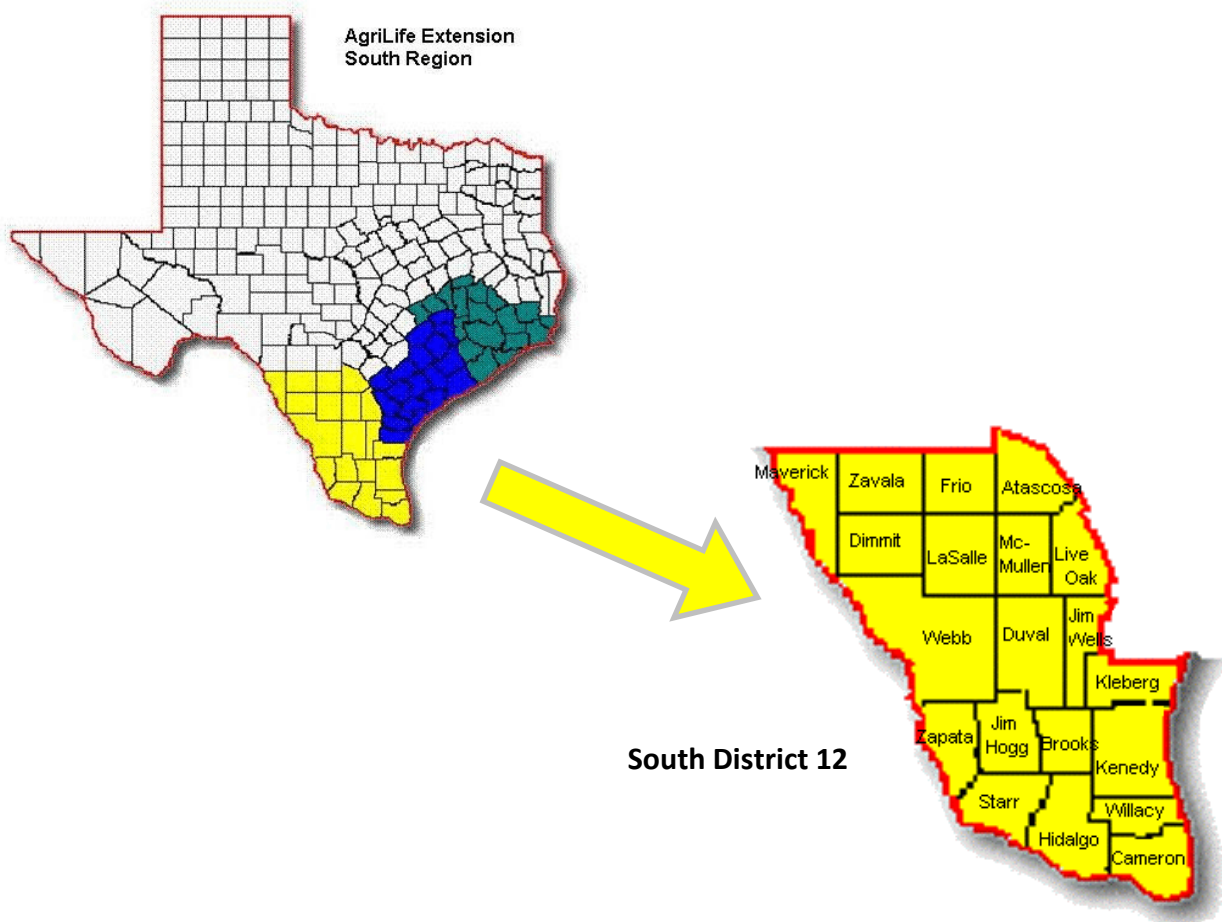


TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION



County Office Handbook

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Introduction

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service has been a part of county, state, and national government for nearly a century, yet it continues to be misunderstood in terms of both funding and purpose. We hope this manual helps to answer questions and set standards for how your county office is managed and organized. The names and faces may change over time, but our mission and commitment to serving the public with high quality educational information, training, and technical assistance will always remain.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

I. EXTENSION 101 - THE BASICS

Our Legal Basis & Purpose

The (Federal) Smith-Lever Act of 1914 - Creation of a Cooperative Extension Service System

Established in 1914, Cooperative Extension was designed as a partnership of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the land-grant universities, which were authorized by the Federal Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890. Legislation in the various States has enabled local governments or organized groups in the Nation's counties to become a third legal partner in this educational endeavor. The congressional charge to Cooperative Extension through the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 is far ranging. Today, this educational system includes professionals in each of America's 1862 land-grant universities (in the 50 States, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, Northern Marianas, American Samoa, Micronesia, and the District of Columbia) and in the Tuskegee Institute and sixteen 1890 land-grant universities. The provisions of the Act, in effect as of December 23, 1915, are shown in greater detail in Appendix I. (Code reference is 7 U.S.C. 341 et seq.)

Our Link to County Government

Authorization for the establishment and ongoing support of Cooperative Extension in the State of Texas is cited in the Agriculture Code of Vernon's Civil States, Chapter 43, Subchapter B.

SUBCHAPTER B. COUNTY DEMONSTRATION WORK

Sec. 43.031. Demonstration Work.

