

University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food and Environment Cooperative Extension Service Review Action Plan

In late 2016, the UK Provost charged the College of Agriculture, Food and Environment with conducting a comprehensive review of the Cooperative Extension Service. The review followed a recurring budget cut of \$2.6 million from Extension field programs and coincided with an audit of county operations by the university's Internal Audit Division. Specifically, the review examined these areas.

- Organization - How Extension is structured, both administratively and at the county level;
- Financial Accountability - How Extension handles fiscal management of state and county funds;
- Programming - How Extension establishes programmatic priorities and delivers its programming;
- Communication, Marketing and External Relations - How Extension defines its return on investment, communicates its successes to stakeholders and disseminates information throughout the organization, e.g. programming, compliance, diversity, business practices, etc.

The College formed a 36-member review team to study these issues. The review committee was comprised of both internal and external stakeholders, and included members from Cooperative Extension Services in eight other states. The review was completed in the fall of 2017 and, after consideration of the committee's recommendations, the College will be implementing the following, pending provost approval.

Organization

- The College will implement a "County Manager" model system to create more accountability at the local level and build a layer of middle management that is currently missing. These positions will provide additional administrative support to District Directors.
 - The size of the county and its budget will be determining factors in how to deploy County Managers. For example, larger counties may have their own County Managers, while smaller counties may share a County Manager with a neighboring county or counties.
 - If a County Manager serves multiple counties, those counties will share equally in the cost.
 - Under the leadership of the District Directors, County Managers will supervise county operations and address personnel matters within the county offices.
 - Under the leadership of the Extension Director of Financial Operations, County Managers will provide day-to-day management of county business procedures.
 - County Managers will serve as liaisons to county leadership on administrative and business matters. Agents will be the points of contact for programmatic matters.
- Recognizing that District Directors will receive additional administrative support, the College will redefine their responsibilities to focus on agent mentoring, program development, needs assessment and identifying opportunities for collaboration.
- The College will continue to build its relationship with Kentucky State University Cooperative Extension to increase collaboration and maximize the benefit provided by both institutions.

Financial Accountability

- The College will build a financial structure within Extension to provide greater oversight of fiscal management, and provide additional financial information to the counties to inform their business decisions.
 - The College has hired an Extension Director of Financial Operations ("EDFO") to oversee financial operations within Extension.

- The EDFO has hired a Regional Fiscal Compliance Officer and will add two more in the coming year.
 - As County Managers are hired, the EDFO and his team will integrate them into the fiscal management team.
- The EDFO will look for all opportunities to bring uniformity to county financial operations, with the goal of increasing efficiency and accountability.
- Consistent with University policy, the College will create a process for disclosure and management of potential conflicts of interest.

Programming

- The College will create a County Needs Assessment process to be implemented statewide. The assessment will focus on gathering as much objective data as possible to provide to local leaders as they make staffing and programming decisions.
 - In addition to identifying community needs, the Needs Assessment will identify existing and potential new partners to deliver programs across the state, with the goal of increasing collaboration, especially within the University community.
 - The County Needs Assessment will be designed by a Steering Committee comprised of:
 - The state program leaders for Family and Consumer Science, Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Programs and the Community and Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky;
 - County agents from each program area;
 - Extension faculty; and
 - External stakeholders.
 - The Steering Committee will design the County Needs Assessment and make recommendations on how it will be implemented in all 120 counties.
 - The results of the County Needs Assessment will be reported to the County Extension Council to inform their staffing and programming decisions.
- Based on available budget, the College will hire Field Associates to work with State Specialists and County Agents to develop and deliver programs in areas of need. The Field Associates will fill gaps, if any, between county staff and local and regional needs. These positions are not likely in the short term, but will be considered once there are greater financial resources available to the system. Field Associates will be hired by academic departments or Extension programs but will be housed in the regions they serve.

Marketing/Communications and External Relations

- Training will be provided to county staff on the importance of and proper ways to build relationships with elected state and county officials.
- Programs will continue to be developed to improve engagement with urban legislators and leaders to increase awareness of CES and what programs it can offer in urban communities.
- Outreach on behalf of the college administration with judge executives and magistrates will be served in greater ways by Drew Graham, Senior Assistant Dean.
- The College has hired a marketing manager dedicated to Extension.
- Based upon availability of funds, the College will hire area communicators to assist with success stories/impact statements, media relations and social media.
- Extension administration will create a Communications Advisory Committee to address internal and external communication.