

## 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

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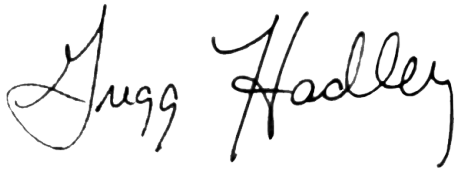
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Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to new extension agents who are using this resource as an overview of your first year professional development. We recognize that you are the front door to K-State Research and Extension all across Kansas. Our success as an organization is dependent on your effectiveness as an educator in your local community. We believe that our system of guiding you through the first year will provide you a foundation to be successful.

Thanks to the mentors, local unit colleagues, regional directors and specialists, and campus-based faculty and staff who are using this resource as a guide to your responsibilities in empowering new agents. We believe that you will find your role to be mutually beneficial, as you will also grow as a professional while you learn with new agents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregg Hadley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gregg Hadley

Associate Director for Extension

# 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 regional director and specialists.

## Partners in New Agent Professional Development

This guide provides resources for each of the 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 Local or Regional Director
- 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 regional 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 educator. 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 Local Unit or Regional Director**

The regional director assigns the mentor. The local unit or regional directors support the new agent in administrative and programing responsibilities.

### **Presenters for New Agent Professional Development Sessions**

New agent professional development sessions are generally 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. The content of the sessions is focused on core competencies common to all agents, not subject matter.

### **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 local unit or regional director to identify resources to meet other professional development needs.

# Job Description for the 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 local unit director or the regional director, establish a schedule to meet with the new agent during the first year
2. Guide the new agent to helpful resources and people, including introducing the new agent to others at K-State Research and Extension events
3. Model professionalism
4. Help the new agent process and apply information presented in the 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 regional 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 regional 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

Considerations in establishing times for the mentor and new agent to work together:

- The new agent generally attends a three-hour mini-orientation at K-State on his or her first day. They then attend a three-day orientation within the first nine weeks.

### Schedule

- at least nine days together in the first three months and one to two days in months 6, 9 and 12. Some mentoring should occur in the new agent's office and some in the mentor's office.
- some mentoring days during events, either in the mentor's or in the new agent's local unit, so the two agents can work together.
- time for the new agent with others in the mentor's local unit.
- the new agent to attend a board meeting, PDC meeting and other key events in the mentor's local unit.
- time for the new agent and mentor to partner in making a presentation, facilitating a meeting, delivering a radio program, etc.
- time to host to the new agent at regional or state-wide events, introducing them to peers.

Conversations with new agents in the past have stressed the value of the months 6, 9 and 12 sessions.

# Mentor Responsibilities, cont.

Following is a recommended schedule for the new agent and mentor during the first year of employment:

<b>Week 1-2</b>	New agent attends one-day mini-orientation or three-day orientation at K-State and the remainder of the time in their local unit getting acquainted.
<b>Weeks 3-4</b>	Three days together (local unit director or regional director schedule with mentor as soon as mentor is named)
<b>Month 2</b>	Three to four days together
<b>Month 3</b>	Three to four days together
<b>Month 6</b>	One to two days together
<b>Month 9</b>	One to two days together
<b>Month 12</b>	One to two days together

## 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
7. Leadership of local unit (if applicable)

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

- Review the new agent's résumé to become familiar with the new agent's skills and previous professional experience (the Extension Operations Office will provide the résumé).
- Email the new agent before they begin working or during the first few days of employment to greet him or her.
- Contact the local unit director in the new agent's office to set the initial dates to get together with the new agent (see schedule above).
- Plan a welcome recognition such as morning refreshments or office lunch 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 (see page 8 for recommended schedule)

# 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
  - Regional director and other personnel in regional 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
6. Attend a board meeting 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 achieve professional and personal satisfaction
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 (electronic copies, emails, hard copies)
3. Managing email, social media, phone calls, mail, office visits, and text messages
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
5. Identifying list-servs (and list-serv administrator) to which new agent should belong

## Experiential Learning

### New agent will:

6. Develop a 30-second “elevator speech” to communicate his or her responsibilities to those who ask, “What do you do?”
7. 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 about communications in 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. Planning for events that may happen in new agent's program in the next three months
3. Utilizing volunteers to strengthen and expand educational programming
4. Identifying resources for programming, focusing on frequently used resources during the first weeks and others at later sessions
5. Participating on a Program Focus Team
6. Identifying key stakeholders in the community to interview to learn more about the community needs (Getting to Know Your Community Assignment from Orientation)
7. Developing action plans to guide educational programming

## Experiential Learning

### **New agent will:**

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

### **Mentor and new agent will:**

16. Work together to assist the new agent in planning for a PDC meeting(s) as part of the New Agent Professional Development "Getting to Know Your Community of Interest" assignment. The purpose is to use the PDC as the planning team for a community of interest needs assessment. Help to identify someone to partner with the new agent in facilitating those meetings - a colleague, mentor, local unit director, regional director, Community Vitality Program Focus Team member, etc.

## **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, regional 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

## **Experiential Learning**

### **New agent will:**

12. Continue meeting with Program Development Committee and develop action plans using Logic Model
13. Identify how events and activities support an action plan
14. Identify educational components and teaching strategies in events and activities
15. Research demographics for local unit and discuss implications for programming
16. Select a Program Focus Team in consultation with regional director and local board

### **Mentor and new agent will:**

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

# Mentor Responsibilities: *Leadership of Local Unit*

Following are topics for new local unit directors and their mentors to discuss as the new director becomes familiar with their role:

## **Mentor and new agent will discuss:**

1. Role of the local unit director (see the position description)
2. strong local programming
3. Developing board relationships and strengthening board leadership
4. Administrative Responsibilities and Administrative Checklist
5. Website resources for local unit directors
6. Budget development and management
7. Non-appropriated funds and tax issues
8. Federal labor laws
9. Hiring, coaching and evaluating staff and agents
10. Benefits for local unit employees
11. Creating an office team
12. Districting
13. Risk management
14. Civil rights responsibilities
15. KSRE and local office policies

The Employee Resources website, and particularly the *Local Unit Director Resources and the Board Leadership* webpage, provide further information about each of these topics.



