

**2015 County Commissioner
Satisfaction Survey:
CSU Extension Services in Colorado**
Survey Results Summary Report
March 2016



Colorado State University
EXTENSION

Introduction: 2015 County Commissioner Survey

The eighth annual County Commissioner Satisfaction Survey was conducted from September 21 to October 30, 2015. 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 was sent only to counties that had not yet responded. All results were received, compiled, and analyzed by the independent contractor.

Surveys are sent annually 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 = 53) 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 = 80) are also reported in this document. Each graphic indicates the type of data calculation used.

A total of 215 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 80, for an overall response rate of 37%.

The per-county response rate was 85%, with 53 of the 62 counties surveyed by CSU extension responding. Response rates by region were also strong: Front Range region (Front Range urban corridor), 75%; Eastern Peaks and Plains region (Southeast, Northeast Golden Plains, and the San Luis Valley), 90%; Western region (all Western Slope counties), 85%. Counties that did not

respond to the survey were: Adams, Clear Creek, Costilla, Jefferson, Las Animas, Mesa, Otero, Rio Blanco and San Miguel.

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

Summary of 2015 Survey Results

Overall, commissioners responded very 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. 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.

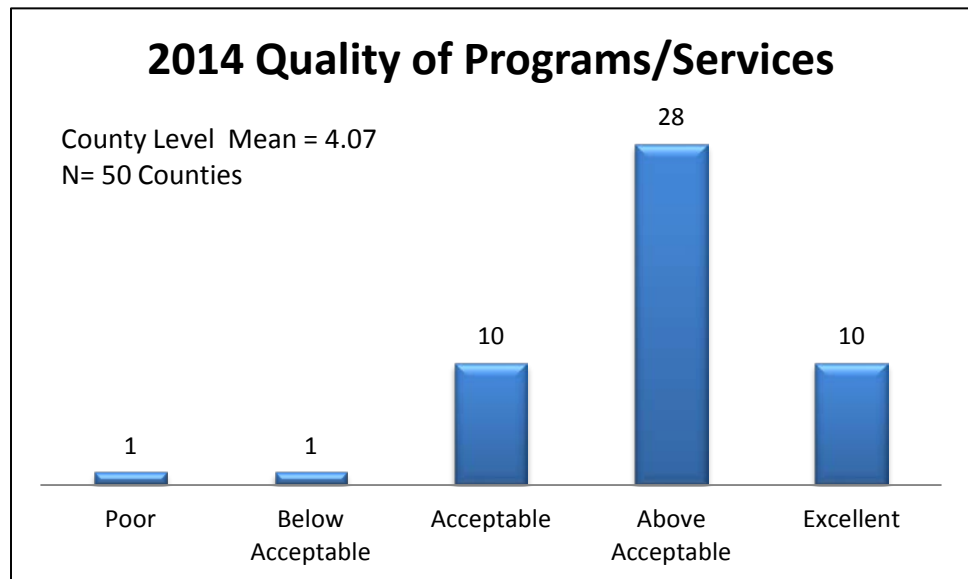
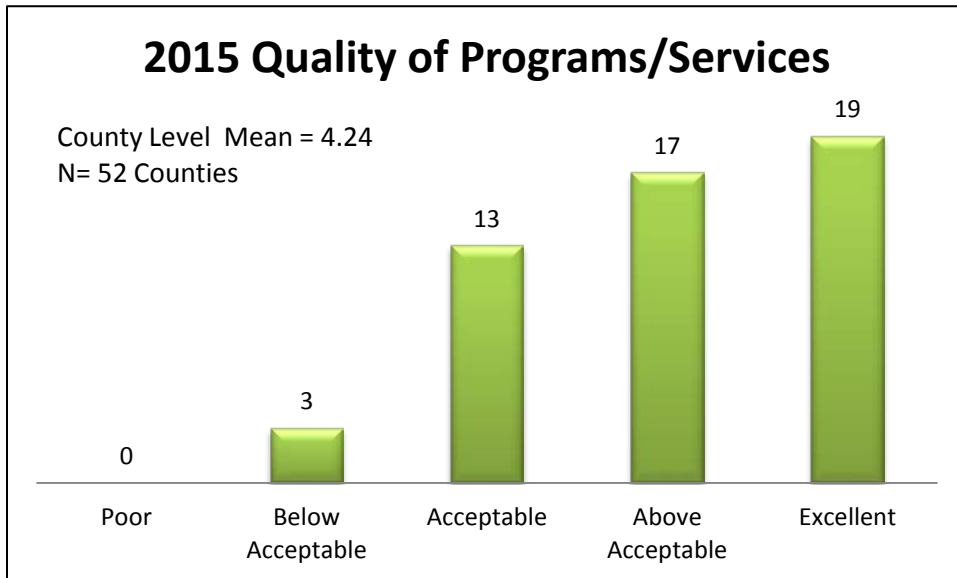
Survey Results: 2014–2015 Key Indicator Comparison of County Responses

