

Response from Kyle Smith at Texas A&M Extension Service

Provided by James Williams

1. Are there legislative requirements in your state that require counties to help fund extension and/or extension programs?

Article 164, Vernon's Civil Statutes, is derived from Acts of the Legislature passed in 1911, 1917, and 1927. This Article authorizes the Commissioners' Court of any county of this State to establish and conduct co-operative demonstration work in agriculture and home economics in co-operation with the Texas A&M University, upon such terms and conditions as may be agreed upon by the Commissioners' Court and the agents of the Texas A&M University and may employ such means, and may appropriate and expend such sums of money as may be necessary to establish effectively and carry on such demonstration work in agriculture and home economics in their respective counties.

2. Is there an assigned specific level of funding by each county or does it vary and depend on the county and its' needs from extension?

There is a minimum level of salary support required for each county position. The total amount of funding provided by the county in support of salaries, travel and operations varies with each of the 254 counties in Texas.

3. Who makes that determination and how does the level of funding get determined?

Decisions regarding funding levels in support of the Extension program are negotiated between the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service District Extension Administrator, Associate Director for County Programs and the County Commissioners' Court.

4. What are the major obstacles that you experience in securing funds at the County level?

County Commissioners' Courts in Texas are encountering the same funding shortfalls as the State and Federal Government due to the down turn in the economy. With Cooperative Extension not being a mandated program, funding shortfalls often result in reduced funding support for county Extension programs.

5. In your jurisdiction, at the County level, who/what are the key funding sources that you pursue? County/Municipality Government? School District ? Public Utilities? Public-Private Partnerships? Associations? Grant Writing? Private Donations? Etc.?

The primary funding source at the county level is from the Commissioners' Court. In some cases, specific program support and/or support for events/activities is secured through donors and sponsors.

6. What accountability is required for ensuring that funds are appropriately used by the State Extension service. Do the counties hold you accountable for use of the funds? Do you provide feedback to the counties on use of the funds?

The funding provided in support of county Extension programs in Texas by Commissioners' Courts stays in the county and is not sent to Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. County Extension Agents are required to submit monthly reports to the Commissioners Court outlining their work accomplishments which provides justification for the funding support.

7. What happens to ensure that funding is requested/provided for the next budget cycle.

Annual budget request are formally presented and approved by the Commissioners' Court either on a fiscal year or calendar year basis.

8. Is there a review process at the state level to ensure that funds are being requested for appropriate activities that support extension.

The Associate Director for County Programs and Chief Financial Officer review the budget requests as well as the final approved budget for each county on an annual basis.

9. Annually, do you experience a shifting in funding sources based on changes in the economic, environmental and political climate? How do you stay tuned in to those shifting funding sources?

For the most part, the level of funding support provided by the Commissioners' Courts does not vary to a great extent from year to year. It is the responsibility of the District Extension Administrator to maintain close contact with the county Extension staff and report any potential funding shortfalls to the Associate Director for County Programs.

10. Who is responsible and what resources do you use to initiate fundraising at the County level? Extension staff? Volunteers? Advisory Board members? Etc.?

Fund raising at the county level in Texas is done to support specific events and/or activities and is not done to support the overall county Extension Program. Program committee members, volunteers and 4-H leaders assist Extension staff in conducting these events.

11. Do you conduct fundraising year round or are their specific time frames in which you pursue fund raising?

Fund raising in support of specific events/activities is done year round.

12. What marketing tools/materials/techniques do you use in your fundraising initiatives? What works well for you in messaging your needs for funding support?

Marketing tools/materials/techniques used for fund raising initiatives vary from county to county. The AgriLife Communication Unit assists in the development of these type resources for statewide programs.