



New Agent Professional Development

PowerPoint Presenter's Notes

These notes are intended to be used as a general discussion outline and not as a script to be read.

Slide #1

K-State Research and Extension places a priority on the professional development of new Extension agents. This module is designed to give board members an overview of that process.

Slide #2

In this module board members will:

- gain an overview of the professional development process for new agents,
- learn the role of the local office and board as part of that process.

Slide #3

New Extension agents bring a variety of skills, knowledge, and experiences to K-State Research and Extension.

New agents hired in recent years have ranged from 21-year-old recent college graduates in their first professional careers to baby boomers who have retired from one career and are beginning another.

Approximately one-third of new agents have master's degrees. Their degrees are in a variety of disciplines – education, family studies, animal sciences, communications, human resource development, and others.

Approximately one-third of new agents have at least one degree from a university other than K-State.

Some new agents have a lifetime of experience with the Extension system. Others have limited personal experience with the organization.

Slide #4

The professional development of the new agent is a partnership involving:

- the agent,
- presenters for new agent sessions on campus,
- the area director and other area faculty,
- colleagues in the local office, including the board,
- the assigned mentor.

The responsibilities of each of these partners are described in the *New Agent Professional Development Overview* document.

Slide #5

The area director assigns a mentor agent for a one-year commitment. During this year, the mentor and new agent are partners as the new agent begins to acquire and put into practice the skills necessary to be effective in the position.

Slide #6

The mentor:

- assists the new agent in building relationships within K-State Research and Extension,
- models professionalism,
- guides the new agent to resources and people,
- reinforces the content of the new agent professional development sessions at K-State,
- is available by phone, e-mail, or in person when the new agent has questions.

Slide #7

A suggested schedule for the new agent to meet with the mentor is shown here.

Most new agents will start employment with a “class” of one to four others during orientation at K-State. This generally occurs the first week of employment.

The new agent will spend the remainder of the first week and the entire second week in the local office getting acquainted with staff, residents, and the local Extension program.

Weeks three and five will be spent with the mentor and should generally begin on Monday afternoon and end at noon on Friday to allow time for travel. During the third, sixth, ninth, and twelfth months, an additional day or two will be spent with the mentor. Days with the mentor should include time both in the new agent’s office and in the mentor’s office.

This schedule may need to be modified depending on the time of year the agent begins and educational programming being conducted during that time.

The local office pays the new agent’s travel expenses associated with the mentoring experience.

Slide #8

Local office colleagues also play a role in the new agent’s development.

Slide #9

Local office colleagues include board members as well as the unit director, other agents, office professionals, and program development committee members.

Slide #10

Local office colleagues help acquaint the new agent with the local Extension program, including:

- the people who are involved,
- ongoing educational programming,
- local office policies and procedures.

Slide #11

The *New Agent Professional Development Overview* (pages 17 through 19) provides an outline for the local office staff to use for their portion of the new agent’s orientation. As soon as a new agent is hired, local colleagues should meet to plan who will fulfill each of the responsibilities.

Slide #12

Board members might be involved by:

- giving the new agent a tour of the county or district;
- introducing the agent in the community;
- sharing information about local customs, culture, and history;
- hosting a welcome event;
- scheduling the initial program development committee meeting.

Slide #13

The area director and specialists also have responsibilities for the agent’s professional development.

Slide #14

The area director assigns a mentor and arranges the schedule for the first two weeks the new agent and mentor are together. The area director also works with area specialists to support the new agent in fulfilling programming responsibilities.

Slide #15

Faculty and staff at K-State also have a responsibility in the professional development of new agents during their first year of employment.

Slide #16

These individuals teach principles related to Extension education and provide opportunities for new agents to practice those principles. Presenters build relationships with the new agents and serve as ongoing resources when agents have questions.

Slide #17

During their first year of employment, new agents spend approximately 16 days on campus attending five professional development sessions. These sessions are:

- Orientation,
- Local Operations,
- Basic 4-H Operations,
- Communications,
- Program Development.

K-State pays the agents' travel expenses associated with attending the campus sessions.

Slide #18

Orientation generally occurs the first three days of an agent's employment. Orientation topics include:

- history of K-State Research and Extension,
- technology resources,
- role of an Extension agent,
- professional ethics,
- professional scheduling,
- Extension program planning and reporting,
- other topics.

Slide #19

Topics covered in the Local Operations session include:

- teamwork,
- balancing professional and personal responsibilities,
- staff supervision,
- managing conflict,
- Extension law and budgets,
- working with the board and program development committees.

Slide #20

Topics in the Communications session include:

- marketing a local Extension program,
- newsletters and news columns,
- radio,
- making presentations,
- developing a relationship with area media.

Slide # 21

Topics covered in the Basic 4-H Operations session include:

- the mission of 4-H Youth Development,
- life skills development,
- science of youth development,
- Volunteer Information Profile,
- risk management,
- fiscal affairs management.

Slide # 22

Program Development is generally the last session in the new agent's professional development sequence.

Topics include:

- program development philosophy,
- developing a program plan,
- reaching underserved audiences,
- impact of program participation,
- professional development.

Slide # 23

Of course, the new agent is a partner in the professional development process.

Slide #24

Personal experience is the best teacher. While each of the partners plays a role in launching the new agent's career, most learning occurs as the agent gains experience and applies what has been learned. Agents are encouraged to ask questions and take an active role in their own professional development. They also may need to seek additional resources.

Slide # 25

For additional information about professional development, see the *New Agent Professional Development Overview* at:

www.ksre.ksu.edu/employee_resources

Slide #26

As a board member, you play an important role in the process of supporting new agents. Thank you!