

**County Government
and Texas AgriLife Extension Service**

Partners in Education

**Employment Guide
for County Extension Agent Positions**

January 2019

The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating

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Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service educates Texans in the areas of agriculture, environmental stewardship, youth and adult life skills, human capital and leadership, health and nutrition, and community economic resource development. AgriLife Extension offers the knowledge resources of the land-grant university system to educate Texans for self-improvement, individual action, and community problem-solving. AgriLife Extension is a statewide educational agency and a member of The Texas A&M University System (the A&M System) linked in a unique partnership with the nationwide Cooperative Extension System and Texas county governments.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension values and promotes principles of citizen and community involvement, scientifically-based education, life-long learning, and volunteerism. It provides access to citizens in all 254 Texas counties and works cooperatively with the other A&M System components, external agencies and organizations to achieve its goals.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension is a part of the Federal Cooperative Extension System. This System includes an Extension Service in each of the 50 states plus several territories. The System was created by the U.S. Congress through passage of the Smith-Lever Act on May 8, 1914. On January 29, 1915, the Texas Legislature accepted provisions of the Smith-Lever Act and Texas AgriLife Extension Service was created. The law mandated that the agency be assigned to the state's land-grant institution, Texas A&M University, for administration.

Section 43.031 of the Texas Agriculture Code authorizes county governments to allocate funds in support of County Extension Agents. County funding support is essential for the continued operation of local county Extension programs. Funding from the county provides a portion of the agents' salary, as well as, travel funds, office space, secretarial support and office operational funds.

Extension Personnel

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service employs some 980 professional staff members. With the main headquarters on the campus of Texas A&M University in College Station, employees are considered professional educators within the University and higher education communities in our state. With a portion of professional staff salaries and some operating funds also coming from the Federal Government through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), staff members are linked to the National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA). This linkage allows for sharing of research and other information among the land-grant universities across the nation. Within Texas, Extension educational programming is also strengthened and expanded by the strong and vital relationship between

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Cooperative Extension Program-Prairie View A&M University (CEP). This ongoing partnership enables the citizens of Texas to receive the assistance they need without regard to which organization happens to hold the expertise. Extension educators extend research-based information to the people of Texas in the areas of agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer sciences, 4-H and youth development, and community economic resource development.

County Extension Agents and Programs

Approximately 560 of the 980 professional Extension staff are County Extension Agents. County Agents are local resident educators with responsibilities for disseminating information and teaching clientele. County Extension Agents serve all counties in Texas through 250 different county Extension offices located in the county seats or other designated locations within the county. These county Extension programs are grouped geographically into 12 Extension Districts for administrative purposes (See Attachment).

To enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the county Extension staff in planning, implementing, and evaluating the Extension program, one county Extension agent is appointed county coordinator. The basic duty of the county Extension agent in this role is to provide leadership for the personnel and programs in the county unit. The county coordinator is responsible for managing the Extension office and serves as a liaison with the County Commissioners' Court in matters relating to office operation, as delegated by the District Extension Administrator.

Supervision of Extension Agents

Direct supervision of County Extension Agents is the responsibility of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and begins with the District Extension Administrator. A District Extension Administrator is located at each of the 12 Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Centers across the State. The individuals are responsible for supervision, recruitment, orientation, staff development, and personnel management within an assigned district.

