

5.4 Professional Improvement Funds

County Extension budgets may include identifiable funds for Extension agents' professional improvement. Funds thus identified may be established only if all other needs of the county Extension program are met in the budgeting process (travel, rent, support staff salary and additional agent salary, etc). Professional improvement funds may be up to but not more than \$3,000 per agent per year. Support staff or program assistants may also receive professional improvement funds (up to \$1,000 is suggested). Use of such funds will be restricted to dues for Extension Professional Associations, expenditures for state and national Extension Professional Associations of agents, state Extension Professional Associations of support staff and program assistants associations, Epsilon Sigma Phi, other professional associations, and other professional improvement expenditures as approved by the District Director.

Funds budgeted for one year cannot be carried over to the next year to increase the agent's total amount over the annual guideline. Funds expended must follow the current state expenses reimbursement guidelines for travel, meals, lodging, etc.

Accounting Procedures

A line item account for each agent, support staff, and program assistant is to be established in the county Extension Budget for professional improvement funds.

An electronic request should be submitted to the District Director for use of professional improvement funds prior to participation in the event.

Agents and staff are responsible for keeping their account accurate and balanced.

Any over-spending of professional improvement funds must be repaid by the agent or other staff involved. This cannot be accomplished by transfer of funds from travel, etc. A paper trail must prove the repayment.

Attendance At Professional Meetings

All staff members are encouraged to participate in professional associations relating to their fields of training or position of assignment.

Agent attendance at one national professional meeting per year will be approved, pending availability of funds and acceptable job performance. Travel time of up to one day to and from the meeting will be allowed, depending on distance to meeting location. Time at this meeting will be on official time.

Agent attendance at other professional meetings will be reviewed on the merits of each case. Additional approval to attend, allowed time, possible reimbursement, etc. will be based on the agent's role at the meeting, participation at other meetings, and the effect on the county program.

Agents are allowed time without expenses for district professional improvement meetings, before or after district staff meetings, or at regularly scheduled times not to exceed one-half day per month or six days per year.

Support Staff are encouraged to join and attend Chi Epsilon Sigma's Annual Meetings. There may be other professional development opportunities available through UK Human Resources. Here are some points to remember:

Requests to attend this and other professional development opportunities should be submitted in writing at least 30 days in advance to the supervising agent/s for consideration.

Support staff must stay within the budgeted Professional Improvement amount within each year (no carryover of account balances).

Unless your work station is more than 4 hours away from the conference site, all non-exempt staff will be expected to report to your normal work station and work until noon the day prior to the conference.

Pre-conference attendance to CHIES Board of Director's meeting or Conference Planning Committee meeting is allowable; however, this must be discussed with the supervising agent.

Agents should make arrangements to keep the office open during the support staff absence.