K-State Research and Extension New Agent Professional Development Overview

"Caring about others works because it is a paradigm focused on people, not things; it is focused on relationships, not schedules; it is focused on effectiveness, not efficiency; it is focused on personal leadership, not resource management."

—Steven R. Covey

K·STATE
Research and Extension

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

2016

K-State Research and Extension
New Agent Professional Development Overview

Table of Contents

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Dear Colleagues,

We are delighted that you are interested and involved as a team member in launching the successful careers of new extension agents.

Why does K-State Research and Extension invest so much in New Agent Professional Development? We believe that the lifeblood of our business depends on attracting, hiring, and retaining the right people. The process of hiring and training a new employee is expensive and important. Therefore, we are committed to supporting new agents in the early stage of their careers. It is important for them to learn the culture of the organization, understand the people, and get a feel for how the organization gets things done.

It is our interest to see extension agents succeed. The more successful agents become, the better the citizens of Kansas are served and the more K-State Research and Extension is valued.

Thank you for being part of the team of extension professionals who are committed to the growth and success of our new agents.

Sincerely,

Daryl D Buchholz

Daryl Buchholz

Associate Director for Extension and Applied Research

New Agent Professional Development

Objective of New Agent Professional Development

The primary objective of new agent professional development is to increase agent performance and retention. Use of this overview will support and guide new agents during their first year of employment. During this crucial period, agents begin building relationships and acquiring foundational concepts necessary for a successful career as a professional with K-State Research and Extension. This overview is a guide for the new agent, mentor, new agent's local unit colleagues, and area director when setting up the new agent's professional development schedule.

Partners in New Agent Professional Development

This guide provides resources for each of the five partners in the professional development of new agents. As the following diagram shows, the concepts that new agents should experience and learn may be facilitated by one or more of these partners:

- the Mentor
- the Colleagues in the Local Unit
- the Area Director and Area Specialists
- Presenters for New Agent Professional Development Sessions
- the New Agent

The unique role of each partner in launching the new agent to a successful career with K-State Research and Extension is as follows:

The Mentor

The area director assigns a mentor to each new agent for a one-year time commitment. During this year, the mentor and new agent are partners, learning from each other, as the new agent begins to acquire and put into practice the skills necessary to be an extension agent. The mentor serves as a model of an effective professional.

The Colleagues in the Local Unit

The local unit colleagues acquaint the new agent with local people, programs, policies, and procedures. It is recommended that the local unit director, other agents, board and program development committee members, office professionals, and program assistants all be involved in orienting the agent.

The Area Director and Area Specialists

In addition to assigning the mentor, the area director works with other area faculty to support new agents in administrative and programming responsibilities. This support may take place in an area-wide meeting, one-on-one at the new agent's location, in the area office, or in another setting.

Presenters for New Agent Professional Development Sessions

Five new agent professional development sessions are held on the Kansas State University campus during the first year of an agent's employment. These sessions are presented by members of the administrative team, faculty in various units of K-State Research and Extension, and other agents.

New Agent

Personal experience is the best teacher. While each of the above partners plays a role in launching the new agent, most learning occurs as agents experience and apply what they have learned. New agents are encouraged to work with the area director to identify resources to meet other professional development needs.

Job Description for the New Agent Mentor

Purpose of the Mentor: To develop a learning relationship with a new agent as he or she begins a career with K-State Research and Extension

Qualifications of the Mentor

1. Ability to fulfill the one-year commitment to serve as a mentor
2. Loyalty to K-State Research and Extension
3. Good understanding of the land-grant philosophy and extension mission
4. Excellence in educational programming and professional development
5. Credibility among peers and others in the system
6. Skills, knowledge, and abilities desirable to be replicated in the system

Major Duties

1. With the area director, establish a schedule to meet with the new agent during the first year
2. Guide the new agent to helpful resources and people
3. Model professionalism
4. Reinforce information presented in new agent professional development sessions at K-State

Mentor Rewards

1. Honor of being a mentor
2. Opportunity to practice and refine interpersonal and management skills
3. Chance to learn from the new agent in a two-way exchange
4. Recognition as a professional with valuable skills and knowledge
5. Career development

Experiences Beneficial to Selection as a Mentor

1. Completion of mentor workshop
2. True Colors™ training
3. Membership in a professional organization
4. "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" training
5. Navigating Difference training

Mentor Responsibilities

The area director will assign a mentor to each new agent for a one-year time commitment. During this year, the mentor and new agent are partners as the new agent begins to acquire and put into practice skills necessary to be an effective extension professional. While the area director assigns the initial mentor, new agents may also identify another person or persons to informally mentor them after the first year.