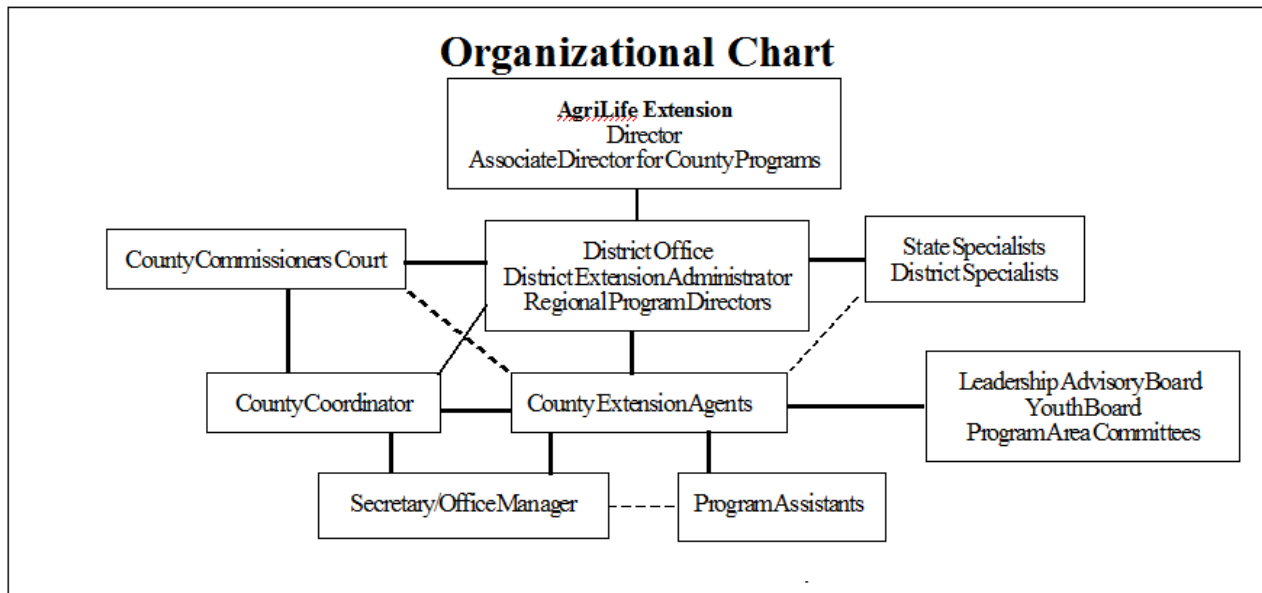
“The commissioners court of any county may establish and conduct cooperative demonstration work in agriculture and home economics in cooperation with Texas A & M University. Acts 1981, 67th Leg., p. 1096, ch. 388, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1981.”

Sec. 43.032. Terms of Agreement With Texas A & M University.

“The demonstration work shall be conducted on terms and conditions agreed to by the commissioners court and the agents of Texas A&M University. Acts 1981, 67th Leg., p. 1096, ch. 388, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1981.”

Sec. 43.033. Expenses.

“The commissioners court may employ any means and may appropriate and expend money as necessary to establish and conduct demonstration work under this subchapter. Acts 1981, 67th Leg., p. 1096, ch. 388, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1981.”



What is Extension?

Extension is a statewide educational agency and a member of The Texas A&M University System linked in a unique partnership with the nationwide United States Department of Agriculture Cooperative Extension System and County Commissioners Courts. Extension values and promotes principles of citizen and community involvement, scientifically-based education, lifelong learning and volunteerism. It provides access to citizens in all 254 Texas counties and works cooperatively with the 10 universities and 8 state agencies of The Texas A&M University System and other state and local agencies to bring the necessary resources to local communities that will address local issues and solve local problems.

Mission and Scope

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service educates Texans in the areas of agriculture, environmental stewardship, youth and adult life skills, human capital and leadership, and community & economic development. The County Office offers the knowledge resources of the Texas A&M University System to local citizens for self-improvement, individual action and community problem solving.

Vision

We envision the Extension Service as Texas' most significant and effective vehicle for outreach education and community statewide problem solving related to issues impacting the quality of life for Texans in the 21st century. We will be increasingly accessible through the use of advanced communication technologies. We will be a major catalyst for leveraging public and private resources through cooperative efforts and coalitions, and we will be focused on education for individual and community self-help to address critical needs. We see Extension as dedicated to fulfilling its land-grant university mandate in the context of a rapidly changing society.

Priorities

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service has a mission to provide quality, relevant outreach and continuing education programs and services to the people of Texas. Extension education encompasses the broad areas of agriculture and natural resources, community economic development, family and consumer sciences, and 4-H and youth development. In the context of this broad mission, the priorities for Extension education are:

- 1. Ensure a sustainable, profitable, and competitive food and fiber system in Texas.**
- 2. Enhance natural resource conservation and management.**
- 3. Build local capacity for economic development in Texas communities.**
- 4. Improve the health, nutrition, safety, and economic security of Texas families.**
- 5. Prepare Texas youth to be productive, positive, and equipped with life skills for the future.**
- 6. Expand access to Extension education and knowledge resources.**

Goals and Objectives

To pursue these priorities, the agency will follow a strategic plan through 2015 comprised of the *programmatic* goals and objectives presented herein. In addition, this strategic plan addresses organizational excellence – the alignment of every facet of the organization to support effective program delivery. *Organizational* goals and objectives are set forth in the following areas:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Accountability | 7. Internal Communication |
| 2. Delivery System for Urban Audiences | 8. Marketing and External Communication |
| 3. Diversity | 9. Professional Development |
| 4. Employee Recognition and Rewards | 10. Quality Assurance |
| 5. Financial and Resource Management | 11. Risk Management |
| 6. Information Technology | 12. Volunteerism |

A full listing of all organizational goals and objectives can be viewed at <http://agriflifeextension.tamu.edu/about/strategic-plan-and-impacts>

Core Values

The core values of Extension embody the philosophy of the land-grant university system, the guiding principles of the Cooperative Extension System and a commitment to the people of Texas. The Extension Service and its faculty and staff value:

- The land-grant concept that the knowledge resource of universities should be extended to the people.
- Scientific knowledge and its usefulness in solving practical problems and producing benefits for the people.
- Involvement of citizens for their programmatic input, help as volunteers and their pursuit of lifelong learning.
- Cultural diversity in programs, clientele, volunteers, faculty and staff.
- Cooperation and collaboration with federal, state, county and local governments; public and private agencies, organizations and groups; and individuals to attain goals.
- The state's land and natural resource base and the significance of those resources to both rural and urban areas.
- Agriculture, as a fundamental sustainer of life for all people, a basic industry and a force of significant impact on society.
- Communities, families and youths and their importance to the future of Texas.
- An objective, unbiased approach to problem solving for all employees as well as volunteers and others involved in Extension education.
- Ethical behavior on the part of all faculty, staff, volunteers and others involved in Extension education.
- Education as a force for meaningful change and economic vitality for Texas.

County Issues

①

②

③

④

⑤

Funding Relationships

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is a cooperative funding effort that includes the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) , The Texas A&M University System (TAMUS), and County Commissioner's Courts of Texas as major cooperators. USDA makes a contribution to Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service that is included in the total annual budget, the State of Texas appropriates funds that make up the state portion, and county government provides and locally allocates the final approximate 1/3 of this formula. State and federal funds go primarily to agent salaries and benefits, specialist support, and state administration. County government provides for the establishment and maintenance of a local office, including support staff, travel, and supplies.

Where is Extension Located?

