

Funding Extension: The Impact of Financial Resources on Extension Programming and Community Support (Statewide & On-Campus)

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PROJECT BACKGROUND

CSU Extension was founded in 1908 with the mission to provide, “trusting, practical education to help you solve problems, develop skills, and build a better future” (CSU Extension, 2023). The national Cooperative Extension program, operated by land-grant institutions, was, at its inception, funded by a combination of federal, state, and county dollars. The intention was to disseminate evidence-based agricultural technologies and practices to rural farming communities. (Brown et al., 2006, p. 103)

Much has changed since then, and with CSU Extension agents transition to faculty status, there is a new emphasis on Extension county offices seeking, obtaining, and utilizing external funding from Grantmakers and foundations to develop projects that benefit their communities.

INTERNSHIP GOALS

- To identify the opportunities & challenges presented when CSU Extension faculty and staff seek, apply for, manage, & utilize external funding.
- To increase our understanding of how funding impacts service delivery in the counties.
- To identify potential points for intervention and solutions to improve or enhance the process for CSU Extension faculty and staff and to support on-campus administrators.

APPLICATION

My long-term interest is in Community-Based Participatory Research alongside marginalized communities in the U.S. who may not have had their interests represented in research in the past. In particular, I am interested in how the distribution of funding impacts healing process in communities that have experienced collective traumas such as genocide and environmental racism.

In this internship, I had the opportunity to explore mixed-methods research and to collaborate with members of the study population. I gained valuable experience facilitating focus groups, conducting interviews, engaging stakeholders in the development of data collection tools, analyzing qualitative data, designing and implementing a survey, submitting IRB amendments, and collaborating as part of a research team. This internship has provided a foundation and lessons that I will take with me into my future work in community-based research.

INTERNSHIP ACTIVITIES

Focus Groups- We facilitated 3, 30-minute focus group sessions at 3 Extension regional meetings. We asked participants to complete a short worksheet describing their experiences when applying for external funding and when working with on-campus grant administrators. I inductively coded data to identify 13 major themes.

Drafting & Submitting the IRB Amendment- Our scientific survey and list of interview questions were submitted to IRB and approved as an amendment.

Survey Creation- Findings from the focus groups informed the development a survey. We collaborated with the OEE Grants & Special Funds team, on-campus faculty, CSU University Advancement, and Extension faculty to create a 42-question survey electronically delivered to Extension faculty & staff.

Interviews- We collaboratively developed a series of 9 formal questions. Interviews were conducted virtually and lasted approximately 60 minutes. During the internship we interviewed 4 individuals and the recordings were transcribed.

Academic Journal Article & White Paper Preparation-I helped to identify articles for the literature review and I drafted methods sections of the article that we plan to submit for publication.

Stakeholder Engagement- As part of the research team, I supported the inclusion of feedback from multiple stakeholders with various interests.

Table 1. Themes from the focus group data

	Themes
1	Lack of time to dedicate to the process as a constraint.
2	Frustration with institutional processes (timelines, communication, complexity).
3	Anxieties around perceived lack of skill necessary to successfully apply for, manage, and report on external funding.
4	Frustration with the percentage CSU administration collects from external funding awards.
5	Lack of knowledge & training as a constraint.
6	Confusion caused by multiple institutions with different requirements.
7	Importance of shared goals among collaborators.
8	Desire for support through the process.
9	Desire for connection/relationship with grant administrators.
10	Limited availability of funding and funding opportunities.
11	Importance of recognition for accomplishment.
12	Pursuit of funding opportunities with the simplest process.
13	Negative impacts of high turnover within administrative offices.

