

PROFESSIONAL PROMOTION PROCEDURES FOR COUNTY EXTENSION AGENTS

Introduction

Extension Agents are professional educators who work collaboratively with faculty, specialists, associates and clientele in carrying out educational programs of the Cooperative Extension Service in all counties of the Commonwealth. The Cooperative Extension Service is the primary outreach arm of the University of Kentucky. In accomplishing the University's outreach mission, Extension agents are to develop and conduct educational programs that meet the needs of individuals and communities across the state.

One of the most important factors in ensuring the success of the Cooperative Extension Service involves the employment, development and retention of high quality personnel. One mechanism for encouraging continued professional growth and development is through the implementation of a professional promotion system. Such a system outlines specific expectations of different stages of professional development and employee performance, and thus provides the motivation that encourages professionals to achieve a high level of performance.

Often referred to as a "career ladder," an agent professional development system rewards individuals for securing additional education and training, as well as for outstanding job performance and experience gained through Extension program development. The result is that the Cooperative Extension Service will advance and retain the best-qualified individuals who will develop into top-notch professionals carrying out the highest quality educational programs. This high level of performance will reflect positively on the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service and will have a positive impact on the lives of individuals, families and communities.

Career Ladder Levels

Agents can progress through five levels. These levels or categories are for internal use and are not intended for use with the public.

The five advancement categories are referred to as:

- Level I
- Level II
- Level III
- Level IV
- Level V

Promotion Criteria and Standards

There are two tracks for advancement in the career ladder. Track A applies to employees hired July 1, 2005 or after. Agents employed before July 1, 2005 can advance through Track A, Track B, or they can start in Track B and then switch to Track A. The criteria and minimum standards for each track are spelled out in the following table.

Agent Professional Promotion System

Criteria and Standards

Grade Level	Requirements	Track A (If the start date is on or after July 1, 2025, the Agent must advance within Track A)	Track B
I	Formal Education	Bachelor's degree (must be promoted by the end of year 5)	Bachelor's Degree
	Professional Development	N/A	N/A
	Service	N/A	N/A
	Performance	N/A	N/A
II	Formal Education (Please provide a copy of your official graduate transcript)	12 hours in an approved graduate program with a minimum of a 3.0 GPA	N/A
	Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Agent Orientation • A minimum of 83 in-service training hours completed. At least 35 hours of Core Training in-services; at least 48 hours of additional in-service training (provide a copy of KERS training history since the date of initial employment). • Completion of Mentor Packet (if hired after July 1, 2016) 	A minimum of 83 in-service training hours completed. At least 35 hours of Core Training in-services; at least 48 hours of additional in-service training (provide a copy of KERS training history since the date of initial employment).
	Service	≥ Three years	≥ Eight years
	Performance	Performing at Meets Expectations or higher rating on last Performance Evaluation	Performing at Meets Expectations or higher rating on last Performance Evaluation
III	Formal Education (Please provide a copy of your official graduate transcript)	Master's Degree in an approved program of study	Bachelor's Degree
	Professional Development	At least 72 hours of in-service training since January 1st of year promoted to Level II (provide a copy of KERS training history since last promotion).	At least 72 hours of in-service training since January 1st of year promoted to Level II (provide a copy of KERS training history since last promotion).
	Service	≥ 8 years	≥ 15 years
	Performance	Performing at an Occasionally Exceeds or Consistently Exceeds Expectations rating on 3 of the last 5 consecutive fiscal years	Performing at an Occasionally Exceeds or Consistently Exceeds Expectations rating on 3 of the last 5 consecutive fiscal years

