



PRAIRIE VIEW  
A&M UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE  
AND HUMAN SCIENCES

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Cooperative Extension Program

TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION

# **Operational Guidelines for Joint County Extension Programs in Texas**

Prairie View A&M University  
Cooperative Extension Program

and

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service  
The Texas A&M University System

*Revised December 2020*

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*Memorandum of Understanding:  
Operational Guidelines for Joint County Extension Programs in Texas*

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Prairie View A&M University Cooperative Extension Program (referred to as AgriLife Extension and CEP in the remainder of the document) have in place both formal and informal structures for administrative and programmatic coordination that maximize the efficient use of human and fiscal resources and strengthen the services provided by both organizations. This document, *Operational Guidelines for Joint County Extension Programs in Texas*, reflects management and operating protocols for a continued partnership that recognizes and values the diverse and unique expertise and contributions of both Extension organizations.

In the *Operational Guidelines*, the administrative coordination between CEP and AgriLife Extension is set forth. The *Operational Guidelines* also establishes principles and a protocol for joint county collaboration in order to ensure program efficiency in delivery of services while recognizing the contributions of both programs in implementing countywide activities.

The ability of AgriLife Extension and CEP to play pivotal roles in meeting individual, family and community needs is strengthened by the ability to work together with a common goal – improving the quality of life for Texas citizens.

We are committed to coordinating efforts for the benefit of Texans. The approaches described in this Memorandum of Understanding sustain the positive working relationship between CEP and AgriLife Extension. We are committed to the two independent organizations working cooperatively to conduct quality educational programs for clientele while avoiding duplication of efforts.

A strong relationship between AgriLife Extension and CEP in fulfilling the Extension mission enables the residents of Texas to receive the assistance they need through a coordinated programming effort. We are committed to enhancing and building on this partnership throughout all levels of our organizations.



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12/10/2020

Date

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12/10/2020

Date

## Overview of Cooperative Extension

Cooperative Extension arose from the concept that the knowledge and results of research developed within the land-grant universities should be made available to all individuals in the state. Thus, Cooperative Extension brought the fruits of public investment in land-grant universities to the people and gave renewed emphasis to the concept of lifelong learning. In Texas, as well as in seventeen other southern states, the United States Congress established two entities to provide Extension services: Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service (1862) and Prairie View A&M Cooperative Extension (1890).

AgriLife Extension is a state agency and component of The Texas A&M University System. It is headquartered in College Station and serves all counties from its offices in 250 of Texas' 254 counties.

CEP, headquartered in Prairie View, Texas, is part of the triad (teaching, research, and Extension) in Prairie View A&M University's College of Agriculture and Human Sciences and currently provides educational outreach activities in thirty-five counties.

While the programs of both organizations focus on the same four broad areas (Agriculture and Natural Resources, Family and Community Health, 4-H and Youth Development, and Community and Economic Development), the primary audiences for these programs differ. Provided on a local and statewide basis, the programs, tools, and resources of AgriLife Extension are aimed at all segments of the Texas population. The educational programs and outreach efforts of CEP are targeted toward underserved and underrepresented families and individuals. While CEP and AgriLife Extension have complimentary missions, the primary audiences and the expertise needed to identify and deliver services effectively to those audiences distinguish the work of the two unique entities.

### Abbreviations and Definitions

CEA:	County Extension Agent for AgriLife Extension
CED:	County Extension Director (AgriLife Extension mid-management position administratively responsible for one of the seven urban county offices).
CEP-ELT:	CEP Executive Leadership Team (Cooperative Extension Program leadership team is administratively responsible for the organization's programmatic and budget decisions.
CEP-PL:	Cooperative Extension Program - Program Leader (CEP mid-management position with administrative and programmatic responsible for CEP Agents in a designated program or subject area).
CLT:	Central Leadership Team (This group of AgriLife Extension middle managers includes DEAs, RPLs, CEDs, and others).
DEA:	District Extension Administrator (AgriLife Extension mid-management position administratively responsible for one of the 12 AgriLife Extension districts).
EA-CEP:	Extension Agent for Cooperative Extension Program
ELT:	Extension Leadership Team (AgriLife Extension's executive leadership team, which is administratively responsible for agency programming and operations).

