

Mentorship Program



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The Extension Mentor

The goal of mentoring in Extension is to provide a professional, educational, and personal support system for new agents of the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service. Each new agent will certainly benefit from the guidance of an appointed mentor.

The role of a mentor should be perceived as a coach who has strong respect and concern for the mentee. The major contribution made by the mentor is his/her willingness to devote time and energy on behalf of the mentee. Every mentor has specific professional knowledge and skill to share. The knowledge that the mentor has must be transformed into a relationship that will meet the mentees maturity and experience level.

There are several resources available that will help the new agent get a successful start in his/her extension career. The District Director (DD) will help the new agent become acquainted with the basic employee policies, procedures, and guidelines that all Extension employees must follow. Extension philosophy and overview of program planning, implementation, evaluation, and reporting will be covered by your DD, but also in depth at new agent orientation and core training. The District Director and new agent will set forth a professional development plan to aid the new employees in their continued success.

The mentor will support the new employee with advice, feedback, focus and support in learning new job responsibilities and getting acquainted with the organization. The mentor will provide an opportunity for the mentee to ask questions, test ideas, and talk about challenges and solutions. Through positive support and experiences, new agents will build their knowledge, skills and abilities that will facilitate them becoming an integral part of Extension.

Mission Statement

Beneficial knowledge and organizational values are communicated to new employees and/or

educators through caring professional partnerships. This helps them become productive Extension employees who will enhance the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service Programs to improve the quality of life for citizens in Kentucky.

Philosophy

The five statements listed below communicate the philosophical foundation of the mentoring in Extension:

- Mentoring is a partnership.
- Mentoring is a nurturing professional relationship.
- Mentoring is communicating with each other.
- Mentoring enhances the development of the mentee and mentor.
- Mentoring benefits the mentee, mentor, and Extension.

Goals and Objectives

The goal of mentoring in Extension is to provide a professional, educational, and personal support system for the new agents called the “mentee”. Achieving this goal will enhance the mentee’s job performance by:

- Identifying resources and resource persons for the mentee.
- Educating the mentee in all organizational philosophy, goals, policies, and values.
- Sharing skills and knowledge of one or more experienced and successful Extension professional to meet the needs of the mentee.
- Strengthening the mentee’s leadership skills and self-confidence.
- Fostering open communication and dialogue.

By accomplishing these objective, mentees will experience an easier transition into the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, thus accelerating the productivity of the mentee and enhancing the effectiveness of Extension.

Benefits of Mentoring

Mentor:

- Develop positive and secure self-image
- Give something back to the organization
- Pass on knowledge and ideas to next generation of staff
- Sense of accomplishment through mentees success
- Help organizations goal

Mentee:

- Supportive atmosphere
- Information technical and process skills
- Non- evaluative feedback
- Organizational values and norms
- Sense of competence and worth
- Opportunity to be successful
- Importance of taking responsibility for requirements of the position

Cooperative Extension:

- New Employee becomes competent sooner
- Continuity of organizational culture
- Decrease turnover (\$\$\$)
- Increased teamwork
- Increased productivity

Research shows that the most successful mentoring relationships are those, which are initiated as early as possible in the mentee's employment. In addition, a mutual commitment to meet regularly is important since success is correlated to time spent together.

The following should be completed in order to become a mentor:

1. Sign up for the mentor training that is offered twice a year via lync
2. Sign the commitment form
3. Complete the True Colors assessment and return to HR Personnel

Desirable Mentor Characteristics

Because of the strong influence the mentor has on a mentee and ultimately, the impact on the system, it is essential that all mentors possess the following characteristics:

- Help mentee to develop goals, access resources, and build a professional network
- Share Extension vision, values, and culture
- Team player
- Trustworthy, ethical, professional behavior
- Positive attitude
- Respected by peers; show respect for others
- Listen and communicate effectively
- Recognizes and encourages excellence
- Self- confident
- Maintain confidentiality
- Encourage independence, not dependence
- Patient, encouraging, caring, and sympathetic
- Appreciates and encourages diversity
- Flexible/ adaptable, and receptive to new ideas

Mentor Training

Agents whom currently serve or interested in serving as a mentor will complete a webinar based training led by HR Personnel. The training will address policies, procedures and provide experiential learning to assist in the development of coaching skills.

