



# Commissioners Handbook

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## Chapter 136: Ohio State University Extension

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### 1 Mission of Ohio State University Extension

As the community-based outreach arm of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES) at The Ohio State University, OSU Extension delivers knowledge from Ohio State to every county in Ohio and brings people and ideas together to help CFAES sustain life.

Since 1914, OSU Extension has worked with families and children, community leaders, and elected officials to help all Ohioans build better lives, better businesses, and better communities.

**Our Vision:** Because of OSU Extension, Ohioans have the **knowledge** and **resources** they need to **actively engage** in creating conditions in which they **thrive**.

**Our Mission:** We create **opportunities** for people to explore how **science-based knowledge** can **improve social, economic, and environmental conditions**.

Ohio State University Extension fulfills the land-grant mission of The Ohio State University by interpreting knowledge and research developed by Extension and other CFAES faculty and staff, others across the university, and partner land-grant universities – so Ohioans can apply science and practical advice to create sensible and realistic solutions to current issues.

The Extension system is the world's largest non-formal educational system. Extension's hallmark is programming delivered by professionals to address the needs of the local community while also addressing state, national, and global issues. Our educational programs combine the needs of local citizens and communities with new research and technical information.

No matter which county you visit, you can find people who are helped by the four major OSU Extension program areas: family and consumer sciences, 4-H youth development, community development, and agriculture and natural resources. These program areas

– and many other special topics – are continuously being evaluated and updated to meet the changing needs and issues facing each community.

OSU Extension professionals currently work to meet local needs in six broad priority areas:

- Health and wellness;
- Workforce development;
- Thriving across the life span;
- Sustainable food systems;
- Engaged Ohioans, vibrant communities;
- Environmental quality

OSU Extension also coordinates many of our efforts within the framework of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences, as it focuses on several grand challenges facing Ohio and the world today. Those topics currently address sustainability; one health; the rural-urban interface; and leadership.

OSU Extension values teamwork and partnerships; integration of science and local knowledge; respectful community engagement; credibility, honesty and integrity; innovation, flexibility and adaptability; relevance and responsiveness; leveraging resources; lifelong learning; diversity in all of its forms; and the contributions of all people toward achieving organizational and societal goals.

OSU Extension is jointly funded by the United States Department of Agriculture, the state, and counties. As such, each county program is an educational effort partially funded by USDA, state, and county governments. Much of the program is county-centered, with many educational efforts being determined at the local level. As part of CFAES at Ohio State, OSU Extension is committed to ensuring that all research and related educational programs are available to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to age, ancestry, color, disability, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, race, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, pregnancy, or veteran status. This statement is in accordance with U.S. civil rights laws and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

## 2 Legal Basis of Ohio State University Extension

Funds available via county, state, and federal governments to OSU Extension are appropriated for purposes as prescribed by state and federal statutes. Specific federal acts and sections of the Ohio Revised Code which relate directly to the operations of OSU Extension include:

### 1. Federal Acts

- (a) Smith-Lever Act of 1914, and the amended Smith-Lever Act of 1972

- (b) Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946
  - (c) Rural Development Act of 1972
2. State Laws (Ohio Revised Code)
- (a) R.C. 3335.35, OSU Extension Fund
  - (b) R.C. 3335.36, Ohio Cooperative Extension Service Employees
  - (c) R.C. 3335.37, County Support (County Tax Levy for OSU Extension Fund)
  - (d) R.C. 3335.38, Farm Financial Management Institute

These laws passed by the General Assembly and Congress are the legal basis for Extension work in Ohio. In accordance with these laws and regulations, the Board of Trustees of The Ohio State University “...shall have the responsibility for expenditure of all moneys in the fund in accordance with state and federal law and memoranda of agreement between the university and the United States Department of Agriculture” (R.C. 3335.35).

A portion of available federal money requires matching funds by the state. State appropriations and county funds are used to match federal funds and must be used for the same purposes for which federal monies may be expended (Smith-Lever Act, Section 3, as amended 6/23/72).

