



Guidance and Support for Faculty with Extension Appointments and Responsibilities

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

College of Agriculture
and Natural Resources



FOREWORD

The Michigan State University (MSU) Extension mission within the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (CANR) is a critical component of the college's identity and is entrusted to faculty and staff with Extension appointments and responsibilities. As part of their Extension assignment, individuals are responsible for programmatically extending the knowledge of MSU to empower Michigan residents to make decisions and to improve their lives, businesses, and communities.

To provide guidance and support for faculty with Extension appointments and responsibilities, especially newly hired professionals, MSU Extension commissioned the National Charette Institute (NCI). Through focus groups, NCI gathered insights from faculty and academic staff with Extension appointments and CANR unit leaders, regarding their understanding about faculty Extension practices around leadership, scholarship, and impact. Focus groups, formed by years of service, were completed in January and February 2024. Twelve focus groups were completed with 111 people participating, four of which were with Extension academic staff. Twelve-unit leaders were interviewed individually.

In Fall 2024, a committee of nine members (1 department chair (Brad Marks – BAE), 1 specialist (Jo Latimore – FW), 4 professors (Daniel Buskirk – ANS; Zachary Hayden – Hort; Sinem Mollaoglu – SPDC and Asia Downtin, FOR), and 3 Extension institute leaders (Cheryl Eschbach, Joshua Gunn, Ronald Bates)) was assembled to review the focus group and interview findings. This committee formed three subcommittees to distill the information into three themes – impact, scholarship, and leadership; and used iterative writing and collaborative editing to summarize main themes. The final document synthesizes **guidance, support, and best practices for faculty with Extension appointments and responsibilities**. The document can also *inform faculty mentors, supervisors, and the systems that review faculty for annual review/performance, reappointment, tenure, and promotion.*

This document has been reviewed by a group of senior faculty with Extension appointments within the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, the college's Dean and Directors, the academic unit leaders and the College Advisory Committee before release for discussion regarding implementation.





OVERVIEW

Michigan State University Extension works to improve the lives and businesses of Michigan residents through supporting their adoption of science and evidence-based information provided in ways and means that meet their needs. *Impact*, *Scholarship*, and *Leadership* assessment are essential pillars of Extension programmatic excellence. As a best practice, Extension faculty members are encouraged to demonstrate and document their contributions and accomplishments in each of these domains. This overview provides guidance and support to faculty, their mentors, supervisors, and the systems that review faculty for annual reviews and reappointment, tenure, and promotion.

Extension Impact is the achievement of outcomes, specifically in *learning* (e.g., awareness and understanding of a topic, skill development); *actions* (e.g., behavior change, including through decision support for changes in practices), and *conditions* (e.g., improved quality of life, improved economic or environmental conditions). Impacts can occur at individual, organizational, or broader community levels. Extension activities may also generate secondary benefits for the faculty member or team, as well as for the University as a whole (e.g., visibility, recognition, grant income and salary savings, research and teaching opportunities).

Extension Scholarship is active engagement responsive to emerging needs and conditions. Scholarship includes disseminating information, typically by publishing and presenting (e.g., industry magazines and newsletters, Extension bulletins, and multimedia outreach). Scholarship is also about sharing the work with others who can adopt or adapt recommendations or practices. Extension scholarship may include creation of curriculum, online educational modules, or “train the trainer” materials. Publications in peer-reviewed outlets on the practice of Extension are also valued. Overall, Extension scholarship is about the translation, implementation, and dissemination of research-based knowledge.

Leadership in Extension provides direction and guidance to all phases of program development, delivery, and assessment. This includes working collaboratively with Extension colleagues when completing needs assessments, developing and delivering educational activities, and assessing impact related to an area of expertise. Leadership is accomplished through collaborative and on-going interactions and alongside Extension Work

Teams, Work Groups, and Institute organization activities. Extension program success is rooted in addressing stakeholder needs through educational offerings and materials developed from current research and evidence-based information and delivered in forms and means that all audiences can readily access. Program development and assessment are enhanced through the cultivation of stakeholder relationships and serve to build trust and foster open, two-way communication. Such connections stimulate creativity in developing educational Extension resources and help prioritize and advance new research and outreach opportunities.





