

# 2012 County Commissioner Satisfaction Survey: CSU Extension Services in Colorado Survey Results Summary Report March 2013



## Introduction: 2012 County Commissioner Survey

The fifth annual County Commissioner Satisfaction Survey was conducted from September 17 to October 26, 2012. The design and methodology were resubmitted and approved by the CSU Research Integrity and Compliance Review Office in 2012. A five-point scale was used for evaluation. The variables studied included: (1) the quality of programs and services provided by local Extension offices; (2) the expertise and knowledge of Extension personnel; (3) the responsiveness and service level of county Extension personnel; (4) the perceived value to citizens of Extension programs and services; and (5) respondent insights and comments regarding CSU Extension. One new question regarding program partnership with CSU Extension was added to the survey.

## Methodology

While the survey was designed by CSU Extension and the Office of the Vice President of Engagement, the survey was conducted by an independent contractor for the Office of Engagement. The revised survey protocol was approved as confidential, allowing survey administrators to see which counties did and did not respond. Participants received a letter directly from the President containing the link to take the survey online. A hard copy of the survey and a pre-paid return envelope were also enclosed, offering the choice to complete a paper survey. The letter stressed the importance of the input, the confidential nature of the survey and the voluntary nature of the survey. Roughly two weeks after the initial letter, a second reminder letter and second hard copy survey were sent from the Chief of Staff, Office of the President, only to those counties that did not respond. A final email reminder from Colorado Counties, Inc. was sent on behalf of CSU, also only to counties that had not yet responded. All results were received, compiled, and analyzed by the independent contractor.

Surveys are sent to all Colorado county commissioners/council members in counties where CSU has Extension offices or provides Extension services. The survey cover letter and email, however, recommend that only commissioners who have contact with and/or knowledge of CSU Extension complete the survey. As many counties appoint one commissioner or council member to serve as the Extension liaison, this means that not every commissioner is expected to complete the CSU Extension survey.

Per-county responses (N = 50) are calculated using the mean of all commissioner responses for that county. As begun in 2010, data is reported here as per-county response. Where relevant, commissioner responses (N = 64) are also reported in this document. Each graphic indicates the type of data calculation used.

A total of 202 surveys were sent to all commissioners/council members in counties where CSU has Extension offices or provides Extension services. Commissioners were encouraged to complete the survey if they worked with Extension, or to forward the survey to the appropriate commissioner contact if they did not work personally with Extension. The total number of returned surveys was 64, for an overall response rate of 32%.

The per-county response rate was excellent, with 50 of the 59 counties served by CSU extension responding (85%). Response rates by region were also excellent: Northern, 82%; Southern, 88%;

Western, 83%. Counties that did not respond to the survey were: Adams, Conejos, Douglas, Gunnison, Huerfano, Larimer, Mineral, Rio Blanco and San Miguel.

Six additional surveys were received after the postmarked deadline. These surveys were excluded from the following analysis.

### Summary of 2012 Survey Results

Overall, commissioners responded favorably to questions about Extension program value and quality, and agent expertise and responsiveness. Comparisons between commissioner level and county level data reveal no statistically significant differences, indicating a trend toward consistent scoring with no extreme highs or lows. Responses for 2012 were slightly more positive across indicators for responsiveness, and slightly less positive across key indicators for value and overall satisfaction. Overall, scores tend to cluster tightly at the positive end of the scale. Comments indicate that lower scores are likely tied to desires for more services and/or better agent coverage.