State laws provide authority under which county commissioners may make appropriations from the general fund of the county or proceeds of a tax levy (within limitations prescribed by law) for the support of Extension programs to benefit the citizens of the county (R.C. 3335.37). An Extension office in each of Ohio’s 88 counties provides a local “front door” to Ohio State and CFAES expertise and resources.

In R.C. 3335.38, state law also authorizes The Ohio State University Board of Trustees to establish an Extension-based farm financial management institute “to train interested and qualified persons to assist farmers needing help with farm financial management problems.” The program should be open to all interested persons, but the statute outlines priority enrollees, who may also be granted a fee waiver if fees apply.

### 3 County Extension Programs

OSU Extension focuses its efforts in four program areas that have been identified as major needs across the state. A brief explanation of each program area follows.

#### 3.1 Agriculture and Natural Resources

**Mission:** OSU Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) empowers Ohio’s agriculture and natural resources communities, provides outreach and education based on unbiased research, and cultivates relationships to strengthen the economic viability and quality of life for Ohioans.

Extension ANR experts help Ohio farmers, landowners, and other citizens focus on profitable and sustainable agriculture, a clean environment, and proper stewardship of Ohio's natural resources. By cultivating relationships with agriculturalist throughout the state, Extension professionals translate research they conduct into practices that help farmers increase farm profits via improved crop yields, better management of resources, and effective use of precision ag technologies.

Current focus areas include precision agriculture technology (for data-driven decisions); new technology and software applications; on-farm research (examples: soil fertility, crop production, pest and disease management, weed management, nutrient management, product testing); alternative crop research and testing; monitoring and improving water quality; conservation education; and preventing soil erosion, nutrient and pesticide runoff.

A report on *The State of Agriculture and Natural Resources in Ohio* can be found online.

## 3.2 Family and Consumer Sciences

**Vision:** Ohioans have the tools and resources to actively engage in creating conditions in which they thrive as individuals, families, and communities. **Mission:** Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) facilitates opportunities for people to explore how science-based knowledge can improve physical, social, and financial health.

FCS professionals deliver research-based educational programs currently focused on building healthy people, healthy finances, and healthy relationships.

Healthy People programming seeks to educate and engage individuals, families, and communities on maintaining or improving physical health across the lifespan. Topics address healthy eating and cooking, physical activity, sun safety, food preservation, and food safety.

Healthy Relationships programming offers relationship programs with a primary focus on strengthening individuals and families so they may thrive throughout the lifespan. Extension educators trained in family-life education are committed to helping people improve and nurture healthy relationships, addressing topics such as aging, parenting, co-parenting, early learning and quality care, and mental wellness.

Healthy Finances programs are sensitive to the economic challenges families and their communities are facing, helping to address and improve current and future economic well-being. FCS professionals provide education on topics that include personal and family finance, housing, and money management (financial literacy).

### 3.2.1 Community Nutrition Programs

OSU Extension also plays a leading role in delivering federally-funded, nutrition assistance programming to low-income households in 88 Ohio counties. Through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Education (SNAP-Ed), Extension uses

evidence-based, behaviorally-focused interventions to assist low-income individuals in making healthy food choices and enhancing physical activity. SNAP-Ed targets individual youth and adults, as well as families. SNAP-Ed is funded by USDA's Food and Nutrition Service and partners with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, along with OSU Extension. More information about SNAP-Ed is posted online.

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) targets limited-resource adults who care for children in their homes, as well as limited-income youth. A specific curriculum is taught to individuals and small groups on nutrition, food safety, food sanitation, and wise use of resources to acquire food. EFNEP is funded by USDA and operates through Extension at land-grant institutions in every state and the six U.S. territories. In Ohio, EFNEP is administered by OSU Extension.

A report on *The State of Family and Consumer Sciences in Ohio* can be found online.

### 3.3 Ohio 4-H Youth Development

**Mission:** Ohio 4-H empowers youth people with skills to lead for a lifetime. 4-H was modeled on the work of A.B. Graham, who believed youth have the power to improve their lives and their community through hands-on, project-based learning. At its core, 4-H prepares youth for adulthood as they learn leadership, citizenship, and life skills while forming long-term, positive relationships with caring adult volunteers. Youth in 4-H learn that every action has the power to make a collective impact. They are four times more likely to give back to their communities; two times more likely to make healthier (social, emotional and nutritional) choices; and two times more likely to participate in STEM activities. [Findings are from *The Positive Development of Youth: Comprehensive Findings from the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development*, a multi-year research project conducted by Tufts University and shared by the National 4-H Council in December 2013.]