BEST PRACTICES

Extension’s mission is to help people by connecting them to the knowledge resources available at MSU, which they can apply in their lives to help them do their jobs better, raise healthy and safe families, and build their communities. This is carried out in a multitude of ways, with seldom one Extension professional’s efforts identical to another. While there are numerous subtle differences, there are “best practices” that can support an Extension professional as they work with their leadership and partners to carry out the mission of Extension.

The examples provided indicate suggestions for people to consider as they determine which may align with the objectives of their work. Faculty should only consider those that align with the objectives of their work, understanding that different faculty with different program objectives from their own will have different outcomes.

Supervisors and mentors should work closely with faculty on developing the appropriate match of their expertise and interests with their Extension appointment percentage to determine their Extension impact, scholarship, and leadership effort.

Best Practices for Extension Impact

Impact in Extension is the measured achievement of desired outcomes within engaged communities, as planned within the [Logic Model Framework](#). The Logic Model process begins with a needs assessment to evaluate the current condition (situation), followed by collaboration with the stakeholders to define the desired alternative conditions (outcomes). Inputs, activities, and outputs are then developed based on available resources, capacity, etc. of the Extension individual/team. Extension Impacts are then measured as they relate to learning (short-term), actions (medium-term), and conditions (long-term). Impact assessments are primarily centered on the stakeholders/partners/participants of the Extension program or outreach.

Examples of Impactful Faculty Work in Extension include the following:

1. Learning impacts (short-term):
 - Participants gain increased awareness or understanding of a topic or a new policy.
 - Community members acquire new or enhanced skills such as using new technology or decision-making tools and methods.

2. Action (or behavioral) impacts (medium-term):
 - Individuals or organizations apply improved fundamental or applied knowledge, leading to better actions, behaviors, and decisions.
 - Community members utilize the decision-support tool, new materials, methods, or policies you provided, resulting in the desired changes in outcomes.
3. Condition impacts (long-term):
 - Your engaged community reports improved quality of life.
 - You document improvement of environmental, social, or economic conditions, such as increased market opportunities, greater economic competitiveness, new jobs created, improved health, greater productivity, safer and healthier communities, improved ecological health, or increased sustainability of supplies or resources.

Measurement and documentation of impacts in Extension are critical. Measuring the impact of Extension programs is tied to the Logic Model to evaluate whether desired outcomes (i.e., learning, action, and conditions) for individuals, groups, communities, organizations and systems were achieved from a specific program/effort. There are **Formal** and **Informal** methods for measuring Extension program impact, and both are valid approaches.

Formal Methods for Measurement. Formal methods for measuring Extension impact are informed by the educational and social sciences, including evaluation theory and survey methodology. These can include:

- A pre/post-test, with the post-test being right after the program for measuring the change in learning (short-term impact of increased knowledge on a particular topic).
- Pre/post survey, with the post-survey being conducted a sufficient time after the program has been completed to inquire about behavior change (medium-term impact).
- More robust strategies can be utilized to scientifically measure whether long-term change has occurred. These are likely to be discipline-specific and would require the involvement of subject-matter experts (e.g., including an economist on the project



team if the long-term goal is economic improvement in a community).

Informal Methods for Measurement. It is widely recognized across Extension programs nationally that conducting a formal evaluation for every Extension effort is not feasible. Instead, a less formal process is often used, guided by the **Rule of attribution**, which simplifies the evaluation.

Participants are asked if the outcome was achieved (yes/no), and to provide any further details, such as whether a plan or policy was developed or a best practice adopted. Examples of how this can be accomplished include:

- Post-program survey immediately following a program, asking participants to self-assess whether they increased their knowledge on a topic or *intend* to change behavior based on what they learned.
- Post-program survey of participants after sufficient time has passed (e.g., 3, 6, or 12 months) to assess any behavior changes, and begin exploring long-term condition changes resulting from those behaviors, such as taking on leadership roles or achieving financial savings from adopting best practices.
- Post-program follow-ups via phone calls or emails with a small subset of participants.

