



THE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SYSTEM IN THE US



WHAT IS THE US UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SYSTEM?

- **Extension is a non-formal education system in the US, not only related to agriculture**
- **Extension is implemented by land-grant universities (at least one in every state)**
- **“Extension strives to help citizens improve economic, environmental, and social well-being” (Virginia Tech)**

- **Extension helps with recruiting students, helps people understand career pathways.**
- **“Extension is the translational aspect to research in university.” Research provides science-based information to extension, in order to share to customers. Integration with extension makes research programs more relevant.**



- **Extension makes the university competitive on the funding market: faculty tries to develop research programs useful for communities, hence it makes university more competitive in terms of extension funding with private companies. Researchers are motivated to help with extension even though they don't have extension appointments in order to understand the needs of the industry and write winning research grants to be funded by the industry – they put a foot in the door.**
- **Can be integrated in the agri faculty (VT, Penn State) or separate (Min.)**

VALUES

01

Integrity of information through unbiased and relevant research.

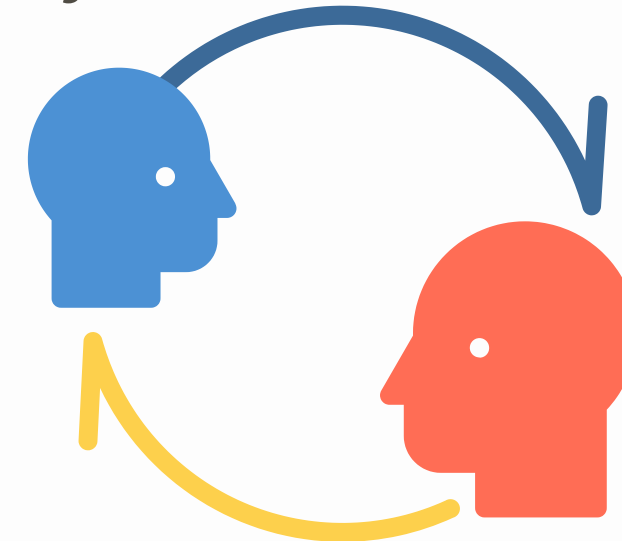


02

Partnerships with all universities, state and federal agencies, community organizations, local and state governmental representatives, and other groups.

03

Individual relationships between Extension educators, specialists, and the clientele they serve.



FUNDING STRUCTURE AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Complex mix public-private (ex. Minnesota: state 37%, federal 14%, counties 23%, grants, gifts, other 26%);**
- **Universities → regional offices → county offices, research&extension centers, 4-H educational centers;**
- **Virginia is half the size of Romania, they have local extension services in every county- approx 100;**
- **Money for the regional extension office comes from the university, the county offices are funded by the county. Local government often provides the physical facilities (offices), based on a MoU between the University and the local government;**

TYPICAL EXTENSION PROGRAMS

01 agriculture, food systems

02 economics, business, supply chain

03 food and natural resources

04 youth development

05 family development and economics

06 community, civic engagement

07 health



EDUCATION DELIVERY

- **in person – field visits, farm visits, workshops;**
- **web pages;**
- **newsletters;**
- **podcasts;**
- **videos;**
- **apps;**
- **social media.**

MODUS OPERANDI



In Min. every faculty does research AND either teaching or extension



Program design – based on the inclusion of audiences, participatory approach



They document outcomes



Feed-back from the rural population goes back to the university through the educators, through professors who do extension as part of their work etc. Ex. In VCE they ask farmers “what are you going to change following this course?” They send a postcard in 6 months for people to send back and write what they did





The local extension center sends impact data to the university, which evaluates, makes plans on what to change etc. There is also a federal database on that. There is a reporting template on impact – quantitative, qualitative indicators



VCE programming process - they do a situation analysis every 4 years. They review the content every 5 years, so that it keeps updated.



Volunteer engagement is paramount. Extension have thousands of volunteers, who benefit from extension services and afterwards are required to pay forward by volunteering and sharing knowledge with others



Professors are evaluated also based on outreach, for promotion and tenure.



Extension educators have a background in the subject given. May be required to have a master degree.