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is a state agency and a member of the Texas A&M University System. Extension is divided into 12 districts across the state, with a District Extension Administrator (DEA) in each district. Two Regional Program Directors (RPD) provide programmatic leadership for a 3-district region in the areas of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Family & Consumer Science, and 4-H & Youth Development. They may be located in any one of the district offices but serve the region as a single unit. In addition, there are seven urban programs, each supervised by a County Extension Director. County Extension agents across the state are supported by subject matter specialists located on campus or at a district Extension field office. Some specialists may be based at other state universities or locations based on joint appointments with those universities or other partner organizations. State leadership is provided by an administrative team from the headquarters office on the Texas A&M University campus in College Station.

II. THE LAND GRANT SYSTEM

A land-grant college or university is an institution that has been designated by its state legislature or Congress to receive the benefits of the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890. The original mission of these institutions, as set forth in the first Morrill Act, was to teach agriculture, military tactics, and the mechanic arts as well as classical studies so that members of the working classes could obtain a liberal, practical education. Passage of the First Morrill Act (1862) reflected a growing demand for agricultural and technical education in the United States. The Act provided grants in the form of federal lands to each state for the establishment of a public institution to fulfill the act's provisions. While a number of institutions had begun to expand upon the traditional classical curriculum, higher education was still widely unavailable to many agricultural and industrial workers. The Morrill Act was intended to provide a broad segment of the population with a practical education that had direct relevance to their daily lives. In Texas, the institution created was Texas A&M University and was established in 1876. There is now at least one land-grant institution in every state and territory of the United States, as well as the District of Columbia.

Certain Southern states have two land-grant institutions as a result of the Second Morrill Act. In addition, some western and plains states have several of the 1994 land-grant tribal colleges. The Second Morrill Act (1890) sought to extend access to higher education by providing additional endowments for all land-grants, but prohibiting distribution of money to states that made distinctions of race in admissions. However, states that provided a separate land-grant institution for blacks were eligible to receive the funds. In Texas, the Second Morrill Act helped establish Prairie View A&M University. Prairie View A&M University was established in 1876 as well and supports the Cooperative Extension Program, a program it jointly administers with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

A key component of the land-grant system is the agricultural experiment station program created by the Hatch Act of 1887. The Hatch Act authorized direct payment of federal grant funds to each state to establish an agricultural experiment station in connection with the land-grant institution there. The amount of this appropriation varies from year to year and is determined for each state through a formula based on the number of small farmers there. A major portion of the federal funds must be matched by the state.

To disseminate information gleaned from the experiment stations' research, the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 created a Cooperative Extension Service associated with each U.S. land-grant institution. This act authorized ongoing federal support for extension services, using a formula similar to the Hatch Act's to determine the amount of the appropriation. This act also requires that the states provide matching funds in order to receive the federal monies.

(Source: <http://www.wvu.edu/~exten/about/land.htm#why>)

What is the Texas A&M University System?

The Texas A&M University System includes a series of 10 universities and 7 state agencies. They are as follow:

UNIVERSITIES

Texas A&M University - *College Station
* includes TAMU - Galveston
Texas A&M University - Commerce
Texas A&M University - Texarkana
Texas A&M University - Kingsville
Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi
Texas A&M International University (Laredo)
Tarleton State University (Stephenville)
Prairie View A&M University (Prairie View)
Baylor College of Dentistry (Dallas)
West Texas A&M University (Canyon)

STATE AGENCIES

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service*
(includes Wildlife Services)
Texas A&M AgriLife Research*
Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station (TEES)
Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service (TEEX)
Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS)*
Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Lab
(TVMDL)*
Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI)

* indicate agency members of Texas A&M AgriLife

What is Texas A&M AgriLife?

Texas A&M AgriLife is a coalition of teaching, research, and extension components within the Texas A&M University System that support Agriculture through higher education. Members of Texas A&M AgriLife include the Texas A&M University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (COALS), AgriLife Research, AgriLife Extension, TFS, and TVMDL. It also includes the colleges of agriculture at all System universities with a College of Agriculture (Tarleton, West Texas, Kingsville, and Prairie View).

III. THE COUNTY EXTENSION PROGRAM

Your County Office

Each County Office has a series of program areas that include agriculture and natural resources, family & consumers sciences, 4-H & youth development, and community development. These areas may be supported by specialized agents in Integrated Pest Management (IPM), Sea Grant/Marine, the Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), Better Living for Texans (BLT), Horticulture, Family Resources, Cooperative Extension Program (1890), and others.

Your county website is: <http://yourcounty.agrilife.org>
Your county email address is: yourcounty-tx@ag.tamu.edu

Who are your county faculty members?

Name	Title
① _____	
② _____	
③ _____	

Who are your program support staff?

Name	Title
① _____	
② _____	

Who are your office support staff?

Name	Title
① _____	
② _____	

Other TAMU System Components in District 12

Texas A&M AgriLife Research

Texas A&M AgriLife Research & Extension
Center at Weslaco
2415 E. Business 83
Weslaco, Texas 78596
Resident Director: Dr. Juan Landivar
jalandivar@ag.tamu.edu
(956) 968-5585

Texas A&M AgriLife Forest Service
2415 E. Business 83, Room 143
Weslaco, Texas 78596
Staff Forester: Salvador Alemany
Salemany@tfs.tamu.edu
(956) 969-5654

Wildlife Services

Rick Sramek, District Supervisor
2209 North Padre Island Dr., Suite L
PO Box 9259 (mailing address)
Corpus Christi, Texas 78469
(361)299-1176

Texas A&M Prospective Student Center

Rick Margo
5277 North 23rd Street
McAllen, Texas 78504
(956)683-8647

IV. PEOPLE YOU SHOULD KNOW

A. State Extension Administrative Team

Dr. Mark Hussey	Vice Chancellor & Dean (COALS)
Dr. Douglas L. Steele	Director
Mr. Kyle Smith	Executive Associate Director
Dr. Pete Gibbs	Associate Director - State Programs
Dr. Darrell Dromgoole	Associate Director for County Programs
Dr. Joan Jacobsen	Urban Program Director
Dr. Chris Boleman	4-H & Youth Development Program Director
Ms. Donna Alexander	Assistant Director for Fiscal Services
Ms. Suzanne Deatherage	Assistant Agency Director
Mr. Bill McConnell	Assistant Agency Director - Compliance

