

# **PROFESSIONAL GROWTH**

**A Workbook for  
Planning Personal Development**

The University of Tennessee  
Extension  
Institute of Agriculture

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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**THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE  
EXTENSION**

**Professional Development Plan for Extension Professionals**

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# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR EXTENSION PROFESSIONALS

## Introduction

The University of Tennessee Extension is committed to enabling all professional staff members to achieve their fullest potential, both as individuals and as members of the Extension community. We believe that by supporting staff members in professional growth opportunities, we improve job performance as well as increase levels of personal satisfaction. In short, involvement in professional development activities results in both individual and organizational benefits.

Planning for professional growth is an important part of our professional responsibility. Such planning means that we look beyond the present and take a holistic look at our professional careers. As with any major undertaking, we must articulate the goals of our efforts prior to selecting activities that will enable us to reach those goals. Although we take a long-term perspective in planning for career development and professional growth, we must maintain flexibility to make adjustments in our plans along the way.

You can work to create your future (proactive) or you can let the future happen to you (reactive). This workbook provides you with the opportunity to be proactive and will assist you on your path of professional excellence.

## Expectations and Responsibilities

There are two expectations for the professional development of personnel in UT Extension. These expectations explain the mutual enhancement that is necessary for good work between the employee and the organization.

The first expectation is that Extension faculty will grow in their profession; that they will continually maintain a "cutting edge" state of knowledge that includes technical, people, and process knowledge and skills. Faculty will see this as a career rather than just the work they must do. Many privileges and opportunities are provided by the Extension organization and The University of Tennessee, but it is important for the individual to recognize the need for, and be willing to invest time and resources in the improvement of personal and professional capacity. The initiative for professional development will come primarily from the individual. However, it is an individual's immediate supervisor who must assume the primary responsibility for assisting the individual in determining training needs through the normal appraisal and counseling process. In Tennessee Extension, everyone is expected to have a professional development plan.

Second, it is expected that the organization will offer guidance, growth opportunities, time, and some financial support, when available, for the professional development of staff. To justify the Extension and university investment in the privileges associated with professional development for the individual, there must ultimately be greater contribution to programs deemed significant by clientele. Administrative decisions related to the support of individual professional development

activities will be based on potential use of the experience by the individual for program as well as personal enhancement.

It is important to remember that there can be many different paths to the same professional development targets. No two individuals will travel the same path the same way at the same time.

### **Types of Staff Development**

Each individual professional development plan will be built on a combination of experiences. Extension staff need a variety of professional development opportunities which will maintain and strengthen professional competencies. The following opportunities described in the National Policy Guidelines for Staff Development, may be included in your plan.

#### Orientation (Level I Training)

Regardless of previous training, education, and experience, staff need an appropriate introduction to the job. Learning experiences for new personnel, generally referred to as orientation, begin the first day on the job and continue through the first few years of employment. The objectives of an orientation program are to enable beginning Extension employees to accept their responsibilities with confidence, to understand what is expected of them, and to feel secure in their work environment.

The exact content and nature of the experiences must be individualized to the background of the staff member and the requirements of the particular position assignment. Just as important as orientation for new personnel is orientation of experienced employees who have been promoted or reassigned to new job responsibilities. Training designed to facilitate the transition should be planned. The benefits of an orientation program include:

- Staff become effective and productive more rapidly.
- Staff learn more quickly to achieve standards of performance and job expectations, thus increasing their value to the organization while also satisfying human needs for personal growth.

Staff needs will differ. However, all personnel will likely have educational needs in each of the following areas:

- Extension philosophy, history, organization, policies and internal procedures, including those which assure equal opportunity in programs and employment.
- The methods and procedures essential for planning, implementing, evaluating and reporting Extension programs.

- Roles and relationships within the Extension system.
- Relationships with the total university and external agencies.
- Human, technical and other support resources available.
- Personnel policies, procedures, expectations and performance criteria related to specific work involved in the assigned position.
- Staff development and career opportunities available for future growth and development.

These needs may be met through learning experiences organized on an individual and/or group basis. In all aspects of orientation, the immediate supervisor is responsible for assuring that needed learning opportunities are provided and utilized. Staff development personnel should provide leadership in assisting administration in developing policies and procedures and should assist in designing orientation programs with supervisors and appropriate other persons. Staff development experiences should be coordinated to provide sequence, continuity, integration and timeliness.