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.

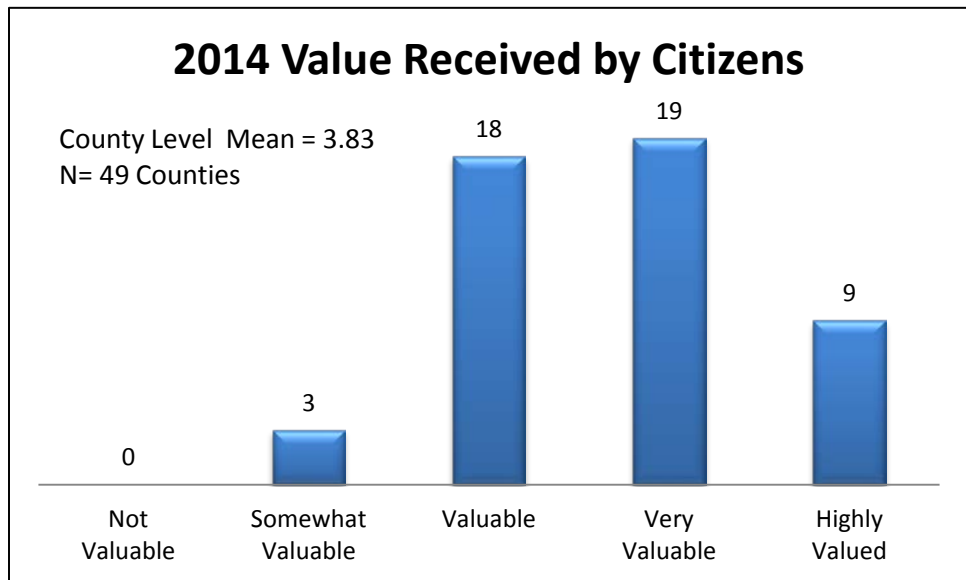
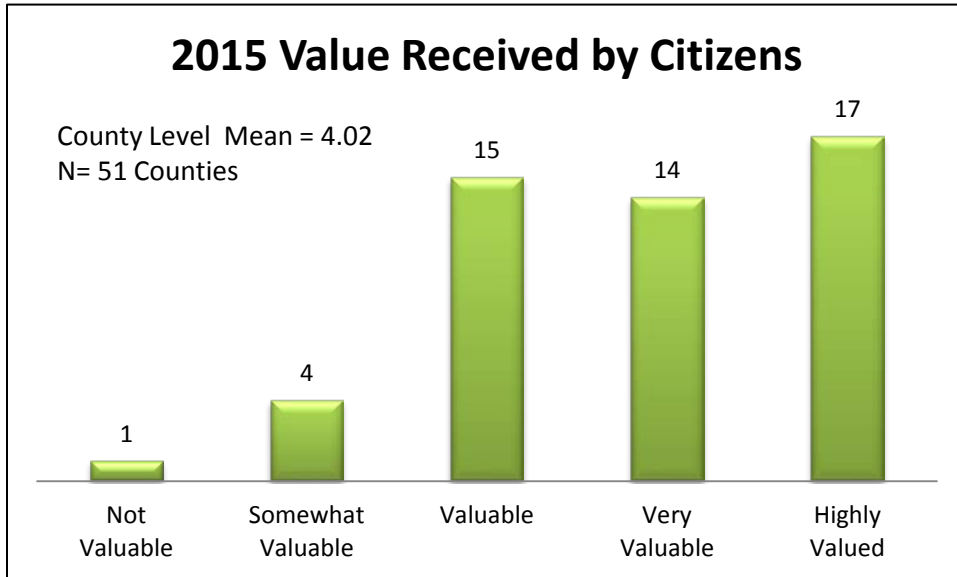
Overall, *counties* responded favorably to questions about program quality, value, responsiveness, and overall satisfaction. We compared 2015 data on four key indicators to 2014 data and found that all four key indicators for quality, responsiveness, value, and overall satisfaction trend slightly higher in 2015. These trends can be seen in both the averaged scores and in the graphs of individual responses below. All four scores have trended consistently high since 2012; in 2015, all four median scores are above 4.0 on a 5-point scale.

