

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

March 2014



Introduction: 2013 County Commissioner Survey

The sixth annual County Commissioner Satisfaction Survey was conducted from September 16 to October 25, 2013. The design and methodology were 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.

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 confidential survey protocol allowed 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 ($N = 56$) 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 ($N = 84$) are also reported in this document. Each graphic indicates the type of data calculation used.

A total of 213 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 84, for an overall response rate of 39%.

The per-county response rate was excellent, with 56 of the 62 counties served by CSU extension responding (90%). Response rates by region were also excellent: Front Range region (Front Range urban corridor), 92%; Eastern Peaks and Plains region (Southeast, Northeast Golden Plains, and the San Luis Valley), 93%; Western region (all Western Slope counties), 85%.

Counties that did not respond to the survey were: Cheyenne, Costilla, Larimer, Ouray, Rio Blanco and San Miguel.

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

Summary of 2013 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. Overall, scores tend to cluster tightly at the positive end of the scale. Comments indicate that lower scores are likely tied to desires for additional services and/or better agent coverage.

Survey Results: 2012–2013 Key Indicator Comparison of County Responses

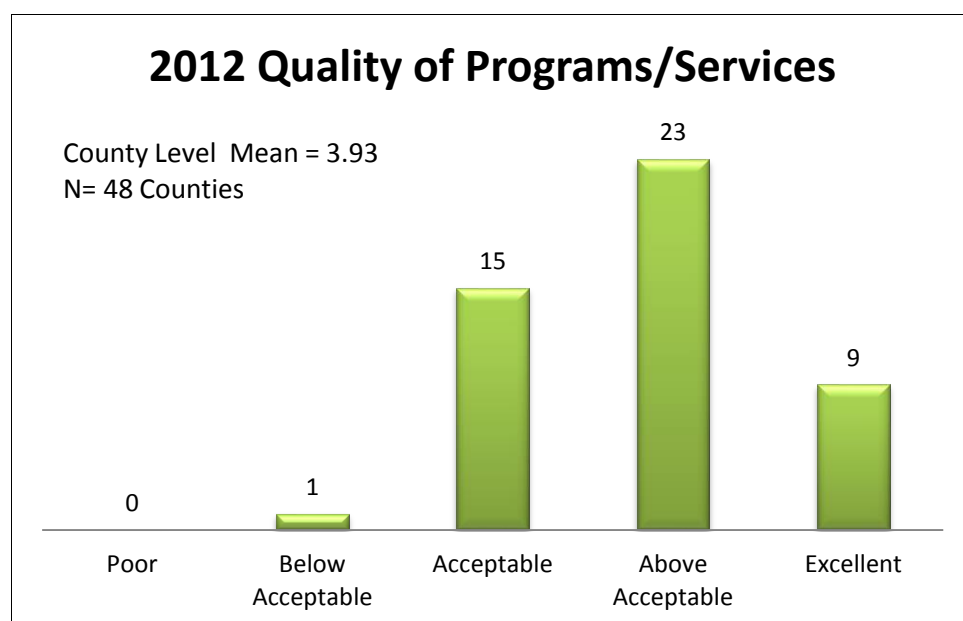
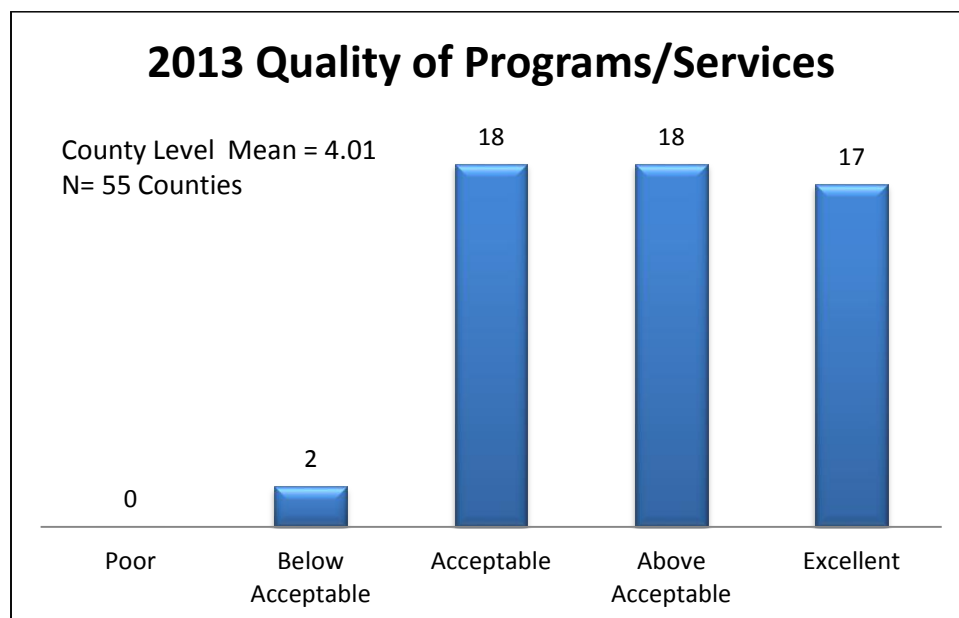
As begun in 2010, data is analyzed primarily at the county level. This standardizes any potential systematic bias caused by some counties having a larger number of commissioners respond versus a county in which the Board of Commissioners assigns only one member to respond to the survey. This methodology 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 2013 data on four key indicators to 2012 data and found a mixed response; key indicators for quality, value, and overall satisfaction trend slightly higher in 2013, while responsiveness trends slightly lower. These trends can be seen in both the averaged scores and in the graphs of individual responses below.