### Survey Results: 2011–2012 Key Indicator Comparison of County Responses

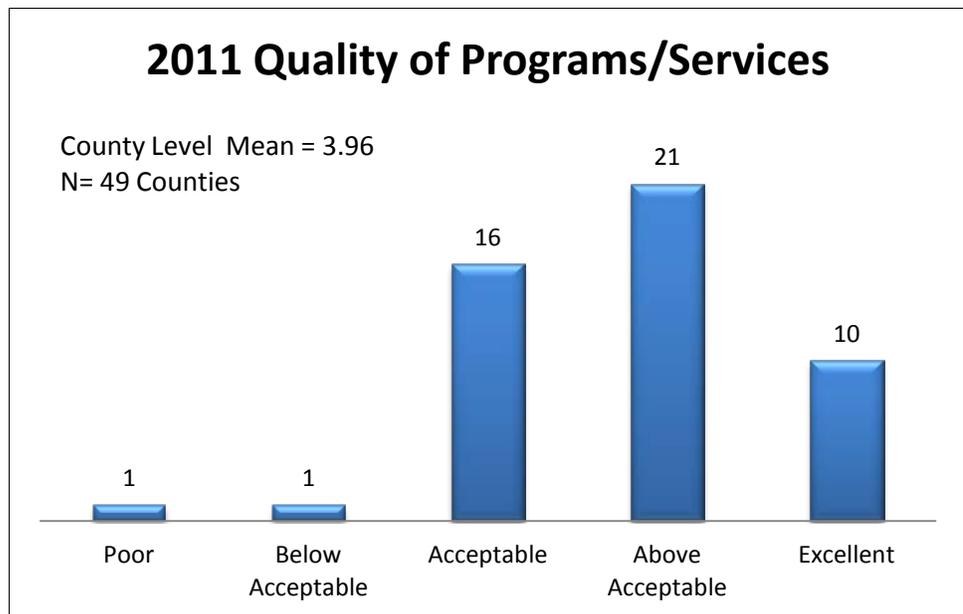
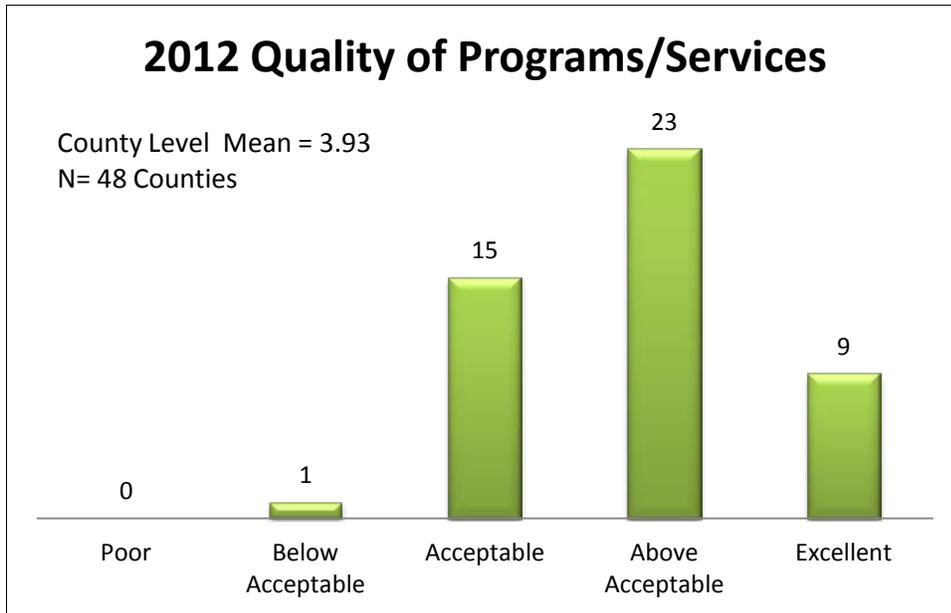
As begun in 2010, data is analyzed primarily at the county level. This standardizes any potential systematic bias caused by some counties having a larger number of commissioners respond versus a county in which the Board of Commissioners assigns only one member to respond to the survey. This methodology levels the playing field and allows for a survey of *county attitudes and satisfaction*, rather than *county commissioner attitudes and satisfaction*.

Overall, *counties* responded favorably to questions about program quality, value, responsiveness, and overall satisfaction. We compared 2012 data on four key indicators to 2011 data and found a mixed response; responsiveness trends slightly higher in 2012, while key indicators for value and overall satisfaction trend slightly lower. These trends can be seen in both the averaged scores and in the graphs of individual responses below.