B. South Region Administrative Team

Dr. Dale Fritz	District 9 Extension Administrator (Bryan)
Mr. Donnie Montemayor	District 11 Extension Administrator (Corpus Christi)
Dr. Ruben J. Saldaña	District 12 Extension Administrator (Weslaco)
Dr. Elaine Fries	Regional Program Director - Family & Consumer Sciences
Dr. Monty Dozier	Regional Program Director - Agriculture & Natural Resources
Dr. Linda Willis	County Extension Director - Harris County (Houston)
Mr. Vince Mannino	County Extension Director - Fort Bend County (Rosenburg)

C. District 12 Extension Center Faculty & Staff

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service - South District (12) 2401 East Highway 83, Weslaco, TX 78596 956-968-5581 Fax 956-969-5639 http://southtexas.tamu.edu			
Name	Title	E-mail	Ext.
Juan A. Landivar, Ph.D.	AgriLife Research & Extension - Center Director	jalandivar@ag.tamu.edu	5122
Ruben J. Saldaña, Ed.D.	District Extension Administrator - District 12	rjsaldana@ag.tamu.edu	5601
Monty Dozier, Ph.D.	RPD-AG/NR (South Region, Districts 9,11,12) Ph: 979-845-6800	mdozier@ag.tamu.edu	N/A
Elaine K. Fries, Ph.D.	RPD-FCS (South Region, Districts 9,11,12) Ph: 361-265-9203	efries@ag.tamu.edu	N/A
Juan R. Anciso, Ph.D.	Associate Professor and Extension Vegetable Specialist	janciso@ag.tamu.edu	5609
Arin E. Bauer	Extension Program Assistant	aebauer@ag.tamu.edu	5610
Juan Enciso, Ph.D.	Associate Professor and Extension Agricultural Engineer Specialist (Irrigation and Water Mgmt.)	jenciso@ag.tamu.edu	5635
Gabriela Esparza-Diaz	Post-Doctoral Extension Associate-Entomology	gesparzadiaz@ag.tamu.edu	5605
Jaime J. Flores	Program Coordinator - Arroyo Colorado Project	jjflores@ag.tamu.edu	5607
Sylvia Garza	Extension Program Assistant-Family Development and Resource Management	Sylvia.Garza@ag.tamu.edu	5614
Ashley Gregory	Research Assistant	ahgregory@ag.tamu.edu	5610
Rosa I. Guel	Cancer Prevention Program Specialist - FDRM (South Region, Districts 9, 11, 12)	Rosa.Guel@ag.tamu.edu	5611
Juan J. Monge	Assistant Research Scientist-Ag Economics	jmonge@agnet.tamu.edu	5677
Luis A. Ribera, Ph.D.	Assistant Professor and Extension Economist-Management Specialist	laribera@ag.tamu.edu	5606
Luis H. Saldana, MBA	Extension Program Specialist - 4-H and Youth Development District 12	lsaldana@ag.tamu.edu	5602
Rod Santa Ana, BS	News Editor and Communications Specialist	rsantana@ag.tamu.edu	5630
Greta Schuster, Ph.D.	Extension Plant Pathologist Ph: 361-593-4116 (TAMU-Kingsville)	greta.schuster@tamuk.edu	5605
Danielle Sekula	Extension Agent - IPM	Danielle.Sekula@ag.tamu.edu	5608
Raul Villanueva, Ph.D.	Assistant Professor and Extension Entomologist	rtvillanueva@ag.tamu.edu	5604
Support Staff and Assigned Specialists			
Lou Garza	District Office Manager - Dr. Ruben J. Saldaña	mgarza@ag.tamu.edu	5669
Martha Bloom	Senior Office Assistant - Luis A. Ribera and Raul T. Villanueva	mbloom@ag.tamu.edu	5673
Roxanne Saavedra	Senior Office Assistant - Juan Anciso, Luis H. Saldaña	rsaavedra@ag.tamu.edu	5670
Marissa Reyes	Senior Office Associate - Lou Garza, Ruben J. Saldaña and Juan Enciso	mjreyes@ag.tamu.edu	5668

* See Districts 10 & 11 for additional specialists assigned to support District 12 County Programs. Also see campus-based units for specialists with state-wide responsibilities.

D. Local Officials

County Officials

The Honorable _____
County Judge
Admin. Asst. : _____

The Honorable _____
Commissioner, Pct. 1

The Honorable _____
Commissioner Pct. 2

The Honorable _____
Commissioner, Pct. 3

The Honorable _____
Commissioner, Pct. 4

_____, County Auditor

_____, County Treasurer

_____, County Attorney

_____, County Clerk

When writing, the word "Honorable" is used as a courtesy accorded to all elected officials. When speaking to these officials, use their highest title (Judge, Commissioner, Congressman, Chairman) unless you're not sure...then use Mr. or Ms.

State Officials

The Honorable _____
State Representative, District ____
Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Website: _____

State Officials (continued)

The Honorable _____
State Senator, District ____
Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Website: _____

Federal Officials

U.S. Congressman

The Honorable _____
U.S. Representative, District ____
Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Website: _____

U.S. Senators

The Honorable **John Cornyn**

United States Senator, Texas

In District 12

222 East Van Buren, Suite 404

Harlingen, Texas 78550

(956) 423-0162

(956) 423-0193 fax

In Washington,

517 Hart Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510

202-224-2934

202-228-2856 fax

<http://cornyn.senate.gov/>

The Honorable **Ted Cruz**

United States Senator, Texas

In Washington,

Dirksen Senate Office Building, Ste SDB-40B

Washington, D.C. 20510

202/224-5922

<http://www.cruz.senate.gov>

V. PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT STRUCTURE

(SAMPLE BYLAWS)
OF THE
_____ LEADERSHIP ADVISORY BOARD

Article I
Name and Location

Section 1: The name of this organization shall be _____ Leadership Advisory Board.

Section 2: The Board of Directors for the organization shall be known officially as the “Board of Advisors”, hereinafter referred to as the “Board.”

Section 3: The principal office and place of business of this organization shall be _____ County, Texas.

Section 4: The mailing address for this organization shall be _____.

Article II
Purpose/Mission

Section 1: The purpose of the _____ County Leadership Advisory Board is to provide leadership and support to the development, implementation, and evaluation of a strong Extension educational program in the areas of agriculture & natural resources, family & consumer science, 4H & youth development, and community & economic development. It serves as a vehicle for citizen input that ensures Extension continues to provide responsive, relevant, effective programs that address critical issues to the residents of _____ County.

