

# BUILDING STRONGER EXTENSION COUNCILS

## Orientation for New Council Members

### Council Member Handout

The mission of University of Missouri Extension is to:

**improve Missourians' lives by addressing their highest priorities through the application of research-based knowledge and resources.**

As an integral part of the land-grant mission, University of Missouri Extension is a joint venture of University of Missouri campuses; Lincoln University Cooperative Extension; the people of Missouri through county extension councils; Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture; and other stakeholders and partners.

As a county extension council member, you play a vital role in meeting these educational needs. County extension councils are statutorily created to work with the University of Missouri in carrying out the local extension program (*Sections 262:550 to 262:620, Revised Statutes of Missouri*). This module will assist new council members in understanding:

- Their role as a county extension council member; and
- The county extension council's relationship with the University.

## Council Responsibilities

Effective county extension councils are comprised of members who are committed to the extension mission and who understand their legal responsibilities as outlined in the state statutes (*Sections 262:550 to 262:620, RSMo*). These responsibilities can be categorized into three areas:

- Educational program development and implementation;
- Governance; and
- Membership.

These topics, briefly discussed below, will be covered in depth in subsequent Council Leadership training modules.

### 1. Educational Program Development and Implementation

Council members assist in planning and carrying out extension programs in their county by identifying concerns in their community; making recommendations to the University by working with local faculty; and ensuring access to local residents, groups and organizations. (*In-depth information provided in Council Leadership modules: "Setting Priorities for Program Development," "Evaluating Program Effectiveness" and "What Is the Council's Role in Program Implementation?"*)

### 2. Governance

The county extension council administers the local extension budget and operations, including council-employed personnel and fiscal management. The council is responsible for office operations, annual council membership elections, council operations and meetings, legal requirements, regional council relationships, marketing and decision making. (*In-depth information provided in Council Leadership modules: "Mastering the Nuts and Bolts of Council Elections" and "Understanding County Budgets and Fiscal Reports."*)

### 3. Membership

The composition of the council is key to its effectiveness. Membership begins with recruiting candidates who represent the broad educational needs and backgrounds of the people residing in the county. Councils are responsible for orienting new members to their role and for ongoing training to enhance the ability of members to serve their constituents. *(In-depth information provided in Council Leadership modules: "Recruiting Candidates for Effective County Councils" and "Be an Effective County Council Member.")*

## County Office Staff

Regional extension specialists are employees of the University of Missouri. County extension councils are important participants in the hiring of regional extension specialists assigned to their county, serving on personnel teams that review applications and interviewing candidates. County extension councils also participate in annual performance appraisals for specialists. County extension councils are key partners with the University in determining the assignment of specialist positions in each county and throughout the region. The regional extension council (through which each local council is represented) and the University determine the areas of specialty required within the region to meet the high-priority needs of residents.

Although regional extension specialists are headquartered in a particular county, specialists have multi-county responsibility for educational programming. This structure provides each county with expertise in a number of specialty areas that might otherwise not be available.

In each county, one regional specialist is assigned by the University to fulfill the role of county program director, who serves as a liaison among the county extension council, other regional specialists serving the county, and the University to ensure that

programs meet the county's educational priorities.

Counties also are served by paraprofessionals, who work with the Family Nutrition Education Program and the 4-H Youth Development Program. These staff members are employed by the University, although all or a portion of their salaries may be paid through the extension council. Paraprofessionals are supervised by regional extension specialists.

Clerical staff who support educational programming and office operations are employed by the county extension council and supervised by University personnel.

## Organizational Structure

The University of Missouri and Lincoln University are the state's land-grant universities, established by the federal Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890. The land-grant mission mandates resident instruction, research and service, and it is this mission that distinguishes the University of Missouri and Lincoln University from other colleges and universities in the state. Through extension, the universities fulfill their mission of service by extending science-based information and education to the people of Missouri through county extension centers.

The extension program is administered by the University of Missouri-Columbia. Leading the organization is the Vice Chancellor for Extension and Engagement, who reports to the MU Chancellor, the campus' chief academic officer. While the extension program is administered by MU, extension collaborates with the campuses in Kansas City, Rolla and St. Louis to fulfill the University's mission of service.

Program Directors provide overall leadership for Agriculture and Natural Resources, Business and Industry, Community Devel-

opment, 4-H Youth Development and Human Environmental Sciences, ensuring access to faculty expertise and making educational resources available from the campuses. Across the state, extension is divided into eight administrative regions. Regional directors provide leadership for programming, coordination and evaluation at the county level. Each regional director supervises the work of regional specialists.

At the core of this structure are county extension council members, who ensure that the system works by identifying local educational needs, securing funds and ensuring that the research-based information of the state's land-grant universities is available to people in their communities. Regional extension councils address issues of multi-county or regional concern. Each county extension council is represented on the regional extension council.

The University of Missouri Extension State Council (UMESC) — with representatives from each region — serves as the statewide advisory council, representing the interests

of county extension councils and the people they are elected or appointed to serve. UMESC promotes the common interest of county extension councils by supporting the extension and research programs of the University of Missouri and Lincoln University at all levels of governments and disseminating information about the need for and benefits of extension on the economic, social and environmental well-being of the state and its residents.

## Resources

1. **Revised Statutes of Missouri, 262:550 to 262:620;** (<http://www.moga.state.mo.us/STATUTES/C262.HTM>)
2. **Glossary of Acronyms**
3. **Brief History of Missouri Extension**
4. **Missouri's Open Meetings and Records Law** (<http://ago.misouri.gov/sunshinelaw/sunshinelaw.htm>)
5. **Missouri Extension Council website** — Source for news, information and training materials. (<http://extension.missouri.edu/extcouncil>)

## **County Extension Council Member Position Description**

**Responsibilities:** Elected or appointed to represent the broad educational needs and backgrounds of people residing in the county, council members are the local link between county residents and the University of Missouri. State statutes (*Sections 262.550 to 262.620*) set forth the primary responsibilities of county extension council members:

1. Assist in the planning and delivery of extension education in the county and in making recommendations to the University, as they deem necessary.
2. Make recommendations to the University regarding the appointment or removal of University-employed personnel assigned to the county.
3. Arrange for and administer the county share of the cost of the extension services over which the council has jurisdiction.
4. Receive, hold and /or sell real and personal property reasonably required for the extension program.

**Accountability:** Council members are accountable to county residents.

**Term of Office:** County extension council members serve two-year terms. Individuals may serve two consecutive terms.

### **Qualifications and Requirements:**

1. Citizen of voting age;
2. Interest in the well-being of county residents;
3. Willingness to participate in planning educational programs for county residents;
4. Knowledge of county residents and communities;
5. Attendance at extension council meetings; and
6. Participation on committees that further extension education in the county.