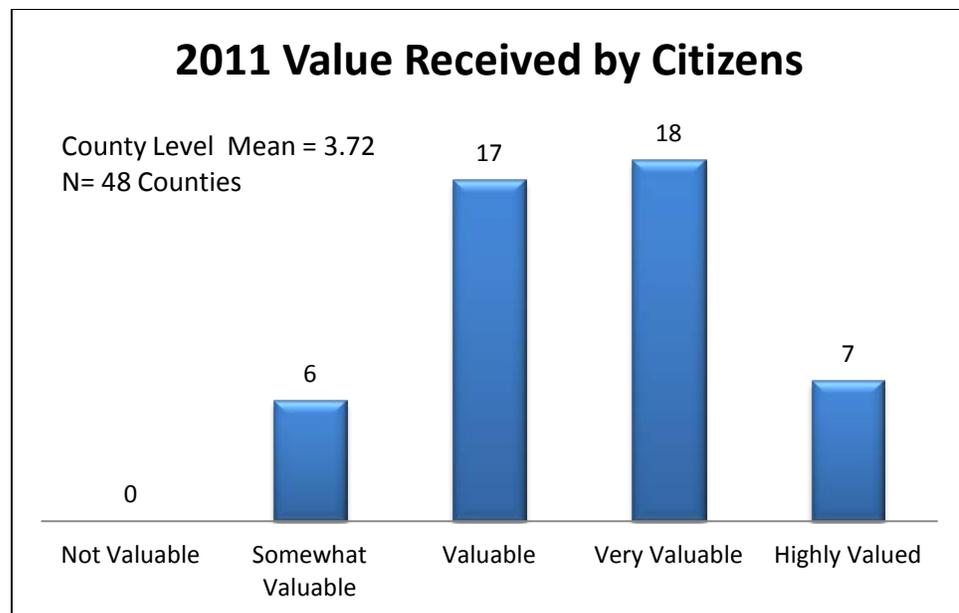
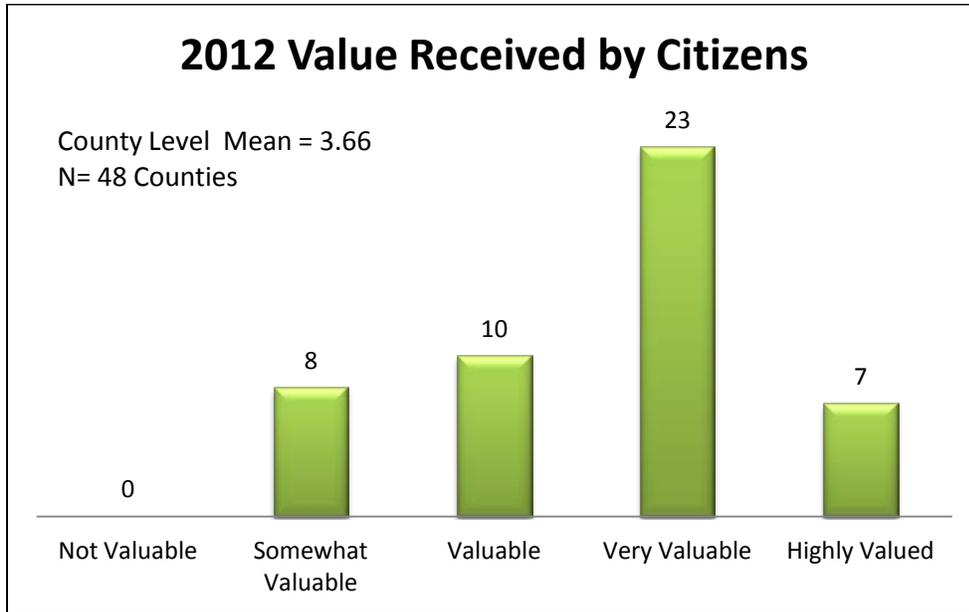
The four key indicators are graphed below for both 2012 and 2011 county responses. This includes the “overall satisfaction” question used to indicate mean satisfaction with CSU Extension.

There were no “Poor/Not Valuable” responses recorded as answers to any of the four key indicator questions in 2012, another sign that CSU Extension is positively regarded in all 48 responding counties.