Secondary benefits, such as securing grants, may arise from Extension efforts. These accomplishments may not directly benefit the community group(s) you are working with yet can benefit your stakeholders through bringing additional support to the program, expanding programmatic offerings and further develop the reputation of the program. For example:

- You are elected or appointed to a board, committee, or other organizational role.
- You achieve recognition for yourself, your team, or the University by organizations, partners, or the media.
- Your Extension program or resource is used, either directly or as a model, by other organizations.
- You attract funding.
- Your Extension work is incorporated into your or a colleague's teaching activities.
- Your Extension work leads to a new research project or partnership.

Best Practices in Extension Scholarship

Scholarship within MSU Extension is a critical component of the success of the programmatic mission. Scholarship in Extension takes several forms and includes the scholarship of discovery, integration, application and teaching. Scholarship materials should reflect the current state of knowledge and can be developed collaboratively with experts within or outside of Michigan State University. These educational materials should be [peer-reviewed](#) and publicly available. Scholarship outputs (e.g., video, audio, graphics, or written media) should be created using language and media forms relevant to and accessible by their target audiences so users can readily adapt this information to improve their lives and businesses.

The following are examples relating to Extension Scholarship, though this list is not exhaustive. Examples include scholarly outputs that facilitate communications with stakeholders, represent program development for engaged communities, and reflect common forms of community-engaged scholarship in Extension.





Communications

- Peer reviewed journal articles published (work published in outlets frequently utilized by communities of practice, extension professionals)
- Extension bulletins and factsheets
- Articles in magazines and newsletters published by professional associations
- Websites (electronic educational materials)

Program Development

- Curriculum development
- Instructional videos
- Software development
- Decision aides
- Development and implementation of technical training workshops
- Development, implementation, and evaluation of state-of-the-art workforce development programs

Community Engaged Scholarship

- Public-facing research processes and findings
- Community-informed research
- Participatory research methods
- Youth-participatory research and engagement

Best Practices in Extension Leadership

MSU Extension faculty provides content/ disciplinary leadership that addresses critical and emerging issues for communities/stakeholders. This should be accomplished through collaborative engagement with communities/stakeholders (internal and external) to ensure program relevance. Such engagement can be expressed through programmatic, organizational, and disciplinary/ professional leadership and service activities.

Programmatic Leadership

MSU Extension faculty with Extension appointments should engage with MSU Extension Educators and Specialists and appropriate Work Teams related to their area of expertise. Programmatic leadership can include development of Activities and Outputs guided by the Logic Model to achieve programmatic

success such as developing and supporting ongoing needs assessment, program development, and evaluation related to their expertise.

Programmatic leadership may include but not be limited to:

- Leadership in developing:
 - o Learning objectives, developed from needs assessment, for educational activities, series, workshops, online courses;
 - o Educational materials (factsheets, videos, tools, apps, etc.) and publications;
 - o Delivery options (virtual, online courses, in-person, workshops, etc.); and
 - o Materials for educational activities, series, workshops, online courses.
- Train-the-trainer educational activities for internal and external audiences.
- Grant/funding development and submission.
- Partnership development.
- Program facilitation.
- Development of evaluation tools, data collection, summarization to assess Knowledge, Actions, and Conditions Outcomes, as indicated in the Logic Model, and publication of those results.

Organizational Leadership & Service

MSU Extension Faculty gain a deep understanding of the inner workings of Extension and promote the broader operations and success of MSU Extension through service and leadership.

Organizational Leadership may include but not be limited to:

- Active engagement within the Extension program related to their expertise, including involvement and leadership with the appropriate Work Teams;
- Serve and/or lead MSU Extension organizational committees, such as, position search committees, planning committees, award committees; and
- Participate and contribute to appropriate MSU Extension organizational activities, such as Culture, Access, and Belonging training opportunities, institute meetings, onboarding new academic staff, and Fall Extension Conference.



