



Volunteer Administration in the 21st Century:

Preparing the Leadership Advisory Board for Success: Advocacy

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Texas Cooperative Extension programs are overseen at the county level by leadership advisory boards. A key responsibility for an Extension leadership advisory board is to serve as an advocate for Extension by helping explain its programs, provide long-term vision for the programs and develop resources for them in each county.

By definition, an advocate pleads for or is in favor of something. Informally, all Extension volunteers, program participants, committee members, youth boards and 4-H members continually serve as advocates of county Extension programs.

However, because of the number and diversity of its educational programs, Extension needs to have a group that advocates for it in a structured and strategic manner. That role falls to the leadership advisory board.

To be effective, advocates must have accurate information about the organizations they support. Therefore, the leadership advisory board must understand Texas Cooperative Extension and the history of the U.S. Cooperative Extension System.

What is Cooperative Extension?

Cooperative Extension is an entity of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Land-Grant University System. It was created to disseminate, explain and promote the practical use of knowledge to improve the quality of life for all citizens in every state.

The Cooperative Extension System employs agents in 3,000 counties across the United States and specialists at each state's land grant university or at regional sites within the state. The agents draw upon their own expertise, the expertise of specialists and the educational resources of the land grant university to provide information and educational programs that address local citizens' issues and problems.

Extension agents and specialists are also linked to regional and national networks and the USDA. This integration of teaching, research and public service enables the Cooperative Extension System to respond to critical, emerging issues in communities and offer research-based information to address those issues.

Legislative foundation

Several federal laws provide the foundation for today's Cooperative Extension System, including two Morrill acts, the Hatch Act, the Smith-Lever Act and two extending legislative actions.

Morrill Act: The Morrill Act of 1862 provided for at least one college in each state to be established in which “the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific or classical studies, to teach such branches as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts.”

For each state, the federal government provided income from public lands—30,000 acres or equivalent in scrip for each representative and senator.

Hatch Act: In 1887, the Hatch Act provided grants to establish agricultural research stations at one land grant college in each state. This established agricultural research as a recognized function of the land grant university.

The findings of these research stations were disseminated to general audiences primarily through Farmers' Institutes. Demonstrations were used as a teaching methodology, and soon “demonstration agents” were being hired with public and private funding.

The nation's first county demonstration agent, W. C. Stallings, was hired in 1906 in Texas. Extension work began to flourish in many states, leading to public support for establishment of an extension system.

Second Morrill Act: In 1890, the Second Morrill Act appropriated more funds for the land grant colleges. To receive the money, a state had to show that race or skin color was not a criterion for admission to the land grant college or to designate a separate land-grant college for black students. The then-segregated Southern States then opened or designated colleges that became known as “the 1890 land grants.”

Smith-Lever Act: The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 provided for cooperation between the USDA and the land grant colleges in conducting agricultural extension work. The law specified that the work “shall consist of instruction and practical demonstration in agriculture and home economics to persons not attending or resident in said colleges in the several communities, and imparting to such persons information on said subjects through field demonstrations, publications and other wise.”

Extending Land-Grant Status: In 1972, a Special Education Amendment extended land grant college status to the U.S. Territories. In 1994, a provision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Reauthorization Act extended this status to 29 Native American colleges throughout the nation.

Texas Cooperative Extension is a true *cooperative* of federal, state and county partners, each of which provides resources to the agency. In Texas, the land grant universities are Texas A&M University and Prairie View A&M University.

Defining the mandates

The Smith-Lever Act and subsequent legislation specified four mandates for Extension work:

- **Serve agriculture and the public:** The Smith-Lever Act gave Extension a very broad clientele base—“the people of the United States”—yet also specified that its programs be concerned with “agriculture and home economics and subjects relating thereto.”
- **Define agriculture broadly:** The term *agriculture* used in the Smith-Lever Act and subsequent legislation included not only the production, processing and marketing of farm and forest products, but also the businesses and industries supplying the resources needed for the production and marketing processes. In a December 8, 1913, report of the House Committee, Representative Lever stated:

“To teach the farmer the best methods of increasing production is exceedingly important, but not more vitally so than is the importance of teaching him the best and most economical methods of distribution. It is not enough to teach him how to grow bigger crops. He must be taught how to get the true value for these bigger crops . . . (The Extension agent) will be expected to give as much thought to the economic side of agriculture—the marketing, standardizing, and grading of farm products—as he gives to the matter of larger acreage yields.”