In 4-H, youth “learn by doing” projects and activities that are designed to fit their needs at different ages. Through a variety of methods, 4-H gives children and teens opportunities to learn life skills, to practice them, and become confident in their ability to use them in the future. 4-H teaches young people how to meet their needs for belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity in positive ways.

Ohio 4-H recognizes that adult volunteer leadership, hands-on learning experiences, community clubs, learning laboratories such as camps, fairs and projects clinics, and the successful funding partnership of public and private dollars all contribute to the success of our young people. Ohio 4-H blends tradition with innovation; and continually adapts and enhances its program to fit the needs of contemporary youth throughout the state.

A report on *The State of 4-H Youth Development in Ohio* can be found online.

### 3.4 Community Development

**Mission:** Community Development (CD) helps communities enhance their well-being and create social, economic, and environmental conditions in which they can thrive.

**Vision:** OSU Extension CD is a leader in community development education and an unbiased partner in the implementation of strategies to achieve community and organizational goals.

OSU Extension CD is a research-based learning network that helps individuals, organizations, and communities achieve their economic and community development objectives. We fulfill the university's land-grant mission through the interpretation and application of knowledge and research developed by the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences, others across the university, and other land-grant universities across the United States in partnership with Ohioans to create stronger communities. Our current educational and applied research efforts are aligned under four areas of emphasis: economic development, leadership development, organizational capacity building, and community planning.

Our community development professionals value: education as a means to help people identify assets, capacities, needs, resources, and solutions; civic involvement (or participation) to improve the quality of community/neighborhood life; internal and external collaborations and partnerships; the uniqueness of individuals and communities/neighborhoods; the applied and theoretical dimensions of community development; the development of viable communities through the wise use of natural, economic, social, and human resources; and scientific information and local knowledge as a basis for decisions.

OSU Extension CD professionals co-create solutions with communities and neighborhoods by educating and engaging businesses, organizations, associations, and committees; current and emerging community leaders; and elected and appointed officials. Through these partnerships we apply cutting-edge, science-based knowledge and innovations to improve and enhance local businesses and communities.

The national Extension network enables CD to share perspectives with residents and leaders about local development issues, increase the knowledge base for individual and community decisions, develop skills necessary to help these partners achieve their individual and community goals, and help create a more inclusive decision-making environment.

A report on *The State of Community Development in Ohio* can be found online.

## 4 Citizen Committee Involvement

To effectively identify specific programs that are needed in each individual county, OSU Extension works through a network of local volunteers, industry representatives, business owners, and community leaders. In most counties, there are committees from one or more of the following groups to help plan and carry out specific programs.

This input helps ensure that the local and statewide Extension program is relevant and addressing the highest priority needs.

In addition to providing input into program priorities and direction, a local committee serves as a strong voice for OSU Extension with current and potential funding partners, program collaborators, and community members. While not a policy board, the county-based Extension advisory committee's role is to advise, assist, and support the local program and staff.

A county Extension advisory committee advises on county Extension program issues. Many counties also have individual program advisory committees that advise each of the educators within the scope of his or her specific program area (agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer sciences, 4-H youth development, and community development).

## 5 Statewide Extension Program and Product Support

The county program does not stand alone. There are many resources located at both the state and multi-county level to support programs needed at the county level. In fact, in most counties, for each dollar appropriated at the local level, there are several dollars invested in that county by way of program support from other entities.

An **Operations** unit supports the “business of Extension” by providing operational support for all Extension employees, clarification around policies and procedures, improvement of business efficiencies and responsiveness, and cooperation with college and university partners (units) to enhance operational effectiveness and improve competitiveness. This includes emphasis on personnel and performance management, resource management, business process and operations management, policies, risk management and compliance, and organizational business analysis.