The four key indicators are graphed below for both 2015 and 2014 county responses. This includes the “overall satisfaction” question used to indicate mean satisfaction with CSU Extension.

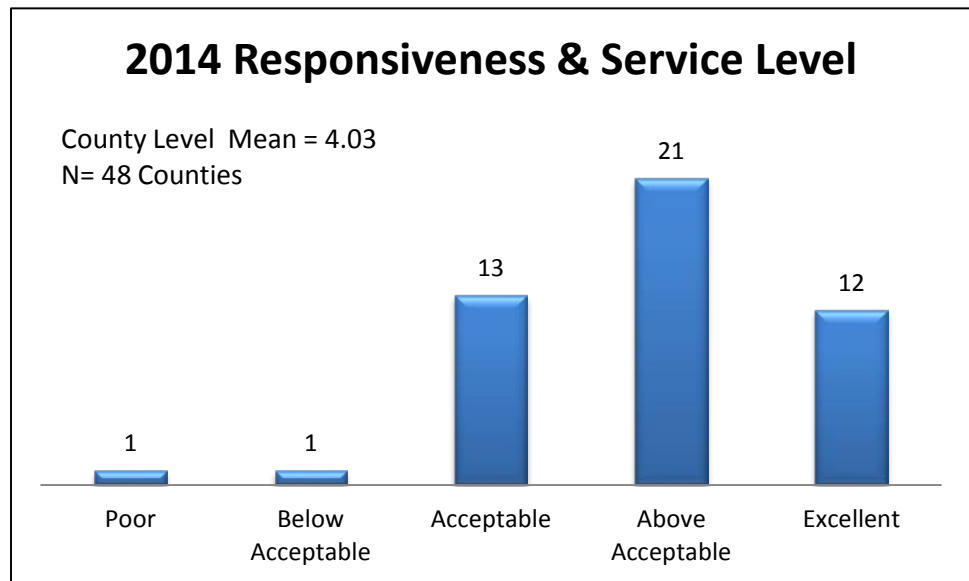
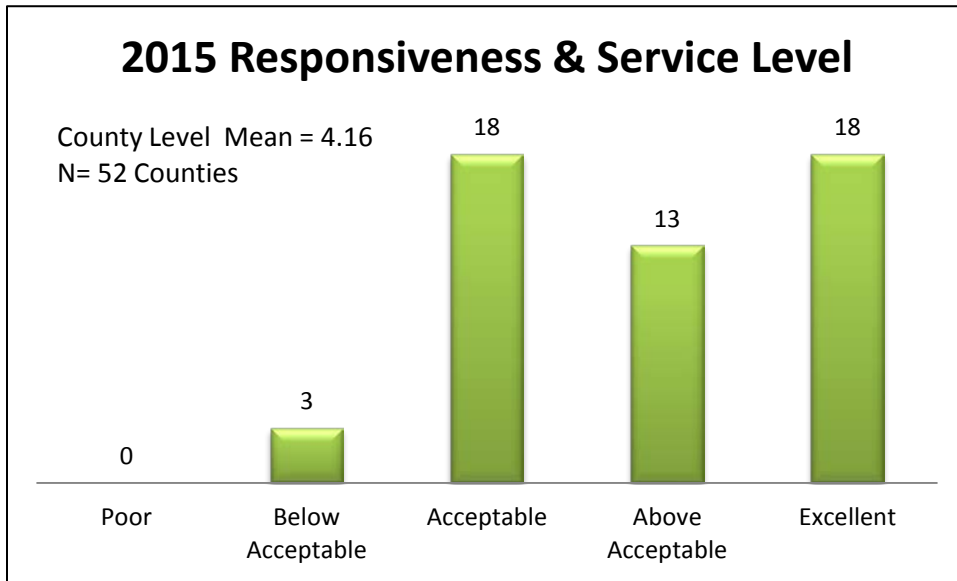
Rate the quality of the programs and services provided from your local Extension office.



