NC STATE EXTENSION

Memorandum of Agreement

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Between
The Board of County Commissioners
Caldwell County
And
North Carolina State University

Preamble

North Carolina State Extension (NC State Extension) was established as a part of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences of North Carolina State University (NCSU) by federal and state legislation for the specific purpose of "extending" the educational services of the University to the people of the state, on subjects related to agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer sciences, 4-H youth development, and community and rural development. The laws creating the Cooperative Extension Service were specifically designed to assure that the findings of research in these areas are communicated to the people of the State.

Under the Federal Appropriations Act of 1972, funds were provided to the 1862 land-grant universities (including NCSU) to enhance the extension outreach of the 1890 universities, which included North Carolina A & T State University (NCA&T). The Food and Agriculture Act of 1977 further stipulated that these funds be appropriated directly to the 1890 institutions, and formalized the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Program as an official part of the School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences at NCA&T.

North Carolina Cooperative Extension (Cooperative Extension) provides the opportunity for North Carolina State Extension and North Carolina A & T Extension to work together to better serve the people of the State through the delivery of locally relevant programs, education and expertise.

The legislation further provided for a cooperative relationship among three levels of government – federal, state, and county – to ensure that the needs of all three levels are addressed. The primary purpose of Cooperative Extension is to provide the people of North Carolina with the most current and relevant unbiased research-based information – particularly that which is related to strengthening the economy through profitable, sustainable and safe food, forest and green industry systems; protecting the environment and natural resources; and empowering youth and families to lead healthier lives and become community leaders. These purposes are furthered by Cooperative Extension employees who are charged with carrying out the extension education programs of the universities and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Cooperative Extension has sufficient flexibility to permit attention to the special problems, needs, and interests of the citizens and leadership in each county. Therefore, the programmatic, personnel, and funding complement reflects the unique needs of each county. County Advisory Councils are consulted on a regular basis to assist in prioritizing the county educational program content. Program clientele or recipients of services include individuals, families, communities, municipalities, agricultural and seafood processing and marketing firms, other businesses and certain organizations. These services are delivered to adults and youth in both urban and rural settings.

To assure that educational programs offered by Cooperative Extension meet the needs of the local clientele, it is important that both elected and appointed decision makers at each level of government understand their respective responsibilities and relationships in conducting and funding this work. To this end, this Memorandum of Agreement will detail the individual relationships and mutually agreed-upon responsibilities of NCSU and each county or tribal community that signs this Memorandum of Agreement.

Part I.
NC State Extension will:

1. Establish minimum requirements and qualifications for employment in Cooperative Extension work.

2. Receive and examine applications for employment.

3. Interview and screen applicants to determine their qualifications and availability.

4. Consult with the Board of County Commissioners, or the County Manager as designee, regarding qualified applicants for appointment to vacant or new Cooperative Extension positions.

5. Consult with the Board of County Commissioners, or the County Manager as designee, regarding the salaries and salary splits of all Cooperative Extension employees, including but not limited to County Extension Directors, Extension Agents, and County Operations Support Staff (COSS).

6. Prepare and submit an annual budget to the Board of County Commissioners, or the County Manager as designee, for securing the county's share of funds for salaries and operating expenses each based on the state fiscal year.

7. Provide funds for official travel necessary to conduct Cooperative Extension work and postage funds, to the extent that funds are available, and for purposes authorized by state and federal policies.

8. Accept responsibility and provide the leadership for administration and supervision of Cooperative Extension programs and personnel, including compliance with affirmative action and equal employment opportunity requirements. NC State will investigate all cases of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation following applicable NC State policies.

9. Investigate and manage all employee relations issues related to NC State employees housed in local offices. We will work collaboratively with local county government and NC A&T University when an issue impacts their employees.

10. Develop and administer a personnel management plan that will provide the annual review of each employee's performance, counseling for job improvement where needed, and periodic county program reviews.

11. Provide a staff of specialists to train agents in current technology and other changes affecting agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer sciences, 4-H and youth, and community and rural development, and to otherwise assist them in conducting work in these areas.

