

Planning the Annual Meeting of the County Extension Council

The annual meeting of the County Extension Council provides a unique opportunity to help achieve the following objectives:

- All members recognize and understand the total Extension educational program in the county (and state).
- The Council communicates the plans and program accomplishments of all its committees and task forces.
- The Council and Extension faculty recognize members for their work and give special recognition to selected persons and groups.
- Invited guests and the public learn about the total Extension program and its impact through interpretation and publicity about the annual meeting.

Leadership/Participation

The key to a successful meeting is to involve members of the Council in planning and conducting the event. The Council may appoint a smaller work-group (subcommittee) to make the arrangements.

Officers should preside/moderate and introduce guests and the speaker. Committee chairs can give brief reports or share a success story. Members can take attendance and hand out printed agendas; others can greet and host invited guests.

This provides both personal leadership development and recognition to the leaders by their peers.

Several planning decisions need to be made in advance.

Date/Time

Should the annual meeting be at the end of the program year (November-December) or early in the new year (January-February)? Consider an appropriate time in terms of committee being able to report accomplishments toward their goals.

The time the meeting is held will affect participation. Consider whether a morning, noon, afternoon or evening meeting will enable members to attend most easily.

Start promptly at the announced time, keep program/business things moving and end with a flourish – while it's still interesting.

Location

The location alone can have a profound effect on attendance. Survey the community for locations you haven't used before – get the meeting out of the courtroom if possible. Possibilities are a public park, a local farm, a member's backyard or by a lake facility. Community facilities may include a church fellowship hall, community meeting hall or a banquet room in a restaurant.

Theme

Consider a special emphasis for the meeting. The theme could relate to the season of the year, or it might relate to a special program thrust the Council is emphasizing for the year. Simple decorations or theme exhibits might be in order.

Atmosphere

A social atmosphere can enhance both productivity of an annual meeting and enjoyment for those who attend. This ought to be one meeting of the year when members “have a good time.”

You might start with a get-acquainted technique or use a mixer game; include a short talent show with a musical group, singers or a 4-H talent activity. Have some taped/recorded music in the background; give door prizes. You may be able to provide inexpensive and simple table decorations.

Speaker

Occasionally, a local or an out-of-town speaker can bring in a crowd that might not otherwise attend. Use different kinds of speakers for different purposes – humorous, inspirational or educational. A talk needs to be fairly brief, however, so you are able to accomplish all the other things at the meeting – 10 to 15 minutes well done will be enough.

A short video or slide presentation of special interest or even a demonstration on a subject interesting to the whole group is another annual meeting “program” idea.

Ceremony

Have 4-H members present the flags or give a brief inspirational opening to the annual meeting.

Plan a ceremony to install new officers; use a county leader (county judge, for example) to handle it. The ceremony can be long or short, formal or informal, but make it an important occasion. Have photos taken for publicity.

Recognition

Include time to recognize people and groups for special achievements in the past

year. Framed certificates presented to honorees will not be costly, and plaques to key supporters are impressive.

The annual meeting can recognize an outstanding committee, individual members and special guests. Remember to recognize other organizations, agencies and individuals who have supported Extension and its Council committees.

Special awards can go to selected “Friends of Extension,” the “Outstanding Program Committee” or “Outstanding Community Leader/Group” (outside the Council).

Honor the service of all Council members by having committee members, board members and Council officers stand as groups to be recognized for their unique contributions to the Extension program. Recognize members who have completed their terms and are being rotated off active service on the Council. Printed programs can list the names of all Council members.

Reports

Program committee reports on accomplishments are a primary and very important component of the annual meeting. Try innovative ways to make the presentations, other than the chairperson reading a list of activities.

Try posters or simple exhibits by each program committee, or show a few slides highlighting the year’s work with an accompanying taped narrative story. Committee members might coordinate brief presentations – this lets several people take part in a leadership role.

Always have a printed report to give to annual meeting participants. It contains the detail; the presentation gives only highlights.

Food

Refreshments or a meal can add just the right flavor. Each family can bring a dish for a

buffet or plan a catered meal. Try a “Dutch-treat” meal every few years. Ask local organizations that have worked closely with Extension programs to help in sponsoring the costs. Contact local businesses to support a meal; let sponsors have a chance to be on the program.

Use a fish fry, omelet supper or barbecue with a product from a local enterprise (beef/pork/poultry/game, etc.) to promote the Arkansas agricultural industry.

Instead of a meal, serve “heavy refreshments” – healthy appetizers or a few freezers of homemade ice cream served with “prize” 4-H cakes.

Attendance

Making the effort to help all Council members attend the meeting will be worthwhile, even beyond the annual meeting itself. A successful annual meeting will influence later board and committee meetings.

- **Involve members in the planning.**

Council officers, chairpersons and members should all have a part to play in planning and carrying out the meeting. It’s not the agents’ annual meeting – plan the agenda with the Council so that its members carry the public leadership.

- **Delegate an important task to each member that he/she is capable of doing.**

Avoid making the annual meeting tasks conflict with other activities of the members. Decide on things by checking with members and determining their availability and willingness to do the tasks. This minimizes conflict and misunderstanding.

- **Follow through with members to check on their progress.**

Put things in writing. Make sure Council members know they have the task to do, what it involves and how to do it. Members need to understand what they’re being asked to do. When they also attach a sense of importance to their role, it’s more likely to be achieved.

- **Keep people informed.**

Use personal contact – never depend on a single letter announcing details about the annual meeting.

Plan well in advance. Allow time to get the annual meeting on calendars so members will be able to attend.

- **Express appreciation.**

People need recognition. When Council leaders perform a task well, tell them so.