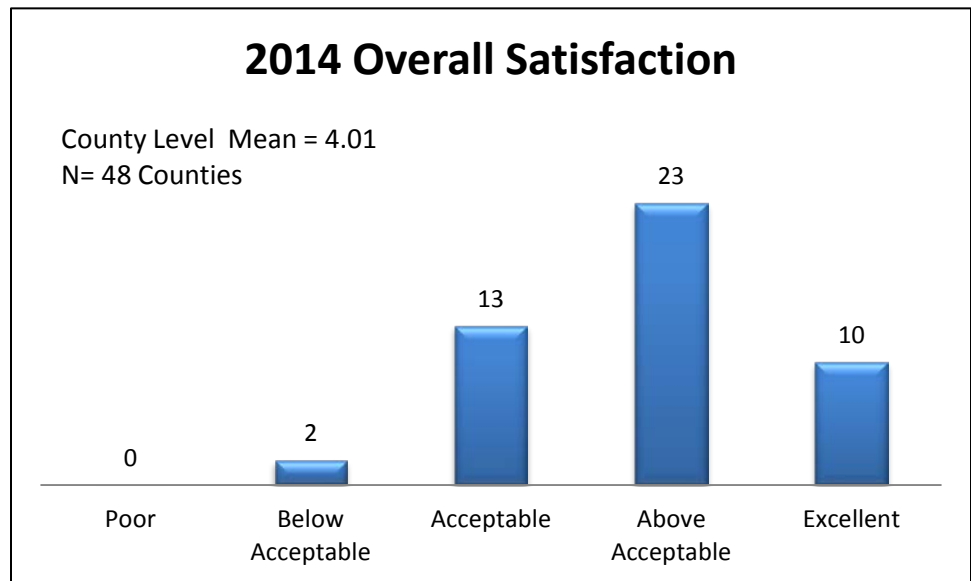
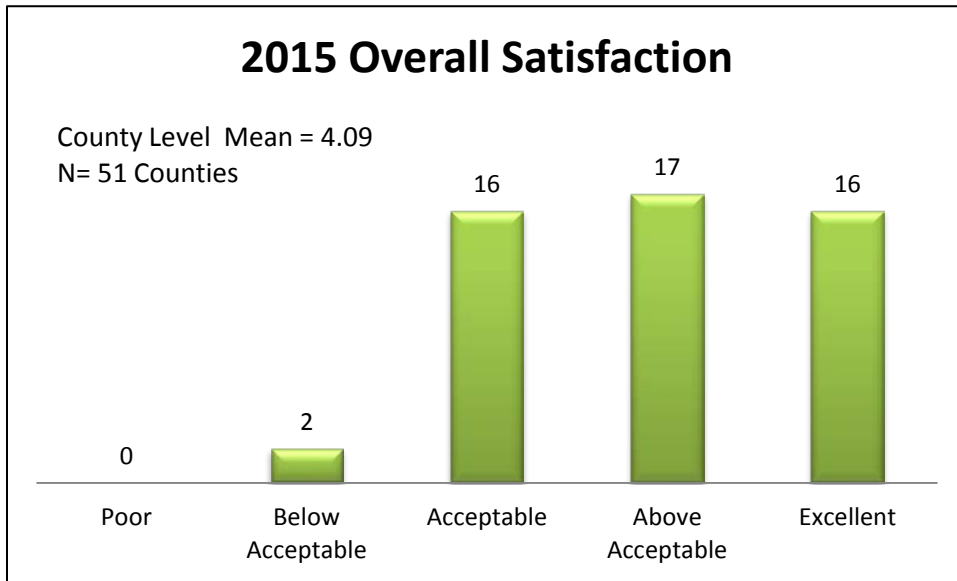
How would you rate the value received by the citizens of your county from programs and services delivered by Extension?