- PVAMU: Prairie View A&M University
- RPL: Regional Program Leader (AgriLife Extension mid-management position that provides programmatic guidance to Agents in one of six AgriLife Extension regions).
- UPC: Urban Program Coordinator (AgriLife Extension mid-management position that provides leadership and coordination for the seven urban and urban initiative counties).

**I. OFFICE IDENTIFICATION AND SIGNAGE**

In counties that house both AgriLife Extension and CEP personnel, signage will be prominently displayed that shows the names and logos of both organizations.

**II. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF EXTENSION AGENTS - CEP**

**Qualifications**

- Qualifications for the position of EA-CEP will be established by CEP in accordance with PVAMU guidelines. A bachelor’s degree is the minimum educational requirement for this position.

**Position Announcements**

- The CEP-PL will develop position announcements with input from the appropriate DEA/CED. The DEA/CED will communicate RPL input, if any, to the CEP-PL.
- The CEP-PL will notify the DEA/CED when the position announcement is posted and when the position announcement is closed.
- The CEP Administrative Officer (or designee) will ensure that position announcements are developed, approved, and posted in accordance with PVAMU Human Resource requirements.

**Review and Selection Procedures**

- Candidate review and selection will follow PVAMU hiring requirements. If a screening committee is used, an AgriLife Extension representative, selected jointly by the DEA/CED and CEP-PL, will be included on the committee.
- When the position announcement is closed, the CEP-PL will seek input from the DEA/CED regarding candidate(s).
- The CEP-PL and the appropriate DEA/CED will coordinate efforts to include county staff, as appropriate, to view candidate presentations that may be part of the selection process.
- The CEP-PL and the DEA/CED will discuss the recommended candidate to ensure concurrence.
- If there is concurrence, the CEP-PL will seek approval of the recommended candidate through established PVAMU procedures. If there is no concurrence, guidance will be sought from CEP administration and AgriLife Extension administration before final approval of a candidate.

**Orientation**

- The new EA-CEP will report to PVAMU for a university processing with the Human Resources Department. The CEP-PL will coordinate the additional orientation agenda including a review of the *Operational Guidelines for Joint County Programs in Texas*.
- New EA-CEP may participate in the AgriLife Extension Onboarding processes and activities as scheduled and appropriate.

- With input from the AgriLife regional administrative team (DEA/CED & RPL), district 4-H specialist and CEP specialist, the CEP-PL will be responsible for county-specific orientation of the new EA-CEP.
- Supervisors of new middle managers (CLT and CEP-PLs) will review this MOU and facilitate introductions with appropriate peer administrators across both AgriLife Extension and CEP.

### **Mentorship**

- For all new EA-CEP, a mentor will be assigned by the appropriate CEP-PL with concurrence from the DEA/CED (if an AgriLife employee is identified as a mentor).
- The “Mentoring in Extension” document will be used and will be coordinated with the CEP-PL.
- The mentor/mentee relationship will continue for a twelve-month period.

### **III. SUPERVISORY ROLES**

- The CEP-PL will provide overall supervision, leadership, and coordination for EA-CEP in their subject area.
- The DEA/CED will provide county-specific coordination, guidance, input, and support for EA-CEP.

### **Job Descriptions**

- The job descriptions for EA-CEP will be developed by the CEP-PL with concurrence by the DEA/CED.

### **Annual Program Plan**

- CEP-PLs will be invited to participate in regional program planning activities.
- EA-CEP will submit draft program plans to the appropriate CEP-PL (with a courtesy copy to the DEA/CED/RPL) for input and approval by the CEP-PL.

### **Performance Appraisal Process**

- The CEP-PL will conduct performance appraisals for CEP county staff with input from the AgriLife Administrative Team, if appropriate.
- The Performance Appraisal System for County Extension Agents of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and PVAMU will be used by the CEP-PL when evaluating EA-CEP.
- The CEP-PL will determine EA-CEP ratings.