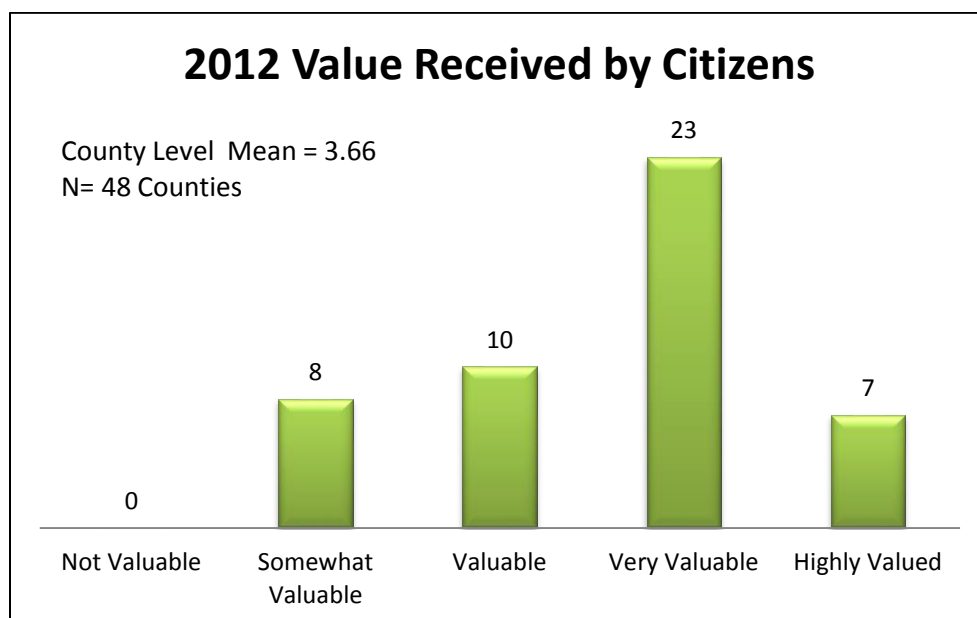
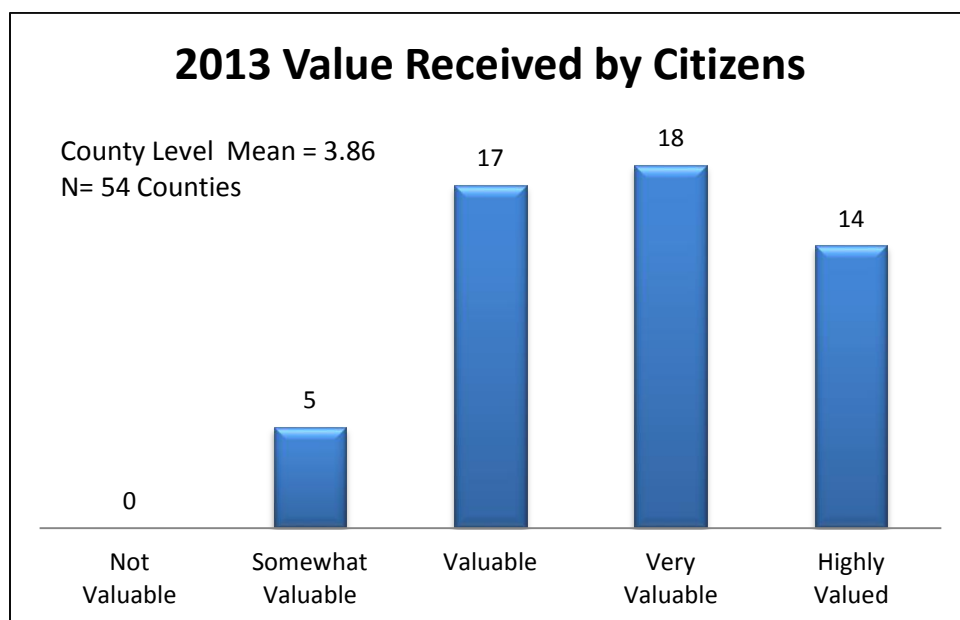
The four key indicators are graphed below for both 2013 and 2012 county responses. This includes the “overall satisfaction” question used to indicate mean satisfaction with CSU Extension.