Grade Level	Requirements	Track A (If the start date is on or after July 1, 2025, the Agent must advance within Track A)	Track B
IV	General Criteria (You may include up to 2 pages, using bullet points where possible).	Agents admitted to this level will be recognized for outstanding performance through demonstration of these characteristics: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leadership – recognized as a leader among peers 2. Program Accomplishments – documented success in serving clientele of the county and beyond 3. Teamwork and Organizational Support – recognized as a strong proponent of teamwork in the county and with program peers, specialists, and administrators; support of CES, College, and UK 4. Contributions beyond county to the program and organization 5. Demonstrates all reasonable efforts to reach all audiences in county 	Agents admitted to this level will be recognized for outstanding performance through demonstration of these characteristics: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leadership – recognized as a leader among peers 2. Program Accomplishments – documented success in serving clientele of the county and beyond 3. Teamwork and Organizational Support – recognized as a strong proponent of teamwork in the county and with program peers, specialists, and administrators; support of CES, College, and UK 4. Contributions beyond county to the program and organization 5. Demonstrates all reasonable efforts to reach all audiences in county
	Formal Education (Please provide a copy of your official graduate transcript)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master's Degree in an approved program of study (required), PLUS • Evidence of further professional or academic training (desirable) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor's Degree (required), PLUS • Evidence of further professional or academic training (desirable)
	Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 82 hours of in-service training since January 1st of year promoted to Level III (provide copy of KERS training history since last promotion). • Contributions to research projects or academic publications. • Evidence of significant community development work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 82 hours of in-service training since January 1st of year promoted to Level III (provide copy of KERS training history since last promotion). • Contributions to research projects or academic publications. • Evidence of significant community development work.
	Service	≥ 14 years	≥ 22 years
	Performance	Performing at an Occasionally Exceeds or Consistently Exceeds Expectations rating for the last 5 consecutive fiscal years.	Performing at an Occasionally Exceeds or Consistently Exceeds Expectations rating for the last 5 consecutive fiscal years.

Grade Level	Requirements	Track A (If the start date is on or after July 1, 2025, the Agent must advance within Track A)	Track B
V (contd. next page)	General Criteria (You may include up to 2 pages, using bullet points where possible).	Agents admitted to this level will be recognized for outstanding performance through demonstration of these characteristics: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leadership – recognized as a leader among peers 2. Program Accomplishments – documented success in serving clientele of the county and beyond 3. Teamwork and Organizational Support – recognized as a strong proponent of teamwork in the county and with program peers, specialists, and administrators; support of CES, College, and UK 4. Contributions beyond county to the program and organization 5. Demonstrates all reasonable efforts to reach all audiences in county 	Agents admitted to this level will be recognized for outstanding performance through demonstration of these characteristics: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leadership – recognized as a leader among peers 2. Program Accomplishments – documented success in serving clientele of the county and beyond 3. Teamwork and Organizational Support – recognized as a strong proponent of teamwork in the county and with program peers, specialists, and administrators; support of CES, College, and UK 4. Contributions beyond county to the program and organization 5. Demonstrates all reasonable efforts to reach all audiences in county
	Formal Education (Please provide a copy of your official graduate transcript)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master’s Degree in an approved program of study (required), PLUS: • Evidence of further professional or academic training (desirable) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor’s Degree (required), PLUS: • Evidence of further professional or academic training (desirable)

Grade Level	Requirements	Track A (If the start date is on or after July 1, 2025, the Agent must advance within Track A)	Track B
V (contd.)	Professional Development (You may include up to 2 pages, using bullet points where possible to summarize your experiences and activities).	<p>At least an average of 20 hours per year of in-service training since January 1st of the year promoted to Level IV and evidence of significant Community Development work (provide a copy of KERS training history since last promotion).</p> <p>Evidence at the highest level of additional professional development experiences such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Study leave that results in significant enhancement of knowledge and skills 2. A significant role in the development and/or delivery of new educational materials or programs that are used beyond the person's county 3. Supervision of interns or mentor for new agents 4. Completion of a significant professional certification or in-service training program, and/or 5. Participation in a professional international assignment 6. Publishing in a professional journal 7. Obtaining grants 	<p>At least an average of 20 hours per year of in-service training since January 1st of the year promoted to Level IV and evidence of significant Community Development work (provide a copy of KERS training history since last promotion).</p> <p>Evidence at the highest level of additional professional development experiences such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Study leave that results in significant enhancement of knowledge and skills 2. A significant role in the development and/or delivery of new educational materials or programs that are used beyond the person's county 3. Supervision of interns or mentor for new agents 4. Completion of a significant professional certification or in-service training program, and/or 5. Participation in a professional international assignment 6. Publishing in a professional journal 7. Obtaining grants
	Service	≥20years	≥ 30 years
	Performance	Acquired a Consistently Exceeds Expectations Performance Evaluation rating at least once in the last 5 consecutive fiscal years.	Acquired a Consistently Exceeds Expectations Performance Evaluation rating at least once in the last 5 consecutive fiscal years.
	Peer Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of the Director of the Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service with consultation from the appropriate Assistant Director • Positive recommendation of a peer review committee named by the Director (to be composed of agents who have attained the highest level) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of the Director of the Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service with consultation from the appropriate Assistant Director • Positive recommendation of a peer review committee named by the Director (to be composed of agents who have attained the highest level)