Disciplinary/Professional Leadership & Service

MSU Extension faculty leverage their specific expertise and role within MSU Extension to provide service leadership on important matters of state, regional, and national scope.

This can include but not be limited to:

- State/regional/national advisory panels or committees, including professional organizations.
- County, state and federal agencies related to the area of expertise, including local, state and federal government advisory or oversight panels.

SHAPING FACULTY'S EXTENSION ROLES ACROSS PERCENTAGE APPOINTMENTS

Faculty with Extension appointments have varied percentage Extension support, similar to what is experienced with undergraduate or graduate instruction or research appointments. Faculty should approach their Extension work from a holistic perspective, consistent with how they approach their teaching and/or research appointments. In Extension work, it is imperative that faculty address critical needs related to their expertise that have been identified by relevant stakeholders. This must serve as the foundation of a person's Extension work.

Extension work is framed by addressing one or more overarching needs, each with corresponding objective(s). Educational materials and events are developed to address these objective(s) through varying formats, both media and educational events, that align with the communication and learning preferences of the target audience(s). To assess progress, each objective(s) should be evaluated for learning outcomes, action or behavior change outcomes, and condition outcomes.

Regardless of percentage appointment, a faculty's Extension programming should reflect these critical elements in their Extension work plan. Specifically, their work should address an overarching need(s) identified by stakeholders whose concerns relate to the person's area of expertise; include clear objective(s); create and publish educational materials that can be delivered at educational events that address the identified objective(s) with measurement of the success of those objective(s) to determine impact.





A smaller percentage Extension appointment will naturally result in a more narrow scope and volume of work produced across the areas of Extension Leadership, Extension Scholarship, and Extension Impact. While the core expectations and quality standards remain the same regardless of appointment size, the scale of what can be reasonably accomplished is tied to the time available for Extension activities. Faculty with smaller appointments may focus their efforts more narrowly, contributing targeted leadership within specific programmatic areas, producing a specific set of educational materials aligned with a limited number of objectives, and documenting impacts that reflect their scope of work. Over time, the proportionality between appointment percentage and delivered outcomes should be evident in the cumulative body of programming, materials, and measured impacts, similar to the expectations related to teaching and/or research. The following narrative emphasizes how differences in percentage appointment might be reflected in the three areas of leadership, scholarship and impact in Extension.

Extension Impact

For faculty with smaller Extension appointments, impacts will naturally reflect a more focused set of activities tied to one or two programmatic objectives. For example, a faculty member with a 20–30% appointment may demonstrate learning outcomes among a specific audience. For example, increased awareness of a management practice or improved understanding of an emerging issue. They may also document targeted action outcomes, such as a subset of participants adopting a new practice with the aid of decision-support tools. In

contrast, a faculty member with a larger Extension appointment, such as 60–80%, would be expected to generate a broader set of impacts across multiple objectives or multiple audiences. Their programming might support not only learning and behavior change but also document longer-term condition outcomes, such as measurable improvements in environmental conditions, economic gains for producers, or enhanced community resilience.

Extension Scholarship

A faculty member with a smaller Extension appointment may develop a limited set of concise, targeted educational materials. Possibly, a specific article series, or fact sheets, or focused webinars or presentations, addressing an immediate stakeholder need. Their scholarship may focus on refining and translating research for a narrow audience or contributing to a single “train-the-trainer” product aligned with their programmatic objective. With a larger appointment, the scope and volume of scholarship broadens. Faculty may be responsible for developing full curricula or multi-module online learning series, producing a wider range of multimedia outreach products, publishing multiple Extension bulletins, or presenting at regional and national venues. Larger appointments may also support greater engagement in scholarly writing about Extension methods and practice, though this would not be exclusive to those with larger Extension appointments. Across all appointment sizes, the unifying expectation is that faculty translate and publish research-based knowledge into accessible, adoptable tools for the audiences they serve, but the breadth and depth of output scale will reflect the proportionately of available time.