Each new agent arrives with a unique academic background and professional skills, so each will have unique needs. The following schedule and mentoring outline are intended to be adapted for each particular situation.

The new agent's local unit will pay hotel expenses, mileage, and meal expenses according to State of Kansas guidelines (if overnight travel required), if incurred during mentoring.

Mentoring Schedule

The area director, working with the new agent's local unit director and the mentor, will determine the specific schedule for the first five weeks, using the following list as a guide. (Major events occurring during the first weeks of employment may necessitate some adaptation of this schedule.)

The new agent and mentor will determine dates for the quarterly sessions. Some of these sessions should be at the new agent's office. Sessions should also be scheduled to allow the new agent to partner with the mentor to facilitate an educational meeting, make a group presentation, present a radio interview, and implement similar educational strategies. The mentor is also encouraged to serve as a host to the new agent at area or state events during the first few months of employment.

Consider scheduling time for the new agent to meet with other agents in the mentor's unit, as well as agents in neighboring units.

The following schedule is recommended for the new agent's time with his or her mentor during the first year of employment:

Days 1, 2 and 3	New Agent Orientation at K ansas State University
Days 4, 5	New agent in local unit
Week 2	New agent in local unit
Week 3*	**New agent with mentor**
Week 4	New agent in local unit
Week 5*	**New agent with mentor**
During month 3	**One to two days with mentor**
During month 6	**One to two days with mentor**
During month 9	**One to two days with mentor**
During month 12	**One to two days with mentor**

It is recommended that Weeks 3 and 5 begin Monday afternoon and end Friday at noon to allow travel time.

Mentoring Outline

This overview identifies six major topics for mentors and new agents to discuss:

1. Getting acquainted
2. Developing relationships
3. Professionalism
4. Management
5. Communication
6. Programming

Under each of these major topics are concepts to be introduced in the initial weeks, as well as concepts to be introduced in later sessions. Also listed are some recommended experiential learning activities related to the concepts. Each new agent's particular situation will dictate, to a certain extent, the topics addressed with the mentor.

Many concepts new agents will discuss with their mentors are taught, experienced, and reinforced by one or more of the new agent's professional development partners. The new agent should be given an opportunity to tell the mentor what he or she has already learned or experienced related to each topic.

Preparing for the New Agent

The area director will provide the mentor with a copy of the new agent's résumé so the mentor can become familiar with the new agent's skills and previous professional experience.

During the new agent's first week of employment, the mentor will contact the agent to welcome him or her to K-State Research and Extension and to give an overview of the schedule during the time they will be working together.

Planning a welcome celebration, such as refreshments at a morning break or an office lunch, is encouraged for the first day with the mentor.

Mentor Responsibilities: *Getting Acquainted*

Initial Weeks

Mentor and new agent will share their:

1. Academic backgrounds
2. Prior work experience
3. Professional skills
4. Interests and hobbies
5. Reasons why each joined K-State Research and Extension

Experiential Learning

New agent and mentor will:

6. Review "Keys to Success" new agent developed during orientation
7. Review list of questions for the mentor that new agent developed during orientation
8. Set tentative dates and determine locations for follow-up sessions during months 3, 6, 9, and 12

Mentor Responsibilities: *Developing Relationships*

Initial Weeks

New agent will:

1. Learn about and appreciate community culture and current K-State Research and Extension programming before making changes

Mentor and new agent will:

