

## **Cost Recovery/User Fee Philosophical Statement**

The User Fee (UF) initiative in Colorado Extension was created in response to budget reductions and elimination of funding in areas deemed important to the sustainability of Extension. These included professional development for staff, special project grants to support innovation and entrepreneurship, and technology support for enabling transfer of research based information. While opinions of the UF initiative were both positive and negative, the organization adjusted accordingly and funding for these priorities was restored. The UF initiative also changed the way our organization approaches or looks at funding for Extension. Colorado Extension is now better prepared to take more of an entrepreneurial view of increasing funding through a multi-faceted approach including user fees. With the understanding that the fore mentioned sustainability endeavors will remain as priorities, we believe it is time to reevaluate the direction of the UF initiative.

Difficult financial circumstances still prevail and are projected to remain difficult for several years. Budgets remain stressed at the state and county levels. Multicounty education through expertise sharing is evolving as a strategy to strengthen the Extension delivery model. This model requires a shared vision, local participation and commitment, and the right tools to help it advance. As an organization, Extension has moved up the user fee learning curve and it is important to retain this operational knowledge. We believe that continuing budget challenges and new emphasis on multicounty programming creates opportunities to redirect user fees.

It is the philosophy of the review task force that a UF fee initiative should be retained but funds should remain at the local level instead of being sent to central campus budgets. The current model for determining user fee targets in the new fiscal year (effective July 1, 2009) will support implementation of local control on August 1, 2009. Using these targets as a starting point, counties will work together in clusters or groups, and develop shared funding requirements necessary to assist in implementing the multicounty effort. This funding could be used to support travel, technology, or in some other manner to advance the multicounty effort. This self directed team approach will provide a new mechanism to enhance multicounty program delivery.