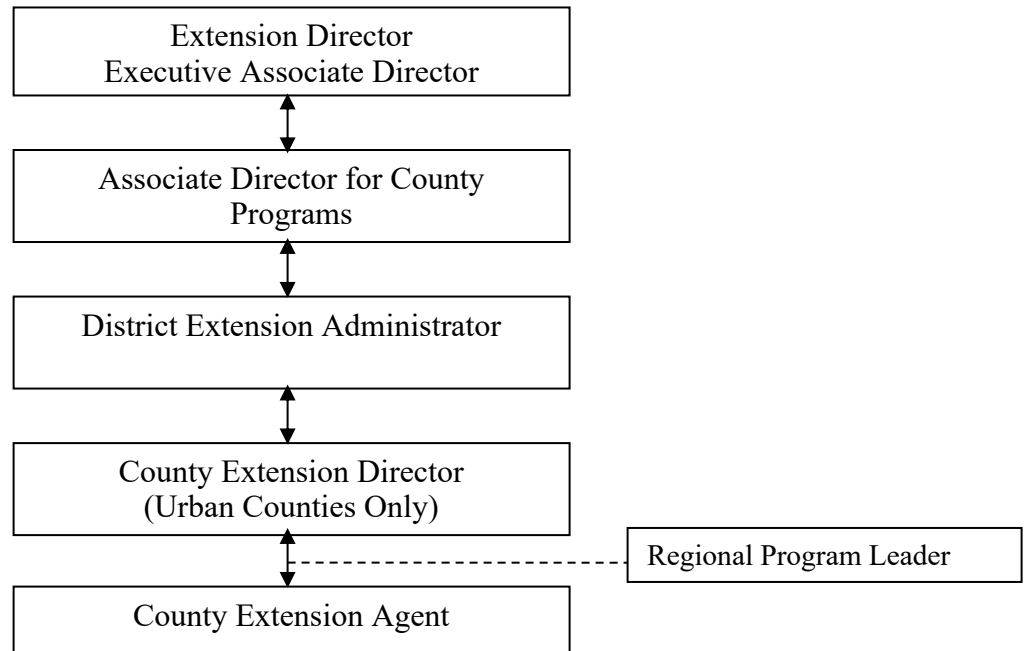
The District Extension Administrator serves as the official Extension liaison with County Commissioners Courts on all matters concerning Extension, including budgets and personnel. The District Extension Administrator annually conducts a performance appraisal of County Extension Agents under their supervision. Court members are extended the opportunity to provide formal feedback on an annual basis regarding the performance of the local County

Extension office and the agent(s) serving the county. The District Extension Administrator should be contacted in the event problems develop regarding the performance of the County Extension Agent that may warrant personnel action. The Associate Director for County Programs, located in the Administrative Offices in College Station, is the immediate supervisor of the District Extension Administrators and must approve all budgeting and personnel actions before they can be presented to the County Commissioners Court. The Associate Director for County Programs conducts performance appraisals of the District Extension Administrators and reviews all county programs annually.

County Extension Directors in seven urban counties (Bexar, Dallas, Tarrant, Travis, Harris, El Paso, and Fort Bend) have similar supervisory responsibility for the agents in those counties. County Extension Directors work under the direct supervision of the District Extension Administrator. A team of three Regional Program Leaders (one Agriculture and Natural Resources, one Family and Consumer Sciences and one 4-H and Youth Development) provide leadership for Extension educational programs in the assigned subject matter program area for each of the four Extension regions in the state. They are also responsible for providing timely input into the recruitment, selection and performance appraisals of county Extension agents and related personnel to District Extension Administrators and County Extension Directors.

The Director and Executive Associate Director of Extension provide leadership for the total Extension organization. The Associate Director for County Programs keeps them informed of county situations and personnel actions. The Director or designee provide final approval of all personnel actions.

Supervisory Relationships



Procedures for Employing Extension Agents

When a County Extension Agent position becomes vacant, specific procedures are followed to fill the vacancy. These procedures may vary somewhat depending on the type of position that is vacant. The procedures ensure fair and equitable treatment of each applicant and County Commissioners Court.

County Extension Agent

These are the primary positions in the county and are filled only by experienced, successful County Agents or those individuals with appropriate qualifications and experience. Bachelor's degrees are required for all county Extension agent positions; however, applicants with a Master's degree will have a higher starting salary. Agents who complete a Master's degree while working will also receive a salary increase upon completion of the degree. Basic qualifications have been preset for each county and are available for review through the District Extension Administrator. Generally, these positions are filled as soon as possible after they become vacant following the listed procedures:

1. After the supervisor (District Extension Administrator or County Extension Director) receives a written notice that an agent is retiring, transferring, or resigning and has responded to this notice, the County Judge is contacted to discuss the vacancy. In this discussion, an agreement must be reached to maintain the county salary contribution and other support before the position can be filled.