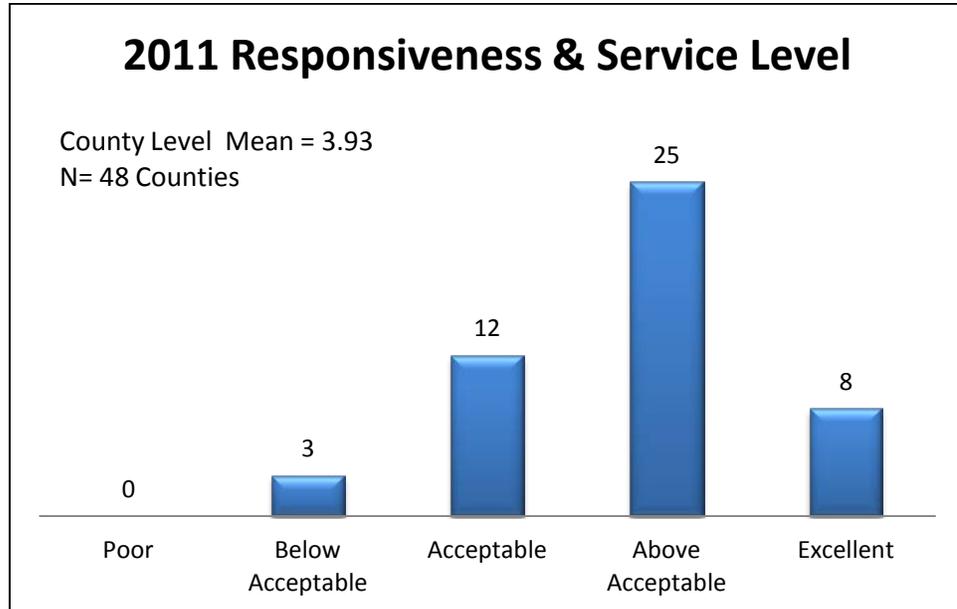
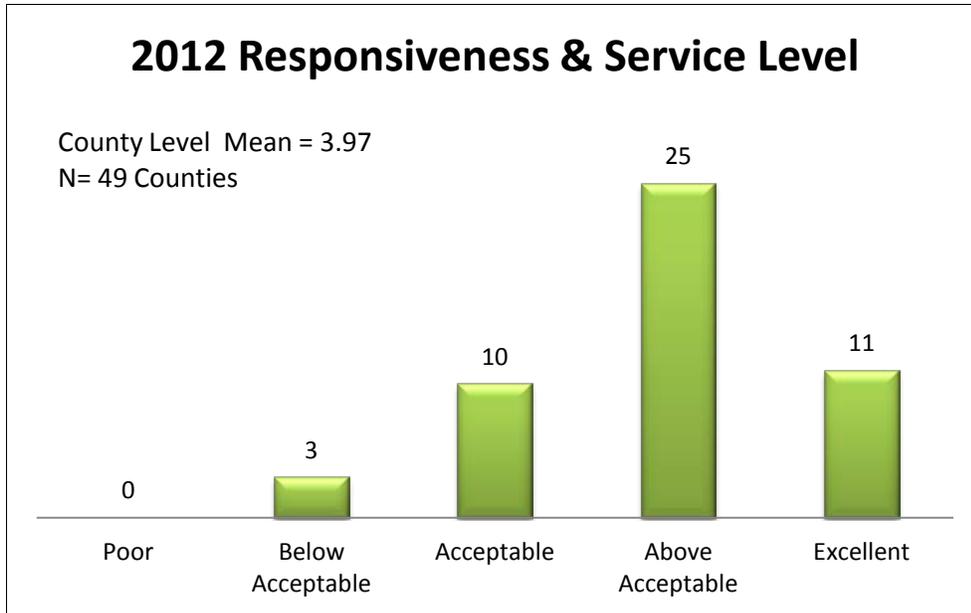
*Rate the quality of the programs and services provided from your local Extension office.*