Matching Process

The District Director will determine the Mentor/Mentee match. Consideration for matching the mentor and mentee will include similar programmatic responsibilities and geographic proximity. In addition, DD's will use the biographical sketch, mentee assessment, and true colors assessment to further evaluate potential mentor fit.

Suggestions for a Successful Visit

The following suggestions will help assure a productive and successful visit with the mentee:

- Schedule adequate time with minimal interruptions to foster a positive mentoring relationship
- Provide directions to meeting location(s)
- Be ready and accessible for mentoring visit(s)
- Know what you want to accomplish to enhance the mentoring visit
- Have information readily available for sharing

Mentor Expectations

Mentors should be prepared to devote time and energy to the relationship. The most important factor in mentoring is the mentor's willingness to give time and attention to the mentee. You accept great responsibility in this close, trusting relationship. Pitfalls can be averted by honest, open communication that establishes expectations and clarifies the concern of the new mentee.

Upon completion of the formal mentoring process, the mentor should complete the mentoring program evaluation and submit the form to HR Personnel. The following general guidelines will apply to each mentoring relationship and should be understood by both the mentor and mentee:

- Complete training offered at Core Training. **All mentors are required to complete the training by July 1, 2017.**
- Effective skills in program development, marketing and interpretation of Extension programs to diverse audiences.
- A minimum of three years' experience in Kentucky Extension.
- Mentors are chosen by the District Director in conjunction with Program and Staff Development based on the mentor biographical sketch, true colors assessment,

program area, and location/proximity to the new agent.

- Commitment to the mission, vision, and goals of the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service Commitment form should be signed and returned. Commitment to the formal mentoring program is **1 year** (12 months).
- The mentor should contact the new mentee within the first week after the selection has been determined. The mentor should fill out the needs assessment (attachment in packet).
- A **minimum** of **six** visits (at least 3 face to face visits) should occur between the mentor and mentee. The first visit should be during the first month after the pairing is determined.
- Mentors and mentees should correspond frequently either by phone, email, in person, etc. It is the responsibility of both participants to make sure that this communication occurs.
- **“NO FAULT”** Arrangement: Throughout a professional career, all employees face various challenges and changing circumstances which are often unexpected and may make it difficult to continue being a mentor. This program operates with a NO FAULT philosophy that allows mentors and mentees to request changes or reassignments without fear of repercussions. The mentor or mentee may request a change or release from the assignment by contacting your District Director.
- Upon completion of the formal mentoring process, the mentor and mentee should complete the Mentoring Program Evaluation and submit it to HR Personnel.

Mentor Responsibilities

The following are some things the mentor should **DO** in the mentoring relationship:

- Review the Mentee Biographical sketch to learn more about his/her interest and background
- Take responsibility to initiate the relationship
- Foster creativity and independence
- Set aside time for the mentoring process
- Display professional behavior and dress
- Schedule meetings and feedback sessions with planned topics
- Be positive, enthusiastic, and supportive
- Be a good listener
- Establish open and honest communication
- Maintain CONFIDENTIALITY!
- Offer to share resources, expertise, and experiences
- Invite mentee to meeting, events, or programs as appropriate

Mentee Responsibilities

Remember, a mentor is a supportive friend with a strong respect and concern for the professional development and success of their mentee. Plan to devote time and energy to build this relationship. Upon completion of the formal mentoring process, you should complete the Mentoring Program Evaluation and send it to HR Personnel.

The following are some things the mentee should **DO** in the mentoring relationship:

- Establish open and honest communication
- Have a purpose in each request
- Communicate your goals and aspirations to your mentor
- Demonstrate initiative
- Act on your mentor's advice when you feel it is applicable to your situation
- Respect your mentors time

- Be aware that as an Extension employee you are a professional- 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- Be realistic
- Maintain a positive attitude
- Be ambitious and enthusiastic
- Remember there is more than one way to reach a goal

The following are some things mentor should **AVOID** in the mentoring relationship:

- Commit yourself to obligations that you cannot keep
- Complain about other people or missed opportunities in an unprofessional manner
- Cancel meetings/visits with your mentor at the last minute (life happens and we understand that)

Suggested Discussion Topics

Based on the mentee's needs assessment, the following are suggestions on how to address the specific needs of the mentee. You may want to plan to address some of these at your initial meeting.

