

Benefits

Representatives elected to the county extension council have the opportunity to:

- Participate in and influence decisions that affect their community and county.
- Make a significant contribution as part of a university educational system that links people with research and technology.
- Develop leadership skills while contributing to the community and the county.

Responsibilities

County extension council members support the extension program, promote community involvement, help agents locate demonstration sites, encourage residents to attend public meetings, and recruit people to assist in program planning.

Members of the four program development committees (Agriculture and Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Sciences, 4-H Youth Development and Community Development) should work cooperatively to plan, implement, and evaluate a unified educational program.

Members of the county extension council are required to attend the annual meeting and to elect officers and members of the executive board. In addition, extension council representatives must work to make programs available to everyone.

Council member involvement in planning the county's extension program requires:

1. Becoming familiar with the mission of the Cooperative Extension Service and the focus of its state and national educational programs.
2. A knowledge of conditions that affect local agriculture, families, youth, and community vitality.
3. Identifying educational needs and opportunities for the county.
 - Educational resources available through Kansas State University.
 - Local, area, and state resources to consider in planning and conducting the program.
 - Developing a comprehensive educational program designed to meet the needs of individuals and address targeted issues that affect communities.
 - Submitting program plans to the executive board for funding consideration, approval, and support.
 - Coordinating local educational efforts with public and private groups, agencies, and organizations.
 - Involving others by helping to recruit program leaders and volunteers.
4. Assistance in evaluating program accomplishments.

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

PM-43 (Rev.)

August 2008

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, as amended. Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating, Fred A. Cholick, Director.

The County Extension Council Election and Serving as a Council Representative

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

The County Extension Council Election and Serving as a Council Representative

I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise ... wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion!

—Thomas Jefferson

The Cooperative Extension Service is a vital part of our democratic government. For a democracy to serve the people, local leaders must identify problems, consider alternatives, and develop action programs that will improve social and economic conditions in the community, state, and nation. Progress does not occur without a flexible, functional adult and youth education program.

The Cooperative Extension Service is the largest, most successful educational organization in the world. Although it was officially established in 1914, the organization's history began in 1795 near Philadelphia, when farmers gathered together to study better farming methods and extend the knowledge to others. In the 1840s at Bloomington, N.Y., businessmen and farmers formed an adult education program called the Farm Bureau to improve economic and social conditions in rural communities.

In 1862, Congress created the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the land-grant universities. An experiment station became part of every land-grant university in 1887, and in 1914 the Cooperative Extension Service was added.

In 1915 the Kansas Legislature passed the Farm Bureau Act to provide for an extension educational program to be conducted in each county. The County Extension Council Law followed in 1951, providing for the public to

elect county extension council members. The law gives county residents the right to organize an extension council to plan educational programs in Agriculture and Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Sciences, 4-H Youth Development and Community Development.

The county extension council is a legally constituted part of the Cooperative Extension Service and, through it, a part of Kansas State University.

Planning the Election

The executive board may call a special meeting of county extension council members to plan the annual election. The purpose of this planning meeting is to work out election details and explain responsibilities. Resources are available on the Board Leadership Web site: www.oznet.ksu.edu/boardleadership/DesktopDefault.aspx

According to Kansas law, a county extension program must be organized and maintained through a local council to be eligible for federal, state and local funds. The 24-member council consists of six members elected to represent each of the four program areas: Agriculture and Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Sciences, 4-H Youth Development and Community Development. Each member is elected for a two-year term and may be elected for two consecutive terms. To qualify for election to the council, a candidate must be a resident of the county and at least 18 years of age when elected.

To provide continuity, half the representatives from each of the four program areas are elected each year: One member from each program area is elected annually from each of the three county commission districts. Counties with more than three commission districts, or those that choose to do so, may elect three members from each program area at-large.

The county extension council election, conducted by meeting or by mail ballot, must not be held before September 1 nor later than 10 days before the annual meeting.

Election by ballot. As an alternate method of electing county extension council members, the executive board may mail a ballot to every county resident of voting age at least three weeks before the council's annual meeting. The ballot must contain the names and addresses of all candidates for the county extension council. Candidates are selected by incumbent council members. The ballots are to be returned to the extension office at least seven days before the annual meeting.

The election meeting. The traditional method of electing county extension council members is to hold an election meeting. The law requires board members to approve the date, time, and place of the election meeting and publish a notice in the local newspaper that carries legal notices.

County extension council members are responsible for the total program, including the election meeting. A council member should serve as meeting chairperson. Agents help with election procedures and publicity. Although the official notice satisfies legal requirements, additional methods should be used to encourage participation. Local media, newsletters, and announcements at public meetings can generate interest among county residents.

Serving on the Council

Each of the 24 representatives elected to the county extension council serves a two-year term. Council members may also serve a one-year term on the executive board, if elected at the annual meeting. The executive board, in cooperation with Kansas State University, supervises the county's extension program, personnel, and budget.