

Response from Amy Hedges at University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension  
Submitted by: Tony E. Windham, Ph.D.

**Provided by Bob Guinn June 2013**

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

No.

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?

Our current uniform funding plan sets a minimum flat rate contribution from each county based on the number of county agents and paraprofessionals. The plan does not have a mechanism to adjust the rate for inflation.

Counties must also provide appropriate office space, janitorial services, utilities and phone service.

Counties that had two offices at the time uniform funding was implemented and wish to retain the second office are assessed an additional annual fee. They are required to have 2 agents and 1 full-time secretary in the main office and 1 agent and secretary in the sub-office.

Additional funding is provided based on negotiations between counties and local Extension agents.

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

The current uniform funding plan was established in 2002. It was developed by a committee of Extension administrators (state and county) and county judges. There is a base level of 2 agents per county. Additional agents and paraprofessionals must be mutually agreed upon by the county and Extension.

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

Differences in fiscal capacity across counties can be challenging. Also, because county agents are responsible for securing local funding, agent turnover can impact the process. Finally, from time to time, we experience difficulties in filling vacancies due to a lack of qualified applicants or fiscal constraints caused by fluctuations and uncertainty regarding state and federal funding. Sometimes this leads to tension with county governments, particularly during budget negotiations.

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.?

County government is the primary local source. In a few instances we have been able to secure funding from municipalities. We also actively pursue grants, private donations, and other funding on a case-by-case basis depending on local needs and relationships.

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?

We enter a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with each county specifying the roles and responsibilities of each party. County agents and local advisory groups (county extension councils) are expected to share information with county officials and other stakeholders about the scope and impact of county programs. Methods for doing so vary by county. In addition, Extension, as part of the University of Arkansas System adheres to all required state reporting and auditing regulations.

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

County administrators (staff chairs) have responsibility for working with county officials to secure funding each year. An MOA is signed by the county judge and

Extension director. Invoices are issued by Extension and payments are made by counties on a quarterly basis.

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

Prior to signing the MOA, district administrators review county funding commitments to ensure adequacy for county programs.

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?

Like other states, we have experienced some cuts and significant uncertainty in federal funding with respect to both formula and competitive funds. State funding has remained relatively flat over the past few years. Administration maintains regular dialogue with state legislators and other key stakeholders year-round, with more intensive engagement during annual legislative sessions. Competition for grant and other funding continues to increase and is monitored by personnel historically connected to those funding sources as opposed to systematic monitoring.

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

County Extension staff holds primary responsibility for soliciting funds to support local programs. We have a sponsored programs office that can provide support and guidance in these efforts. County agents are encouraged to engage their county extension council and affiliated volunteer groups for assistance in these efforts as well.

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

Outside the time frames for county, state, and federal budget cycles, there is no official time frame in which we emphasize fundraising.

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?

We provide templates to develop county impact reports. Beyond that, efforts are primarily driven by individual relationships.

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