

**University of Missouri Extension and Lincoln University Cooperative Extension
Seek to Identify Priority Needs That May be Used to Develop Programs that Will
Improve the Lives of Individuals and Strengthen Communities Within our State**

Each year, as Land Grant Institutions, the University of Missouri and Lincoln University Cooperative Extension must submit a joint plan to the United Department of Agriculture (USDA) that describes how we will work to improve the lives of the people of Missouri. USDA provides funds each year to help Extension provide quality services and programs to meet the needs of those who live in our state. At the end of each year we evaluate our programs and report to USDA about the impacts that were achieved.

In order to determine the most important needs that need to be addressed, the Universities engage in a number of processes to gain input from stakeholders across the state. This year we are gathering information through a number of methods. We participated in a random telephone survey of approximately 100 people a few months ago. Now we are engaging audiences across the state in conversations to gain information about what they need. While we are doing this we are also working with the 114 local counties and their county councils to gather local level input to support the design of a local plan of work for each county. The goal is to improve program delivery at the local level and enhance communication with key stakeholders and decision makers.

We want to ensure that we talk to all who represent the broad diversity of our state. Our state is rich in diversity whether it be differences in race, ethnicity, age, religion, socio- economic level, ability or another difference. For this reason, during the months of September and October Extension faculty are traveling around the state to hold what we are calling "Diversity Discussions." This entails us speaking with 13 to 15 groups to listen to them as they tell how Extension can best work with them and how we might best connect with them to carry out our mission of reaching out into the communities with quality programs and services. Participation in this discussion is voluntary and no one has to answer any questions that they feel uncomfortable answering. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefit of any kind. All participants' responses will be completely anonymous, as no comments will be personally linked to anyone's name. Those who agree to participate may discontinue their participation at any time. All participants must be 18 years or older.

Information gathered will be recorded in writing without names and typed into a database. Information will then be shared with those who are designing the statewide and local Plan of Work.

Thank you so much for allowing us to speak with your group.
If you have questions, please contact Julie Middleton at 882-3407.

Please sign and return a copy of this to your facilitator or to Julie Middleton, 828 Clark Hall, Columbia, MO 65211, fax 573-882-2595.

I consent to meeting with the University of Missouri – Columbia Extension to seek to Identify Priority Needs That May be Used to Develop Programs that Will Improve the Lives of Individuals and Strengthen Communities Within our State. The date will be arranged at a time that is convenient for both parties prior to October 30, 2005.

Name of Organization: _____

Signature: _____