There were no “Poor/Not Valuable” responses recorded as answers to any of the four key indicator questions in 2012 or 2013, another sign that CSU Extension is positively regarded in all responding counties.

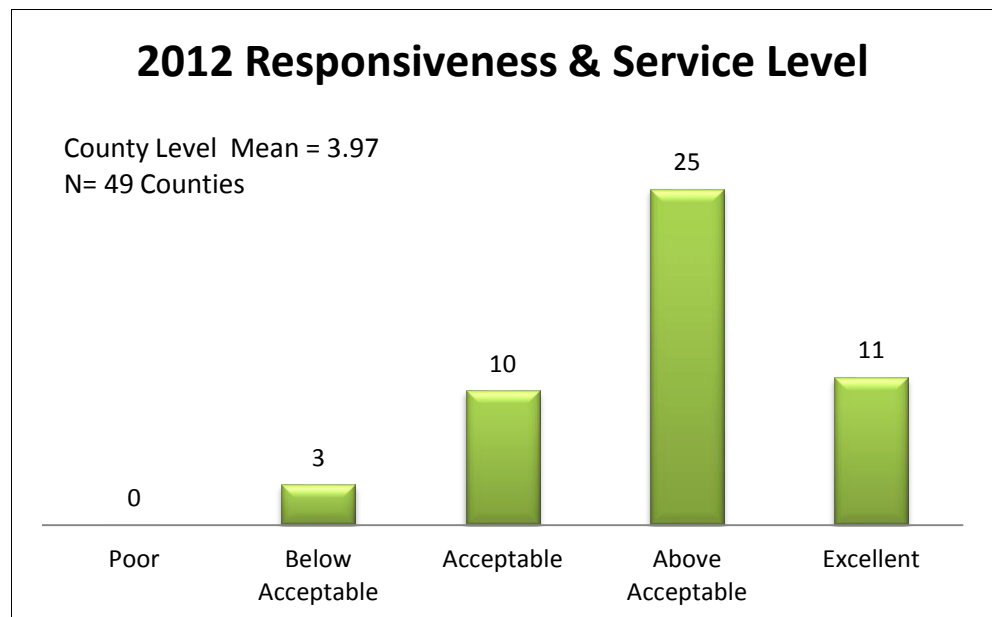
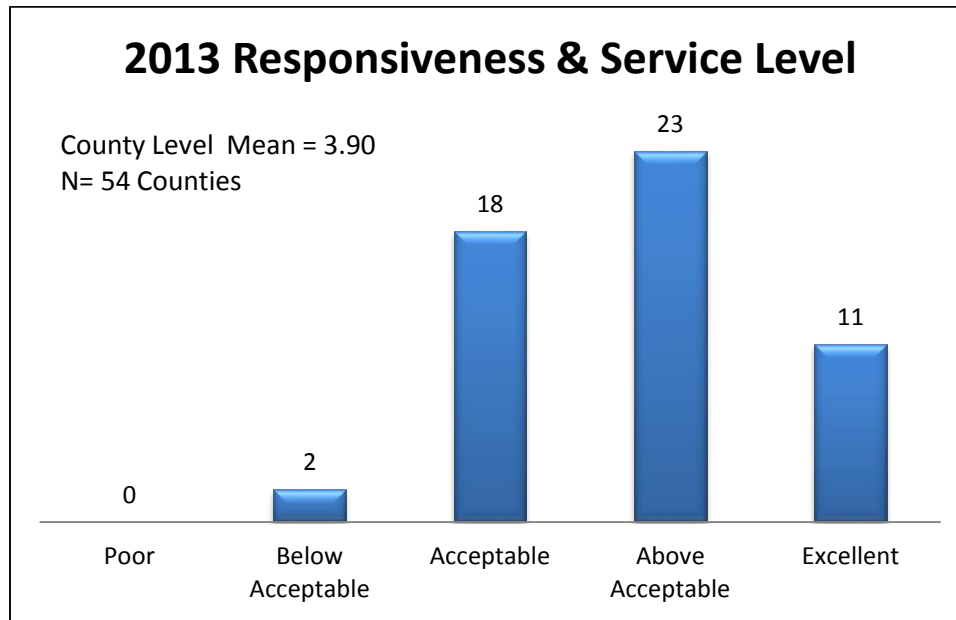
Rate the quality of the programs and services provided from your local Extension office.