Note: All requirements outlined in this document are subject to further review and future revision.

Years of Service

Years of service in an agent equivalent position with Cooperative Extension in other states will apply to career ladder applications.

Incentive

There is a monetary promotion incentive when a person moves from one level to the next. Although standard incentive amounts have been established for advancement at each level, the amount of the incentive may vary from year-to-year depending upon the resources available. Only hours earned prior to January 1 of the current year will be considered.

Application Process

The application provides information as to how the agent meets the criteria for promotion established for each level. It is the responsibility of the agent to apply for consideration for promotion to the next level. The application will guide that process. Applicants to Level V may apply two consecutive years. If their application is denied the second year, from then on they will be allowed to apply on an every other year basis.

Timeline for Applying

The completed application must be submitted online through KERS by no later than February 1 in the year in which the agent is requesting promotion. The application will be reviewed by the agent's Area Extension Director and Regional Director. If an application is not complete, it will be returned to the agent. Therefore, applications should be submitted as early as possible to plan for any unexpected delays. Promotions will be effective July 1 of that year.

Final Decision

The final decision on promotions will be made by the Director of the Cooperative Extension Service.

Peer Review Committee

A Peer Review Committee is appointed to review applications and recommend to the Director persons qualified for promotion to Level V. The final decision on promotion will be made by the Dean and the Director after reviewing the application, the committee recommendation, and the input of Cooperative Extension administration. The committee is composed of five agents who have already been promoted to Level V. They are from different parts of the state and from the different program areas. Committee members will be appointed for three-year terms with persons rotating on and off each year. The review process of the committee is established by the Director of the Cooperative Extension Service.

Appeals Procedure

Agents have the right to present grievances concerning promotion decisions. Agents are encouraged to seek resolution of concerns through established supervisory channels, however if the matter cannot be resolved satisfactorily, the agent may seek a hearing by an Appeals Committee appointed by the Director.

Implementation

1. Persons employed July 1, 2005 or after must be promoted to Level II within five years of the first July 1 after initial employment or their employment will be terminated. This provision will not apply to persons hired before July 1, 2005. Exceptions to the five-year period can be requested for such reasons as family medical leave or military leave.
2. Agents seeking promotion from Level I to Level II must complete at least 35 hours of in-service credits selected from a list of Core In-Service Training topics. These topics have been identified as critical to the development and success of agents across program areas, particularly those new to Extension. For new agents, these credit hours should be obtained within the first 18-24 months of employment. Although required by new agents, all agents (particularly those with recommendations from an Area Extension Director) are encouraged to enroll if there is a desire to enhance skills in a particular area. The list of trainings is available through Program and Staff Development and is noted in the KERS In-Service Catalog as "CORE" Topics.
3. Only Extension experience in an agent, associate or specialist position will count as service time for purposes of promotion. This experience can be from any state Extension Service. Non- Extension work experience will not count toward promotion. Even though Extension service time in other states will be counted, required performance ratings must be with the Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service.
4. Agents who are working toward completion of a Master's must have been admitted into an approved graduate program in a subject matter discipline relevant to the agent's Extension position (as judged by the Area Extension Director and the appropriate Assistant Director). To meet the 12- hour requirement, there is a 3.0 GPA minimum and the hours must count toward the approved Master's.
5. The number of in-service training hours taken each year should represent a reasonable amount of time for agents to be away from their county (typically 20 to 40 hours) and the training should be directly related to the agents' program area.
6. Applicants to Level V may apply two consecutive years. If their application is denied the second year, from then on they will be allowed to apply on an every other year basis.