Extension Leadership

With a smaller Extension appointment, leadership often takes the form of focused contributions to a specific component of a program or Work Team's efforts. Such as helping define needs for a limited number of objectives, contributing expertise to the development of educational programming with select educational materials and events or activities, or supporting evaluation of a particular program. These faculty members may lead a narrowly defined project or serve as a key content adviser for colleagues. For those with larger appointments, leadership should encompass broader, ongoing responsibilities across multiple stages of program development, delivery, and assessment. These faculty may guide Work Teams in shaping program priorities, coordinate multi-partner initiatives, cultivate relationships with diverse stakeholder groups, or play a central role in conducting comprehensive needs assessments. They may also contribute more substantially to building trust and two-way communication with stakeholders, fostering innovation in program design, and supporting the development of new research and outreach opportunities that emerge from Extension engagement. As with the other categories, the scope of leadership grows proportionally with the percentage of time allocated to Extension work.

For all faculty appointments, the department or unit develops expectations related to successfully completing the mission of the department or unit. The department or unit has norms related to research and teaching related to various percentage appointments. The department or unit should use this guidance to develop expectations for faculty with varied Extension appointments. Furthermore, mentor committees for faculty should have at least one person who has an Extension appointment, and this person could be a faculty member from another department/unit who has an Extension appointment.



COMMUNICATIONS, MARKETING AND EVALUATION

The MSU Extension Communications Team offers varied support to faculty with Extension appointments. Each Extension institute has a designated institute communications manager (ICM) who serves as the primary communications partner for faculty aligned with that institute. ICMs can help develop stories about programs and partnerships, promote impactful work through MSU Extension channels such as the MSU Extension website, impact reports and the organizational email newsletter system, and more. Faculty are encouraged to communicate with institute leadership that they align with along with their work teams to meet the [institute's ICM](#).

Communications staff within the MSU Extension Director's Office also support the work of faculty through media relations coordination, management of organizational assets and digital channels, and major communications initiatives and campaigns. These efforts focus primarily on organization-wide communications priorities and strategy rather than day-to-day needs and program promotion, and faculty should work first with their institute communications manager to determine when elevating to centralized communications support may be appropriate.

With all communications and marketing efforts, faculty and staff are important partners, and participation is key. For example, staff play an active role in program-level communications, particularly in promoting educational programs, events and resources. To support this work, the MSU Extension communications team maintains [a suite of templates and tools](#) that make it easy for anyone to create branded, accessible promotional materials such as flyers and postcards. These resources help ensure materials meet MSU brand and accessibility standards while allowing staff to quickly produce program promotions. Staff can also reference resources such as [the MSU Extension marketing checklist](#) to help plan and promote programs effectively. In addition, faculty frequently contribute educational articles for the Extension website as part of their outreach. Guidance, templates, and submission instructions for these articles are available in [the MSU Extension article writing toolkit](#).

If a faculty member's department or college/school has a unit-level designated communicator, this



person can also offer front-line support on things like posters, social media content, department/school newsletters, etc. At the college level, communication staff can write/promote feature stories with an external audience, provide coaching for media engagement and add a faculty member's content to the ANR-ALL newsletter. The college's web group also offers training on using dotCMS and developing a web presence.

Evaluation Support

Faculty and staff with an Extension appointment can access a wide range of evaluation tools, trainings, and examples through MSU Extension's **Evaluation Resources** page. This collection includes recorded trainings, an evaluation plan form, logic model resources, and a self-paced professional development: **Evaluation Essentials with AI**, which provides guidance on designing evaluations, creating

questions, analyzing data, and communicating results in Extension contexts. The page also highlights additional high-quality evaluation trainings from partners such as the University of Wisconsin Extension and the American Evaluation Association to help you build or strengthen evaluation capacity as you begin your Extension work.

For individualized support, new faculty and staff can connect directly with MSU Extension's **Evaluation Specialist or Planning and Reporting Manager**. This service provides one-on-one assistance with evaluation design, logic model development, needs assessments, survey and tool creation, indicator development, data management, analysis, reporting and dissemination of results. The page also includes contact information to book a meeting with MSU Extension's Senior Evaluation Specialist, making it easy to get tailored guidance as you plan and evaluate your programs.

