



# UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING **EXTENSION**

## Guide to Welcome the New Extension Educator in the County Extension Office

July 2022

## **Introduction:**

Welcoming a new Extension educator is the first step in their success. Several parties play an active role in welcoming the new educator:

- The county office team
- The Associate Director who supervises the new educator
- The Staff Development Coordinator
- UWE Early Career Mentor
- Other Extension colleagues

The first days, weeks, and months as a new Extension educator can be overwhelming. It is wise to go slow and find ways to provide information in small doses. This guide will help you understand the roles and responsibilities for orientation and training of the new educator. Some topics are included multiple times and that's by design. The repetition will reinforce the concept because different people present it in different ways. The other advantage is that the new educator may be more comfortable asking questions to different people.

## **The County Office Team:**

### **Prior to the First Day**

- Make sure the office space is clean and properly equipped i.e. computer, phone, voice mail system, UW Extension phone list, UW Extension Area Map, desk supplies, file space, storage, etc.
- Order name plate for office door or desk as appropriate.
- Get office keys.
- Facilitate parking permit if necessary.
- Arrange for local media coverage or interviews with local news reporters.
  - New employee announcement will be distributed through the All-CES list serve by the Staff Development Coordinator.
  - A statewide news release will be generated and distributed through UWE C&T.
- Develop plan to introduce the new educator to community members. Ideas include open house, digital recording to be placed on Facebook page, website, schedule meetings to introduce at civic groups and/or other organizations.
- Provide a prepared contact list of county commissioners, key stakeholders, agency personnel, anyone that will be instrumental in the new educator's success.
- Additionally, provide a contact list of 4-H Community Club leaders, 4-H key leaders, and council members for new 4-H educators. Be prepared to share ideas for identifying key players/volunteers and how they have been utilized in the past.
- Provide past 4-H newsletters (12 months)
- Provide files of major programs (12 months)
- Provide a "Calendar of County Events and Meetings" and when to begin work on these. This is critical especially for 4-H educators starting in the spring or summer.

- E-mail or call to welcome them onboard. Share any pertinent information about their first day such as what time to arrive, where to park, etc. Contact information can be obtained from the Associate Director.

## First Day in the Office

- Be there before the new employee arrives to welcome them to the office.
- Show them to their office space and explain what will happen during their orientation with you.
- Introduce UW Extension staff and any other personnel who may share office space such as Weed & Pest or fair staff.
- Tour of the office: show where office supplies are kept, restrooms, storage, etc.
- Share office protocols, i.e. regular staff meetings, coffee breaks, county coordinator responsibilities, communication about schedules.
- Explain county policies such as vouchering county mileage and expenses, use of county vehicles and how to access them (if available), budget allocations, and general fiscal philosophies of county government.
- Provide a list of county holidays and identify those that are not UW recognized holidays. Please reinforce that if a county office closes for a holiday not recognized by UW, employees must work that day or take vacation.
- Talk about working with administrative assistants; What program area(s) does the admin support? What kinds of tasks are appropriate to ask admin to complete? What can be delegated to admin? How much lead time is appreciated? Communication with admin regarding schedules, upcoming programs, potential conflicts with clientele, etc.
- Share their official title and use of letterhead.
- Demonstrate how to use the phone and set up voice mail, if available in the county office. Share standard office answering message – *“UW Extension, \_\_\_\_\_ County, this is \_\_\_\_\_. How can I help you?”*
- Help acquire e-mail address if county addresses are different than UW. A UW e-mail address will be generated when the hiring paperwork goes through human resources the first week on the job. Instruction on how to forward the UW e-mail to the county e-mail.
- Suggest things to do to get the program up and running, such as:
  - Visiting with clientele immediately, both individuals and groups.
  - Encourage them to attend appropriate civic group meetings and other organization meetings with you.
  - Prepare a one-page introduction to give to people.
  - Consider developing a short survey asking for input on area issues and needs to accompany them on visits to gather information for educational programming.
- Consistently demonstrate overall Extension vision, mission, and philosophy. Explain Extension team concepts:
  - Staff team
  - Area team
  - Focus areas and Program Development and Assessment Teams

## Within the first month

- Introduce to:
  - County commissioners and other personnel in nearby offices
  - Key stakeholders in extension and their programming interest
- Encourage educator to develop a plan to learn about the community and county.
- Take them on a community and county tour. Show them meeting facilities that are available outside of the county office. Provide them contact information to reserve the facilities.
- Describe existing program efforts done by or with other agencies in the area and encourage them to begin building agency relationships.
- Share current goals, if any, of the county program and any progress or positive momentum that the program is making so the educator can focus on what is “working” and maintain that momentum instead of starting with what is wrong with the program.
- Provide training on general office functions that all staff should be able to handle, i.e., water tests, hay/forage/feed tests, etc.
- Tips for managing professional scheduling.
- Encourage participation in training opportunities.

## Within the 2<sup>nd</sup> month

- Introduce to civic organizations, other local partners

## Ongoing

- Check with new educator occasionally to answer further questions and see how they are doing.
- Check in on the educator’s plan to learn about the community and county. What have they learned? Have they interacted with key stakeholders? Have they attended meetings of organizations that partner with Extension or could be potential program partners?
- How are they doing? Do they adequately understand their roles & responsibilities?
- Direct, coach and support, and provide positive guidance as needed in a non-threatening environment. Each time, come up with something specific that will help them grow and to know when they are successful.

