

INCREASING GIFTS, GRANTS AND FEES

Shirley Hastings, Director, UT Extension Strategic Planning

Rob Holland, Director, Center for Profitable Agriculture

Brandi Berven, Extension Specialist, Extension Evaluation and Staff Development

Extension systems across the country have historically been funded through a partnership of federal, state and local governments. This funding partnership remains true today; however, the direct or formula funding from federal and state government has not increased significantly over time. To provide sustained funding for current programs and meet future needs additional resources must be secured. Through gifts, grants and fee-based programs employees have the opportunity to work together to develop funding streams that support specific programs and the entire system. Seeking external funds to support program efforts puts Extension in the best position to implement and sustain impactful programs.

Background

In 2010, Tennessee Extension launched a strategic planning process to honor the past and look to the future. The strategic plan provided a roadmap to guide Extension to achieve excellence and focus attention on advancing Extension in Tennessee. The plan resulted in five overarching goals that included strategies and action steps to achieve each goal. Diversifying revenue sources, including fee-based programming, and expanding grant and contract funding were goals in the strategic plan.

Purpose and Objectives

In 2013, a diverse team was appointed and charged to increase funding to accomplish Extension's mission by:

- Identifying and making recommendations for streamlining procedures for processing, reporting and tracking gifts, grants and revenues from fee-based programs.
- Encouraging a paradigm shift that emphasizes the individual's responsibility for securing and increasing external funding.
- Increasing Extension staff's awareness and understanding of the roles, policies and procedures in the external funding process.

Methodology

The team began their work by researching and gathering information from the director of the Office of Sponsored Programs, director of UTIA Advancement, and Extension budget director about existing policies and procedures, approval and workflow processes, and forms related to external funding. They also researched and identified best practices for securing and managing external funds.

The team conducted surveys and interviews with stakeholders and agents to identify needs, barriers and challenges related to securing external funding. Interviews were conducted with agents who had been successful in securing external funding and with those who had not.

After reviewing survey results, interview data and best practices, the team identified the following areas as necessary for expanding partnerships and increasing funding in the future:

1. Guidelines and expectations for extramural funding support, including gifts, grants and fees at the county and regional level
2. Procedures to manage grants and contracts at the county and regional level.
3. Systems and procedures for documenting and reporting extramural funding.
4. Guidelines for the faculty incentive program.
5. Protocols for the establishment of endowed positions and distinguished appointments.
6. Plan and conduct training for state, regional and county staff.
7. Recognition opportunities and awards related to funding accomplishments for specialists and agents (entrepreneurship awards).

Major Outcomes

Training for Extension Staff

The team developed training for Extension personnel to provide a general overview of the basic terminology, structure and procedures related to seeking, obtaining, handling, managing, and utilizing external funds, including gifts, grants and fees. The objectives of the training were for participants to gain a better understanding of basic policy, procedures and routing guidelines. The training was offered in each region in 2016, and county and regional office teams, consisting of at least two staff members, were encouraged to attend. More than 135 employees attended the training. The training was recorded and made available to staff who were unable to attend. It was recommended that training be included in new employee orientation and county director training.

Designated Extension Contact in Office of Sponsored Programs

To facilitate a simpler process for Extension staff obtaining and managing external funds, a designated contact was established in the Office of Sponsored Programs to coordinate Extension grants. Responsibilities include coordinating, directing, and answering questions about securing, handling, and reporting external funding. All questions regarding grants and contracts can be directed to the newly created email address for Extension: extensiongrants@utk.edu.

External Funding Added to Performance Appraisal Criteria

Securing external funding was added as an expectation in the agent performance appraisal rubric, starting with the new performance appraisal system that was implemented in 2017.

Changes to Faculty Incentive Program

The name of the program was changed from the Faculty Incentive Program to the Salary Incentive Program to clarify that agents as well as faculty were eligible to participate. The program criteria originally required that 10 percent of the salary must be replaced with grant dollars to qualify for the incentive. The criteria were changed to require 5 percent of salary be replaced, which made it more likely for agents to qualify for the salary incentive program. This change was made to encourage more agents to seek external funding.

External Funding Increased

Between fiscal year 2015 and fiscal year 2019, external funding from grants and contracts increased from \$29.5 million to \$34.7 million. Fee based income increased from \$4.71 million in fiscal year 2015 to \$6.32 million in fiscal year 2019.

Sustainability Plan

The Office of Sponsored Programs was designated to conduct future training as needed and to update policies and procedures as necessary.

2013-2016 Initiative Committee

Team Leader

Rob Holland, Director, Center for Profitable Agriculture

Team Members

Gayle Bowman, Extension Administrative Support Assistant, Cheatham County

Lynn Brookins, Regional Family and Consumer Sciences Program Leader, Western Region Justin Crowe, Extension Specialist, 4-H Youth Development

JC Dupree, Extension County Director, Lauderdale County

Debbie Hurst, Extension Administrative Support Assistant, Sevier County

Tom Looney, Director of Advancement, UTIA Advancement Michelle Parrott, Extension County Director, Putnam County

Nancy Rucker, Extension County Director, Hamilton County

Scott Stewart, Professor, Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology



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