- **Enhance human development:** The same report defined the role of the Extension agent as one who “is to assume leadership in every movement, whatever it may be, the aim of which is better farming, better living, more happiness, more education and

better citizenship.” This broad leadership challenge was also applied to teaching home economics or home management to farm women and to programs aimed at youth. The underlying mandate is to provide educational programs for individuals and families that will enhance human development and maximize a person’s contribution to society. In this way, Cooperative Extension stimulates national growth by helping the individual.

- **Meet local problems:** Section 8 of the Smith-Lever Act establishes the obligation of Extension to help communities faced with special or unusual hardships. It also acknowledges Extension’s role in working with groups as well as individuals in solving local problems.

These four mandates provide the basis of education in Texas Cooperative Extension and are included in its mission statement:

“To provide quality, relevant outreach and continuing educational programs and services to the people of Texas.”

This mission is carried out by the four major base program areas in Texas Cooperative Extension:

Base Program Areas	Example Programs
Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment	Livestock, crops, pest management, wildlife, natural resources, water, urban landscapes
Family and Consumer Sciences	Nutrition, health, safety, housing, food science, human growth and development, family resource management
4-H and Youth Development	Leadership, community service, character education, agricultural literacy, livestock, food, nutrition, financial planning
Community Resource and Economic Development	Nature tourism, workforce education, community leadership, emergency management

The advocacy message

When relaying the mission of Texas Cooperative Extension, the leadership advisory board should focus on the agency’s four key goals:

- **Education:** Texas Cooperative Extension is an educational institution serving residents in all 254 counties in Texas. County Extension agents work in the areas of agriculture, natural resources, environment, family and consumer sciences, 4-H and youth development, and community resource and economic development. These county agents teach research-based information provided from The Texas A&M University System.
- **Access:** All people in the county have access to the county Extension office and can use the county Extension agent for information based on their individual needs.
- **Relevance:** Texas Cooperative Extension is constantly scanning the environment to determine needs in communities. When evaluating community educational needs, Extension gathers input from county stakeholders, elected officials program area committees, leadership advisory boards and Texas Cooperative Extension’s subject-matter specialists. The programs created to address these issues are also closely monitored through a strategic plan that is adjusted annually to ensure that local needs are being met.
- **Links:** Texas Cooperative Extension links federal, state and county partners. All three partners are essential for the design, implementation and evaluation of educational programs for the people of Texas.

Summary

One of the major responsibilities of an Extension leadership advisory board is advocacy. If Texas Cooperative Extension is to be effective, the leadership advisory board must be properly equipped to “tell the agency story.” This starts with a firm understanding of Cooperative Extension, Texas Cooperative Extension and the relationship the agency has with federal, state, and county governments.

For more information on leadership advisory boards or any volunteer item in Texas Cooperative Extension, please visit: <http://texasvolunteer.tamu.edu/>.

For more information

“Brief Historical Perspective of Cooperative Extension,” Pennsylvania State University College of Agricultural Sciences, retrieved from <http://www.cas.psu.edu/> on September 5, 2005.

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From the Top Down: The Executive Role in Volunteer Program Success, by Susan J. Ellis. Energize, Inc., 1996.

“A People and a Spirit: Report of the Joint USDA-NASULGC Study Committee on Cooperative Extension,” Colorado State University, November 1968.

Taking the University to the People: 75 Years of Cooperative Extension, by Wayne D. Rasmussen. Iowa State University Press, 1989.

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Preparing the Leadership Advisory Board for Success: ADVOCACY

- ___ 1. An organizational entity of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Land-Grant University System created under provisions of the Smith-Lever Act (1914) and subsequent related legislation.
- ___ 2. Provided for at least one college in each state to be established where “the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific or classical studies, to teach such branches as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts.”
- ___ 3. Established Cooperative Extension.
- ___ 4. To plead or be in favor of something you support.
- ___ 5. States had to show that race or color was not a criterion for admission, or designate a separate land-grant college for blacks in order to receive the money.
- ___ 6. One of the institutions established under the Morrill Act of 1862.
- ___ 7. One of the institutions established under the Morrill Act of 1890.
- ___ 8. Established agricultural research stations at one land grant college in each state. This established agricultural research as a recognized function of the land grant university.

A. Cooperative Extension

B. Advocate

C. Texas A&M University

D. Morrill Act (1890)

E. Prairie View A&M University

F. Morrill Act (1862)

G. Smith Lever Act (1914)

H. Hatch Act (1887)

Don't Look at answers until you're done!

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Visit Texas Cooperative Extension at <http://texasextension.tamu.edu>

Educational programs conducted by Texas Cooperative Extension serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, handicap or national origin.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, Acts of Congress of May 8, 1914, as amended, and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. Edward G. Smith, Director, Texas Cooperative Extension, The Texas A&M University System.

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