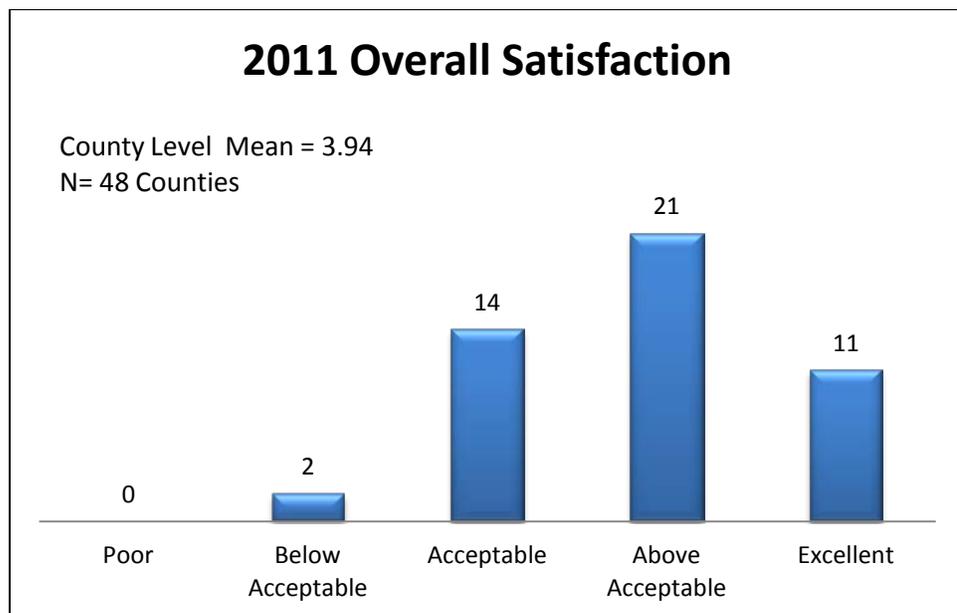
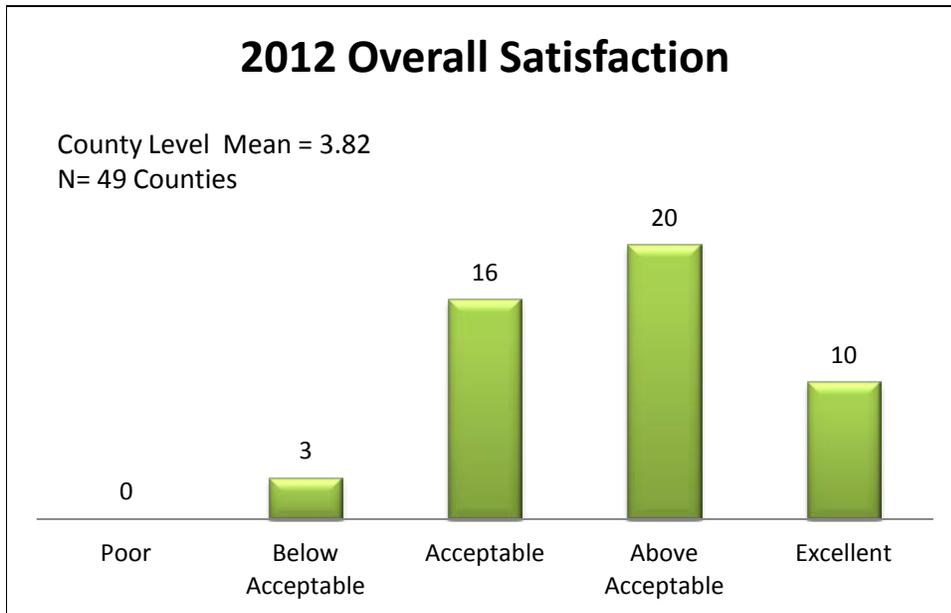
*How would you rate the value received by the citizens of your county from programs and services delivered by Extension?*



*Rate the responsiveness and service level of your county Extension personnel in meeting the needs of your county citizens.*



*Rate your overall satisfaction with the service the citizens receive from your local county/area Extension office.*

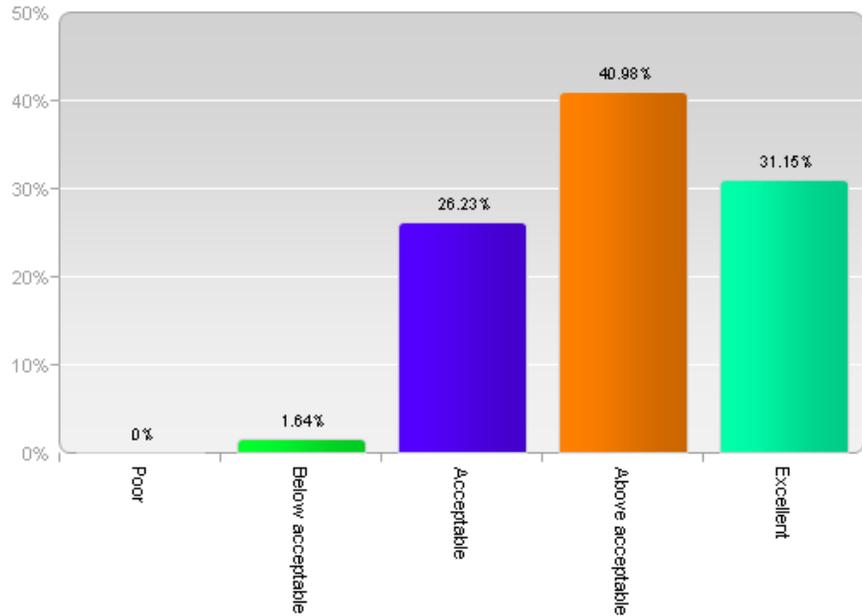


*Commissioners rated the services provided from local Extension office favorably, with 98.36% rated as acceptable, above acceptable or excellent. As one commissioner states: “We are on a good path to excellence!”*