### **Required Reports**

CEP staff are expected to submit the following:

- Monthly reports in Texas Data
- County Commissioners’ Court reports
- EA-CEP will include their impacts in the annual total county report

### **Career Ladder**

- All elements of the CEP career ladder process will be managed by CEP-ELT.
- For new EA-CEP, the CEP-PL and the DEA/CED will jointly determine equivalent professional experience and recommend an initial career ladder rank, which will be decided by CEP administration.
- EA-CEP will manage the career leader process using the AgriLife Extension Career Ladder document.
- EA-CEP will notify the appropriate CEP-PL of intent to apply for career ladder promotion and will submit promotion materials in accordance with Career Ladder Guidelines.
- CEP administration will approve/disapprove career ladder advancement for EA-CEP.

#### IV. TRAVEL AND LEAVE AUTHORIZATION

##### Travel

- The CEP-PL and Director of Fiscal Operations will recommend to the CEP Executive Associate Director travel allocations based on county needs and available resources.
- Out-of-county travel must be approved in advance by the CEP-PL.
- Travel will be processed through the CEP Fiscal Office.
- EA-CEP will notify the DEA/CED and county secretary/office of all non-routine travel (e.g., attendance at a national professional meeting, etc.).

##### Sick Leave/Personal Leave/Emergency Leave

- CEP county staff are responsible for requesting sick leave and personal leave via Workday in accordance with PVAMU guidelines.
- The CEP-PL is responsible for notifying the DEA/CED administrator when leave has been approved.
- The CEP-PL, DEA/CED, and county office should be notified by the approving authority when emergency leave has been granted.

#### V. REQUEST FOR SPECIALISTS

- Requests for CEP and/or AgriLife Extension specialists for educational programs, activities, or special assistance in the counties will be made by the county staff person. The appropriate CEP-PL and Regional Leadership Team members should be informed when requests are made.
- CEP and/or AgriLife Extension specialists conducting special programs in the counties should coordinate with the county staff and involve them in program activities for clientele groups, as appropriate. The appropriate Regional Leadership Team and CEP-PL should be aware of intended visits.

#### VI. COUNTY STAFF RELATIONSHIPS

- The appropriate CEP-PL and DEA/CED or designated AgriLife Extension staff member will introduce the new EA-CEP to the County Commissioners' Court in a scheduled Court meeting, or other avenue as appropriate and accepted by the county.
- EA-CEP participate in county office conferences, county interpretation events, and provide input for hiring, supervision, and evaluation of county support staff.
- EA-CEP share weekly schedules with county support staff and keep County Coordinator/Administrator or CED informed of schedules and absences.
- If county-specific resources or conditions (including agent behaviors and relationships) change and no longer support the presence of an EA-CEP, the Associate Director for County Operations will notify AgriLife Extension administration and CEP administration. After consultation, the DEA/CED and CEP-PL will take necessary steps to implement the relocation or removal.
- As new staff join the county extension office, a review of the *Operational Guidelines for Joint County Programs in Texas* will be provided.

#### VII. JOINT PROGRAM COLLABORATION

In this section, ***“joint program collaboration” means those programs, activities, events, etc. in which both organizations are represented and participated in planning and implementing the program, activity, or event.*** To ensure visibility and to recognize the contributions of both CEP and AgriLife Extension, the following principles will apply when implementing joint programs, activities, and events. This section does not apply to programs that do not meet the definition of a joint program.

### **County Based Joint Programs**

- The names and logos of both organizations should be displayed on program and promotional materials, signs, etc.
- Information on planning, implementation, and interpretation will be shared with and between those responsible for the program or activity.
- AgriLife Extension and CEP staff should coordinate programming when working with the same audience and should support, as appropriate, county trainings, meetings, and other activities provided funding is available.
- Appropriate titles and affiliations should be included on all county interpretation and accomplishment documents.
- DEAs, CEDs, RPLs, and CEP-PLs should be informed if new grants or projects are introduced in the county. This helps develop teamwork, accountability, marketing/promotion, and interpretation opportunities.
- Leadership of both organizations should be informed of any interpretive meetings at which joint programs will be discussed with elected officials in county joint programs.