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



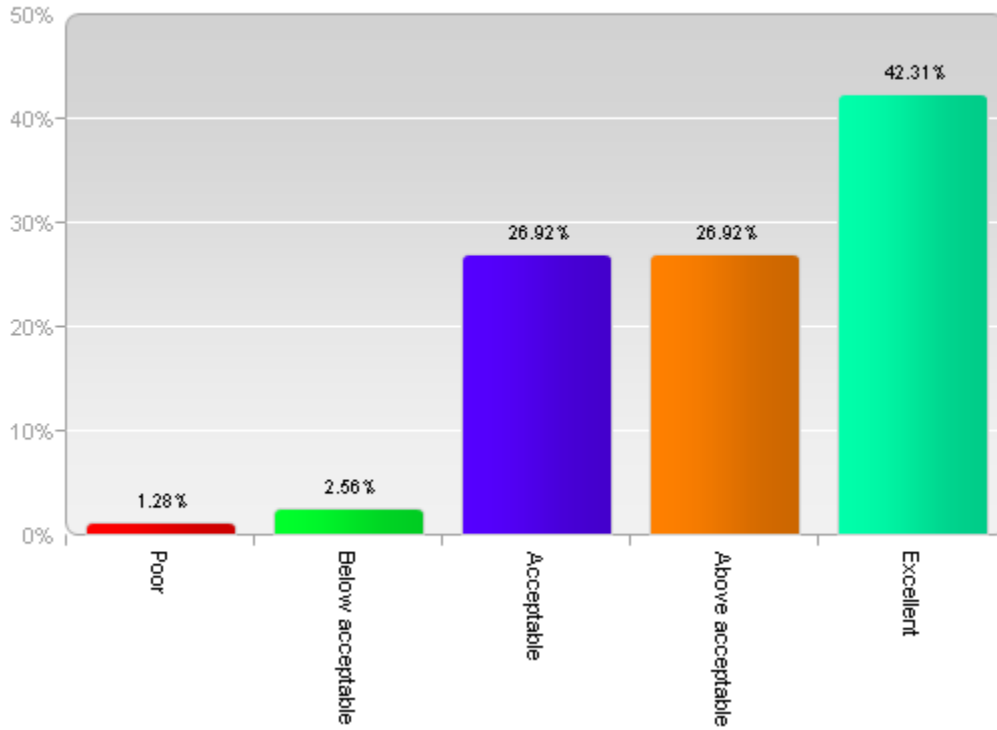
Rate your overall satisfaction with the service the citizens receive from your local county/area Extension office.