Communications

- Discuss importance of evaluation forms after program delivery to see if your planned objectives were met
- Share newsletters with mentee
- Share news articles that you prepared
- Share a radio/TV recording or invite to next taping
- Invite the mentee to see you conduct a program
- Share your positive perspectives on office communications, teamwork, conflict etc.
- Discuss appropriate attention to phone, walk-ins, and email messages
- Emphasize the importance of reviewing daily planning (calendar is a must!!)

Program Development

- Invite to an advisory committee meeting
- Invite to attend a volunteer meeting
- Invite to a program of mentees interest
- Share successes and failures in program
- Explain importance of networking (who? how?)
- Discuss local power structures and relationships
- Discuss Plan of Work- assessing the community needs
- Discuss the importance of the sign in attendance roster
- Discuss the importance of “All Reasonable Effort” File
- Discuss programming for reaching underserved audiences and special needs
- Discuss Success Stories
- How to be successful
- Use of logos

Personal Effectiveness

- Discuss protocol/ informal rules in Extension
- Share your time management techniques
- Share your perspective on maintaining balance with family/work
- Discuss importance of community involvement
- Talk about upcoming in-services
- Identify professional associations
- Encourage mentee to apply for awards (i.e. Diversity Award, Association Award, etc.)
- Discuss professional image

Working with County Elected Officials and Other Key Officials

- Elected or appointed officials
- County commissioners
- Magistrates
- Chamber of commerce
- City council
- Mayor

Managing Resources in the Extension Office

- Telephone
- Secretary
- Program assistant
- Shared equipment
- Vehicles
- Meeting rooms
- Hours
- Publications

Budget and Budget Process

- Money handling/Procedures
- Access to local funds
- Stop Gap Funding
- Reimbursement of expenses

Local Extension Program

- Staff meetings
- County Coordinator Responsibilities
- County demographics and background information
- 4-H ES- 237
- County organizations, collaborators, and key leaders
- Kentucky Extension Reporting System (KERS)- daily activity reporting system
- Program Plans
- Office filing system
- Postal mail guidelines
- Working with local mass media
- Client Protection (if applicable)

Extension Philosophy

- Professional Educators
- Mission/Vision/Goals
- Civil Rights/Affirmative Action/ADA
- Handling Money

Professional Relationships

- County Staff
- Military
- District Director
- District
- Elected officials
- Associations/ organizations
- Organizational chart
- Secretarial staff
- Media
- Key leaders
- Agents in other counties

Roles and Responsibilities

- Agriculture
- Family and Consumer Sciences
- 4-H and Youth Development
- 4-H Camp
- Community Development
- Horticulture
- Additional Subject matters areas addressed by specialty agents

Ethics/Work Habits/Policies

- Follows rules regarding age and entry deadlines (county, district, state)
- Keeps informed of rules and checks Policy handbook if necessary for accuracy
- Remember that 4-H is about youth development first, then winning contest
- Understands leave and attendance policy
- Exhibits a professional image
- Understands travel policies
- Understands employee benefits
- Transitioning into an agent role from predecessor
- Strives to attain between work and family life; takes time to maintain health; works continually on self- improvement to maximize job effectiveness; prioritizes family and personal needs

Performance Expectations

- Attends regular office staff meetings
- Contributes information to articles in newsletters
- Assist with local, district, state, and national contest and events
- Works on county committees or board
- Develops a plan for involvement and recruitment of volunteers
- Assist with school curriculum and enrichment efforts
- Conducts evaluation of program to show outcomes
- Markets and interprets Extension Programing accomplishments
- Understands the career ladder