Section 2: Organized groups composing the Leadership Advisory Board shall include the following:

- _____ Leadership Advisory Board
- _____ Youth Board
- _____ Program Area Committee
- _____ Program Area Committee
- _____ Program Area Committee

Task forces may be established within each group to perform selected tasks as needed to effectively achieve the goals and objectives of each committee and in furtherance of Extension educational efforts.

Section 3: Extension boards, committees, task forces, and the programs they develop and provide to the public shall strive to serve all people regardless of socioeconomic levels, race, color, disability, age, religion, or national origin.

Article III
Leadership Advisory Board

Section 1: The Board shall be at least ____ in number and represent a cross section of the community's social, economic, and educational infrastructure.

Section 2: The Board shall be appointed by the County Coordinator/County Extension Director based on recommendations from Extension faculty, staff, volunteers, committee members, and key stakeholders.

Section 3: The term of membership shall be 3 years and will be based upon a calendar year. Board members may serve up to two consecutive terms upon recommendation of the Board and approval by the County Extension Agent. Board members must vacate their seat for at least one year before becoming eligible for another term.

Section 4: The functions of the Board shall rest within three major task forces.

- Program Direction
 - review and ratification of Extension's Annual and Long Range Extension Programs as developed through community-based meetings to identify critical issues.
 - recommend changes in organizational structure to committees, task forces, and other organized groups
 - identify and recommend area, state, and national initiatives appropriate for Extension to implement
 - become familiar with Extension program efforts by attending selected activities and events as time and schedule allows

- Education
 - organize activities and events that make use of mass media and other methods to promote Extension programming efforts, accomplishments, and impact.
 - make personal contact with county, state, and national elected officials and opinion leaders to interpret Extension programs and accountability in the use of resources.
 - develop and follow a plan of annual activities that promote Extension programming efforts (service club presentations, public service announcements, talk radio shows, representation at public meetings and forums, letter writing, etc.)
 - recruit Board members as needed to ensure an active, effective Board.

- Finance
 - identify and contact funding sources with potential for support of Extension educational programs
 - develop and follow an annual budget to support Board activities
 - develop a plan for sustainable resource development

Each task force shall consist of a task force chair who will have authority to recruit additional members to assist with task force duties.

Section 5: The Board shall meet at least twice a year to carry out its responsibilities.

Section 6: The Board shall consist of a Chairperson. Each task force shall consist of a chair. Other officers may be appointed as needed by the Board.

Article IV Committees

Section 1: Committees shall consist of those listed under Article II, Section 2. Committees shall be standing committees and may change as needed to meet changing community needs.

Section 2: Committee membership shall be appointed by the County Extension Agent based on recommendations from Extension faculty, staff, volunteers, committee members, the Board, and key leaders. Number of members will vary and will be determined by the responsible Extension faculty member, but all committees should have at least 5 members.

Section 3: The term of membership shall be 1 year and will be based upon a calendar year. Members may be reappointed for succeeding terms. If a member misses three consecutive meetings without cause, the committee may declare a vacancy. Extension faculty responsible for a committee serve as ex-officio members of the committee.

Section 4: The functions of the committees shall be to provide leadership and support in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of an effective, innovative educational program.

Section 5: Each committee will elect their own officers, including a chairman, vice-chairman, secretary and other officers as needed. Officers will serve for a one year period and may be reelected to the same office for one additional term. Officers may be elected to a different office. If a vacancy occurs in the committee chairman position, the vice-chairman will become the chairman for the balance of the term of office. If a vacancy occurs in any other officer position, the committee will elect a member to serve for the balance of the term.

Section 6: All committees shall meet as needed to carry out their responsibilities. Meetings may be called by the committee chairman, the responsible Extension faculty or any two members of the committee. At least two regular meetings a year will be held. At least a five day notice shall be given in advance of the called date for regular meetings. Special meetings may be held by meeting or by telephone conference call.

Section 7: A quorum of any committee shall consist of the members present and voting at any committee meeting. A majority vote will be required to transact business at any meeting.

Section 8: All money and other resources managed by any committee shall be managed in accordance with the established Extension policy. All accounts shall be audited once per year. Verification of the audit along with other requested information shall be submitted to the County Extension Agent.

Section 9: Extension faculty are responsible for working with the issues and committees and serve as a liaison between the committees and the Board.

Article V
Amendment of By-Laws

These by-laws may be amended, altered or repealed by a majority vote of the Board at any regular or special meeting if notice of the proposed alteration, change, or amendment is contained in the notice of the meeting.

Draft Prepared: (Date)

VI. YOUR COUNTY PROGRAM PLANS

The programs of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are the heart of our organization's service delivery. They are developed based on TCCF issues, emerging needs, industry trends, and other factors. Locally driven programs ensure that issues addressed by Extension are relevant and allow Extension to periodically redirect resources as needed to assure prompt and effective responses. Programs are driven by a plan and include a variety of tasks and activities to support them. They are developed by community-based committees, implemented under the leadership of an agent, reported monthly, evaluated annually, and interpreted to key stakeholders.

Agent: _____

Outcome Plan(s): _____

Output Plans(s): _____

Agent: _____

Outcome Plan(s): _____

Output Plans(s): _____

GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES

Disclaimer: These guidelines are intended to tailor policies and procedures from both the County and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service/TAMUS into clear procedural standards for a given County Office. They are not intended nor should they be interpreted to replace or supercede the established rules, policies, procedures, or guidelines of either organization. If you encounter different rules, you should adhere to the more stringent rule or clarify the proper course of action with the County Coordinator.

See County Policy Handbook or TAMUS Policies and Procedures Manual for further information and clarification.

I. GENERAL OFFICE PROCEDURES

Greeting the public: Our customers are the public whether they access us by phone, fax, mail, internet, or walk-in. They are to be greeted with respect and with special attention paid to their needs at all times. They're the reason we are here! Our phone greeting is: Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, _____ County, "This is (your name)...may I help you." All efforts should be made to answer calls on the first ring and you should end all phone calls with "Goodbye", "Thank you for calling", "Please call again" or similar professional business ending to a call. No collect, person to person, or other calls billed to Extension are accepted. Walk-ins should be assisted within 1 minute and should be referred to appropriate faculty member within 5 minutes if no appointment has been made.