2. The District Extension Administrator submits a position authorization form to the Associate Director for County Programs requesting authorization to recruit applicants for the position. The authorization request must be approved by the Associate Director for County Programs.
3. Concurrently the District Extension Administrator or County Extension Director submits a draft position announcement following Extension and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) guidelines for employment. This announcement must be approved by the Associate Director for County Programs and then forwarded to the Texas A&M Agriculture Human Resource Office.
4. The position announcement is released initially to current Extension employees for consideration and then open to external candidates at a later release time if a suitable internal applicant is not identified. Those individuals who meet or exceed the minimum qualifications and who are interested in the position apply on-line following established procedures.
5. At the close of the designated position announcement period, the District Extension Administrator or County Extension Director reviews the applicant pool with the appropriate Regional Program Director (Agriculture and Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Sciences or 4-H and Youth Development). Individuals most qualified for the position are identified with interviews scheduled by the District Extension Administrator or County Extension Director. Other members of the county staff, appropriate Regional Program Leader and in some cases, other designees appointed by the Commissioners Court will also have the opportunity to meet the applicant(s) and provide input to the District Extension Administrator or County Extension Director.
6. After interviews are completed and an acceptable candidate has been identified for the position, the District Extension Administrator contacts the Associate Director for County Programs and makes a recommendation for the selected candidate to be presented to the County Commissioners Court.
7. When a candidate is agreed upon, the District Extension Administrator will submit a Request to Hire to the Associate Director for County Programs to confirm the appropriate salary level to be offered to the candidate. The actual salary level is based on the salary levels for agents with similar academic degrees, years of experience, performance ratings, complexity of counties, career ladder designation, and available funding.
8. A conditional job offer is made to the selected applicant pending successful background check; and review and approval of the County Commissioners Court. The salary offer includes the budgeted county salary contribution as well as the state and federal funding allocated for the position.

9. If the applicant accepts this conditional offer, the District Extension Administrator or County Extension Director contacts the County Judge to discuss the background and qualifications of the individual being recommended to fill the position and confirm the county salary and travel allocation. The District Extension Administrator or County Extension Director will request inclusion on the official agenda of the County Commissioners Court meeting to introduce and present the candidate for approval of the Court. If approved, a starting date for the new agent will be determined. The county portion of the salary and travel allocation will be so noted at this time and a copy of the court minutes showing acceptance of the applicant acknowledging salary and travel must be made available to the District Extension Administrator.

10. If the Court does not approve the recommended candidate, the District Extension Administrator or County Extension Director will present the second choice candidate (if available) after steps 6,7, and 8 are completed. The first candidate will no longer be considered for the position. An official copy of the minutes of the Commissioners Court meeting turning down the first candidate must be made available to the District Extension Administrator for Equal Employment Opportunity files.

V.G. Young Institute of County Government

The 61st Texas Legislature created the V.G. Young Institute of County Government to be administered by Texas AgriLife Extension Service. The primary role of the Institute is to provide educational assistance for all elected officials of County Government as they seek progressive ideas for improving efficiency in the operation of the many essential services provided for the benefit of the citizens of each county. This linkage provides another opportunity for Extension and County Government to be mutually supportive of county Extension programs.

An Equal Opportunity Employer

Texas AgriLife Extension Service is an equal opportunity employer. The agency recruits at most major colleges and universities in Texas as well as in many adjoining states. Position vacancy announcements are posted on-line for easy access of interested applicants. All persons may apply and will be considered for employment regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin.

For Further Information About Extension Employment

If you have questions or concerns about the employment of County Extension Agents, first contact the District Extension Administrator in your Extension District or the County Extension Director in the designated urban counties. In most cases, he or she will be able to respond to your question. For further information contact:

Associate Director for County Programs
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

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