Reporting Expectations

- Reporting Annual Due Dates/Time Line
- Report to the People
- Submits staff meeting minutes by email to DD and DD administrative assistant
- Submits newsletters and newspaper clippings to DD and DD administrative assistant
- Success stories
- Reporting should be timely, accurate, descriptive, and include the difference made in behavioral outcomes
- Be sure to meet deadlines

Program Development

- Delivery and teaching methods
- Leader training for teens and adults
- Outcome programs vs. output programs
- Annual program plan
- Performance standards
- Evaluation

Professionalism

- Follows rules in maintaining effective office hour, work habits, and office appearance
- Follows policies and procedures regarding travel, supplies, reporting, inventory, entry deadlines, etc.
- Exhibits a positive professional image and code of conduct
- Communicates well, both orally and written
- Exhibits a positive attitude, is loyal and cooperates with others

External Funding for Extension Programs

- Competitive grants in support of issues and Plan of Work (POW); resource enhancement
- Donors
- Sponsors
- Fiscal policy regarding handling money/ accountability

Professional Development

- New Agent Orientation
- Core trainings
- Mentoring program
- Professional associations
- In-service education opportunities
- Local, State, Regional, and National Committees and Boards
- Master's degree (if have not obtained)

Volunteer Management

- Risk management issues involving volunteers, programs, and clubs
- Volunteer recruitment and management
- Delegation of tasks to volunteers

Public Relations/Marketing

- Professionalism
- How to respond to sensitive situations
- Social media (marketing programming and organization)
- Work with various media outlets in county
- Network with key leaders, collaborators, and county agencies and organizations

Sources of Support

- Builds relationships with mentor and other agents
- Goes to observe programs conducted by mentor and other agents
- Takes advantage of as many professional development opportunities as possible
- Seeks counsel from mentor, DD, etc.
- Seeks assistance from specialist
- Self-study/reads technical journals, research publications, books, periodicals, etc.

APPENDIX A

The Following letter is a sample that the DD may send to the new agent as a way of initiating the relationship.

Sample Letter to the MENTEE

First Name, Last Name
Extension Office Address
City, Kentucky Zip Code

Dear _____ (Mentee Name),

Congratulations on your new position in Extension! Your formal program area mentor for three years will be _____ (Mentor Name) and (Contact information). In extension, we focus on the success of all employees. All new employees are trained in three developmental stages: orientation, core training, and professional development. Having a mentor is an exciting experience because you have the opportunity to form a relationship that will provide a positive professional, educational, and personal support system for you.

During your time together you will examine the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service's philosophy, goals, and values; identify resources and resource persons; and share skills, knowledge, and ideas pertaining to your career in Extension. You will also discuss questions that you may have. You will meet with your mentor face to face a minimum of six times throughout the year.

Your mentor will be contacting you to set up the initial face to face meeting. Again, welcome to extension and know that I am a resource to ensure that your career in extension is successful. I look forward to working with you.

Thanks,

(District Director Signature)

Sample Letter to the MENTOR

First Name, Last Name
Extension Office Address
City, Kentucky Zip Code

Dear (Mentor's Name),

Thank you very much for your willingness to take on the role of a mentor to new agents. Your mentor is (Mentor Name) from (County name). You have the expertise and experience necessary to support the agent through their first year with UK Cooperative Extension Service. Your involvement in the UK Cooperative Extension Mentoring Program is greatly appreciated.

Enclosed is a UK Cooperative Extension Mentoring Handbook. You will find that the handbook contains resources and materials which support the development of the mentoring relationship. If you need additional support or resources, please do not hesitate to contact Program and Staff Development. While mentoring relationships are confidential, we are in a position to support you and your mentee.

Enclosed is a Commitment Form and a Biographical Sketch that will need to be returned to Program and Staff Development. Also enclosed is a Mentee Needs Assessment that was given to the mentee to bring to the first face to face meeting. The mentee should provide you with the form completed on or before your first meeting. Successful mentoring relationships are established early in the employment cycle; please contact your mentee within the first week after the match is determined by your District Director. Your Mentee's start date will be (DATE).

