



# Western Extension Leadership Development

April 2, 2025

Dear Western Extension Directors:

The Western Extension Leadership Development Program, which began with WELD I in 2001, provides a 13-month program designed to enhance participants' leadership skills and impact within Extension work. The WELD experience is ideal for early—to mid-career Extension professionals whose roles may involve a broad scope, including direct programming, scholarship, and community engagement. The program requires a strong commitment and follow-through on the part of program participants. We look forward to facilitating the next cohort which will commence this September, 2025.

**Specifically, we request that you advance the names of the Interns you have chosen to participate in WELD XIII by submitting them here: <https://bit.ly/WELDXIII> by 5 PM Mountain Standard Time on May 15th, 2025. .**

The WELD Program guides and assists participants in learning and applying leadership skills in their Extension work. Specific objectives include:

- Participants will develop awareness and appreciation of their own and others' leadership and problem solving style(s) and learn to apply appropriate techniques in working with diverse individuals.
- Participants will gain a community of practice around leadership within Extension.
- Participants will develop skills and enable themselves and others to develop, articulate, and implement organization/group direction.
- Participants will develop skills to effectively implement planned change.
- Participants will apply theory and practice leadership skills within an innovative project with direct impact on their work.

## Benefits of WELD Participation

A 2020 survey of 98 previous WELD interns highlighted the benefits of participation in the WELD Program. Survey participants were broken into two categories based on their WELD attendance years. Results below show the responses of the early group (participation from 2001-2010) and the late group (participation from 2011-2018) related to the impact the WELD program had on their professional career.

- 95% of participants in the early group agreed that WELD participation inspired them to continually better their leadership skills and increased their confidence as a leader. Similarly, the late group mostly agreed that participation in WELD inspired them to improve their leadership skills (86%), helped them understand their own strengths and weaknesses (86%).
- All participants within the early group (100%) agreed that being selected for WELD made them feel like a valuable member of their institution. Also, the early group mostly agreed WELD participation helped them to evolve and grow as a professional (97%). Similarly, participants in the late group mostly agreed that being selected for WELD made them feel like a valuable member of their institution (84%), and WELD participation helped them to evolve and grow as a professional (82%).
- Overall, both the early and late cohorts perceived their participation in WELD had a positive impact on their professional value.
- The most significant changes were found in the leadership roles of participants after WELD. During WELD, no participant held an administrative role. Now, 22% ( $n = 12$ ) indicated they held an administrator role.

The WELD XIII Program will contain four sequential learning experiences:

- An in person Seminar will be held in Tucson, Arizona September 22nd- 25th (2025) to introduce WELD XIII Interns to each other and Planning Team members, and to explain the purpose for and specific components that contribute to effective Innovative Project learning experiences. Interns will then develop and begin to implement their Innovative Projects with direction and leadership from the WELD XIII Planning Team, their Extension Directors, Program Leaders and Supervisors. The seminar may include topics such as: review, discussion, and practical application of leadership inventories; recognizing leadership styles and using them to articulate personal and organizational visions and directions; motivating others to take action and facilitating change; working together through teams; effective communication; justice, diversity, equity and inclusion in Extension; and mentoring.
- Interns develop and begin to implement their Innovative Projects with direction and leadership from the WELD XIII Planning Team, their Extension Directors, Program Leaders and Supervisors.
- Interns will conduct a leadership self-analysis and then participate in a leadership inventory assessment to illustrate their strengths and challenges in organizational leadership, and the roles they are best equipped to perform in group projects and other settings. Participants will then consider, articulate, and prepare a personal plan for developing and utilizing their leadership skills in their Innovative Projects and Extension assignments.
- WELD XIII Seminar 2 will be held in September 2026 in San Diego. During Seminar 2, WELD participants present the results of, or progress on, their innovative projects to the entire group, including the WELD XIII Planning Committee. Additional training sessions will be delivered in such topical areas as empowered leadership, essential facilitation skills, ethical decision making, conflict management, and other topics identified as useful by both WELD XIII and previous WELD participants.

NDirectors are encouraged to send at least 2 interns from each state. The fee of \$2,500 per participant includes registration for the WELD XIII Program, pre-seminar activities, seminar leadership activities and presentations, communication, a welcome reception during Seminar I, a graduation celebration during Seminar 2, and all follow-up materials and resources. This fee does *not* include travel to the seminar locations, lodging, and some meals. Additionally, because of planning and budgetary considerations for the WELD XIII Program, **this fee is non-refundable once an individual begins the program.** However, if needed, states may substitute intern participants providing the leadership inventory instrument can be administered prior to Seminar I. Once applications are accepted by the WELD XIII Planning Committee, each state will be invoiced for the fee of \$2,500 per participant.

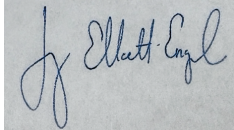
We request your assistance in identifying your state's WELD XIII participants and encouraging their involvement in order to promote leadership development in Extension in the Western United States. We encourage you to consider applications from all of your faculty and staff who are delivering community engaged programming, scholarship, and direct programming. These varied roles lead to a mixed involvement that enriches WELD participants' discussions and interactions. A WELD XIII application is attached.

**The names of Extension employees you wish to advance to the WELD XIII Planning Committee need to be submitted here: <https://bit.ly/WELDXIII> by 5 PM Mountain Standard Time on May 15th, 2025.**

If you have any further questions about the WELD XIII Program, please feel free to contact Barbie Garnett at 303-842-6583 or by e-mail at [barbie.garnett@colostate.edu](mailto:barbie.garnett@colostate.edu), or contact your state's representative on the WELD XIII Planning Committee.

On behalf of the WELD XIII Planning Committee, I extend our appreciation for your support of the Western Extension Leadership Development Program and we look forward to your state's involvement in the WELD XIII Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jeremy Elliott-Engel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "J" at the beginning.

Jeremy Elliott-Engel, Co-Chair  
WELD XIII Planning Committee

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Elizabeth Sparks". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "E" at the beginning.

Elizabeth Sparks, Co -Chair  
WELD XIII Planning Committee

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Barbie Garnett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "B" at the beginning.

Barbie Garnett, Co-Chair  
WELD XIII Planning Committee