2. Discuss importance of and strategies for developing relationships with key individuals:

- Office professional(s)
- Other agent colleague(s) in local unit
- Area director and other personnel in area office
- Extension board members
- Program development committee members
- Key volunteers
- Local and regional media contacts
- County commissioners
- Agents in neighboring units
- Collaborating organizations
- Other independent organizations that work closely with K-State Research and Extension

Experiential Learning

New agent will:

3. Develop list of names and contact information for key individuals

4. Outline main conversation points for introducing himself or herself to the above individuals

5. Meet with other agents in the mentor's local unit

Later Sessions

Mentor and new agent will:

1. Review what new agent learned about developing relationships in professional development sessions at K-State and how he or she has implemented that information

2. Review list of key individuals

3. Discuss progress made toward developing and maintaining these relationships

Mentor Responsibilities: *Professionalism*

Initial Weeks

Mentor and new agent will discuss:

1. Managing first impressions
2. Developing and maintaining personal image and professional competence in the community through personal dress, actions, and attitudes
3. Achieving visibility in the community
4. Appropriate use of social media and technology
5. Maintaining confidentiality
6. Demonstrating loyalty to employers and colleagues
7. Using business cards and wearing name tag
8. Providing customer service through phone calls, emails, office visits
9. Using professional scheduling to balance work and personal responsibilities
10. Belonging to professional organizations
11. Preparing new agent for major events, such as K-State Research and Extension Annual Conference

Experiential Learning

New agent will:

12. Add personal and family dates to his or her calendar

Later Sessions

Mentor and new agent will:

1. Review what new agent learned about professionalism in professional development sessions at K-State and how he or she has implemented that information
2. Review progress on those topics

Mentor Responsibilities: *Management*

Initial Weeks

Mentor and new agent will discuss:

1. Using technology as a management tool
2. Developing a filing system (hard copies, electronic copies, emails)
3. Managing email, social media, phone calls, mail, office visits
4. Managing a calendar
5. Keeping office colleagues informed regarding current educational programming
6. Working with the office professional to manage work flow

Experiential Learning

New agent will:

7. Begin to develop a system of managing information to fit his or her work style and preferences
8. Schedule time to plan, implement, and evaluate events and activities

Later Sessions

Mentor and new agent will discuss:

1. Managing multiple projects
2. Organizing work flow
3. Facilitating effective meetings
4. Identifying and reviewing resources in new agent's office
5. Setting priorities
6. What new agent learned about management in professional development sessions at K-State and how he or she has implemented that information

Mentor Responsibilities: *Communication*

Initial Weeks

Mentor and new agent will discuss:

1. Building relationships with local media
2. Communicating with board members about program and professional development plans and impacts
3. Appearing on radio and television programs
4. Using newsletters, columns, radio, blogs, websites, and social media as part of programming

Experiential Learning

New agent will:

5. Develop a 15-second "sound bite" to communicate his or her responsibilities to those who ask, "What do you do?"
6. Write a self-introductory message to be tailored for social media, website, newsletters, news columns, etc.

Later Sessions

New agent and mentor will:

1. Discuss what new agent learned in communications professional development session at K-State and how he or she has implemented that information
2. Discuss the importance of content used in newsletters, news columns, blogs, websites, social media, and radio and television programs, and identify ways they support local action plans

Mentor Responsibilities: *Programming*

Initial Weeks

Mentor and new agent will discuss:

1. Getting acquainted with program development committees (PDCs)
2. Using action plans to guide educational programming
3. Planning for events that may happen in new agent's program in the next three months
4. Utilizing volunteers to strengthen and expand educational programming
5. Identifying resources for programming, focusing on frequently used resources during the first weeks and others at later sessions
6. Participating on a Program Focus Team

Experiential Learning

New agent will:

7. Plan initial individual visits with PDC members
8. Plan for meeting with PDC chair to set agenda for initial meeting with full committee; explore strategies for initial PDC meeting — face to face, conference call, webinar, etc.
9. Review current action plan for new agent's office
10. Develop first board report based on what was learned with mentor and at orientation
11. Attend a PDC meeting with mentor
12. Develop a presentation for community groups that may request a program from new agent
13. Identify and plan for educational components of events and activities
14. Review events that will be occurring (or that new agent will be planning for) within the next few weeks