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

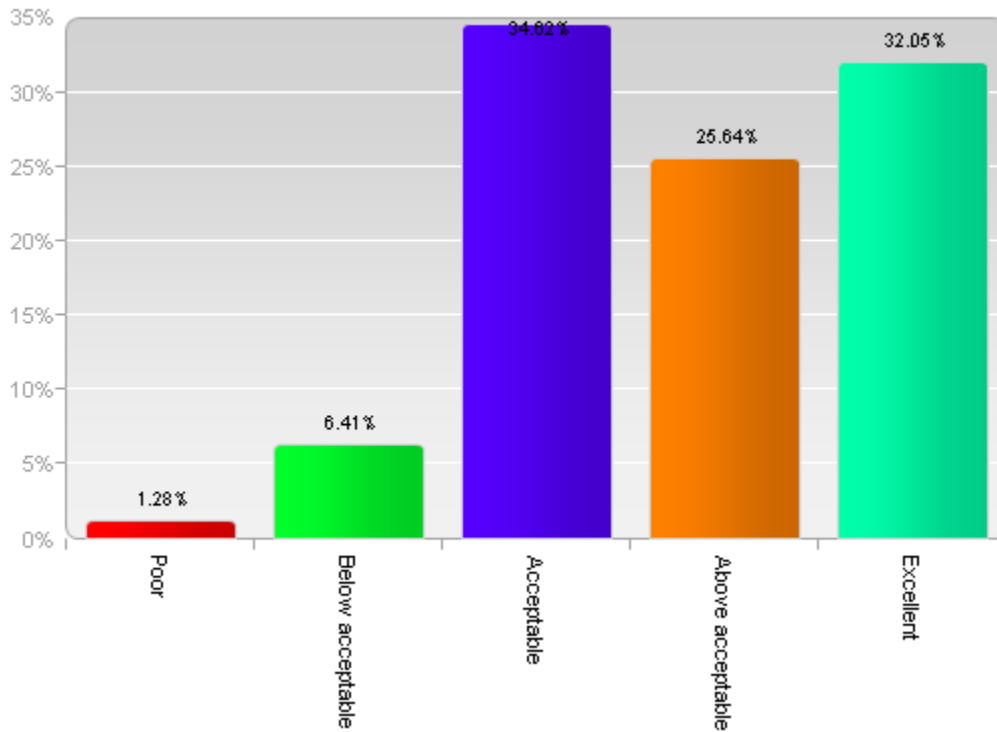
As indicated below, commissioner responses were positive about CSU Extension services, program quality, and responsiveness of local agents. The quality of CSU programs and expertise of local agents and county offices received particularly positive ratings.

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



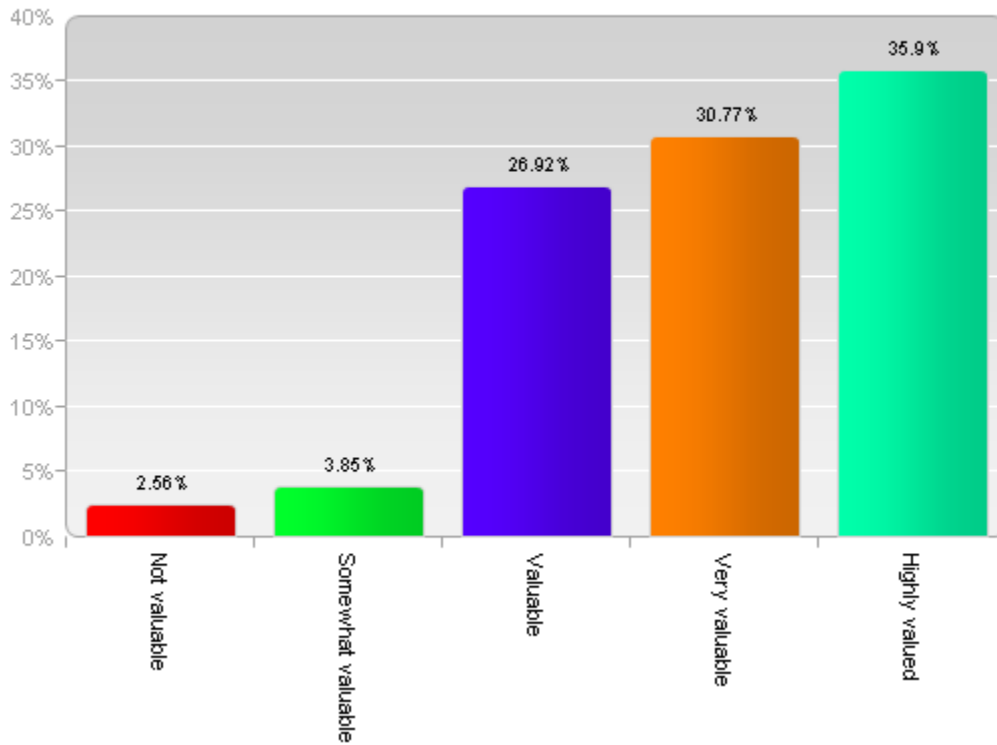
Commissioners rated the services provided from local Extension office favorably, with 96.15% rated as acceptable, above acceptable or excellent. As one commissioner commented: "We have a responsive, responsible and energetic program..."

