

## Agent Funding Model - Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q1. What does attrition mean?**

A1. Attrition is the process by which employees leave at will – either through retirement, resignation or transfer. So, as third agents retire, resign, or transfer this model will be activated when the third base agent leaves.

### **Q2. Does this mean that Extension is going to offer early retirement options for employees?**

A2. No. Information on retirement can be found at: <https://www.uky.edu/hr/benefits/retirement>

### **Q3. When are we going to be able to hire our Agent positions back?**

A3. The university is still in a hiring pause due to COVID. All positions require special permission to be filled at both the college and university level. Ensuring adequate supervision of employees was the goal of the Extension Administrative Transition. With Area Directors in place, vacant third agent positions can be hired when the county Extension District Board agrees to permanently fund the position at the new cost share model that best suits local needs. Keep in mind, we are planning to expedite our hiring process, but it will still take time to ensure we are hiring the best possible candidate for each position.

### **Q4. How does this affect post retirement? Will counties be responsible for the post retirement salary or when will they be responsible?**

A4. At this time this does not affect post retirement appointments. The same county cost share will apply until the post retirement appointments end.

### **Q5. How would a partnership with KSU to fund a county agent work from the county standpoint, how would that process start and what would be required?**

A5. Your Area Extension Directors will be facilitating the process for KSU administration to discuss options with the Extension District Board members.

### **Q6. How many counties can go together and share an Agent?**

A6. Your Area Extension Directors will work with counties to ensure that decisions are made to effectively cover program areas based upon county needs and funds available. This model will give counties the opportunity to reflect on a vision for the future to design base staffing patterns that best support their needs.

### **Q7. If counties are sharing a position, can they over time go back to being a non-shared county agent if circumstances change (budgets improve, need changes, etc.)?**

A7. At this time, the plan is that the counties would have the flexibility to make decisions about the third agent base agent positions in the future as needs and budgets may change.

### **Q8. If a current county has 3 agents, but knows they could not fund the 3<sup>rd</sup> position if a vacancy occurs, could they go into a 50/50 agreement with another county who has a current vacancy?**

A8. The Area Extension Director will be working with all counties to discuss the implications to the counties of this change. If opportunities arise for counties who want to move forward to develop a 50/50 agreement before attrition the flexibility will be available.

**Q9. Can an agent request to move to an 80% role in their current position?**

A9. No, the 80% option is based upon the position, not the person. At this time 80% is only available at the beginning of the hiring process to ensure the county leaders, colleagues, program leadership and administration have discussed the expectations for 80% commitment. At this time the 80% FTE is only available for the 2+ model.

**Q10. What does “third base agent” mean?**

A10. In our current system, we have cost shared, using federal and state funds, with counties to cover the cost of three base agent positions (4-H, ANR and FCS). This cost share has been a fixed cost for counties. Moving forward, when one of these three positions becomes vacant that position becomes the designated third agent position and will fall under the new funding model.

**Q11. What is a two agent model?**

A11. Two agents are required to work together to ensure that all three program areas are covered. AEDs will be working with agents, county leaders, subject matter program leaders and county staff to discuss and identify the programs that will be prioritized to meet the county needs and state level assignments.

**Q12. If a county moves to a two agent model, and ANR or FCS was the third base agent in the county, does one of the two agents currently in the county need to get the "missing" degree to operate that program?**

A12. If the county moves to a two agent model, the current two agents will work with the AED, subject matter program leaders, and county leaders to assess the needs of the county and the expertise of the agents to decide what programs can and will be expected to be covered. We encourage agents to consider a masters with a focus in ANR or FCS in these cases or completion of the available FCS or 4-H certificate, whichever is appropriate, but it is not mandatory.

**Q13. How will District Boards and Councils be involved in the hiring process?**

A13. District Boards and Councils are represented on screening committees for applicants to agent positions. These screening committees make important recommendations on qualities needed for the position as well as reviewing applicants to determine strengths and weaknesses.

**Q14. Should the District Board and County Extension Council meet when the third base agent leaves to discuss the possibilities?**

A14. As the fiscal agent, the Extension District Board approves the level of funding and can approve moving forward with the 100% third agent increased cost share option. Other available options - 80% position, sharing or moving to two agents permanently - should be discussed with CEC to ensure there is understanding of the changes in program offerings and expectations for the position.

**Q15. Why can't a District Board put a salary cap on the agent position being filled? Will the District Board have the option to decide if they want agent at starting salary or one that might transfer?**

A15. The University of Kentucky is an equal opportunity employer. As such, the University works cooperatively with the counties to identify the programming needs of the county and to review applicants for each agent position and uses this input to select the candidate who possesses skills, education and experience that is the best fit for the county and the position. Prior to extending an offer, the University performs an equity analysis to make offers to new agents that are fair and equitable compared to current agents with similar education and experience.

