

Employees of Texas Extension are committed to the idea of real learning for real life. To achieve the missions of our agencies depends on our ability to maintain professional competence and technical expertise. Today as never before, professional development will help us achieve the level of excellence that we expect from ourselves and that we must have to help our clients succeed.

### What is YES!

Over the past 5 years, Texas Extension has been working to develop a systems approach to professional development system referred to as You, Extension and Success (**YES!**) **YES!** is for all employees of Texas Cooperative Extension and the Cooperative Extension Program at Prairie View A&M University.

**YES!** has five main components:

- ◆ the Texas Extension Competency Model.
- ◆ communication and information.
- ◆ professional development planning.
- ◆ learning opportunities and resources.
- ◆ accountability.

Through **YES!** Extension employees improve their productivity and performance and, as a result, enhance their own personal fulfillment and increases the value of Texas Extension to all our stakeholders.

**YES!**, is guided by the Professional Development Trust, a group of individuals that represent all levels of the organization and are “entrusted” with planning, communicating, recommending allocation of resources, and evaluating professional development for Texas Cooperative Extension and the Cooperative Extension Program at Prairie View A&M University.

### Texas Extension Competency Model

The foundation for **YES!** is a set of core competencies that are important to Extension work and that make Texas Extension employees successful in their jobs. Central to building the model were focus groups and interviews with Texas Extension faculty. The model is constantly under review, as we stay in touch with the needs of clientele and our changing world.

The competencies are divided into six broad categories:

**Subject Matter Expertise** – Expert knowledge and skills in the area for which an Extension educator is responsible. This category also includes skills in providing education and instruction, solving problems, and integrating technology.

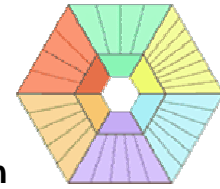
**Organizational Effectiveness** –Accomplishing the mission of Extension through program development and evaluation efforts, as well as the ability to build relationships and act with accountability.

**Develop and Involve Others** – Maintaining healthy relationships with other people to meet the needs of Extension’s clientele. This includes knowledge and skills in mentoring, delegation, teamwork, facilitating groups, and providing direction for volunteers.

**Communications** – The ability to communicate effectively in interpersonal and group situations, whether through written or oral means.

**Action Orientation** –Taking the initiative, seeing the value of positive change creating a vision for the future and working diligently toward goals.

**Personal Effectiveness** – A commitment to the Extension profession as well as balancing all aspects of personal and professional life.



## Communication and Information

The **communication and information** component is designed to be the central source for professional development in Texas Extension. It includes important web resources for new, mid career, supervisors, and support personnel. It also includes a learning opportunities catalog, degree information, information on scholarships, and notices of important professional development events and activities. <http://yespds.tamu.edu/>

The communication and information component supports all extension faculty and staff as they work to maintain their professional competence and technical expertise through professional development.

## Professional Development Planning

The **planning** component is based on a partnership between the individual and their supervisor and results in an action plan to help formalize professional development goals and the steps needed to meet those goals. It includes:

- ◆ A competency-based self-assessment to target areas for professional development related to career goals and job responsibilities. This is a web based application that allows employees to complete the assessments and get reports immediately.
- ◆ A planning tool for putting together an individualized professional development plan. This tool is integrated with program planning in a web based application called TExAS—Texas Extension Accountability System.

This information helps direct both the organization and individual employees.

Using data from the needs assessment tool in the planning component in combination with research and trend data, and other organizational strategic plans can be used by program units and administrators to make decisions about training and development priorities. This approach focuses coordination, scheduling, action, and resource allocation on the highest training priorities and makes the training broadly available.

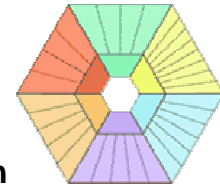
Using the Individual Development Plan, employees plan from year to year their short term professional development as well as their development needs related to their career goals and program plans.

## Learning Opportunities and Resources

The **learning opportunities and resources** component is Extension's efforts to provide relevant and appropriate professional development opportunities. *Relevant* because the system considers aggregate data from the planning component and recognizes that needs vary according to length of service, experience, or change in assignment. *Appropriate* because the system recognizes learning can take place in a variety of ways, through face to face workshops, self directed learning, degrees, certifications, working with an expert in the field or on-the-job learning that comes from a challenging project.

With development plans as a foundation, employees can look for opportunities both relevant and appropriate to their specific needs.

Learning opportunities and resources available from Departments, program units and other providers external to Texas Extension will be broadly communicated through the **YES!** Learning Opportunities Catalog. Opportunities and resources may include face-to-face



workshops or conferences, self-directed learning media (printed, online, video, audio), or certification curriculum. Development activities and events that are specifically targeted to the right audiences, with the right amount of information, at the right time, in the right geographic locations will use time and resources wisely.

Specialists and others who provide professional development training will have access to on-line course development tools and the use of on-line collaboration tools to help build partnerships and reduce duplication of effort. Instructors can monitor registrations, communicate with those enrolled, and distribute materials in advance. After a training activity or event, the organizer can verify participation, conduct evaluations, and provide one-on-one follow-up.

### Accountability

The **accountability** component provides a mechanism where employees record their participation in planned professional development activities. This is integrated within other organizational systems which allows employees to retrieve and extract the information recorded related to their individual development plans and use it in reporting during their annual performance appraisal or in putting together information for their career ladder or promotion file. Employees can also track their progress on professional development from year to year towards achieving their career goals.

The **accountability** component also makes Texas Extension more accountable for its resources and to its employees. Reports from TEXAS and reports from the annual needs assessment provide insight into the quantity and type of professional development experiences being offered, and actual training and development experiences that were

delivered in relation to the highest training priorities.

### Annual Cycle for YES!

#### Spring

--Self Assessments

#### Late Spring

--Reports from Assessments & Previous Year's Development Plans

#### Summer

—Draft Individual Development Plans (IDP)

#### Fall

--Plans Finalized (IDP and Program Plans)

#### Winter

--Review and Evaluation of **YES!** Including Updates to Competencies and System Components

#### ALL YEAR

--Accountability  
--Development of Learning Resources  
--Update of Learning Opportunities Catalog  
--Professional Development Activities & Events

#### For More Information

Visit: <http://yespds.tamu.edu>

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