## **Staff Development Coordinator:**

### Prior to start date

- Order name tags and business cards
- Add to appropriate list serves, zSuite and 4-H Connect
- Add to UWE website(s)
- Employee introduction on all-ces-list
- Facilitate budget activity code with ABO

First day or two in the office

- Call to welcome the new educator
- Schedule zoom conference(s) to begin New Employee Orientation

Within first 3 weeks – several zoom orientations will be conducted to cover the following topics:

- Employee start up package: national meeting allowance, technology funds, program fund
- WyoWeb Tour: Admin calendar for UW holidays; Employee LearnCenter for mandatory trainings; WyoCloud; vacation and sick leave requests; expenses and pay (direct deposit, delegating roles, and P-card); WyoFolio/WyoVita and reporting requirements; Zoom account.
- UWE Employee Resources Website Tour: official leave request and managing professional scheduling; training request for in-depth training and professional association conferences; office policy manual; University vehicle policy and forms; UW Catering; marketing materials; C&T trainings; model release form.
- Additional topics: Professional scheduling; community assessment tool - develop plan to learn about the community and program; communication from the State UWE Office; representing Extension in public (dress, name tag, political issues); primary role in 1<sup>st</sup> year.

Ongoing

- Monthly zoom conferences for all new employees 2:00 to 3:30 pm on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of January, February, March, April, September, October, and December. Occasionally dates change do to scheduling conflicts. Topics include:
  - Working with Mentors and Office Colleagues; Professionalism and building networks
  - Communication: Difficult Conversations
  - It's all about Management: time, e-mail, paperwork
  - Professional Associations; National Conference and In-depth Training Funds
  - Performance Review Documents and Reporting Requirements
  - Writing Impact Statements and your Narrative
  - C&T: team intro; on-line facilitation strategies; using social media; eXtension and other resources
  - Civil Rights Training
  - Stakeholder Input
- Quarterly Worktime in WyoVita zoom conferences. New employees are encouraged to participate and enter their work in WyoVita asking questions while on-line.
- Coordinate two in-person orientations
  - Spring - off campus: Program Development and Evaluation; Effective Teaching Strategies
  - Fall - on campus: introduce employees in the State UWE office, Admissions, ABO; mission, vision, organizational structure, employee expectations, UW policy and performance appraisal, state 4-H office and/or department time

## **The Associate Director who supervises the new educator:**

Prior to start date

- Work with State Extension Office to communicate who was hired and start date to the local interview committee and county commissioners
- Identify Early Career Mentor

First day or two in the office

- Call to welcome the new educator
- Schedule a time to visit

First 2 weeks – in person visit to cover the following topics

- Primary role in the first year
- Being an effective educator
- Strategies to learn about the community and program
- Questions about information shared by the Staff Development Coordinator
- Employee expectations and representing Extension in public
- Follow up on employment questions
- Reinforce professional scheduling and its purpose
- Responsibilities for financial management (program fund)
- Share appropriate and applicable information from the exit interview form completed by outgoing employee
- Make sure the county staff has helped the new employee with routine tasks like mailing packages, use of phones, cell phones, equipment usage, county protocols.
- Deliver UWE branded swag

Ongoing

- Check in with new employee – how are they doing? Do they adequately understand their role & responsibilities? Have they interacted with key stakeholders? Have they attended meetings of organizations that partner with Extension or could be potential program partners?

## The UWE Early Career Mentor:

Begin by focusing on their program, building clientele relationships, informal education venues and developing teaching skills. Help them understand the workings of UW Extension such as area meetings and state events.

First day or two in the office

- Call to welcome the new educator; share your programming experience and background
- Schedule a time to visit

First couple of weeks

- Early career mentoring is focused mainly on the routine and day to day functions in Extension. Information to ease their way into the job. The goal is to build a solid foundation for Extension performance.
- Learn about the new employee. Ask questions to open a friendly dialogue with them.
- Use the first weeks/months to form a working relationship and build trust. Contact them regularly. Several shorter visits are recommended in the beginning until the new educator begins to feel comfortable with Extension. Just knowing that there are others “out there” who care about their success goes a long way toward helping them get started in Extension.
- Schedule dates/times for future visits that are longer in nature. The visits may be onsite, by phone or virtual.
- Suggest they keep a list of questions they want more information about for your meetings. Keeping a list of questions can be helpful throughout the first year.
- Brainstorm ideas/ways to become familiar with the community and county.

Ongoing

- Check in monthly – encourage them to ask questions and engage in conversations around what they have tried and what worked.
- Be a sounding board and be willing to share strategies that have worked for you to learn about the community and meet key stakeholders.
- Provide opportunities for the new employee to learn from your success and mistakes.
- If there is a right answer or only one way to do something, tell them. If there are multiple right answers or a variety of ways to accomplish the same goal, help them discover the answer for themselves. Encourage a practice of self-reflection.
- Encourage them to seek out informal mentor(s) to help support their learning and success.
- Share focus area and program development and assessment team information.
- Invite the new educator to participate in a program you are conducting or a workshop you are teaching. Involve them in ways that will build their confidence and skills.
- Touch base when events or deadlines are approaching. For example, “EPIC is coming up and that’s our statewide professional development conference. Can’t wait to see you there”.
- Be a coach, encourager, listener. Communicate your willingness to observe a workshop or program, provide feedback on a needs assessment or teaching outline, talk through challenges, etc.