### **District Based Joint Programs**

- The names and logos of both organizations should be displayed on program and promotional materials, signs, etc.
- EA-CEP will support district events and activities provided CEP funds are available. When funds are not available and efforts to coordinate travel with AgriLife Extension agents are unsuccessful, CEP-PLs will notify DEA/CED that the EA-CEP will be unable to attend and/or assist with the event.
- EA-CEP are responsible for notifying the appropriate CEP-PL and the DEA/CED of scheduling conflicts.
- The number of 4-H district events in which EA-CEP participate should be discussed by the CEP-PL, DEA/CED, and the District 4-H Specialist and then approved by the CEP-PL.

### **VIII. TRAININGS AND CONFERENCES FOR COUNTY STAFF**

- State, regional, district, or topic-specific training and conferences provided by either AgriLife Extension or CEP are open to agents of each organization provided funding is available and prior supervisory approval is received.

### **IX. EXTENSION LEADERSHIP ADVISORY BOARD AND PROGRAM COMMITTEES**

- Leadership Advisory Boards and Youth Boards should be supported by EA-CEP and inclusive of CEP target audiences.
- EA-CEP are expected to organize program committees that focus on the needs of underrepresented and underserved audiences.

### **X. COUNTY SUPPORT FOR CEP**

- CEP staff in County Offices are expected to follow all policies set forth by the County related to office presence and management. The DEA/CED will work directly with the CEP-PL to communicate and set expectations related to county office policy.
  - The DEA/CED will work with the County Commissioners' Court and county staff to furnish office space for CEP county staff.
  - Equipment and furniture will be provided by the county. Computer equipment for CEP staff is provided by CEP administration.



- Secretarial support, if available, will be provided by the county.
- Office supplies (e.g., paper, pencils, pens, etc.) will be provided by the county.
- CEP will provide demonstration supplies. The CEP-PL will allocate funds for demonstration supplies to CEP county staff persons.
- Office telephones will be provided by the county.
- Letterhead, postage, business cards, name tags, and envelopes will be provided by CEP.
- Texas A&M AgriLife and Prairie View A&M Cooperative Extension Information Technology will provide the computer services to support CEP county staff statewide as provided by the Intrasystem Cooperation contract for IT services. The CEP county staff will be provided access to the Internet when it is available to Texas A&M AgriLife Extension county staff.

**XI. METHODS FOR SELECTING COUNTIES FOR PRAIRIE VIEW A&M COOPERATIVE EXTENSION**

- CEP administration will notify the Associate Director for County Operations when it identifies an opportunity for county-level program expansion based on criteria such as programmatic need, potential audience characteristics, geographic location, and available funding.
- The Associate Director for County Operations will initiate a discussion with the appropriate AgriLife administrators to consider the feasibility of the proposed CEP expansion. If it is determined that county-specific resources and conditions are sufficient to support the proposed expansion, the Associate Director for County Operations will notify CEP administration and AgriLife Extension administration. If both administrations agree, the appropriate AgriLife administrator and the CEP Program Leader will take necessary steps to implement expansion.

**Staffing Patterns**

- As vacancies occur, CEP will review its staffing pattern based on current priorities, program objectives, and available resources. The decision to fill, hold, modify, or discontinue the position housed within an AgriLife office will be made in consultation with the Associate Director for County Operations and the AgriLife Regional Team.

**XII. COORDINATION CONFERENCES**

- Senior administrators from AgriLife Extension and CEP will meet annually to discuss strategies for enhancing program coordination.
- State, regional, district, or topic-specific conferences (including planning conferences) provided by either AgriLife Extension or CEP are open to administrators, DEAs, CEDs, RPLs, and/or Program Leaders of each organization, as appropriate, when the topics or issues addressed have implications for both programs.