Standards for Answering the Phone:

1. Phone should be answered on the first ring and **never** after the third ring. It is **everyone's responsibility** to assure that this standard is met.
2. "Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, _____ County, This is (your name)" is the official greeting that must be used.
3. When calls are received,
 - contact should be made with the staff person before the call is transferred
 - if contact cannot be made, the caller should be told the person is "away from their work station" and a detailed, written message taken and provided to the agent.
 - no person shall be left on hold for more than 20 seconds without being provided with an update and options for continuing to hold or leaving a message. No person shall ever be left on hold for more than a minute (3 - 20 second holding periods).

Taking Messages: When taking messages, particularly for agents, you are expected to document the full name of the caller, return phone number, time & date of call, full address if pertinent to the call, and detailed notes about the purpose of the call. Incomplete or inaccurate messages result in dissatisfied customers and poor quality service.

Additionally, take the time to learn the names of key local leaders and program area committee members, media, county officials, state officials, Extension specialists and administrators, and other key people. Agents should inform their secretaries about the people for which they wish to be interrupted. Please afford these individuals the consideration they deserve by offering to check with agents before taking a message or making extra efforts to locate agents who are away from their desks. County commissioners, media representatives, state elected officials, and state administrators should be given top priority and full service.

Agent Duties Outside the Office: Agents are considered to be on duty during posted office hours. It is the responsibility of the agent to advise the secretary of their whereabouts during office hours and provide an estimated time of return, updating that time as needed. It is the secretary's responsibility to make reasonable efforts to maintain the whereabouts of the agent along with an estimated time of return. This information is important when handling phone inquiries, walk-ins, and to designate where you may be located, including leave taken. A message board is recommended to advise internal staff that the agent is "at a meeting," "conducting a workshop," "away from his/her desk," "out," or other appropriate reference. Each person, both agents and support staff, is individually responsible for ensuring that an agent's duties outside the office can be reasonably accounted for during business hours. If agents are on leave, that should be indicated along with the date the agent can be expected to return to work. Secretaries should NOT say "I don't know," "that agent hasn't come in yet," "gone for the day," etc.

Referrals: All walk-in traffic should be served immediately and be provided with a comfortable place to be seated while an agent is contacted to serve them. You may also ask the person if they had an appointment so that you can provide this information to the agent. Please make every effort to ensure that walk-ins receive attention from a professional faculty member as appropriate. Agents should make walk-in customers a high priority and attend to them as quickly as possible. Phone inquiries should be directed to the agent once the general nature of the question is established. This is to minimize inaccurate referrals. Under no circumstances should a caller be transferred to a voice mailbox without the caller being given that option (example: "Mr. X is not in...may I take a message or would you like his voice mail"). Be aware that agents may provide a special method in which they would like calls directed. This should be honored and followed.

Long Distance Calls: County Offices may have special codes or instructions for long distance calls. Verify county policy for long distance calls and other phone use policies. Personal phone calls, even those taken on personal cell phones, are generally permitted but should be kept under 2 minutes and be kept to a minimum during a given business day. No personal phone calls should be made if they will result in costs to the county or state (i.e. long distance charges billed to the county/state, collect calls, time spent on the phone that exceeds reasonable limits).

Mailing Costs: A postage budget is provided by the District office through budgeted state funds. Funds are charged on an online account and may be used to mail business mail as needed. Overnight mail services may be supported at county expense. This should be verified with the county coordinator, county auditor, or other responsible person.

Reports: All agent monthly reports are due on the 5th work day of the month following the reporting period or the 7th of the month, **whichever comes FIRST**. A complete monthly report includes a posted web report, a commissioners court report submitted to the Judge's Office, and a copy of court report, monthly schedule of travel and office conference minutes mailed to the district office. Other reports are due throughout the year and should be submitted as directed by the DEA or RPD.

Dress Code: Dress should be consistent with the job responsibilities. Support staff shall dress in a manner consistent with a professional office environment. If a "casual day" is designated, it should be consistent with standards of office dress for other county departments. Agents should always dress professionally and in accordance with their duties for the day. Business dress should be worn for Commissioners Court appearances, conferences, and similar activities. If in doubt, support staff should consult an agent or county coordinator. Agents should consult the DEA.

Scheduling of Meeting Rooms: Some offices are responsible for scheduling a meeting room within the county office.

Opening & Closing: Unless alternative arrangements are made, it is the responsibility of support staff to open the office and prepare it for the business day. Similarly, closing procedures should ensure that the office is safe and secure. This includes ensuring that all equipment not being used is turned off, all doors are locked, break/meeting rooms are clean and picked up, and that lights (except security lights) are off. A check for general hazards should also be conducted to ensure that appliances are unplugged as appropriate, that water isn't running in the bathrooms, and other potential hazards are eliminated or identified and reported if safety is an issue.

Office Conferences: Faculty conferences should be held if there are two or more people on staff, including support staff. Conferences should be held weekly and never less often than twice per month. Attendance is required of all agents and support staff. Minutes should be prepared and filed. They should be submitted to the district office monthly with commissioners court reports.

Use of Motor Vehicles: All agents must have a vehicle for business use as a requirement of employment. Selected program support staff may also be required to use their personal vehicle for official duties as determined by job responsibilities. Job responsibilities for secretaries shall not require travel and secretaries may not travel except with special permission. Secretarial support staff may decline to use their own vehicles for county or Extension business without fear of reprimand or reprisal. Any vehicle driven in support of official business, whether compensated or uncompensated, must be driven by a licensed operator and must have liability insurance that satisfies state law. State or county-owned vehicles should be used in accordance with applicable state or county policy. Unless expressly allowed, official vehicles should not be taken home or used for any non-business purpose.

Filing and Document Storage: Central files should be present in each county office and follow the uniform filing system. With the exception of confidential files, these files should be kept in a location that is accessible to all faculty and staff and should house all administrative files along with subject matter publications. Efforts are in progress to move from this filing system to a laserfiche system. Until such a system is implemented at the county level, each county should retain the current paper filing system. Agents may retain personal program files or working files but should not replace central file documents.

File Retention: County offices should follow county policy for county records and state policy for state records. In the absence of a county policy, state policy should be used for guidance. Guidance for record retention related to monthly reports, personnel files, civil rights files, subject matter publications, and other documents can be obtained from the district office. File retention does not apply to an agent's personal files.