Thank you again for your willingness to help a new staff member get off to a great start. Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

(District Director Signature)

Agent Biographical Sketch

Today's Date: _____ County: _____ District: _____

Mentor: _____ Mentee: _____

Agent Position: ANR FCS 4 -H/Youth Dev. Hort Fine Arts

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Office Phone: _____ FAX _____

Mobile Number (optional): _____

Educational Background:

Undergraduate Institution _____

Major _____

Year Degree Received _____

Graduate Institution(s) _____

Concentration _____

Year Degree Received _____

Previous Work Experience _____

Major program areas of interest _____

My strengths include: _____

**Please return form to Mia Farrell, Extension Personnel,
N-106C Ag Science North, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40546-0091**

MENTOR COMMITMENT FORM

By signing this form, you are indicating your willingness and desire to be considered to become a formal mentor for a newly employed or newly assigned County Extension Agent. You recognize that such an assignment will entail a commitment of time and energy for 1-year period.

Since there are many factors which determine when and where newly employed or assigned county agents are placed, there is no way to predict when you will be asked to be a mentor. Additionally, please know that you will be contacted and asked about becoming a mentor prior to the notification of the new agent. If personal and/or professional responsibilities make it impossible to be a mentor at that time, feel free to ask that another agent be asked to be the mentor.

We hope that you will consider being a mentor an honor and an opportunity to make a difference in the professional careers of our newly employed or assigned County Extension Agents.

Name: _____

County: _____

Program
Area: **ANR** **FCS** **4-H** **HORT** **Fine Arts** **Other**

Date: _____

**Please return form to Mia Farrell, Extension Personnel,
N-106C Ag Science North, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40546-0091**

MENTEE ASSESSMENT

Please rank your level of knowledge and skills in the following areas as they relate to Cooperative Extension:

- 1 = None (*I know nothing about this topic.*)
- 2 = Some knowledge and/or skill (*I know a little about this.*)
- 3 = Familiar with the topic and/or some skill (*I can do this or know about this but would need to spend some time getting up to speed.*)
- 4 = Very familiar or skilled (*I have done this and/or I am very knowledgeable in this area.*)
- 5 = Expert (*I could teach this right now.*)

Public Relations/Marketing

Writing newsletters _____
Interacting with media _____
Radio/TV presentation skills _____
Presentation Skills _____
Interpersonal Skills _____
Managing Conflict _____
Computer Skills _____

Teaching Presentation/Program Development

Understanding the Program Planning Process _____
Developing Annual Programs _____
Managing and Acquiring Resources for programming _____
Program Evaluation _____
Working with advisory committees _____
Teaching Strategies _____

Personal Effectiveness

Work effectively and Time Management _____
Flexibility and Maintaining a Schedule _____
Balancing Personal and Professional Life _____
Developing Oneself _____

Professional Development and Volunteer Management

Professional Associations _____
Awards and Recognition _____
Career Ladder _____
Performance Review Preparation _____

Organizational Structure and Time Management

Extension Organization- local/ state _____
Extension Language _____
Building Relationships and Networking _____
Cultural Competence/ Diversity _____

Other Needs

What are the most important things you would like to get from this relationship?

Preferred method of learning? (I.e. self-directed, auditory (listening), experiential (hands- on), shadowing/ observing, etc.)

**Please return form to Mia Farrell, Extension Personnel,
N-106C Ag Science North, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40546-0091**

APPENDIX B

Acknowledgments

Extension materials reviewed and used for the development of this program were from the following states: Ohio, Wyoming, Texas, Mississippi, Tennessee, Maine, Georgia, Colorado, Kansas, Connecticut, and Idaho. Additional information came from the International Mentoring Association and The Mentoring Institute. Finally, the following books were used as background information for developing the philosophical foundation for this program: *Mentoring: Helping Employees Reach Their Full Potential* by Gordon F. Shea and published by the American Management Association, 1993; *Mentoring: How to Develop Successful Mentor Behaviors*, by Gordon F. Shea and published by Crisp Publications, 1997; and, *Mentoring: A Success Guide for Mentors and Protégés* by Floyd Wickman and Terri S. Jodin and published by McGraw-Hill, 1997.