**Survey Results: Commissioner Level Data on Program Value and Agent Ability**

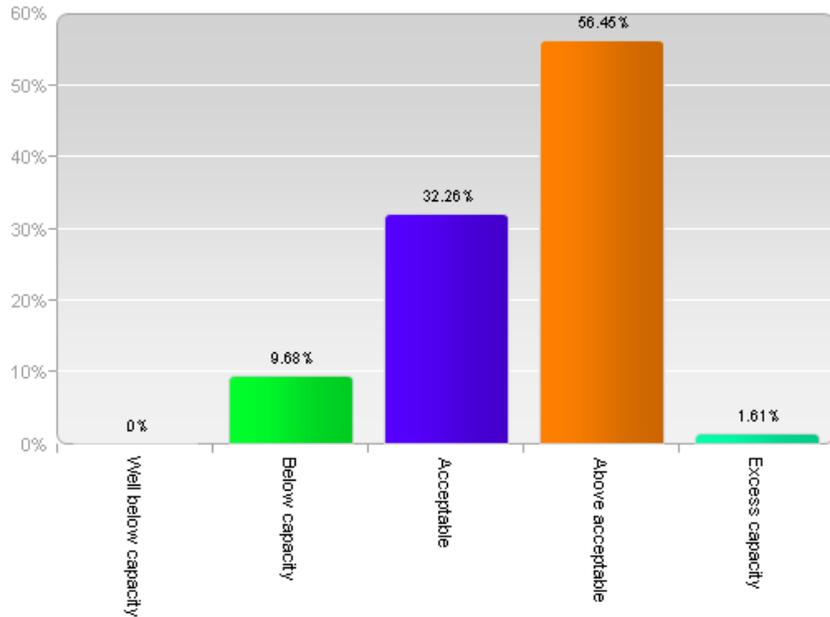
As indicated below, commissioner responses were positive about CSU Extension services, program quality, and agent expertise. Both program quality and the expertise and knowledge of local agents received particularly positive ratings.

Q4. 3. Rate the quality of the programs and services provided from your local Extension office

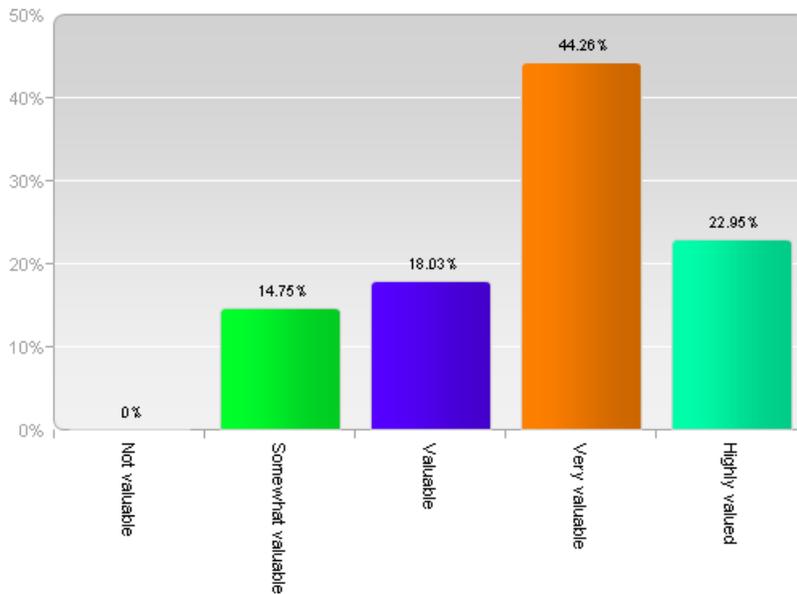


*The value received by the citizens from programs and services delivered by Extension was valuable, very valuable or highly valuable according to 85.24% of respondents. One commissioner explains: “The programs are excellent; they are being used by the community.”*