- **Provide a benefit.**

Maybe it’s recognition, maybe it’s developing a skill/talent in performing a leadership action. Help people gain an appropriate benefit from attending and from helping to conduct the annual meeting.

- **Make the meeting productive and worthwhile.**

Make it important enough that people want to attend, too – do something special. Avoid sameness – same time, same place, same everything. Try something different to keep things interesting from year to year.

The agendas on the following pages may be used as a guide for planning County Extension Council meetings.

Information in this publication has been adapted for Arkansas. Original materials were prepared by Mary G. Marshall and Burl B. Richardson, Extension Program Development Specialists, Texas Agricultural Extension Service.

SAMPLE AGENDAS

PLAN A First Meeting

Part 1:

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|-----|---|---------------|
| 1. | Introduction – purpose and role of the County Extension Council (CEC) | CEC Chair |
| 2. | CES overview and mission – strategic plans, etc. | Agent |
| 3. | Structure of CEC | CEC Chair |
| 4. | Review of organizational procedure for CEC and position descriptions | CEC Chair |
| 5. | County situational information | Agents |
| | a. Rural Profiles of Arkansas | |
| | b. Kids Count | |
| | c. Potential audiences | |
| | d. Recent census | |
| | e. Rural Profile of Arkansas Families (check with Lynn) | |
| 6. | Review of CEC recommendations of previous year | CEC Secretary |
| 7. | Distribute and approve minutes of last year’s meeting | CEC Secretary |
| 8. | Review of program accomplishments of previous year | Agents |
| 9. | Identify current issues | CEC Chair |
| 10. | Present slate of officers for CEC | CEC Chair |
| 11. | Elect officers for CEC for current program year | CEC Chair |
| 12. | Select appropriate issue/program subcommittees | CEC Chair |
| 13. | Appoint chair and vice chair of each subcommittee | CEC Chair |
| 14. | Set subcommittee meeting dates | CEC Chair |
| 15. | Set date of 2nd CEC meeting | CEC Chair |
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Part 2:

County Extension Council Program/Issues Subcommittee Meeting

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|-----|--|--------------------|
| 1. | Introduction – purpose and role of CEC | Subcommittee Chair |
| 2. | CES overview and mission – strategic plans, etc. | Agent |
| 3. | Structure of CEC | Subcommittee Chair |
| 4. | Review of organizational procedure for CEC and position descriptions | Subcommittee Chair |
| 5. | County situational information appropriate to committee | Agent |
| 6. | Review of program/issues subcommittee recommendations of previous year | Subcommittee Chair |
| 7. | Distribute minutes of last year’s meeting | Subcommittee Chair |
| 8. | Review of program accomplishments of previous year | Agent |
| 9. | Identify current issues | Committee |
| 10. | Prioritize issues | Committee |
| 11. | Review next step in CEC process | Subcommittee Chair |
| 12. | Adjourn | Subcommittee Chair |

Part 3:

**County Extension Council
Second Meeting**

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|--|---------------------------|
| 1. Welcome and introduction | CEC Chair |
| 2. Meal and or refreshments | |
| 3. Reading of minutes of first meeting of CEC | CEC Secretary |
| 4. Reports of program/issues subcommittee meetings | Subcommittee Chairs |
| 5. Prioritizing recommendations of subcommittees | CEC |
| 6. Development of county plan | CEC and Extension Faculty |
| 7. Recommend ad hoc committees as appropriate | CEC Chair and Members |
| 8. Discuss, plan, and assign responsibilities for interpretive event | CEC Chair |
| 9. Recognize out-going officers and retiring members | CEC Member |
| 10. Adjourn | CEC Chair |

County Extension Council PLAN B

Part 1:

County Extension Council Program/Issues Subcommittee Meeting

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|-----|--|--------------------|
| 1. | Introduction – purpose and role of the County Extension Council (CEC) | Subcommittee Chair |
| 2. | CES overview and mission – strategic plans, etc. | Agent |
| 3. | Structure of CEC | Subcommittee Chair |
| 4. | Review of organizational procedure for CEC and position descriptions | Subcommittee Chair |
| 5. | County situational information appropriate to committee | Agent |
| 6. | Review of program/issues subcommittee recommendations of previous year | Subcommittee Chair |
| 7. | Distribute minutes of last year’s meeting | Subcommittee Chair |
| 8. | Review of program accomplishments of previous year | Agent |
| 9. | Identify current issues | Committee |
| 10. | Prioritize issues | Committee |
| 11. | Review next step in CEC process | Subcommittee Chair |
| 12. | Adjourn | Subcommittee Chair |
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Part 2:

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|-----|--|--------------------|
| 1. | Introduction – purpose and role of CEC | CEC Chair |
| 2. | CES overview and mission – strategic plans, etc. | Staff Chair/Agent |
| 3. | Structure of CEC | CEC Chair |
| 4. | Review of organizational procedure for CEC and position descriptions | CEC Chair |
| 5. | County situational information | Agents |
| | a. Rural Profiles of Arkansas | |
| | b. Kids Count | |
| | c. Potential audiences | |
| | d. Recent census | |
| | e. Rural Profile of Arkansas Families | |
| 6. | Review of CEC recommendations of previous year | CEC Secretary |
| 7. | Distribute and approve minutes of last year’s meeting | CEC Secretary |
| 8. | Review of program accomplishments of previous year | Agents |
| 9. | Reports of program/issues subcommittee meetings | Subcommittee Chair |
| 10. | Prioritizing recommendations of subcommittees | CEC |
| 11. | Development of county plan | CEC |
| 12. | Recommend ad hoc committees as appropriate | CEC Chair |
| 13. | Discuss, plan, and assign responsibilities for interpretive event | CEC Chair |
| 14. | Recognize out-going officers and retiring members | CEC Member |
| 15. | Adjourn | CEC Chair |

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