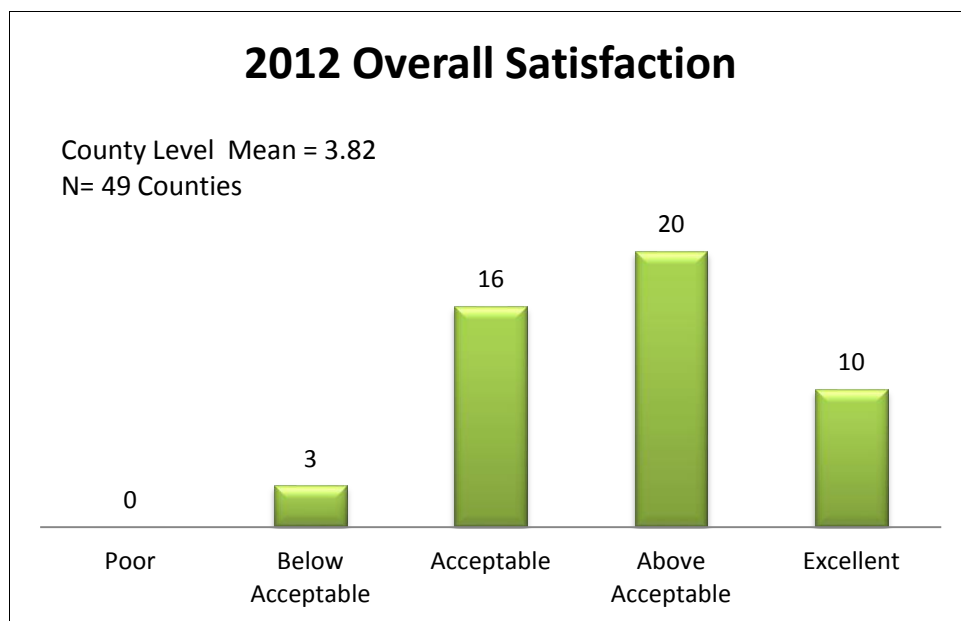
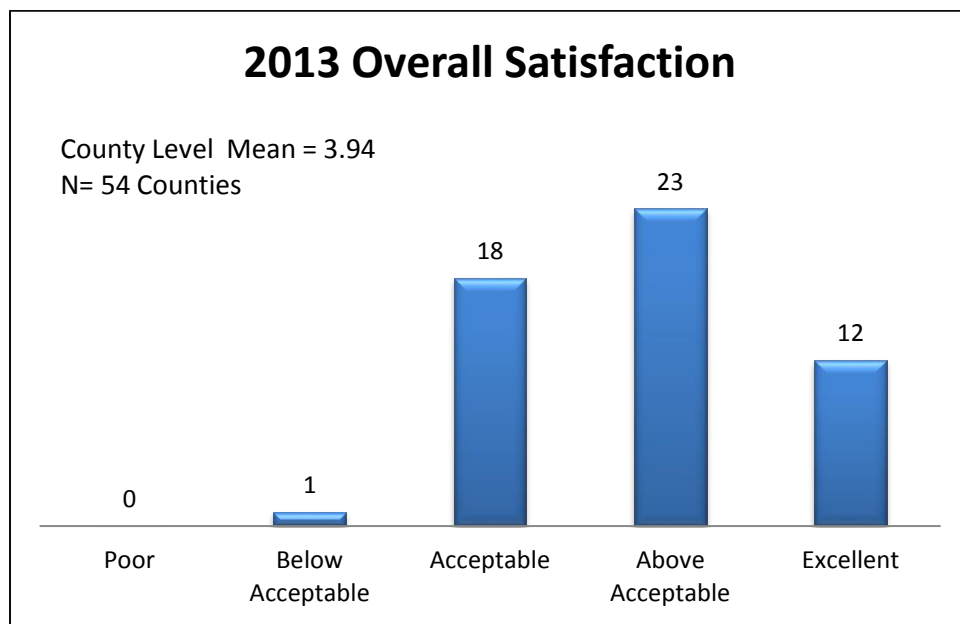
How would you rate the value received by the citizens of your county from programs and services delivered by Extension?