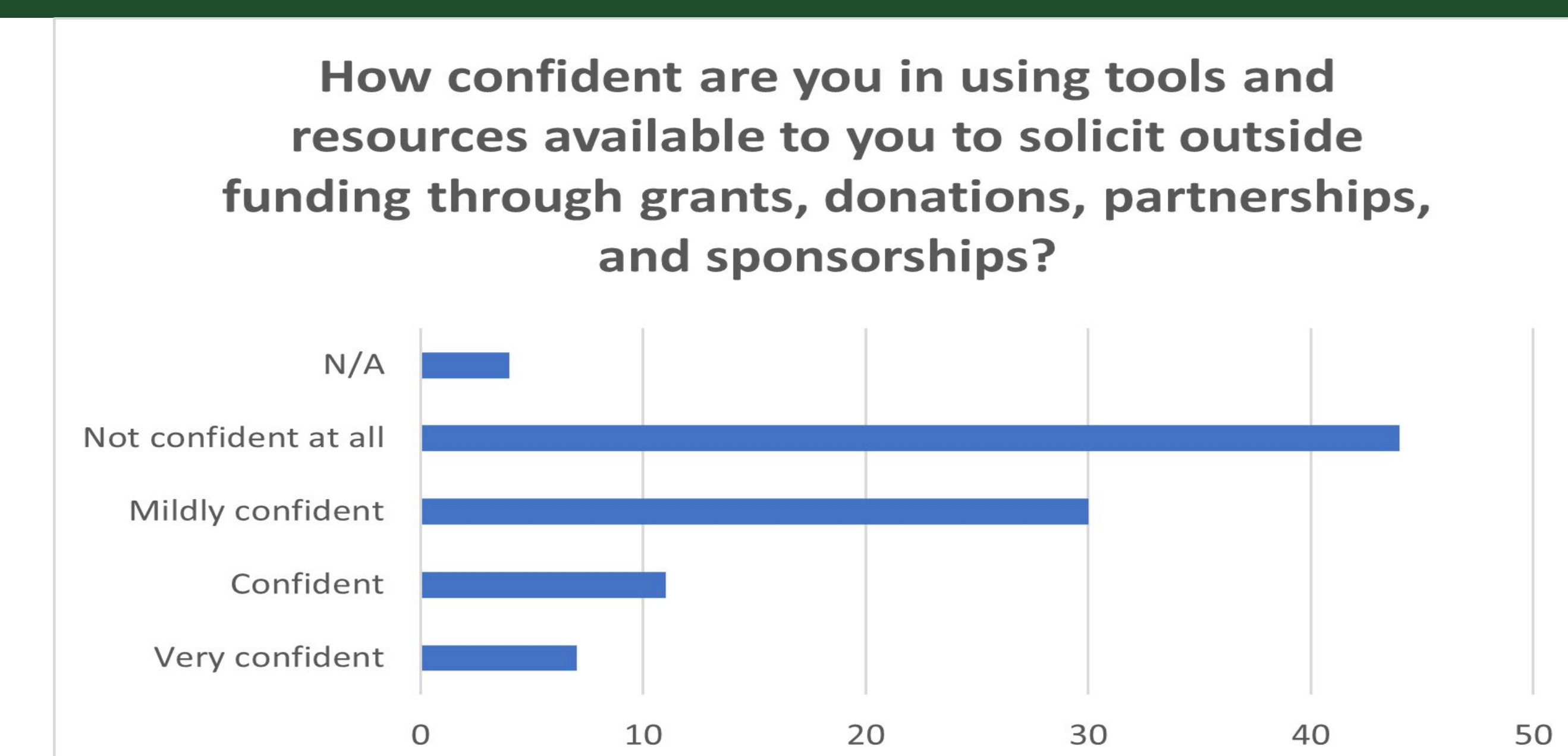
PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Challenges: **1.** Persisting miscommunications and misunderstandings regarding the process when utilizing CSU on-campus support. **2.** Perceived lack of tools and resources, as well as a lack of training, contribute to misunderstandings and frustrations (for both administrations and Extension faculty and staff). **3.** Perceived lack of time to dedicate to the process for on-campus administrators and Extension faculty and staff. **4.** Turnover in administrative offices and perceived impacts to the process among Extension faculty & staff.

Coping with Challenges: **1.** Selectively applying for external funding opportunities or specific types of funding opportunities. **2.** Avoiding services provided by on-campus grant administrators.

Potential Solutions: **1.** In-person training opportunities to support the development of relationships and trust. **2.** Centralized repository of resources, tools, and information for Extension faculty and staff. **3.** Mentorship opportunities for experienced Extension faculty and staff.

Graph 1. Focus group responses



NEXT STEPS

1. Collecting and analyzing survey data
2. Continue interviewing
3. Request budget information from counties
4. Present preliminary results at the ABFM Conference

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