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



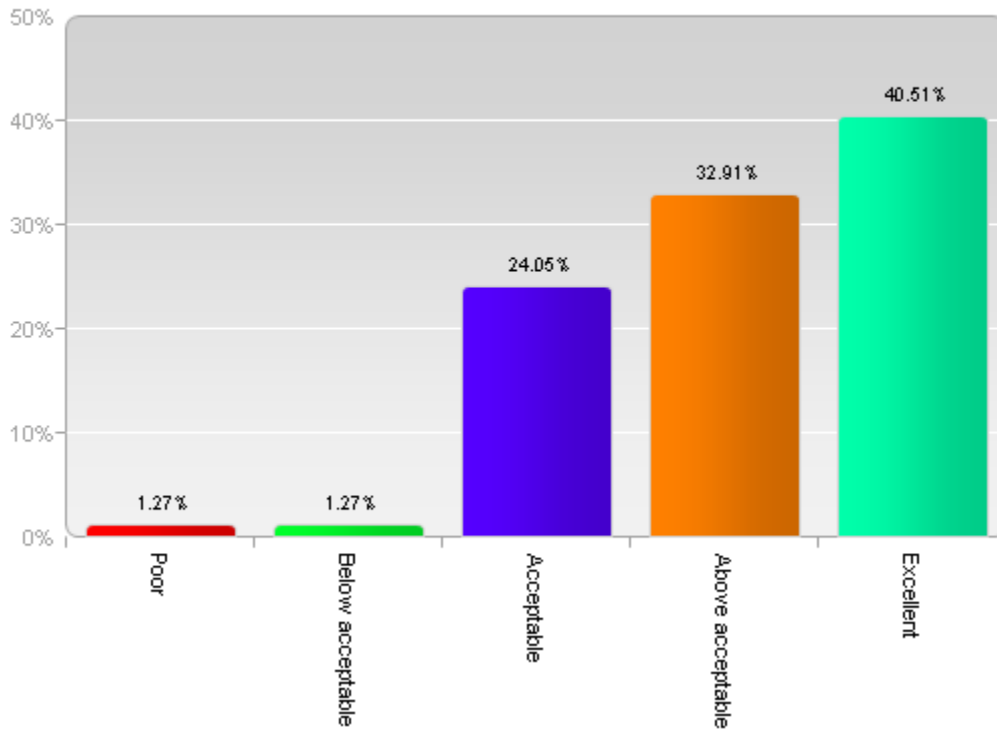
Commissioners were satisfied with the local offices' ability to meet the needs of each county, with 92.31% rated acceptable, above acceptable or excellent.