A **Learning and Organizational Development** unit provides education and program support in professional development, workforce development, and continuing education for Extension personnel and for Extension's outreach to external audiences. This includes support for program strategizing, needs assessment, and implementation; evaluation and impact documentation; individual and institutional accountability; and digital engagement and educational technology integration.

A **Strategic Initiatives** unit refers to OSU Extension's vision, mission, and values to focus on strategic initiatives that align with priorities of the university and the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences, national Extension networks, and community collaborators. Examples of current and previous strategic initiatives include: urban engagement (addressing Ohio's urban influence and facilitating connections along the urban-suburban-rural continuum); program area reviews; innovative impacts (that are relevant locally, responsive statewide, recognized nationally); and the client, partner, and employee experience.

A **Publishing** unit provides educational materials that help fulfill our land-grant mission to provide science-based education in multiple publishing formats. OSU Extension

Publishing is responsible for editing, design, marketing, and distribution of 4-H books, learning lab kits, and OSU Extension fact sheets and bulletins. Fact sheets are available at [ohioline.osu.edu](http://ohioline.osu.edu) and provide information generated via research conducted by Extension and other Ohio State faculty and staff, often in collaboration with other land-grant university colleagues. Print and hands-on learning products, providing a tremendous range of additional resources, are available at [extensionpubs.osu.edu](http://extensionpubs.osu.edu).

## 6 Extension Personnel Serving Counties

### 6.1 Staffing at the County Level

Ohio law establishes the procedure whereby all money appropriated by federal, state, and county governments is placed to the credit of The Ohio State University for use in conducting Extension programs (R.C. 3335.35). For this reason, all individuals hired to carry out Extension programs are employed by Ohio State. As such, all are subject to the benefits available to all other Ohio State employees (R.C. 3335.36 and OAG Informal Opinion 160,7-23-52).

The number and type of professional staff in each county varies according to the needs of the county. The staff includes individuals who fill such positions as county educator, agriculture; county educator, family and consumer sciences; county educator, 4-H youth development; or county educator, community development. Some county educators may work in a combination of the program areas, depending on local needs and funding. For example: county educator, agriculture and natural resources/community development.

In addition to Extension educators, many counties have program assistants or coordinators to carry out a county program designed to meet the needs of the county. Educators may work in more than one county on a formal basis or may informally do programming in their area of specialization for clientele in other counties, in collaboration with those counties' Extension staff.

The extent of staffing in each county is based on input from the local Extension advisory committee, county residents, and public officials. Within general statewide guidelines for funding, the county Extension advisory committee may choose to identify the needs for programs as they view it and identify the types of personnel needed to carry out those programs. The needs for personnel are then presented in the form of a budget request to the county commissioners, who make the final decisions about the ultimate scope of the county Extension program beyond the basic program support provided by state and federal funds. The ways in which county commissioners help to fund Extension are described in section 136.07 (Funding of OSU Extension) below. State and federal funds are available only if certain specified county funds are also provided.



## 6.2 Specialized Personnel

In addition to personnel employed to work in counties, OSU Extension provides other highly trained professional staff who are available to help county personnel develop and carry out programs. They include:

- State Extension specialists in many disciplines within the Ohio State colleges of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences; Education and Human Ecology; Pharmacy; Public Health; Social Work; and Veterinary Medicine. Specialists who collaborate with Extension also are located in the School of Environment and Natural Resources, as well as the John Glenn College of Public Affairs.
- Field specialists who are located throughout the state. Each field specialist has a particular subject matter focus. He or she provides overall leadership for developing and implementing a comprehensive and balanced teaching and applied research program to address statewide issues. These specialists work to bridge relationships between campus researchers and field staff located throughout the state. They expand existing partnerships, develop new connections, and foster collaboration. Unlike state specialists, field specialists do not have campus-based faculty responsibilities such as resident instruction and student advising; and they are 100 percent Extension-funded. Their specific programmatic efforts are typically supported in some way with external funding.
  - Current field specialist focus areas: agriculture and resource law; agronomic systems; beef cattle; community economics; dairy production economics; energy development; family wellness; food, nutrition and wellness; food safety and production management; manure nutrient management systems; organizational and community leadership development; volunteerism and 4-H community clubs; youth nutrition and wellness.
- Administrative, supervisory, and program development staff as necessary to properly administer, supervise, and coordinate Extension programs throughout the state.