Effective orientation programs are an essential part of a strong professional development program. Such programs are invaluable for creating a healthy organizational "esprit de corps." This often results in future informal contacts among participants to seek and share information, to get and give guidance and moral support which leads to establishing many on-going working relationships.

Additional information regarding Tennessee's orientation program, policy, procedures and responsibilities may be found in the TAES Staff Development Plan, dated October 1, 1992.

#### In-Service Education (Levels II and III)

Changing environmental situations and opportunities necessitate new programs, new methods, and new and increased abilities of staff members. An ever expanding knowledge base, new technology and increasingly diverse clientele groups demand continuous adjustment in Extension personnel. A comprehensive staff development program should provide sufficient opportunities for staff to maintain and enhance technical knowledge and process skills to assure a continuous high level of competence and to uphold the Agricultural Extension Service's reputation as a highly respected and trusted educational institution.

Experienced staff members need inservice education to assist them with the following:

- To further develop technical subject matter competencies to keep abreast of and, if possible, ahead of change.
- To increase competencies in program development, educational methodology and communication processes, including use of electronic media as appropriate to program responsibilities.

- To enhance ability to communicate with Extension's various public(s) as appropriate to their position responsibilities.
- To become more effective in working with and through existing leaders and to develop leadership abilities in others.
- To build the analytical skills needed to inventory and assess the human, physical, economic, social and political resources and trends critical to decision making.
- To take a broader view and yet focus more sharply on particular Extension role responsibilities and update approaches to carrying out responsibilities.
- To acquire the capacity to deal with changing situations.

In exploring both group and individual opportunities for continued learning, both non-traditional and traditional approaches should be considered. Staff development programs can be used as models for introducing educational methodology which participants can later adapt and use.

The Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service provides two levels of inservice training to meet the needs of its employees. Level II inservice is an intensive educational program for new and reassigned agents. It is designed to overcome agents' deficiencies in subject matter knowledge and skills needed in their newly assigned responsibilities. Level III inservice is designed to provide experienced staff needed updating to enhance their technical and professional capabilities. Additional information, policies and procedures related to inservice training may be found in the TAES Staff Development Plan, dated October 1, 1992.

### Graduate Education

As an integral part of a university system and to serve Extension clientele more effectively, staff must attain academic excellence. The technical knowledge and process skills derived from graduate study add to staff capacity to meet clientele needs and increase their stature among professional colleagues and clientele. Therefore, a comprehensive staff development program should provide opportunities for staff to engage in continuing education through graduate study programs and their formal professional development activities.

Full-time UT Extension faculty/staff, who have successfully completed at least two years on the job, may be eligible to apply for graduate study in Agricultural and Extension Education or other job related programs. Staff applying must be either working on a Master's degree or have had the Master's degree for at least five years. Individuals fitting the latter case (i.e., completed the M.S. five or more years earlier) may participate in graduate courses for professional improvement, if approved through regular channels. Agents attending may earn up to six semester hours per session while on full salary and with a waiver of fees.

Upon successful completion of seven years of employment with the UT Extension, faculty/staff may be granted educational leave to pursue a doctoral degree program. Educational leave for full-time study may be granted for up to 15 months with one-half UT pay and other benefits as outlined in the Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual.

Additional information, policies and procedures related to graduate education may be found in the TAES Staff Development Plan, dated October 1, 1992, pages 7-8 and/or the Human Resources Policies, HR0330 and HR0335.

### Professional Development

A comprehensive staff development program includes support for short-term individual professional experiences which are not as extensive as the graduate education programs or inservice education programs sponsored by the organization. Educational programs tailored to meet individual needs have far greater flexibility in content and scheduling than group inservice education can provide. There is exceptional opportunity for staff to take advantage of professional development experiences to pursue individual career development goals.

The University of Tennessee provides some opportunities and/or financial support for such activities. Current opportunities are available from the UT Training and Development office. Career Development Fund applications are available from the UT Web site (under the Faculty & Staff link).

### Other Opportunities

*Journals, Books and Periodicals:* Most Extension professionals have developed their own personal libraries of professional journals, books and periodicals in keeping with their professional interests and job assignments. In addition, many offices have small Extension program-oriented libraries.

Personal library materials are the financial responsibility of the individual. However, journals, books and periodicals needed as resource materials related to programs may be purchased from county or state budgets with approval of the individual's supervisor. Such materials become the property of UT Extension and should become a part of the office library.

