Agency Overview

Extending Knowledge. Providing Solutions. Changing Lives. For a century, these have been the hallmarks of extension education, a unique American innovation to help people prosper.

In 1914, the federal Smith-Lever Act established extension education as a means for the nation’s land-grant universities to serve the people—by extending the benefits of trusted research beyond the laboratory and classroom, into everyday living. Thus began the national Cooperative Extension system and the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

To support extension education, the Smith-Lever Act made cooperative funding possible among the federal, state, and local levels of government. By leveraging appropriations and engaging with researchers, partners, collaborators, and volunteers, AgriLife Extension maximizes its capacity to deliver lifelong learning opportunities to the people of Texas.

Established: In 1915, the Texas Legislature established a state education agency, as authorized by the Smith-Lever Act, that is known today as the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

Mission: To improve the lives of people, businesses, and communities across Texas and beyond through high quality, relevant education.

Grand Challenges: As we celebrate the centennial of our founding legislation, extension educators join other members of Texas A&M AgriLife to address five grand challenges of the 21st century:

  - Feeding Our World
  - Protecting Our Environment
  - Improving Our Health
  - Enriching Our Youth
  - Growing Our Economy

Program Delivery Network: AgriLife Extension employs more than 785 professional educators. Extension county agents act as resident educators, working from 250 county offices to serve all 254 counties. Their local presence is supported by extension specialists and other professionals based at headquarters and 14 research and extension centers.

This delivery network enhances the state’s ability to address diverse contemporary and emerging issues that affect Texans. And it provides valuable infrastructure for joint programs with hundreds of other organizations and government agencies.

To extend this network, we train and work with volunteers. The number of volunteers we can manage, and hence the value of this extra return on investment, directly correlates with our staffing level. In 2013, a total of 96,794 extension volunteers contributed 4.86 million hours of service. That equated to a full-time workforce of 2,567.

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Most extension specialists are affiliated with an academic department of Texas A&M University. However, many specialists and most other extension personnel are located across the state, outside our headquarters.

The chart below depicts AgriLife Extension’s staffing for fiscal year 2014. The total workforce of 1,816 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions is comprised of 1,441 FTEs budgeted by the agency (including 29% funded through contracts, grants, and other sources), supported by another 375 county-funded personnel who work in extension county offices.

**Expertise:** Our personnel have expertise and conduct programs that encompass the broad areas of:

- production, marketing, and policy in the food, fiber, greenhouse, nursery, and timber industries;
- natural resources, the environment, and wildlife services;
- family and consumer sciences;
- human nutrition and health;
- 4-H and youth development; and
- community economic development.

**Collaboration:** AgriLife Extension collaborates with Texas A&M AgriLife Research, other members of The Texas A&M System, and many external organizations. External groups often seek AgriLife Extension’s outreach capability. Some joint activities arise from contracts, grants, the law, legislative mandates, and memoranda of understanding.

Collaborative programs enable extension educators and their partners to extend resources and prevent duplication of services. For 2012, planned extension programs involved a total of 208 collaborators—diverse private sector and nonprofit entities—and hundreds of school districts.

**Program Development and Delivery Process:** Three aspects of Extension’s program development and delivery process are essential to success: our network of educators and volunteers, our collaboration with other agencies and organizations, and the involvement of local people.
Texans decide what AgriLife Extension should do for them and guide program implementation at the local level. Citizen-led advisory boards and program committees accomplish this in coordination with county agents. These volunteers participate along with other Texans in a periodic, statewide needs assessment. We also engage in ongoing communications at all levels with stakeholder groups, state and federal agencies, local and regional planning groups, and elected officials.

Based on locally-identified issues and priorities, we determine key educational areas in which to focus development of new extension program pilots, curricula, and resources. However, the combination of programs implemented locally may range from "traditional" to "cutting edge," given the varying needs, stages of adoption, and creativity of local citizens and communities.

Extension programs historically have employed demonstrations of new technology and applied research on farms and ranches and in the home. Methods to facilitate learning for large groups and urban audiences include field days, workshops, short courses, newsletters, teleconferencing, online interactive programs, and the use of master volunteers. Websites and other electronic media make our educational information as accessible as possible.

In total, extension personnel and extension-trained volunteers achieved 25 million direct teaching contacts, including distance education via the Web, in fiscal year 2013. Among youth between the ages of 5 and 18, nearly 600,000 participate annually in Texas 4-H and our other youth programs. A majority of participants come from urban areas, including most of the youth engaged in 4-H school enrichment curricula. External support yields $2.3 million yearly in college scholarships for 4-H members.

Technical Services: Our agency also administers several technical services that it is uniquely positioned to provide. These include soil analysis, water testing, pest identification, and plant disease diagnosis. Effective September 1, 2003, AgriLife Extension was assigned the functions and personnel of the former Texas Wildlife Damage Management Service, which we call our Wildlife Services unit.
Related to workforce and economic development, AgriLife Extension offers technical certification and training that annually serve thousands of people who render important community services. Often these service providers must obtain mandatory education to obtain or keep a job, or start and stay in business.

**Budget:** Extension education exists in each state through a financial partnership between the federal government (USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture), county and other local governments, and state government. At AgriLife Extension, every state dollar is leveraged by another $1.40 in federal and county appropriations and contracts, grants, and user fees. The charts below show the sources and uses of fiscal year 2014 funds available to the agency. Funding from County Commissioners Courts is retained locally and administered in support of extension education by each court.

![Available Funding Chart](chart1.png)

**Available Funding, Budgeted Fiscal Year 2014**

- **Total 143 Million**
  - State General Revenue; $59 million (42%)
  - Federal Smith-Lever; $12 million (8%)
  - County Funds; $33 million (23%)
  - Contracts, Grants, & User Fees; $39 million (27%)

![Distribution of Resources Chart](chart2.png)

**Distribution of Resources by Program Area, Fiscal Year 2014**

- **56%** 4-H, Youth Development & Human Sciences
- **39%** Agriculture and Natural Resources
- **5%** Wildlife Services
- **5%** Land Grant System: USDA-state-county partnership in Extension

Note: Fiscal and staffing numbers reported herein represent agency status upon approval of the operating budget for fiscal year 2014. County court contributions are estimated from annual reports by the counties.

**Summary:** The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service strives to provide quality, relevant outreach and continuing education programs and services to the people of Texas. The need for life-long learning can be served by extension education—proven programs that serve the public good and educate people for self-improvement, individual action, and problem-solving.