INTRODUCTION

Working hand in hand with its Texas A&M System partners, the state legislature, and the communities it serves, the mission of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service to serve Texans through community based education has remained unchanged for almost a century.

The mission of AgriLife Extension is a seemingly simple one: improving the lives of people, businesses, and communities across Texas and beyond through high quality, relevant education. Carrying out this mission, however, is a massive undertaking. One that requires the commitment of each and every one of the agency’s employees. Through the programs these employees provide, Texans are better prepared to:

- Eat well, stay healthy, manage money, and raise their children to be successful adults.
- Efficiently help themselves through preventing problems and using tools for economic stability and security.
- Improve stewardship of the environment and of the state’s natural resources.

Today’s AgriLife Extension is known for its leadership, dedication, expertise, responsiveness, and trustworthiness. Texans turn to AgriLife Extension for solutions, and its agents and specialists respond not only with answers, but with a significant return on investment to boost the Texas economy.

HISTORY

The Morrill Act of 1862 established land grant universities to educate citizens in agriculture, home economics, mechanical arts, and other practical professions. Extension was formalized in 1914, with the Smith Lever Act. It established the partnership between the agricultural colleges and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to provide for cooperative agricultural extension work.

This land grant system recently celebrated 100 years of Cooperative Extension in the United States. Over the last century, extension has adapted to changing times and landscapes, and it continues to address a wide range of human, plant, and animal needs in both urban and rural areas. Extension educators use modern technology to disseminate knowledge and tools but also rely on traditional human values and relationships to gain the attention and trust from the people they serve. As residents of the communities in which they work, local extension agents bring credibility to their roles as educators.

Extension also receives support from local governments, in the case of Texas, the county commissioner’s courts. With a vast network of 251 county Extension offices and some 900 professional educators, the expertise provided by AgriLife Extension is available to every resident in every Texas county. But Extension educators are well aware that a program offered in Dallas might not be relevant in the Rio Grande Valley. AgriLife Extension custom-designs its programs to different areas of the state, significantly depending on residents for input and program delivery. This is where the Leadership Advisory Board (LAB) provides our local educators with direction and guidance to maintain local relevance of programs.
The following organizational chart illustrates the network that makes Extension unique across the State.

At the local level, the organizational chart would include the Leadership Advisory Board working closely with County Extension Agents, and providing oversight to the total program, including a network of committees, task forces and other planning groups. Each county is staffed and organized differently, but the Leadership Advisory Board is the one constant that is present in all counties regardless of size or number of staff.
LAB MEMBER ROLES AND CHARACTERISTICS

Members of the Leadership Advisory Board serve vital roles for each county Extension program. While there are many roles that may be fulfilled by members in different circumstances, the guiding principles that LAB members should keep at the forefront are Visioning and Advocacy. These two roles encompass the true function of a board.

Visioning...

Visioning simply refers to a member’s ability to take a broad look at the community and represent the issues that are most important to residents that Extension can address through education. While this seems like a very simple concept, in fact it can be difficult. To take a truly unbiased and broad look at the community takes a special individual that is constantly scanning the environment around him or her, and noticing those things that are having an impact on others in the community. The issue may or may not be important to the member personally, but the member has the ability to see the impact that Extension could have on the community by addressing the issue.

Members can be successful in this role by listening to others in the community. The networks that each member has are of vital importance to the board as a whole. As members have the opportunity to interact with others, a true view of the community will emerge. As a member of the LAB, it is part of your responsibility to purposefully seek out issues as interactions in the community occur.

Advocacy...

Advocacy is an equally important role that members of the LAB are asked to fulfill. Being an advocate for Texas AgriLife Extension and the programs in each county can include many different roles. An advocate can serve as a primary spokesperson with elected officials, or can be in a less visible role helping develop messages and materials. In any case, the LAB member must be fully informed of Extension success stories, funding, history, organization, and resource needs. A true advocate is one that takes advantage of every opportunity possible to promote and enhance the organization in general, and specifically the programs in their counties.