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



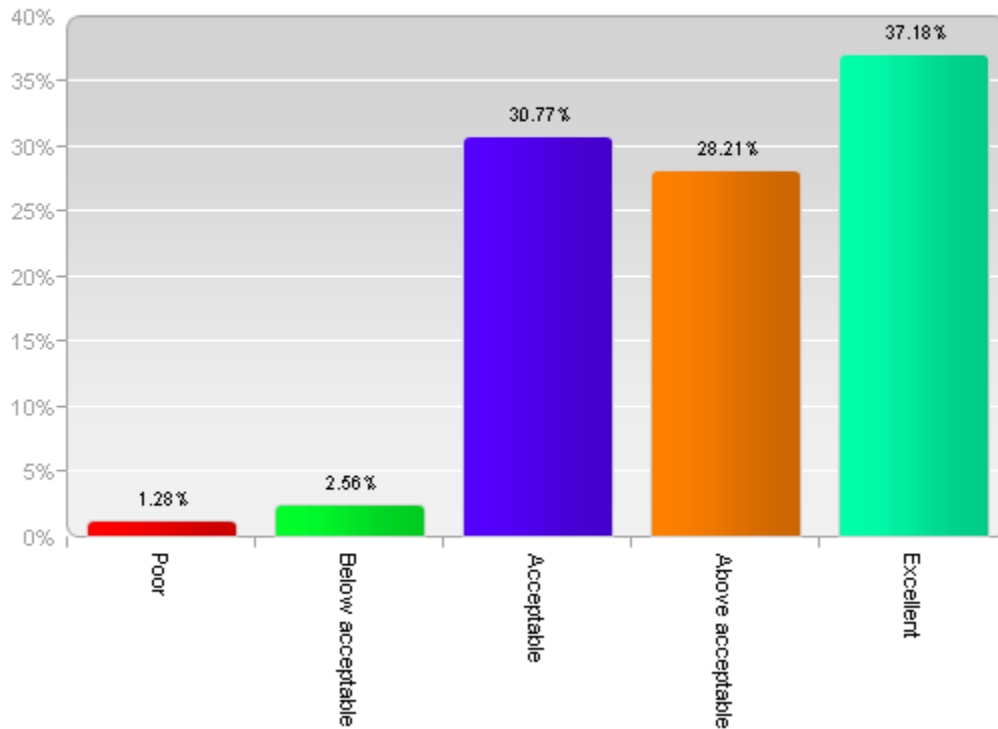
*The **value received** by the citizens from programs and services delivered by Extension was valuable, very valuable or highly valuable according to 93.59% of respondents.*

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 97.47% rated as acceptable, above acceptable or excellent. One commissioner comments: "Excellent and beyond."*

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. 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 capacity.

2015 Regional Results Comparison									
	Excellent/Above Acceptable			Acceptable			Below Acceptable/Poor		
	Front Range	West	East	Front Range	West	East	Front Range	West	East
Program Quality	73%	88%	54%	27%	4%	43%	0%	8%	3%
Capacity	53%	81%	43%	40%	8%	51%	7%	12%	5%
Value	67%	85%	53%	33%	11%	36%	0%	4%	11%
Knowledge	79%	82%	65%	21%	11%	35%	0%	7%	0%
Responsiveness	57%	79%	58%	43%	14%	39%	0%	7%	3%
Satisfaction	57%	84%	57%	43%	12%	40%	0%	4%	3%

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 reported leveraging Extension resources to partner with county efforts in Open Space/recreation, fire mitigation, and human services. Comments also, however, raised concerns about lack of awareness and/or an interest in having Extension address specific community interests and needs.

Praise for Extension Agents and Services

- We believe the longevity of experience and familiarity of issues and people that our CSU Extension Staff has within the community is a most valued asset. That level of experience and dedication translates into a level of service that our community/county has come to know and trust.
- Extension has regained the trust of the commissioners after the budget cuts of 2007/08 and the long period of uncertainty regarding a director for EPC.
- They are doing an excellent job already, and should continue to reach out to the community. If they stay in touch, they can meet the needs.

- Citizens let us know the value of Extension. They cite programs from Master Gardener, to 4-H, to help in disaster preparation.

Concerns: Appropriate Programming and Resources

- Demand outstrips resources, regrettably. Tough choices are made.
- They just compete with so many other sources of information, so sometimes they are perceived as obsolete.
- Would like to see more home economic programs.
- Work more closely with industry partners.

Recommendations from Respondents

- Create an annual report about types of requests, trends, and request outcomes for [] county.
- Be more visible. Partner with industry. At times, Extension seems to be a bit behind, especially with Agronomy.
- Continue the collaborative work.
- Continue to develop noxious weed program.
- Be visible in communities and proactive in promoting services and their value.

Conclusion

The 2015 survey data indicate that commissioners feel very positively about their agents and are highly satisfied with CSU Extension overall. As in 2014, current county revenues continue to be based on property values that lowered during the recession, and on severance taxes on the Western Slope. The continued and increasing county financial commitment to Extension is a strong sign of support. Counties particularly affected by water issues continue to appreciate the support received from the Colorado Water Institute and the three regular water specialists in CSU Extension.

The Office of Engagement is 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 2017.