Open Records/Freedom of Information Act: With few exceptions, any document or record in a county office is subject to the Open Records Act. This could also include work documents kept at home. Contact the district office immediately if such a request is made.

Office Management Responsibilities: The office manager is responsible for the general operation of the office, including effective management of office equipment, supplies, and operations.

Communication with Elected Officials: Communication with county elected officials that are initiated by Extension should be done with prior full knowledge and consent of the county coordinator. When communication is done with state or federal elected officials, the DEA should be advised in addition to the county coordinator.

II. HUMAN RESOURCE GUIDELINES

Salary & Benefits: Full county employees qualify for full county benefits and are paid based on the established county payroll schedule. Agents with blended positions (county & state) will receive the county and state portions of their salary separately based on the payroll schedule for each entity. State payroll for salary employees is paid on the 1st work day following the pay period. Agents receive state health benefits. The provision of health benefits from the county is at the discretion of the county. Retirement benefits must be coordinated between the county and state and may vary based on the type of the retirement plan. When agents are new, they should check their pay stubs to ensure proper deductions are being made and report errors to the appropriate person at the county or state, depending on where the suspected error has occurred.

Time Sheets: All non-exempt employees are required to maintain a daily record of hours worked through the use of a time clock or other accepted method as approved by county coordinator. Hours worked and leave taken must be recorded on appropriate county payroll forms by all employees, with employee signature for each payroll period. Payroll should not be altered or reported incompletely or incorrectly and should not be submitted for employees who do not record hours, sign, or otherwise fail to follow county policy for payroll records. Agents should follow county policy or seek exemption or other court order that provides guidance for this process.

Classification of Employees: All agents are defined as “Salary-exempt” employees according to the Fair Labor Standards Act. By this exemption, they cannot lay claim to overtime, compensatory time, or other standards affecting wage employees. They are required to adhere to the standard office work hours of 8 am to 5 pm. All office and program support staff are defined as “Salary-Non-Exempt” employees and are affected by the rules set by the Fair Labor Standards Act. If you don’t know how your position is classified, ask the agent or county coordinator.

Work Hours: The County Office should have posted office hours from 8 am to 5 pm unless the county prescribes otherwise. Support staff shall be provided with a lunch hour from 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm. Breaks are not required to be provided. Given that most offices have only one support staff person, the secretary should coordinate with the agent for breaks that are needed during the day and taken judiciously during the day.

Work Week: The standard work week for secretaries shall consist of 40 hours. The county may have a different work week than the state. The work week for state support staff is Thursday through Wednesday. Program support staff, including program assistants with BLT and EFNEP shall work not more than 40 hours per week, using a standard 8am to 5 pm schedule or other set schedule as requested by the supervising agent. Part Time staff work hours shall be determined by the supervising agent.

Overtime/Compensatory Time: Counties generally do not provide budgeted funds for overtime pay. No compensatory time will be allowed as a standard practice. Agents should ensure that work is provided to support staff with sufficient lead time and in a manner that allows for it to be completed during normal working hours. Agents are not authorized to alter the standard work hours set for the office.

Job Descriptions: Job descriptions should be developed for all positions and be reviewed and signed annually. All agents and support staff shall sign and submit a job description for the file at the time of employment. This is a requirement for all positions, regardless of funding source.

Sick and Vacation Leave: Sick and Vacation leave may be taken when eligible and in accordance with policy, as an accrued benefit. When sick, secretaries should personally and directly contact the agent to notify them of the nature of their illness and the number of hours that will be taken. This should be done in a manner that assures that neither office operations nor programs/services are unreasonably impacted negatively. Vacation leave should be requested in advance, preferably with 2 weeks notice. Failure to provide due notice for leave may result in denial or delays to ensure that the office can operate effectively for the period in question. LeaveTraq is the official system for leave for state employees. County employees should follow county leave procedures. Please refer to state/county guidelines for specific rules on sick/vacation leave benefits. Leave is a request process, not a notification process.

Holidays: The county office is closed on all days observed as holidays by the County. If the State of Texas provides for more holidays than the County, agents may request added vacation days in connection with other state/national holidays using the floating holiday option (x-holiday on LeaveTraq). If the county holidays exceed the number of state-authorized holidays, agents must either take leave on the number of excess days or request and gain administrative approval to work selected holidays.

Disciplinary Action: Disciplinary action for county staff follows county policy for discipline and dismissal. Progressive discipline may include any of the following actions: verbal warning, written reprimand, suspension, demotion, and/or dismissal. A written warning should precede any action related to suspension, demotion, or dismissal. TAMU System & AgriLife Extension policy shall be followed for faculty and state employees.

Supervision & Evaluation: County Extension Faculty are supervised and evaluated by the District Extension Administrator. They are also accountable to the Commissioners' Court. Secretaries provide administrative support to agents and should be evaluated by agent annually. The County Coordinator is responsible for facilitating this process in a manner that assures full faculty input. Program support staff should also be evaluated annually by their supervising agent with input from the county coordinator. Standard evaluation forms are available on the human resource website and should be used for all support staff. This also applies to county-funded positions unless the county has and requires the use of their own instrument.

Civil Rights/Affirmative Action: A number of laws, USDA directives, and System Policy govern issues related to civil rights and affirmative action. The reason these rules were created was to ensure that Extension programs and services are open and available to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin. These rules also prohibit discrimination in employment. Every reasonable effort must be made to make all people in the county aware of Extension programs and all people should be served in a

non-discriminatory manner. This is also an expectation in the workplace. Documents that support efforts in support of non-discrimination should be kept on file and updated annually to use during state civil rights reviews. Each county is subject to federal or state reviews of compliance with Civil Rights laws. For further information on EEO laws and civil rights policy, county employees should refer to county policy and state employees should reference the TAMUS Administrative Policies website.

III. FISCAL GUIDELINES

Travel Approval: Requests for travel involve approval for two things: time (administrative approval) and money (PO or court approval). Sometimes those are accomplished in one action and sometimes they require two separate requests, depending on the source of travel funds. Administrative approval is necessary to protect the agent while traveling outside their assigned county. There is no approval required from the DEA or county commissioners court for local travel. An annual (based on a fiscal year) blanket travel request authorization form (AG-802) must be submitted for all agents for in-district travel. Border counties should also submit a blanket travel request authorization form for any border travel into Mexico. These should be completed each fiscal year and are due on or before September 1. Administrative approval for travel outside the district must be submitted on AG-802 designating the funding source and approved by DEA prior to the date of the trip. Out-of-state or out-of-country travel must be requested, approved by DEA, and forwarded for state approval 30 days prior to the trip. Failure to do this in a timely manner will result in denial of authorization to travel. Agents may use annual leave to travel but will not have the protections in place if they were on official time. For travel to be paid from county funds, a request for travel funds must also be made to the county. This usually involves an agenda item but county policies may vary. Any travel to be paid from Extension/state funds must be processed through Concur (state online travel system) and appropriate approval must be processed and routed completely based on administrative directives for the given account.