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.

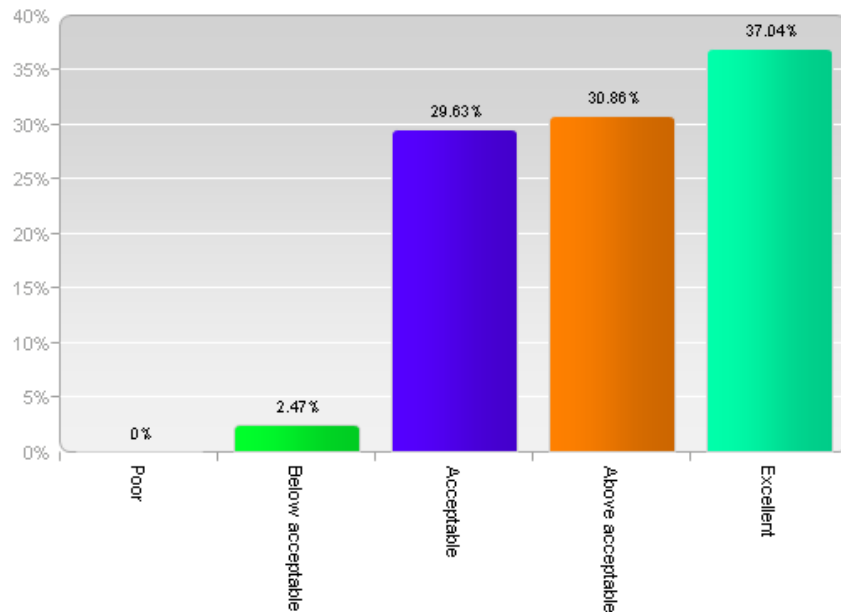


Survey Results: Commissioner Level Data on Program Value and Agent Ability

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

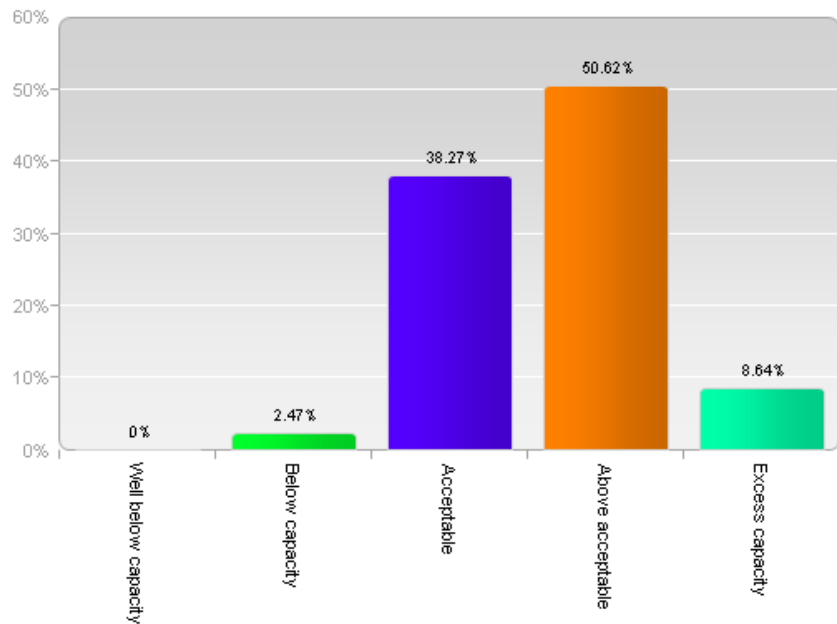
Commissioners rated the services provided from local Extension office favorably, with 97.53% rated as acceptable, above acceptable or excellent. As one commissioner commented: "...programs are an integral and vital part of life here..."