Books may be purchased at a discount from The University of Tennessee Bookstore by University employees. In addition, books may be checked out of the UT library for a convenient length of time. Many useful journals and periodicals are also available at the library.

The Journal of Extension is the official, professional Extension publication. The Journal serves as the in-house publication reporting research in informal educational methods and program development. On this basis, it is applicable to all Extension workers, regardless of their role and responsibility in the organization. Individual copies of the Journal of Extension and the Extension Review (published by the Extension System, Washington, D.C.) are provided to all staff when officially appointed to their position.

*Professional Associations:* Membership in appropriate professional associations is encouraged. National associations are available in the technical areas of concern to Extension specialists and the broad subject matter of concern to Extension agents. County, area and state specialists may find it helpful to belong to and participate in their appropriate subject matter association. All staff are encouraged to join and participate in the Tennessee Association of Extension 4-H Agents, Tennessee Association of Extension Family & Consumer Scientists, Tennessee Association of Agricultural Agents and Specialists and/or Epsilon Sigma Phi. Official travel leave policies and procedures should be reviewed prior to making plans to attend state or national professional meetings.

## **The Role of UT in Professional Development**

### Guidance

Many Extension faculty/staff can be called on for guidance in designing and executing your plan. Above all, keep your immediate supervisors apprised of any plans you are making.

Regional directors and/or regional program leaders are responsible for assisting county staff in developing and implementing their professional development plan. Each individual's plan will become a part of the employee's file and will be reviewed and updated annually as part of the performance appraisal process.

All new county employees will complete their professional development plan prior to the end of their first year of employment as part of their Level I orientation. The plan should be developed after considering the individual's goals and aspirations, educational background and experience, present job responsibilities, and the needs of the Extension organization. After the plan has been developed and approved by his/her regional director, the individual will receive a copy, one copy will remain in the employee's file in the regional office.

Area, regional and state staff will develop their plans in consultation with their immediate supervisor. After the plan has been approved, a copy will go to the individual and one copy to his/her immediate supervisor.

### Professional Development Resources

At times there will be financial support available to help you accomplish your goals. University scholarships and loan applications can be completed. Outside organizations may have support monies available for specific workshops. UT Extension may provide financial support for appropriate knowledge and skill acquisition. Contact the regional office or the Extension Evaluation and Staff Development Department for information on potential resources. In all cases, the requested resources should be consistent with the individual's professional development plan.

The time necessary for professional development activities may be official leave, educational leave, or sabbatical leave. Consult present policies and procedures for further information.

## Performance Appraisal

Within the UT Extension performance appraisal document, you will find references to your professional development. In preparation for your annual performance appraisal, you will be asked to put in writing specific goals. It is important to consider your own career goals and planning as a prerequisite to being effective with your clientele. During your appraisal process, your plan and your agent profile will be reviewed to determine progress and future direction.

## Sustained Superior Performance

To achieve designation as a top performer over time, on the cutting edge in your field, you will need regular, significant, professional development accomplishments that fit the goals defined in your performance appraisal document.

### **The Importance of a Plan**

#### Benefits of Planning

A professional development plan provides you with a system and process that can help you plan for the future. Some of the specific benefits are:

- To help you determine where you want to go and what you need to do to get there.
- To provide an opportunity to discuss career and professional development goals with colleagues who can offer ideas, support and feedback.
- To reinforce the concept of "everything's possible" and that goals aren't overwhelming if tackled step-by-step. The plan makes goals manageable.
- To assist you in preparing information and plans for promotion, tenure, annual performance appraisal, honors and awards, professional leave, and building your resume and vita.
- To help you determine needs for inservice training and professional development.
- To assist you in planning for lateral or vertical career opportunities within Extension.

## Steps in Carrying Out a Plan

Although there are various approaches to carrying out a professional development plan, five basic steps are useful:

*Step 1 -- Take charge of your own life.* It's the responsibility of each of us to take steps to increase our self-insight, plan our own future, assess our career and professional growth, and focus on our targets and goals.

*Step 2 -- Engage in mind, body and spirit stretching.* In this step, one should recognize the importance of having new experiences for one's mind, body and spirit. Branch out into interdisciplinary approaches in learning and living. Develop new linkages with people, organizations and activities that develop new insights and experiences. This takes visionary attitude which will involve risk.

