

# County Extension Agent Development System

## **Phase III: Professional Development**

Professional development is a term we use in Cooperative Extension to refer to the broad array of learning experiences that builds an agent's capacity as a professional, enhances their ability to respond to local needs, or assists in meeting long-term career goals. Participation in professional development activities is self-directed in that agents identify, select, and participate in those experiences that meet their needs. Agents generally work to establish a proficiency in at least one area as well as use the in-service training opportunities to sharpen their knowledge and skills related to the program in their specific county. In addition, while there is currently no requirement for a Master's Degree for employment in the Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, agents are required to take a defined amount of formal graduate level coursework in an approved program beyond a bachelor's degree.

There are two types of professional development experiences. The first is in-service education. In-service education includes those learning experiences sponsored by the Cooperative Extension Service designed to enhance the performance of its employees. The second major type of professional development is categorized as professional improvement. Professional improvement includes a broad array of experiences not sponsored by Extension.

These two types of experiences are described more fully on the following page.

### ***Through participation in professional development experiences agents will:***

- ***identify professional development goals***
- ***select experiences that meet current needs and long term career goals***
- ***display a commitment to lifelong learning***
- ***become a self-directed learner***

### **In-Service Education**

In-service education includes those learning experiences sponsored by the Cooperative Extension Service designed to enhance the performance of its employees. Agents enroll in those in-service sessions that best meet their needs. Sessions are generally taught by specialists and other resource persons. Individuals wishing to conduct an in-service education session submit proposals for the sessions they plan to conduct to the Program and Staff Development Office. Contact the Program and Staff Development office for dates and deadlines.

A web-based catalog of in-service offerings is created each spring which lists many of the sessions to be offered from July 1 of the current year to June 30 of the following year. However, that catalog is open-ended with additional sessions being added throughout the year. Therefore it is wise to review the opportunities on a monthly basis. You will enroll on-line and once a commitment is made to attend, it is expected that agents will show up. Enrollment also assures that agents will be notified of changes or cancellations related to those scheduled trainings.

A transcript of your participation in in-service education can be viewed and printed from the CES In-Service Training link on the CATPAWS home page. It is an excellent tool to guide your future participation in in-service education.

### **Professional Improvement**

The second major type professional development is categorized as professional improvement. Professional improvement includes educational experiences beyond those sponsored by the Cooperative Extension Service. It includes such things as becoming involved in professional associations, working toward a graduate degree, engaging in independent study, reading professional journals, or working on special projects. Agents are encouraged to become involved with professional associations and develop leadership skills by assuming leadership roles at the state level and beyond in these organizations.