Q6. 4. Please rate the local offices' ability to meet the needs of your county:

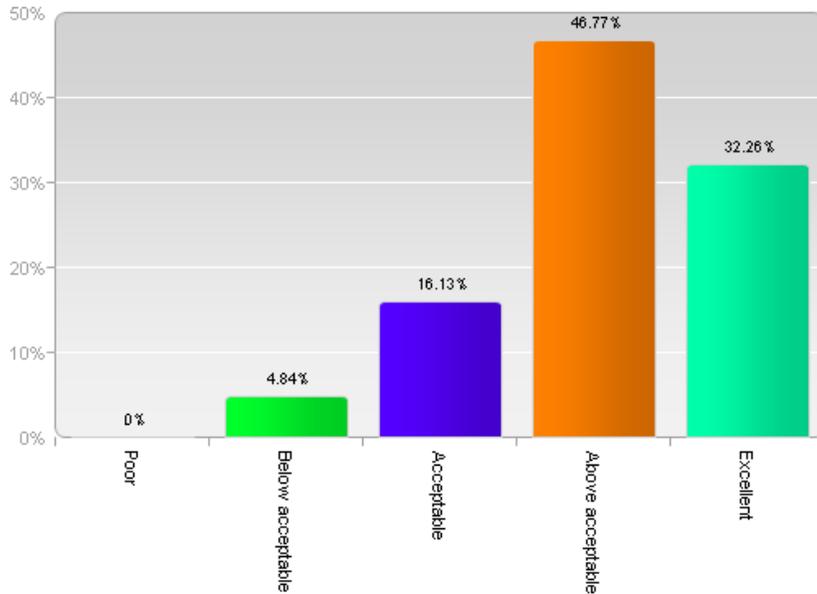


Q8. 5. How would you rate the value received by the citizens of your county from programs and services delivered by Extension?



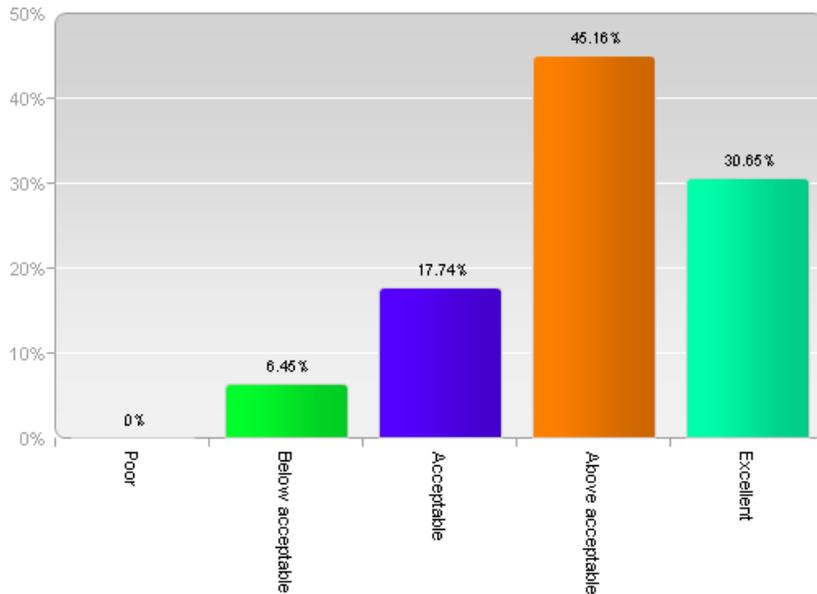
*Commissioners were satisfied with the local offices' ability to meet the needs of each county, with 90.32% rated acceptable, above acceptable or excess capacity.*

Q10. 6. Rate the expertise and knowledge of your county Extension personnel in meeting the needs of your county citizens:



*Commissioners rated the expertise and knowledge of Extension personnel positively, with 95.16% rated as acceptable, above acceptable or excellent.*

Q12. 7. Rate the responsiveness and service level of your county Extension personnel in meeting the needs of your county citizens.