Local Mileage: Reimbursement for local mileage from county funds is handled through a mileage reimbursement process or by a travel allowance. Mileage reimbursements require a record of miles traveled and reimbursed at the approved rate by the county. These reports should be submitted regularly and not saved up. Mileage should stay within budgeted amounts. Travel allowances are usually processed through payroll and are reported as income. No mileage support documentation is required but travel allowances should be justifiable for the amount of mileage traveled locally.

General Office Supplies: General office supplies should always be well stocked and in a single storage area accessible to all staff. Staff members should only take what they will reasonably use. Supplies are for business purposes only. Records may be kept for certain items to monitor use for budgeting and management purposes. General office supplies should include paper, copier supplies, writing tablets, pens, pencils, paper clips, folders, rubber bands, and other supplies as requested by staff. The secretary/office manager is generally responsible for ordering supplies with guidance/direction from the county coordinator and with agent input. Agents and support staff should notify the secretary/office manager if a specific supply item is running low.

Special Program Supplies: Certain programs such as BLT and other grant programs may have budgeted funds for supplies and equipment. As such, these programs may have individual accounting requirements or limitations on uses that should be recognized and honored. However, it is an expectation that seamless use of resources is practiced while honoring the requirements of a given special program.

Equipment/Inventory: The County Coordinator is the accountable property officer for all county and state equipment. All equipment should be stored in a accessible but secure area, preferably with a lock. A “check-out” system is encouraged if there are multiple users. State and county equipment should only be used for official Extension or county business. Non-business uses are prohibited. Any problems (burned out bulbs, missing cords, etc) should be reported to the office manager upon return of the equipment. Except for programs or other business uses, all equipment must remain in the office. Equipment should not be routinely stored/used at home, in a vehicle, or other unofficial location without a filed letter that documents this and provides a justification about how such an arrangement is in the best interest of the state or county. A history of lost or damaged equipment may result in the revocation of such a privilege. Equipment inventory is conducted annually by the state and must be verified by the accountable property office. A separate inventory should be kept for county equipment/property. If the county has no inventory process, we recommend that county equipment be accounted for and visually verified annually as well through a county inventory list.

Grant/Program Funds: State-controlled funds must be managed by the designated P.I. in a manner that honors and follows agency policy and established fund management procedures and guidelines. External support accounts should follow agency recommendations with the assigned agent being responsible for providing training to volunteers as appropriate.

Use of Vendor Accounts: Accounts may be set up in the name of the County or the State only with expressed written consent from the appropriate fiscal officer. Accounts carry considerable restrictions and accountability for their use. These may only be used for business purposes, only with state or county funds, as appropriate, and in accordance with AgriLife Extension or County fiscal policy.

Support Group Accounts: External accounts may exist and serve a valuable role in supporting Extension programs. These could include 4-H Clubs, TEEA, Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, Ag. Committees, Advisory groups, or others. These funds belong to these groups, not to Extension or the County. As such, agents may not handle any money that is not county or state money, except as outlined in agency policy. Strict procedures for the handling of money is outlined in Extension’s “Best Practices: Financial Management Procedures” document. All volunteers, agents, and support staff are required to receive training in this area.

County Budget Development: County Budgets are developed annually based on the fiscal year of the county. The county coordinator is responsible for coordinating the development of a county budget request with input from all county faculty and with consideration of support staff needs. Details for this process are outlined annually in budget development instructions provided to the county coordinator. All budgets must be submitted and approved by the district office prior to submission to the county.

IV. Helpful Websites:

<http://extensionemployees.tamu.edu> - General information website for Extension employees

<http://agrifeas.tamu.edu> - Administrative Services website; includes links AgriLife resources such as Fiscal, HR, Risk and Compliance, OSRS, Forms, SSO, etc.

<http://agrifeas.tamu.edu/hr> - Human Resource office

<http://agrifeas.org/od/employee-development> - Professional development; training for new employees

<http://agrifeas.tamu.edu/fiscal/travel/index.php> - Travel resources and forms

<http://agrifeasextension.tamu.edu/volunteer/> - Volunteerism resources (LAB, Youth Board, volunteer mgmt.)

<http://agrifeas.tamu.edu/forms/index.php> - All forms

<http://texashelp.tamu.edu> - Resources for disaster preparedness

<http://greatjobs.tamu.edu> - Official Jobs website for Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

<http://first-call.tamu.edu/centra.php> - Centra Symposium website (online training)

<http://texas.tamu.edu/login.cfm> - Texas Extension Planning & Reporting System

<http://extensionemployees.tamu.edu/resources/internal-resources/diversity-and-civil-rights-resources/> - Civil Rights & Diversity Resources

<http://agrifeasextension.tamu.edu/strategicplan> - State Strategic Plan

<http://agrifeasbookstore.org> - TCE Bookstore (publications, marketing items, supplies)

<https://agrifeaspeople.tamu.edu> - Listing of all departments & units in Extension

<http://county-tx.tamu.edu> - List of all county and district offices

<http://perdir.tamu.edu/Docs/ExtensionDirectory.pdf> - personnel directory of all state faculty

<http://tamus.edu/offices/policy/index.html> - Texas A&M System Policies & Regulations

<http://sso.tamus.edu> - Request leave, access payroll and benefit information, required training

<http://agrifeas.tamu.edu/fiscal/cash-mgmt/> - Best Practices: financial resource management

<http://owa.agnet.tamu.edu> - AgriLife Outlook Web app

<http://agrifeas.tamu.edu/cg/index.php> - contracts and grants, sponsored research contacts

<http://www.csrees.usda.gov> - general information about Extension's federal partner

<http://southtexas.tamu.edu> - District 12 website

<http://d124-h.tamu.edu> - District 12 4-H website (resources on district events)

<http://southtexas.tamu.edu/county-resources> - A list of district-based documents and web links are also available on the District 12 website.