Specifically, LAB member responsibilities include the following:

- Attends all board meetings and functions
- Stays informed about the organization’s mission, services, policies and programs
- Reviews agendas before meetings and is ready to discuss agenda items
- Serves on sub-committees and assists with special assignments as needed
- Informs others about Texas Extension
- Works with the county Extension agents to recruit new LAB members
- Keeps up-to-date on developments concerning the county Extension program
- Helps the board carry out its responsibilities, such as long-term visioning, reviewing financial statements, and advocacy of the county Extension program
Leadership Advisory Board
Position Description

Title: Texas Extension County Leadership Advisory Board Member

Leadership Advisory Board Advisor:
County Extension Agent (County Coordinator)

Purpose of the Leadership Advisory Board:
Extension’s grassroots programming effort relies on the connection the agency has with Leadership Advisory Boards. LABs are critical to Extension’s ability to provide locally relevant educational programs; a strong, diverse LAB is vital for each county.

Benefits of serving on the Leadership Advisory Board:
- Be a significant part of the educational process
- See the impact the county Extension program has in the county
- See the positive change in program participants
- Experience personal growth from participating in this vital community effort

Responsibilities of the Leadership Advisory Board:
The Leadership Advisory Board develops a long-term vision for the county Extension program, advocates for and interprets the program throughout the county, and helps develop resources for the county program. It is responsible for the “big picture” of county programming.
- Reviewing the county Extension program’s mission and purpose and the local program’s goals, objectives and primary audiences served
- Developing resources to ensure that high-quality programs can be implemented
- Helping to ensure accountability and advocacy goals are achieved for program efforts
- Monitoring and strengthening the educational program
- Enhancing the county Extension program’s public standing

Qualifications and special skills:
- Resides in the community or county
- Is interested in more than one area of Extension programming
- Sees the community from a broad, general perspective
- Represents one of the county’s targeted audiences
- Has good visioning and communication skills
- Is interested in the quality of life in the county

Time required: The Leadership Advisory Board meets three or four times for a total of 6 to 10 hours each year. An additional 10 hours or so may be needed to carry out a member’s individual responsibilities. Serving as an officer may require more time, depending on the position.
Agency Overview

Extending Knowledge. Providing Solutions. Changing Lives. These are the hallmarks of extension education, a unique American innovation to help people prosper.

In 1914, the federal Smith-Lever Act established extension education as a means for the nation’s land-grant universities to serve the people—by extending the benefits of trusted research beyond the laboratory and classroom, into everyday living.

To support extension education, the Smith-Lever Act made cooperative funding possible among the federal, state, and local levels of government. Thus began the national Cooperative Extension system and the organization known today as the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, founded by the Texas Legislature in 1915.

Mission: To improve the lives of people, businesses, and communities across Texas and beyond through high quality, relevant education.

As we pursue this mission, we join other members of Texas A&M AgriLife to address five grand challenges of the 21st century:

- Feeding Our World
- Protecting Our Environment
- Improving Our Health
- Enriching Our Youth
- Growing Our Economy

Impacts: To help assess the effectiveness of Extension education, we analyze selected, representative programs and activities to determine their economic impact. For summaries, visit agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/impacts.

Program Delivery Network: AgriLife Extension employs some 900 professional educators. Extension county agents act as resident educators, working from 250 county offices to serve all 254 counties. Their local presence is supported by extension specialists and other professionals based at headquarters and 12 research and extension centers.

This delivery network enhances the state’s ability to address diverse contemporary and emerging issues that affect Texans. And it provides valuable infrastructure for joint programs with hundreds of other organizations and government agencies.

To extend this network, we train and work with volunteers. In 2015, our volunteers numbered 99,907. Their service totaled 3.6 million hours—equivalent to a full-time workforce of 1,902 and a value of $83.2 million ($23.07/hour per IndependentSector.org). However, the number of volunteers we can manage directly correlates with our staffing level.
Most extension specialists are affiliated with an academic department of Texas A&M University. However, many specialists and most other extension personnel are located outside agency headquarters, as shown on the map at right.

The chart below depicts AgriLife Extension’s staffing for fiscal year 2017. The total workforce of 1,873 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions is comprised of:
- 1,504 FTEs budgeted by the agency (over 30% are funded through contracts, grants, and other sources), plus
- 369 county-funded personnel who work in extension county offices.

The agency’s cost for administration and shared administrative services is only 3.5% of its total budgeted expense.