**The knowledge is derived from the university. They coordinate with the university.
Extension educators have an annual plan of work.**

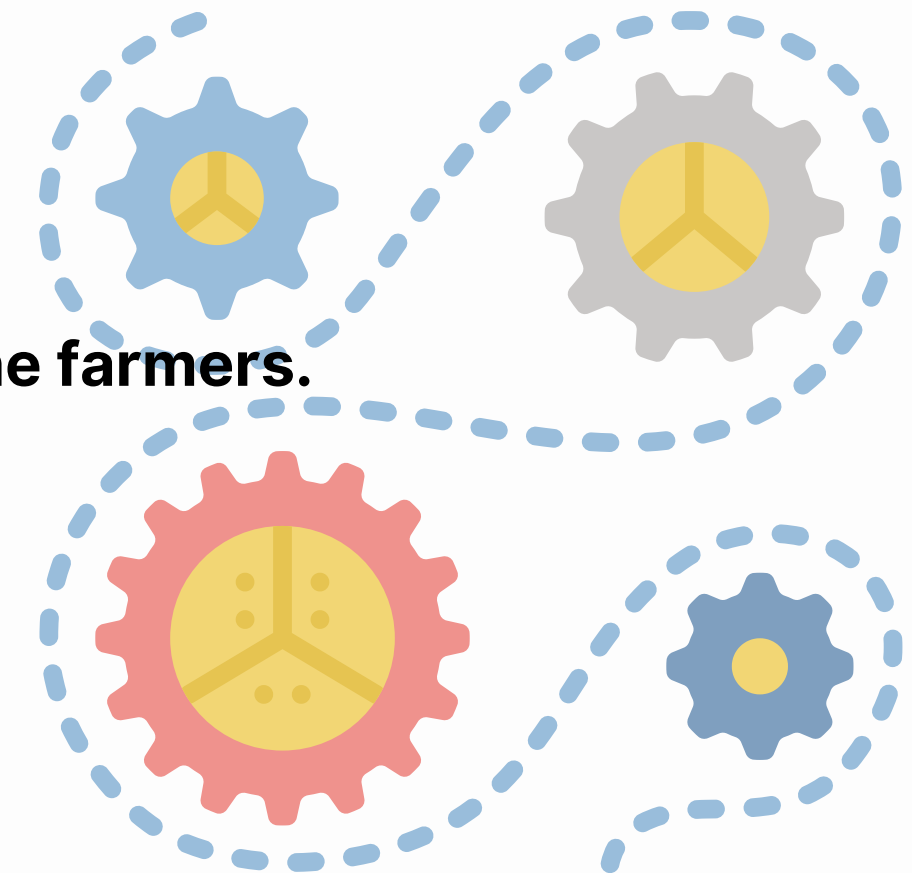
At VT extension agents have 50% research 50% extension shares. They are part of faculty, but as administrative agents.

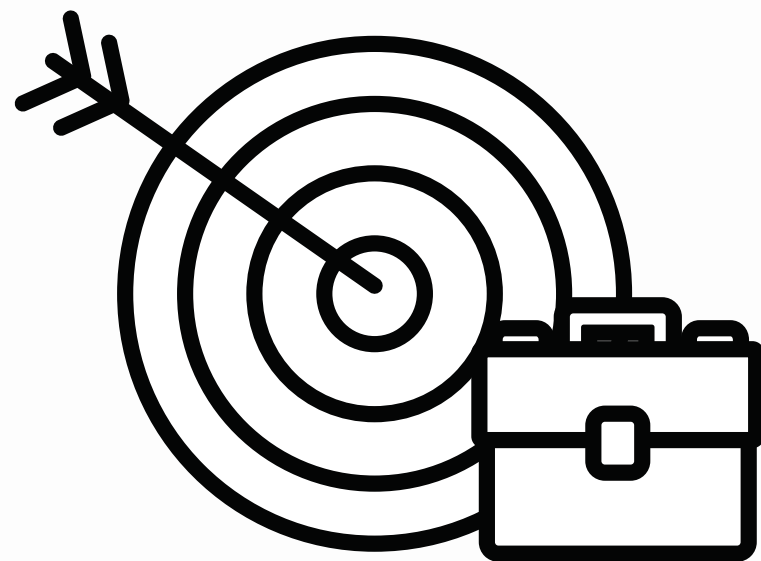
Sometimes 75% of the educator's time goes on 1 0 1 interaction with the farmer, in other places it's just 5%. The numbers of local extension educators used to be much bigger in the past, and the split between 1 to 1 interaction and 1 to many depends on capacity.

Educators need to listen, they need to build a culture of collaboration, need to have customer service skills. Extension professionals are approachable - "anecdotes lead to scientific discovery". A lot of them have sales background.

VCE hires editors, designers to "translate" the materials so that they are accessible to the farmers.

GFRAS – they have the new extensionist learning kit- funded by the World Bank.





PRICING

- **Some programs for farmers are free, some are not. Depending on whether the service is for private/public good.**
- **For some paid programs they offer scholarships. The beneficiaries must volunteer to teach others.**
- **In VCE they test farmers' food on the obligation for farmers to do educational courses.**
- **Prices are usually low. Farmers pay after they start to trust the service/educator**
- **The University can apply for research grants in order to help a farmer resolve an issue**



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