12. Provide Cooperative Extension professionals with training programs as needed to maintain effective program delivery.

13. Seek regular input from the County and maintain a County Advisory Leadership System to ensure that county Cooperative Extension programs are based on the particular needs of people in their respective county.

14. Prepare and submit a "Report to the People" to the Board of Commissioners, or the County Manager as designee, at least annually, informing the Board or Manager of Cooperative Extension programs and work accomplished.

Part II.
The Board of County Commissioners will:

1. Provide the County's share of salaries and benefits for Cooperative Extension personnel.

2. Comply with North Carolina's Workers Compensation Act, N.C. General Statute § 97-2(2).

3. Provide offices, equipment, utilities, telephones, office supplies, instructional materials and other items needed for efficient operation of the County Extension Center and its programs; and comply with the accessibility provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

4. Review and consider the annual budget request from NCSU, and take appropriate action by July 1 of each fiscal year.

5. Provide regular input to the District and County Extension Directors on the particular needs of people in their respective county to help ensure that county Cooperative Extension programs are based on specific needs and meet county programming plans.

Part III.
NC State Extension and the Board of County Commissioners mutually agree:

1. That all county Cooperative Extension employment appointments and separations will be made in consultation between NCSU and the Board of County Commissioners, or the County Manager as designee, and that no official action related to such appointments or separations will be taken by either party regarding appointment or separation prior to discussion of the matter with the other party.

2. That the Board of County Commissioners and NCSU shall each be responsible for compliance with applicable laws and regulations relating to their respective operations.

3. To cooperate in implementing affirmative action and equal employment opportunity plans of NCSU.

4. The parties will work together to maintain an environment of high-quality cooperation and services. At the request of any party, a meeting or conference will promptly be held between the Parties' representatives to resolve any problems or develop any improvements.

5. That the policies established by the State of North Carolina under N.C. General Statute §126 and followed by the UNC System for SHRA employees be used in the granting and administration of leave related to the earning rates, transfer policies, payout computation and timing, and administration of vacation, sick, civil, community involvement, military, Family and Medical Leave, Family Illness Leave, leaves of absence, and other approved leave programs for Cooperative Extension personnel.

6. That Cooperative Extension employees will follow county policies relative to office hours, office closings for inclement weather, and holidays, and for the management and use of county property.

7. That personnel procedures are as follows:

(a) Establishing Accounts to Operationalize the Payroll Process.

i. To operationalize the payroll arrangement, NCSU will establish a Trust Fund Account for the County at NCSU that will serve as the vehicle for the transfer of funds from the County to NCSU for use in paying the county's agreed-upon share of salary and benefits for Cooperative Extension personnel.

ii. Procedure for Providing Funds to the Account. A State Treasurer's Electronic Payment System (STEPS) form will be completed and the original submitted to the Assistant Extension Director of HR and Operational Strategy via the appropriate District Extension Director. The County Finance Officer, or the designated County representative, will receive notification from the NCSU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences HR Office prior to the University's payroll date, generally the last working day of each month, advising the amount due for the current payroll. Within 5 business days following the payday, the respective University will draft against the County's established trust account in the amount communicated.

iii. Administration of the Account. The trust account will be maintained in accordance with the respective NCSU accounting policies and procedures. The trust account will be audited and reconciled by the NCSU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Business Office to ensure the month-end account balance remains zero.

(b) Employee Benefits.

i. Retirement Benefits. All Extension Personnel will participate solely in either the North Carolina Teachers and State Employees Retirement System (TSERS) and accompanying North Carolina Disability Income Plan, or the Optional Retirement Plan, based on eligibility criteria established by the State. They will be eligible solely for respective NCSU employee benefits for which they qualify based on their appointment and FTE, and former federal appointees will maintain federal benefits, the employer-paid parts of which will be paid for solely by NCSU.