Later sessions

Mentor and new agent will discuss:

1. What new agent learned about programming in professional development sessions at K-State and how he or she has implemented that information

2. How to evaluate and communicate program impact to K-State Research and Extension, local board, PDCs, area director, county commissioners, and other decision makers

3. Strategies for effective meetings

4. The specialist's role in enhancing local programming

5. The Program Focus Team's role in enhancing local programming

6. The calendar of events and necessary preparation for programming in the next three months

7. Using demographics when developing action plans

8. Identifying underserved audiences and developing strategies to reach them

9. Various teaching strategies based on audience and intended outcome of educational programming

10. Subject matter resources related to agent's responsibilities

11. Risk management strategies in programming

12. Develop a 15-second "sound bite" to communicate his or her responsibilities to those who ask, "What do you do?"

Experiential Learning

New agent will:

13. Continue meeting with Program Development Committee and develop action plans using Logic Model

14. Identify how events and activities support an action plan

15. Identify educational components and teaching strategies in events and activities

16. Research demographics for local unit and discuss implications for programming

17. Select a Program Focus Team in consultation with area director and local board

Mentor and new agent will:

18. Partner in teaching, facilitating a meeting, and implementing other educational strategies

Local Unit Responsibilities

The following checklist is designed to be used by the local unit director and board chair as they determine who among local unit colleagues (other agents, program assistants, and office professionals), along with board and program development committee members, is responsible for each task in orienting the new agent.

Modify this checklist to fit the unique needs and situation of the new agent and local unit.

Assigned to	Completed	
		Within a week after acceptance of position … (If new agent will be moving from a different location)
☐	☐	1. Provide information about realtors, utilities, banks, schools, day care, and other community services.
☐	☐	2. Send information from Chamber of Commerce.
		Before new agent begins working …
☐	☐	3. Develop a plan for announcing the new agent's arrival: news releases, social media, newsletters. The Extension Operations Office will provide a brief news release.
☐	☐	4. Prepare agent's office for his or her arrival. Clean office, replenish supplies, update furniture, update technology.
☐	☐	5. Review New Agent Professional Development module from Board Leadership website with local board.
☐	☐	6. Let agent know when office opens, where to park, and any other information that would be helpful before first day of work.
☐	☐	7. Compile useful information: office policies, action plans, calendar of events, K-State Research and Extension Directory, and other resources.
☐	☐	8. Order nameplate for agent's desk.
☐	☐	9. Develop a plan for welcoming the new agent, including a reception or similar event.
		First day in office …
☐	☐	10. Host a morning break or lunch to welcome the new agent.
☐	☐	11. Introduce new agent to coworkers.
☐	☐	12. Give new agent key to office.
☐	☐	13. Tour office including work spaces, file storage, meeting rooms, work rooms, restrooms, vending machines, and publication storage.

Assigned to	Completed	
☐	☐	14. Review computer access; email account and password will already have been set up at K-State.
☐	☐	15. Have new agent set up voice mail and email signature block.
☐	☐	16. Schedule times to meet to review items on this list.
☐	☐	17. Review office emergency procedures.
☐	☐	18. Get agent's emergency contact numbers and ask him or her to fill out Voluntary Adult Health Information Form: *www.ksre.ksu.edu/agsafe* (Select "Manuals and Forms.") Place this form in a sealed envelope and file with forms from other office personnel.
☐	☐	19. Get agent's signature to order enclosures, if used by the local unit, from the Department of Communications and Agricultural Education.

Within first week …

Assigned to	Completed	
☐	☐	20. Host a community welcome event for the new agent.
☐	☐	21. Review "Keys to Success" new agent developed during orientation.
☐	☐	22. Review list of questions new agent developed for the local office during orientation.
☐	☐	23. Make arrangements for new agent to interview with local media.
☐	☐	24. Review calendar of upcoming events.
☐	☐	25. Provide job description for new agent.
☐	☐	26. Review daily and weekly office routines such as procedures for mailing, staff conferences, and communicating schedules and programming details.
☐	☐	27. Review office policies and procedures including use of vehicles, cellphones, and credit cards.
☐	☐	28. Introduce new agent to key individuals (including county commissioners) in other offices in courthouse or office complex.
☐	☐	29. Facilitate informal meeting for new agent with board members and key volunteers.
☐	☐	30. Review procedures for work flow with office professional(s).
☐	☐	31. Review procedures for reimbursement for hotel expenses, mileage, and meal expenses incurred during mentoring.

