



## Grassroots Connection: Strategic Initiatives

From the very beginning of the land grant university concept, engaging the public to address their needs was defined as being “grassroots”. The “roots” are essential for a living entity to grow and prosper, hence connection of the university to the public. Extension’s roots are addressing the needs of individuals, families, and communities through access to research-based information. As people and communities evolve, so do needs and concerns. Extension cannot be stagnant in the delivery of information. The continuous dialogue with stakeholders to understand their needs, as well as exploration of new strategies to engage is the Extension model. Throughout 2019 and early 2020, UOG Cooperative Extension & Outreach focused on four strategic thrusts to address the needs of stakeholders. Through multidisciplinary teams of faculty, professionals, and staff, they designed and planned engagement activities to address four areas:

- Ensure Food Security
- Our Youth, Our Future
- Reinforce Family Resiliency
- Harness Big Data

Extension professionals from all disciplines and responsibilities partnered together to identify and develop engaging programs around these topics. As each team strategized and implemented engagement strategies, no one predicted a worldwide health crisis. Each of the four initiatives shifted and professionals adjusted the activities and where applicable, transformed activities to be specific about COVID-19 for the needs of youth, individuals, families, and communities. While some activities were postponed due to the crisis, other activities are

very specific to the grassroots needs of Guam. Extension professionals further demonstrated their ability to adapt by identifying pieces from each program to use for the immediate need. While some parts of the strategic initiatives have paused, the mission of Extension is still the grassroots connection – deliver research-based information for citizens to engage in their daily lives.

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