



# **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 Dowtin, 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 may best 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:
  - Learning objectives, developed from needs assessment, for educational activities, series, workshops, online courses;
  - Educational materials (factsheets, videos, tools, apps, etc.) and publications;
  - Delivery options (virtual, online courses, in-person, workshops, etc.); and
  - 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.





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