Michigan State University Extension's Transformation Through PEARS

Michigan State University (MSU) Extension encountered major hurdles with their former planning and reporting system. Norma Lundeen, MSU Extension's Planning and Reporting Project Manager, noted that one of the biggest pain points was the system's inability to export data effectively. On top of that, inconsistent terminology across the organization made it difficult to collaborate and produce accurate reports.

> *"Staff often used different terms to describe the same processes, which led to confusion and slowed things down,"* Norma explained. *"Without standardized reporting, it was tough to coordinate efforts internally and align with other extension services."*

A Strategic Shift: Enter PEARS

Adopting PEARS helped MSU Extension tackle these challenges directly. The new system offered several key improvements:

- **Consistent Terminology:** PEARS created alignment not just within MSU Extension, but also with other extension services using the platform—making communication and collaboration much smoother.
- **Improved Data Management:** With user-friendly data export tools, PEARS made it easier to handle, analyze, and report data—boosting both efficiency and accuracy.
- **Collaborative Development:** PEARS is guided by an advisory committee made up of representatives from participating states, giving each organization a voice in shaping the system to meet the evolving needs of extension work nationwide.

Exceptional Support That Goes Beyond Expectations

Norma emphasized that one of the most valuable aspects of working with PEARS is the dedicated team behind the software.

"I know the name of every person on the client success team," she shared. "Each one of them has gone above and beyond to solve problems—not just for me, but for my staff, often without me even realizing it. They're just amazing."

The client success and development teams at PEARS are known for being responsive, helpful, and truly invested in supporting their partners.

A Culture of Collaboration Across States

Beyond its strong technical foundation, PEARS helps foster collaboration across the broader extension network. MSU Extension regularly shares tools and resources with other states, contributing to a culture of shared learning and mutual growth. Monthly meetings offer a valuable platform for exchanging advice, exploring best practices, and strengthening the collective impact of extension services across the country.

Measurable Improvement and a Clearer Story of Impact

Since implementing PEARS, MSU Extension has experienced a notable boost in its planning and reporting capacity. The platform's intuitive design and continually evolving features have empowered both staff and administrators to track their work more effectively and communicate their impact more clearly.

"The reason so many states are using PEARS is because it's great," Norma stated. *"It keeps getting better and does more to meet our needs than any in-house system ever could."*

Looking Ahead

MSU Extension's journey highlights the transformative impact of PEARS. With its strong support network, collaborative spirit, and focus on the unique demands of extension evaluation, PEARS delivers a dynamic, all-in-one system designed to grow and adapt alongside the needs of extension professionals.