*Step 3 -- Inventory your life.* Each of us needs to periodically inventory our capabilities, our desires, and our resources. In this process, it is helpful to review the constraints on our lives as well as our achievements.

*Step 4 -- Develop an action plan.* In any integration of career and personal growth, each of us needs an action plan that involves setting targets and re-examining our lifestyles to determine if it contributes to our goals. In this action plan, one reviews past learning experiences and develops lifelong learning plans for personal educational experiences, challenges, and opportunities.

*Step 5 -- Plan for support, review and evaluation.* We need to identify and value the support of significant others in our life...those friends and colleagues who can give us feedback on our behavior, competencies and limitations. We need to evaluate our new directions to assess meaningfulness and satisfaction. We recommend building into one's life spontaneous celebrations of achievements and successes to reinforce the value of continuous growth.

## Setting Goals, Accomplishing Goals

Your accomplishments will be determined by your ability to direct your day-to-day actions toward clearly defined, measurable goals. Self-esteem does not come from plans; it comes from accomplishments!

A story from Lewis Carroll's "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" captures this point:

"Cheshire Puss," she began rather timidly, "would you tell me, please, which way ought I go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the cat.

"I don't much care where," said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the cat.

One of the most frequent reasons for not setting goals is the conscious or subconscious fear of failure. If one doesn't set goals, one can't fail. Not so -- the clearest failures of the future will be those who can't move ahead, can't risk. In a rapidly changing society, no career can stand still for long. Even if you're on the right track, if you're not moving forward you'll be run over.

After you have planned and defined your goals, there are several actions you can take to "stay on task." First, be sure your goals are so clear that you will know when or whether you have accomplished them. Second, write them out on a card. Give your goals top priority by keeping the card visible on your desk every day. You may also wish to carry the card with you. Third, visualize, in your mind with your eyes closed, the successful results of accomplishing your goal. Spend 3-5 minutes daily recalling your goals and visualizing the positive results of success.

## **The Plan**

### **Dreaming**

Nearly everyone spends time dreaming of what they'd like to be later in their life. Some act to achieve their dreams. Some focus their life on their dream.

Some dreams are realistic, others are truly "fairy tales." Yet many great and small accomplishments begin with dreams. Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech and the inspiration those lines provided to so many, are as well known as his accomplishments.

What are your career dreams? Write some key words here that will help you remember your dreams.

### **Professional Development Ideas**

The following questions and/or statements are for your personal use--to help you think about what works best for you and what needs you have for professional development. Reading through these items will prepare you for actually writing down your professional development plan. These items are incomplete. You will have good ideas that are not listed. Include them in your plan.

A. Delivery Preferences

1. Which methods/approaches do you feel are most effective for your professional development? (Check as many as apply)

- 1. Group workshops
- 2. Self-paced instruction
- 3. Mentoring/coaching
- 4. University courses
- 5. Training with follow-up
- 6. Seminars
- 7. Lectures
- 8. Professional meetings
- 9. On-the-job work experience
- 10. Field trips
- 11. Conferences
- 12. Other (identify) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Which formats for professional development do you prefer? (Check as many as apply)

- 1. Intensive activities
- 2. All day
- 3. Weekend
- 4. Extended-over-time activities
- 5. Once a week
- 6. Once a month
- 7. Three hour blocks
- 8. Individualized with follow-up
- 9. Weekly visits
- 10. Monthly visits
- 11. Other (identify) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Which time periods are most conducive to effective professional development for you? (Check as many as apply)

- 1. Weekday
- 2. Weekend day
- 3. Early morning
- 4. Late afternoon
- 5. Early afternoon
- 6. Evening
- 7. Other (identify) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Which time of year would you most prefer professional development activities to be scheduled?

- |       |    |          |       |     |           |
|-------|----|----------|-------|-----|-----------|
| _____ | 1. | January  | _____ | 7.  | July      |
| _____ | 2. | February | _____ | 8.  | August    |
| _____ | 3. | March    | _____ | 9.  | September |
| _____ | 4. | April    | _____ | 10. | October   |
| _____ | 5. | May      | _____ | 11. | November  |
| _____ | 6. | June     | _____ | 12. | December  |

5. How much time are you willing to spend traveling to professional development activities?

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Less than 1 hour
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. 1-2 hours
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. 3-4 hours
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. More than 4 hours