*The responsiveness and service level of Extension personnel in meeting the needs of citizens was found to be 93.55% acceptable, above acceptable or excellent.*

### Regional Results Comparison: Commissioner Level Data

The table below reports commissioner responses divided into the three CSU Extension regions as percentages. As these percentages indicate, all three regions are similar in their response trends. The Western region (all Western Slope counties) trends higher overall, while the Southern region (Southern and Southeastern counties) and Northern region (Northern and Northeastern counties) trend lower on all issues. The Northern region scores for program value, in particular, are tied to an interest in receiving more programming and hiring additional agents. Overall, regions are most satisfied with program quality, responsiveness, and agent knowledge; scores trend lowest with regard to program value.

2012 Regional Results Comparison									
	Excellent/Above Acceptable			Acceptable			Below Acceptable/Poor		
	North	West	South	North	West	South	North	West	South
Program Quality	68%	94%	58%	32%	0%	42%	0%	6%	0%
Capacity	58%	78%	44%	32%	17%	44%	11%	6%	12%
Value	58%	78%	67%	16%	22%	17%	26%	0%	17%
Knowledge	68%	89%	80%	26%	11%	12%	5%	0%	8%
Responsiveness	68%	94%	68%	26%	6%	20%	5%	0%	12%
Satisfaction	58%	89%	60%	37%	6%	32%	5%	6%	8%

### Survey Comments: Kudos and Concerns

Each question on the survey allowed unlimited space for comments. Comments on local agents and offices were generally very positive. Many comments reflected perceptions of positive changes in community-appropriate programming. Comments also, however, raised concerns about inadequate staffing and/or programming.

#### Praise for Extension Agents and Services

- *CSU Extension plays a vital role in this urban-rural county, especially in the small farm program, local foods initiative and in the broader reaching 4H program.*
- *We could always use more staff and programs, of course, but we are thrilled with the professionalism of our staff.*
- *The whole community feels they are being served well.*
- *The new inter-county flexibility is great. Now we can call in expertise on animals.*
- *CSU Extension is a big part of our County's services that are available to the public. Their ability to respond to questions, provide services, and offer new programs is a big part of our rural outreach.*
- *We appreciate the great partnership with CSU Extension. We are a stronger county community because of Extension's presence and commitment.*

- *While both state and county funding is not what it was when I took office in 2005, I am happier with Extension and our relationship with Extension than at any time since I have been a commissioner.*
- *Our local staff is great and we certainly appreciate the partnership with CSU. Dr. Swanson and Kathay Rennels are excellent partners. Thanks.*
- *We are very pleased to partner with CSU Extension!*

### Concerns: Appropriate Staffing and Office Funding

- *Funding cuts and facilities needs kept the rating out of the excellent category.*
- *We have calls for services that we are not adequately staffed for.*
- *We currently have no AG Agent assigned to the County and are unable to provide residents with timely responses to their requests for information.*
- *Need a second agent.*
- *There is a lot of information readily available from local coops and other merchants within and sometimes wonder if the costs associated with Extension services are worth their value in the long run.*

### Recommendations from Respondents

Similar to the 2011 Extension Survey, respondents continue to advocate for raising awareness of Extension services. They also suggest creating better connections with Extension and the CSU campus.

- *Citizens could be more aware of the connection between the services and CSU Extension as the provider.*
- *I think it needs to be advertised more. More participation.*
- *Better communications with area producers on what Extension can do to help them – i.e., advertising either through an area newsletter or a subscribed email of services being offered.*
- *Better reach-down from campus-level staff. It is almost like Colorado State University and our local Extension service are two different entities – less about the land grant mission.*
- *It would be great to have a report from the Extension agent, once a year. Otherwise, we don't know what is going on the office.*

### Conclusion

The 2012 survey data indicate that commissioners continue to feel very positively about their agents and the overall value of CSU Extension. In light of prolonged state and county funding reductions, they continue their efforts to balance community needs with existing resources. Two additional counties have committed funds to Extension programming: Clear Creek renewed CSU Extension programming in 2012, and Hinsdale county will support Extension programming for 2013. The expansion of CSU Extension is a strong indication of its perceived value to Colorado citizens and public officials.

This report will be made publicly available on the CSU website, through the CSU Extension and VP Engagement web pages. A link to the report is also mailed to all survey participants, with thanks for their interest and participation. The survey results are shared with CSU Extension program leaders and regional directors, to be used in planning and recommendations for 2013.