K-State Research and Extension - A Federal, State and Local Partnership

The partnership between K-State and the local Extension Board is unique and is one of the strengths of K-State Research and Extension. High quality educational programs for the people of Kansas is the result of this continuing relationship.

The following questions and answers reinforce the framework of this partnership.

Q: Just what is meant when we use the word "Partnership" to describe the cooperative nature of our organization?

A: The nature of the unique partnership that exists between USDA, Kansas State University and local Extension units is defined in legislation for Extension from the Federal Smith-Lever Act, the Kansas County Extension Council and District laws, as well as from Memorandums of Understanding between USDA and Kansas State University, and Kansas State University and local Extension Units.

Q: What is the role of the Director of Extension in the Partnership?

A: The Director has the overall responsibility for Extension in Kansas, including budget, personnel and programs. The Kansas Extension law indicates that the Director of Extension to be responsible for the expenditure of all funds, derived from whatever source. The Director issues a "Certificate of Proper Functioning" each year which authorizes the appropriation of local funds for the local Extension unit. The Director delegates responsibility to a "Director's Representative", usually the Area Director, to represent the Director in these discussions and decisions.

Q: Doesn't the local Board make all decisions regarding local funds and personnel?

A: The local Board and the Area Director cooperatively develop a budget for the local unit. Policies and procedures are used to guide decision-making. An Attorney General opinion indicates that the Kansas Extension Council law creates a statutory requirement of cooperation. The implication is that the Director's representative and local Board will compromise on issues so that the local Extension unit can function as intended by the legislature. The local Board, acting within K-State Research and Extension policy, manages the budget and authorizes the expenditures necessary to operate the local program.

Q: What about personnel management issues?

A: The Memorandum of Understanding reinforces a joint responsibility between the local Board and the Director's representative regarding all personnel decisions, including the hiring process, the employee agreement, compensation decisions, employee performance reviews, professional development plans and agent action plans.

Q: How do we decide what agent positions the local unit will have?

A: A K-State Research and Extension agent staffing plan identifies a specific number of agent positions to each local unit. The Memorandum of Understanding directs that employing Extension agents shall be based on programmatic needs as jointly determined by the Board and the Director's representative. When an agent position is to be filled, the Director will provide a candidate (or candidates) to be interviewed by the Board and Director's representative. Agents will be employed under the terms of a three-party

agreement which will stipulate the total salary ..... and other points pertaining to the agents employment.

Q: Who is responsible for the supervision of local agents?

A: The general supervision of Extension agents as provided by law, is accomplished by conference between the Board and the Director's representative, at such times and places as is mutually convenient.

Q: How do we appropriately deal with a personnel performance issue and decisions related to continuation of employment?

A: If the agent's performance requires the need for improved performance, an agent performance improvement plan can be developed between the agent, the Board and the Director's representative to improve employee performance. If an agent's performance requires additional action by the Board and Director's representative, a procedure of employee due process is called for.

Q: How does due process work?

A: Due process is a legal term that has been adapted into an informal process in today's employment environment. The process provides a framework to all performance issues to be addressed by the local Board and the Director's representative.

<u>Steps in Due Process</u>

- Board and Director's representative agree that performance issues are significant and lack of improvement could lead to a change in an agent's employment status.

- In Executive Session, the Board and Director's representative discuss the nature of the issue and provide the employee an opportunity to address the issue.

- If the Board and Director's representative determine the agent's performance does not meet expectations, a probationary period and process is established.

- The Board and Director's representative prepare a written plan with the performance issue to be addressed, specific actions that need to be taken to improve performance, evidence that will be required to document improved performance, and the date by which the improved performance will be achieved. At the end of the probationary period, the agent will prepare for the Board documentation of how they have addressed the performance issue.

- The Board and Director's representative will jointly determine whether the criteria has been met and if the probation will be ended, extended, or if dismissal proceedings will begin.