6. How would you like your professional development needs met?

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Local resource personnel
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Consultants
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Instructors at my institution
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Business and industry personnel
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Teacher educators
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Other (identify) \_\_\_\_\_

7. What incentives would encourage you to participate in professional development activities. Rank top three with 1 being top priority and 3 being least.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Certification (CEC's)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Academic credits
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Increase in salary
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Technical growth
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Personal and professional growth
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Public recognition
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Other (identify) \_\_\_\_\_

B. Program Development (Check those goals you need to include in your professional development plan)

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Writing (preparing) measurable objectives.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Developing better lesson outlines.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Knowledge of alternative instructional strategies and their implementation; for example,
  - Computer-managed instruction
  - Competency/outcome-based education
  - Development of self-instructional modules.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Preparing presentations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Designing and organizing demonstration activities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Writing and developing valid, reliable evaluations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Writing outcome/impact statements.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Conducting research.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Analyzing evaluation results.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Modifying packaged programs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Eliminating discrimination and stereotyping in programs and materials.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Environmental scanning.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Writing newsletters.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Writing press releases.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Planning interdisciplinary approaches.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. Writing issue statements.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. Futuring
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. Other (identify) \_\_\_\_\_

C. Delivery Strategies (Check those areas where you wish to become more effective)

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Determining the most effective audio-visual materials and/or equipment.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Simulation/role playing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Using community resources as teaching tools.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Applying learning theory to instruction.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Structuring interdisciplinary programs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Utilizing paraprofessionals and volunteers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Motivating participants.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Utilizing interdisciplinary team approaches.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Utilizing group process skills.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Facilitating positive self-concepts.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Effectively using advisory committees.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Conducting committee meetings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Being an effective committee member/chairman.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Writing proposals for funding.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Other (identify) \_\_\_\_\_

D. Outreach (Check those areas where you wish to become more effective)

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Assisting small businesses.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Improving public speaking.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Improving consultation skills.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Writing for publication.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Working with or managing volunteer/service group activities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Developing business/industry/educators partnerships.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Implementing effective research.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Other (identify) \_\_\_\_\_

E. Personal Development (Check those areas where you wish to become more effective)

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Balancing career and personal life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Managing time.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Improving human relation skills.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Keeping abreast of new technology.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Improving physical fitness.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Learning to recognize and handle stress.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Managing stress.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Other (identify) \_\_\_\_\_

F. Technical Subject Matter Knowledge (List subject matter areas where you presently have deficiencies which must be removed)

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_



3. What are your strengths as you now see them?

4. What are your weaknesses as you now see them?

## **Developing Your Action Plan**

Now for your plan. Keep in mind the importance of moving ahead with this--right now! Several of the next seven pages will become a part of your Professional Development Plan. Other items are included here for planning purposes.

### **Long-Term Career Goals**

It is important to have a job that is both challenging and satisfying. We each need to identify future career directions that will be best for us 5-10 years from now and beyond. This may include a change in program direction, a different assignment or location with Extension or a job in another organization. Your goal should be clear and concise. It may be helpful to visit with your supervisor or an Extension administrator to explore specific opportunities within Extension.

1. Career goal or goals (no more than three--one may be sufficient).

2. Knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes necessary to achieve goal (if more than one goal, match these to the number of the goal under #1.).

3. Resources I will need (list by goal number).

4. Time line (one for each goal).

### SHORT TERM PROFESSIONAL/PERSONAL GOALS

Here is your opportunity to develop short-term goals, those that may be accomplished within the next year. They may, for instance, be needs that have been identified in your performance appraisal or things you've wanted to do during the last year but didn't get accomplished. These may be professional goals such as "learn how to organize and work with a program advisory committee" or "increase my knowledge and skills in the area of Family Financial Management." Or they may be personal goals related to your job: e.g., "improve my time and office management skills" or "work toward the completion of my Master's degree."

Goal 1:			
How to Accomplish	Resources Needed	When Target Date      Completion Date	What evidence will reflect completion?

Goal 2:

How to Accomplish	Resources Needed	When Target Date      Completion Date	What evidence will reflect completion?

Goal 3:

How to Accomplish	Resources Needed	When Target Date      Completion Date	What evidence will reflect completion?

Record of Professional Development/Continuing Education

Record of Committee Appointments

## Barriers

What barriers, threats and distractions are most likely to deter you from reaching your goals?

How will you overcome those barriers, threats, and distractions?