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

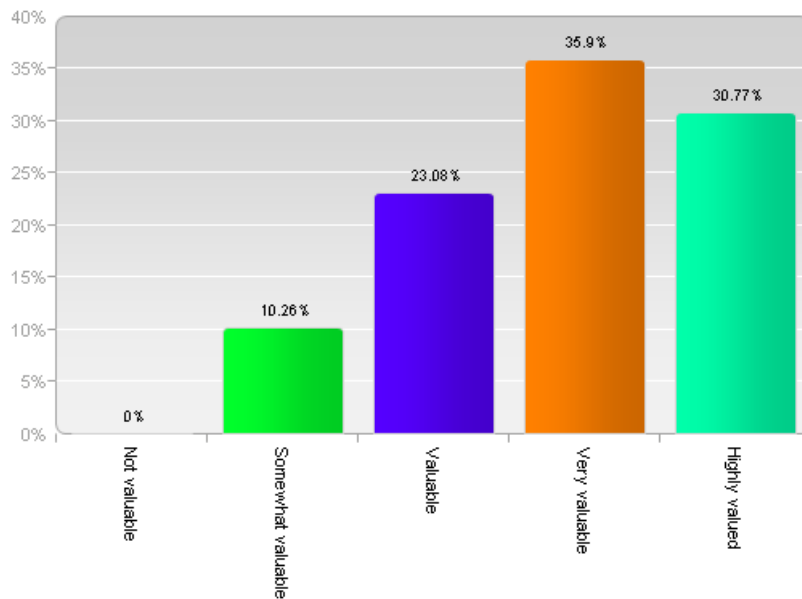


Commissioners were satisfied with the local offices' ability to meet the needs of each county, with 97.53% rated acceptable, above acceptable or excess capacity.

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



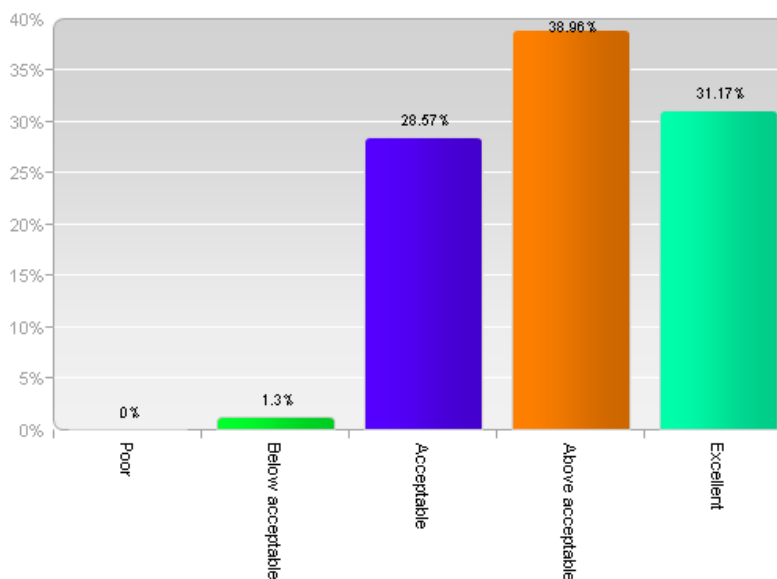
Q8. 5. How would you rate the value received by the citizens of your county from programs and services delivered by Extension?