Assigned to	Completed	
☐	☐	32. Review process for reporting work-related injuries to the area office.

Within first month …

Assigned to	Completed	
☐	☐	33. Facilitate contact with PDC chair(s) to set date and agenda for first meeting, which should focus on getting acquainted.
☐	☐	34. Review preparation for board meetings.
☐	☐	35. Review procedure for reporting vacation and sick leave.
☐	☐	36. Review submission of expense vouchers and board reports.
☐	☐	37. Review procedure for requesting, ordering, and purchasing program materials.
☐	☐	38. Review process for ordering publications and other supplies from KSRE Bookstore or University Printing.
☐	☐	39. Identify key community collaborators with whom to meet.
☐	☐	40. Give tour of county or district. Encourage board and PDC members to do this task.
☐	☐	41. Review previous years' educational program action plans and reports.
☐	☐	42. Meet with other agents, office professionals, and program assistants to learn about their responsibilities.

Whenever appropriate …

Assigned to	Completed	
☐	☐	43. Review local unit's responsibilities and initiatives to ensure access to educational programming by all county or district residents.
☐	☐	44. Review procedure for processing local program discrimination complaints.
☐	☐	45. Review local budget, including grants.
☐	☐	46. Review agent's role in programming unique to his or her subject matter responsibilities.
☐	☐	47. Prepare new agent for major events, such as K-State Research and Extension Annual Conference, providing overview of what to expect.

Other Topics to be Determined by Local Office

Assigned to	Completed	
☐	☐	______________________________
☐	☐	______________________________

Area Director and Area Specialist Responsibilities

The following list is designed to be used by area directors and area specialists during a new agent's first year of employment. These topics may be covered with a group of new agents at an area-wide meeting, or one-on-one in the new agent's, area director's, or specialist's office. Every situation is different. Use the list as a guide to fit the needs of the area office and new agents.

Area Director Topics

1. Professionalism
2. Professional scheduling
3. Executive board
4. Working with office professionals and other agents
5. Program Focus Teams
6. Reporting
7. Performance review
8. Professional development plan
9. Agent employment agreement (salary, benefits, Annual Conference, etc.)
10. K-State Research and Extension policies
11. Conflict resolution

Area Specialist Topics

1. Support to local program
2. Local collaborative relationships (specific to area)
3. Program development committees (PDCs)
4. Subject matter resources and demographic resources
5. Independent organizations that work closely with K-State Research and Extension

Other Responsibilities to be Determined by Area Director or Area Specialist

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New Agent Professional Development Sessions at K-State

Following is a brief summary of the topics discussed during the new agent professional development sessions. Agents would generally attend these sessions within the first year of employment.

Orientation:

- Welcome to K-State Research and Extension
- History of the land grant university and extension
- The role of an agent
- Program planning and reporting
- Personal and professional credibility
- Effective meetings

The Art of Extension:

- Personality styles
- Volunteer development
- Strategic partnerships
- Cultural competency
- Strategic communications
- Conflict management

Foundations of Youth Development and 4-H Program Management

- Positive youth development
- Ages and stages of youth
- Engaging volunteers
- 4-H delivery modes
- Finances and policies

Programming with a Purpose:

- Program development philosophy
- Action plans
- New audiences
- Programming impacts
- Evaluation strategies

Navigating Difference:

- Building skills in cultural awareness, understanding and knowledge
- Practicing inter-cultural interaction and sensitivity

Local Unit Director Basics:

(for agents with local unit director responsibilities)

- Role of the local unit director
- Budget development and management
- Federal employment laws
- Office policies
- Program development and delivery

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