## 7 Funding of OSU Extension

The funding for OSU Extension at both the state and local level is complex. The following major points can help clarify this topic:

### 7.1 General Overview

Extension is funded jointly by county, state, and federal governments. County general fund support for Extension is entirely discretionary, except for the requirement contained in R.C. 3335.36 for the county to provide Extension office space. Two property tax levy options also exist to generate funds for Extension. R.C. 5709.19(WW) allows a five-year property tax levy for Extension support. R.C. 5709.19(Y) allows for a property

tax levy for a combination of support for OSU Extension, agricultural societies, and soil and water conservation.

County appropriations are used to benefit the county, and generally consist of funding for a portion of educator salaries; program assistants, and office support staff; as well as rent, office equipment, travel, supplies, and other expenses necessary for operation of the county office.

State and federal funds are used to pay for a portion of the salary and benefits of county educators, as well as salary and benefits of state staff, state specialists (partial, depending on percentage of appointment for Extension work), and operating costs of state and regional offices.

## 7.2 Sources of Funding

During CY 2023, the total budget of Extension was nearly \$77 million. The funds were derived from the following sources:

<b>OSU Extension Revenues, FY 2023</b>		
<b>Source</b>	<b>Revenue (in million)</b>	<b>Share of Total</b>
State Funding	\$24.8	29.7%
Federal Funding	\$12.3	14.7%
County Appropriations	\$18.6	22.2%
Earnings	\$6.4	7.7%
Gifts/Endowments	\$3.1	3.7%
Grants/Contracts	\$18.4	22.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$83.6</b>	

In the same fiscal period, Extension's expenditures broke down as follows:

- Personnel (Salaries & Benefits): 71.4%
- Operating/IT: 25.6%
- Travel: 2.7%
- Equipment: 0.3%

## 7.3 Authority for County Support

As indicated in Ohio Revised Code Section 3335.37, county commissioners may levy a tax, within the limits prescribed by law, and appropriate money from the proceeds thereof or from the general fund of the county to be paid to The Ohio State University to the credit of the OSU Extension fund created by Section 3335.35, and expended according to state law for the benefit of the county.

State law provides that if a levy is used to fund Extension and more than 10 percent of the monies collected in the preceding year remains unexpended for two years from the

time of payment, that money must be returned to the county, unless the commissioners agree by resolution to contribute the funds to OSU Extension for general purposes.

## 7.4 Identification of Need for County Money and Use

The money appropriated by county commissioners to operate a county Extension program goes through an approval process prior to submission of a budget request to the commissioners. A budget is developed by the county Extension staff and is reviewed by the Extension area leader. The common items in the county budget include: partial salary of educators, salary and benefits of office associates, program coordinators and assistants, and other county-funded employees, as well as travel, office rent, office supplies, office equipment, and other items necessary to operate a county office.

## 7.5 State Guidelines for County Extension Educators

The present arrangement for funding county Extension educators is as follows:

1. For calendar year 2024, each county will pay for \$32,750 toward one educator in the county from local funds. The remainder of the educator's salary and benefits are paid via state and federal monies; and
2. When two or more educators per county are also employed, the county (usually the commissioners) provides a designated amount of county support for each educator.

For calendar year 2024, the local cost is \$42,750 per year for each additional educator. Cost share overview/recent history, key information, and updates are posted online.

## 7.6 Deposit of Money

The money appropriated by county commissioners is deposited at The Ohio State University and kept in an account reserved strictly for use by the county. The appropriated money can be forwarded in a single annual payment, or counties can be billed quarterly or semi-annually for their annual appropriation.

## 7.7 Authority to Expend County Money

Money may only be spent from funds on deposit in the specific county account. Funds from each county account are expended according to the above guidelines and with approval from the area leader, in coordination with Extension and college leadership.

## 8 Acknowledgment

The County Commissioners Association of Ohio expresses its gratitude to Ohio State University Extension which assisted in preparing this chapter of the handbook.

### Contact Information

Please contact the following Policy Team staff member with any questions:

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