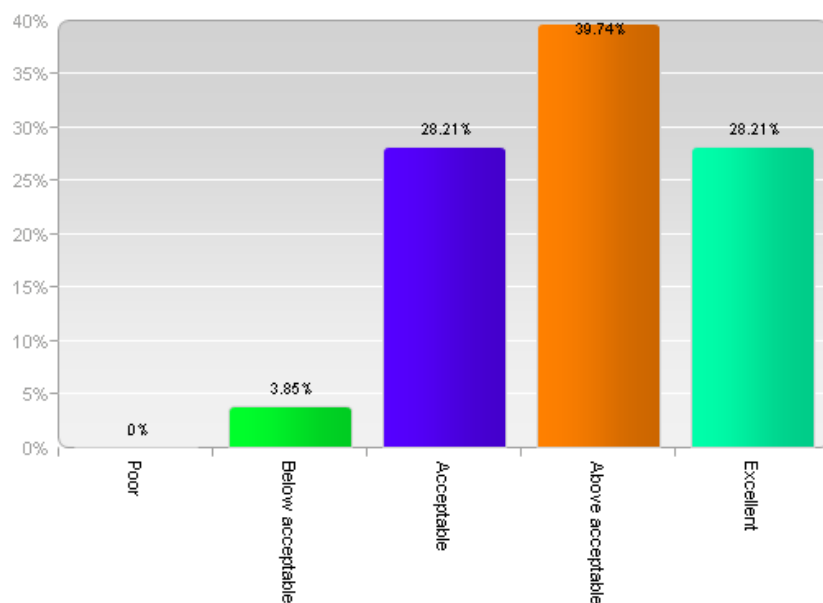
The value received by the citizens from programs and services delivered by Extension was valuable, very valuable or highly valuable according to 89.75% of respondents.

Commissioners rated the expertise and knowledge of Extension personnel positively, with 98.7% rated as acceptable, above acceptable or excellent. One commissioner comments: "Top Notch."

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



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 96.16% 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. These regions were reconfigured in 2012 to reflect population density and capture similarities in programming needs. As these percentages indicate, the three regions vary in their response trends. The Western region (all Western Slope counties) trends higher overall, while the Front Range region (Front Range urban corridor) and the Eastern Peaks and Plains region (Southeast, Northeast Golden Plains, and the San Luis Valley) trend lower on all issues. Overall, regions are most satisfied with program quality, responsiveness, and agent knowledge; scores trend lowest with regard to program value.

2013 Regional Results Comparison									
	Excellent/Above Acceptable			Acceptable			Below Acceptable/Poor		
	Front Range	West	East	Front Range	West	East	Front Range	West	East
Program Quality	68%	86%	58%	32%	14%	38%	0%	0%	5%
Capacity	63%	73%	50%	37%	27%	45%	0%	0%	5%
Value	63%	82%	60%	21%	18%	27%	16%	0%	14%
Knowledge	67%	77%	68%	33%	23%	30%	0%	0%	3%
Responsiveness	63%	82%	62%	37%	18%	30%	0%	0%	8%
Satisfaction	65%	90%	64%	35%	10%	31%	0%	0%	6%

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 lack of awareness and/or inadequate programming.

Praise for Extension Agents and Services

- *Couldn't be more pleased with what Extension is doing to engage the community here.*
- *CSU has been part of [city] garden program for years and it is so critical to providing healthy food to so many [city] residents.*
- *Several new programs have been put in place based on the needs of the community.*
- *I cannot stress enough the importance of our extension agent and her programs in the county.*
- *Thank you for providing this invaluable service to [our county].*

Concerns: Appropriate Funding and Staffing

- *There is a major concern about continued regionalization and pull back of funding from the university.*
- *We may have to cut the 4H Program Director if CSU cannot help with funding part of her position.*
- *Stabilize funding for local positions.*
- *Sharing personnel with neighboring counties, such as a 4-H coordinator, it looks to me as though you are putting a lot of pressure on them, especially during fair time since they are scheduled so close together.*
- *Give us more people. Send more money. Don't cut any more or there won't be an Extension Service!*

Recommendations from Respondents

Similar to the 2012 Extension Survey, respondents continue to advocate for raising awareness of Extension services. They also suggest creating better connections with Extension and other local community programs.

- *It is important to be in front of the commissioners throughout the year and bring stories of both success and need in areas where they may not be aware Extension is working.*
- *Partner with industry more.*
- *There is a need for CSU Extension to educate the urban areas about the value that you offer in the community.*
- *Need an advertising campaign, statewide, letting people know that Extension is available to them.*
- *Continue to listen to constituents and provide innovative programming.*

Conclusion

The 2013 survey data indicate that commissioners 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.

The Office of Engagement and the Office of Community and Economic Development are working with CSU Extension to explore how best to meet some of the requests and recommendations from respondents, such as those that advocate for additional community services or partnering with local resources.

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 2014.