# 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	
		<b>Within a week after acceptance of position ...</b> (If new agent will be moving from a different location)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Provide information about realtors, utilities, banks, schools, day care, and other community services.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Send information from Chamber of Commerce.
		<b>Before new agent begins working ...</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	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.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Prepare agent's office for his or her arrival. Clean office, replenish supplies, update furniture, update technology.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Review New Agent Professional Development module from Board Leadership website with local board.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Let agent know when office opens, where to park, and any other information that would be helpful before first day of work.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7. Compile useful information: office policies, action plans, calendar of events, K-State Research and Extension Directory, and other resources.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8. Order nameplate for agent's desk.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	9. Order office credit card for agent's use.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	10. Develop a plan for welcoming the new agent, including a reception or similar event.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	11. Contact mentor to schedule three days together during Weeks 3 and 4 (see page 8).

Assigned to

Completed

### First day in office ...

- |                          |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 12. Host a morning break or lunch to welcome the new agent.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 13. Introduce new agent to coworkers.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 14. Give new agent key to office.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 15. Tour office, including work spaces, meeting rooms, work rooms, restrooms, vending machines, and publication storage.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 16. Review computer access; email account and password will already have been set up at K-State.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 17. Have new agent set up voice mail and email signature block.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 18. Schedule times to meet to review items on this list.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 19. Review office emergency procedures.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 20. Get agent's emergency contact numbers and ask him or her to fill out Voluntary Adult Health Information Form: <a href="http://www.ksre.k-state.edu/employee_resources/forms/admin_forms/VoluntaryAdultHealthInformationForm.pdf">www.ksre.k-state.edu/employee_resources/forms/admin_forms/VoluntaryAdultHealthInformationForm.pdf</a> . Place this form in a sealed envelope and file with forms from other office personnel. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 21. Get agent's signature to order enclosures, if used by the local unit, from the Department of Communications and Agricultural Education.  |

### Within first week ...

- |                          |                          |   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 22. Host a community welcome event for the new agent.                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 23. Review "Keys to Success" new agent developed during orientation.                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 24. Review list of questions new agent developed for the local office during orientation.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 25. Make arrangements for new agent to interview with local media.                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 26. Review calendar of upcoming events and the new agent's responsibilities for each event. |

Assigned to

Completed

- |                          |                          |   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 27. Provide job description for new agent.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 28. Review daily and weekly office routines such as procedures for mailing, staff conferences, and communicating schedules and programming details. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 29. Review office policies and procedures including use of vehicles, cellphones, and credit cards.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 30. Introduce new agent to key individuals (including county commissioners) in other offices in courthouse or office complex.                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 31. Facilitate informal meeting for new agent with board members and key volunteers.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 32. Review procedures for work flow with office professional(s).  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 33. Review process for reporting work-related injuries to the regional office.  |

**Within first month ...**

- |                          |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 34. Facilitate contact with PDC chair(s) to set date and agenda for first meeting, which should focus on getting acquainted. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 35. Review preparation for board meetings.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 36. Review procedure for reporting vacation and sick leave.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 37. Review submission of expense vouchers and board reports.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 38. Review procedure for requesting, ordering, and purchasing program materials.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 39. Review process for ordering publications and other supplies from KSRE Bookstore or University Printing.                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 40. Identify key community collaborators with whom to meet.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 41. Give tour of county or district. Encourage board and PDC members to do this task.  |

Assigned to

Completed

- 42. Review previous years' educational program action plans and reports.
- 43. Meet with other agents, office professionals, and program assistants to learn about their responsibilities.

**Whenever appropriate ...**

- 44. Review local unit's responsibilities and initiatives to ensure access to educational programming by all county or district residents.
- 45. Review procedure for processing local program discrimination complaints.
- 46. Review local budget, including grants.
- 47. Review agent's role in programming unique to his or her subject matter responsibilities.
- 48. 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**

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# Local Unit or Regional Director Responsibilities

In all districts and in counties with four agents or more, the local unit director will cover the following topics during the new agent's first year of employment. In a county with fewer than four agents, the regional director will cover these topics or assign another staff member to the responsibility.

1. Representing K-State Research and Extension as a professional
2. Professional scheduling
3. Working with the executive board and Program Development Committees
4. Working with office professionals, program assistants and other agents
5. Program Focus Teams
6. Program impact reporting
7. Performance review
8. Professional Development Plan
9. Agent Employment Agreement (salary, benefits, Annual Conference, etc.)
10. Local policies and procedures
11. Local collaborative relationships with other organizations
12. Conflict resolution

**Specialist Topics:** (Specialists located in regional offices are encouraged to meet face-to-face with new agents in the first several months)

1. Specialist support to local program
2. Subject matter and demographic resources

# **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
- Getting to know the community

## **The Art of Extension:**

- Personality styles
- Volunteer development
- Strategic partnerships
- Needs assessment
- 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
- Logic Model

## **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
- Hiring, coaching, and evaluating staff
- Office policies
- Program development and delivery
- Strengthening board leadership

For additional information contact:

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**Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service**

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