**Expertise:** Our personnel have expertise and conduct programs that encompass the broad areas of:
- production, marketing, and policy in the food, fiber, greenhouse, nursery, and timber industries;
- natural resources, the environment, and wildlife services;
- family and consumer sciences;
- human nutrition and health;
- 4-H youth development; and
- Community economic development

**Collaboration:** AgriLife Extension collaborates with Texas A&M AgriLife Research, other members of The Texas A&M University System, and many external organizations. External groups often seek AgriLife Extension’s outreach capability. Some joint activities arise from contracts, grants, the law, legislative mandates, and memoranda of understanding.

Collaboration enables extension educators and their partners to extend resources and prevent duplication of services. Yearly extension program plans involve, on average, some 185 diverse organizations and hundreds of public school districts statewide.
**Program Development and Delivery Strategy:** Three aspects of Extension’s program development and delivery process are essential to success: our network of educators and volunteers, our collaboration with other agencies and organizations, and the involvement of local people.

Texans decide and guide what AgriLife Extension does for them at the local level. Citizen-led advisory boards and program committees coordinate this with their extension county agents. These volunteers and other Texans participate in a periodic, statewide needs assessment. We also engage in ongoing communications with stakeholder groups, state and federal agencies, local and regional planning groups, and elected officials.

So the educational programs, curricula, and resources that we develop are propelled by constituent priorities. Programs implemented locally may range from "traditional" to "cutting edge," given the varying needs, stages of adoption, and creativity of local citizens and communities.
Extension programs often employ real-life demonstrations of new technology and applied research. Methods to facilitate learning for large groups and urban audiences include field days, workshops, short courses, newsletters, teleconferencing, online interactive programs, and the use of master volunteers. Websites and other electronic media make our educational information as accessible as possible.

**Related to workforce and economic development**, AgriLife Extension offers technical certification and training, annually schooling thousands of people who render important community services. Often these trainees—such as food handlers, child care providers, and licensed pesticide applicators—must obtain mandatory education to obtain or keep a job, or start and stay in business.

**Among youth ages 8 to 18, some 600,000 participate annually in Texas 4-H**, the agency’s program for youth development and school curriculum enrichment. A majority of the youth come from urban areas. **External support yields $2.3 million yearly in college scholarships** for 4-H club members.

In total, nearly **22 million direct teaching contacts** were achieved by extension personnel and extension-trained volunteers, including distance education via the Web, in fiscal year 2016.

**Technical Services**: Our agency also administers several technical services that it is uniquely positioned to provide. These include soil analysis, water testing, pest identification, plant disease diagnosis, and wildlife damage management.

**Budget**: Extension education exists in each state through a financial partnership between the federal government (USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture), county and other local governments, and state government. The charts below show the sources and uses of fiscal year 2017 funds available to the agency. Funding from County Commissioners Courts is retained and administered by each court in local support of extension education.
Available Funding, Budgeted Fiscal Year 2017

Total 158 million
- State Appropriations ($68M)
- Federal Appropriations ($13M)
- County Funds ($36M)
- Contracts, Grants & User Fees ($41M)

Distribution of Resources by Program Area, Fiscal Year 2017

- Agriculture and Natural Resources: 56%
- Wildlife Services: 5%
- 4-H, Youth Development & Human Sciences: 39%

Note: Fiscal and staffing numbers reported herein represent agency status upon approval of the operating budget for fiscal year 2017. County court contributions are estimated from annual reports by the counties.
**Summary:** The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service strives to provide quality, relevant outreach and continuing education programs and services. By leveraging appropriations and engaging with researchers, partners, collaborators, and volunteers, AgriLife Extension maximizes its capacity to deliver lifelong learning opportunities that serve both the people of Texas and the public good.

**Other documents suggested for inclusion in the packet:**

1. Board Member list w/contact info
2. Outcome Summaries from previous years program efforts
3. County Annual Report from previous year
4. County Budget summary
5. Results from most recent Issue Identification Process
6. Staff listing, with photographs
7. Membership Roster for all Program Area Committee’s, Task Forces, etc...
8. Agricultural income statistics
9. LAB By-Laws
10. Partial Cost Recovery Information
11. Annual Volunteer Survey Summary Report