**Q16. Will the base agent amount currently paid for 3 agents stay the same?**

A16. The county groupings currently in use will remain the same. The county cost share will be divided by three and counties will be charged 2/3 of the cost to cover the two agent cost share.

**Q17. In counties that move to a two agent model, when a 4-H agent leaves how will that position be filled?**

A17. The two agent model is based on hiring two agents with specific degree expertise who will be expected to also take on 4-H responsibilities as attrition occurs. FCS/4-H and ANR/4-H will be the expected two agent model.

**Q18. Will the third agent always be the same agent?**

A18. Yes, because the model is based on attrition. It is not planned that the third agent will change.

**Q19. If a county moves to a two agent model, will the District Board choose which position they are sharing?**

A19. We are trying to give flexibility to the two agent cost share based upon the needs of the county. The District Boards will work with AEDs to pursue scenarios that are best for each county. We anticipate that these discussions will take longer because of their complexity.

**Q20. How will an 80% FTE be determined?**

A20. The AEDs will work with local agents, District Boards, County Extension Councils and State program leaders to frame the expectations for 80% positions before hiring.

**Q21. If counties want to share an agent, how would schedules be determined, travel funds, expenses etc.?**

A21. AEDs will work with local agents, District Boards, County Extension Councils and State Program leaders to frame the expectations for shared agents before the position is hired. Counties will share the cost and expenses for the position.

**Q22. What is the timeline for implementation?**

A22. As soon as counties have vacancies of a third base agent they can begin working with their AEDs to finalize their decisions for hiring patterns.

**Q23. With the budget reductions, how does that impact the second wave of AED hiring?**

A23. With the current budget ramifications of \$4 million cut we do not have funds for moving forward with the second wave of AED hiring.

**Q24. If counties have 3 agents currently, will county have to pay the 90% of an agent in the new model?**

A24. Barring any further major budget reductions, we are implementing this through attrition – so, only after a third agent leaves will the county move to the new funding model.

**Q25. How will budgets that begin on July 1, 2021 change?**

A25. For counties who are fully staffed with no third agent vacancy, there will be no changes related to agent salaries to the FY22 budget since the new model will be implemented through attrition. For those counties who wish to proceed with the 2+ agent model and move forward with the hiring process for the third-base agent position, an amended budget will be necessary. Amended Budget workbooks will be prepared by Extension Business Operations and sent to the

counties. Amendments will be required to be submitted within 30 days of hiring the third-base agent position.

**Q26. If positions already exist, can counties have more than three agents?**

A26. Yes, counties that have 4<sup>th</sup> and above vacancies on the books can move forward with hiring with District Board approval.

**Q27. In counties that are fully staffed, and remaining in the old cost share model for a time, how do they plan and budget for someone who may leave in the future?**

A27. AEDs will eventually work with all EDBs and CECs to decide how to plan for future attrition and move to this model. They will start with counties with current third agent vacancies to expedite that process, but they will have discussions with all counties on planning for the future.

**Q28. In the new model, is the county paying 90% of both the salary and the benefits?**

A28. Yes.

**Q29. Are the number of specialist and on-campus positions being reduced?**

A29. The budget reduction impacted every department. Extension faculty and specialist positions have been lost depending upon the vacancies that had existed at the time. We were also committed to no reduction in force at state levels as much as possible.

**Q30. If counties move to a two agent model, will agents in those counties receive additional compensation for dual roles?**

A30. No, it has always been the expectation that our county agents will work together to meet programming needs in all mandated areas whether this is during a time of vacancy or when a county has two base agents. Where agents have split program areas, AEDs will work with REDs and Program Area Leaders to adapt programming expectations accordingly.

**Q31. Will all new 4-H Agents in the future be required to have an Ag or FCS background?**

A31. No, our current degree requirements remain the same for any county with 3 or more agents.

**Q32. Should agents begin discussions with District Board members to determine next steps?**

A32. The AED will take the lead on the discussion to ensure there is consistency across the state. Agents are integral to the discussions with CECs and EDBs as counties make county based decisions for the future.

**Q33. District program responsibilities are not included in our MJRs, will those be reviewed as part of this process?**

A33. This is currently part of the MJR and agent expectations. AEDs will be involved in discussion with REDs and Program Leaders of expectations of future programming.

**Q34. If a District Board decides to move to a two agent model, can they later move back to a three agent county?**

A34. At this time, yes, this model is meant to provide flexibility for current positions.