(c) Taxes and Fringe Benefits.

i. The County will be responsible for providing their proportional share of fringe benefits for all Cooperative Extension personnel, including but not limited to the following:

1. Employer contributions to all applicable Federal and State taxes.

2. Employer contribution to TSERs per N.C. General Statute §135, or to ORP per N.C. General Statute §135-5.1.

3. Employer contribution to the Health Insurance matching charges per N.C. General Statute §135.

(d) Workers' Compensation will be administered pursuant to N.C. General Statute §97-2(2). The County will provide full and direct coverage for those employees subject to the County workers' compensation insurance within the county insurance program. Employees for whom the County will maintain workers' compensation coverage are the following:

1. All administrative and any other positions designated as County Operations Support Staff (COSS); and

a. All Program Assistants/Associates who are not funded by directly allocated federal funds such as EFNEP, or Program Assistants/Associates who are paid in part by EFNEP funds but which account for less than 50% funding.
b. NCSU will provide full and direct coverage for their respective Cooperative Extension employees subject to NCSU's workers' compensation insurance. Cooperative Extension employees for whom NCSU will maintain workers' compensation coverage are the following:

i. All County Extension Directors and Extension Agents; and

ii. All Program Assistants or Associates who are funded by directly allocated federal funds such as EFNEP, or Programs Assistants or Associates who are paid in part by EFNEP funds at equal to or more than 50% funding.

(e) Employee Separation

1. NCSU will process severance pay for reductions-in-force (RIFs) as delineated in the COSS Employee Handbook for County Operations Support Staff (COSS).

2. Upon an employee's separation, the County will pay out its proportional share of annual/vacation leave, up to a maximum of 240 hours per the OSHR and/or UNC System guidelines, and any applicable bonus leave balance.

3. The County will pay its proportional share of state longevity for COSS employees upon an employee's service anniversary date.

4. The County will pay out its proportional share of any accrued "extra" time (hour-for-hour) or overtime (1.5 hour-for-hour) to Cooperative Extension employees that are subject to Fair Labor Standards Act or the North Carolina Wage and Hour Act upon an employee's earning anniversary date or as due to the employee at the time of separation.

(f) Optional County-paid Salary Increases or Bonuses to Cooperative Extension Personnel. At their discretion, Counties may award additional permanent salary increases or one-time pay awards (“bonuses”) to Cooperative Extension personnel. If such salary increases or bonuses are proposed by the County under the "non-lock-in" payroll arrangement, they must be communicated to the appropriate District Extension Director's office no later than the first day of any month in which the proposed increase or bonus is to be applied. Increases must be entered in the current fiscal year.

(g) Lock-In Provision

This section describes the preferred arrangement to support the salary agreement between the County and NCSU for Extension personnel. All counties will participate in the Lock-In provision unless designated on an Opt-Out Addendum the arrangement as Non Lock-In.

1. Salary Adjustments for Extension Employees under the Lock-In Provision. The full compensation plan for university employees as approved by the General Assembly and implemented by the Office of the President, University of North Carolina System, will serve as the basis for all compensation adjustments and both the County and NCSU will adhere to the plan's effective dates and implementation instructions. Cooperative Extension personnel receiving salary from grant funds will be governed by the terms and conditions of the applicable grant within the scope and applicability of NCSU personnel policies governing grants. These compensation components include, but are not limited to:

   Across-the-board adjustments,
   Cost-of-living adjustments (COLA),
   Merit adjustments,
   Bonuses (in any form conveyed), and
   Promotion, classification, market, or equity adjustments.

   Salary and Benefits. Salaries and benefits, as delineated above in 7(a-e), will be split according to the hiring agreement and will be detailed on an attached addendum. As both parties may provide increases, these percentages will change slightly from the original hire percentage.

Part IV.
DURATION, AMENDMENT, AND TERMINATION

The parties will conduct a periodic review of this collaboration and responsibilities to determine and evaluate whether the parties are achieving the goals and accomplishing the responsibilities activities herein. No amendment of the terms of this Agreement will be effective unless made in writing and signed by each Party's authorized signatory.

Signatures of the persons below authorize execution of this document, effective as of July 1, 2023, and continuing year-to-year, unless otherwise terminated in writing by either party under written notification to the other party no less than one-hundred twenty (120) days prior to the proposed termination date. Termination of this Memorandum of Agreement shall have the effect of terminating the Cooperative Extension activities and programs in the County.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Chairperson or Designee Board of County Commissioners
Caldwell County

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Director
North Carolina Cooperative Extension
North Carolina State University

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Dean
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
North Carolina State University

Addendum Attached Executed _____