

DEVELOPMENT OF MULTI-COUNTY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION PARTNERSHIPS

OBJECTIVE

May 2011

The division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) has traditionally entered into a Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with each county in California for the local provision of University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) programs. While this model of delivery of UCCE is expected to continue for many counties, in order to increase programmatic value delivered and reduce administrative costs, where applicable and amenable in the State, ANR wishes to transition to a multi-county partnership (MCP) approach by executing an Interlocal Agreement (IA) with interested counties. ANR's objective in this effort is described below.

1. **Sustain and stabilize county funding of UCCE programs** by providing for administrative savings for both counties and UC which can be reinvested in locally relevant programs. County budgets have been slashed and for many counties, additional budgetary reductions will likely continue in the near term. Centralization of administrative functions in multi-county partnerships is a cost-savings strategy that immediately returns program expertise to participating counties and makes the resulting larger units more competitive for new investments from UC in faculty, information technology and grants while encouraging more local inter- and multi-disciplinary problem solving activity.
2. **Create efficiency, reduce administrative costs and improve controls.** Centralization will result in lower administrative cost per unit which translates to long-term savings for the county and UC and allows UC to reinvest in enhanced program delivery capacity (e.g., the hiring of additional academics). Examples include the following.
 - a. Time and effort spent on reporting requirements would decrease when reports are produced on a multi-county (not single county) basis.
 - b. Training and technical assistance on a MCP basis would allow ANR to reach a greater number of people for a reduced cost.
 - d. Purchasing power may bring down overhead as in many cases UC rates are more favorable than those of counties (e.g., repair of computers, purchase of supplies, etc.).
 - e. Elimination of the current dual reporting role of ANR County Director (CD) to their county and UC would significantly reduce the CD's administrative burden. Currently many counties define ANR's CDs as county department heads. Accordingly, CDs fulfill a host of county administrative requirements in addition to those of UC. Substantial savings would be realized if county department head responsibilities were eliminated from the functional role of the CD and the accountability and communication transferred to the MCP Director and Advisory Council (comprised of the leadership of participating counties).

- f. Controls would be strengthened and policy compliance improved as fewer MCPs would reduce the number of administrators needed, allowing work to be performed by fewer staff with more experience.
3. **Improve county appreciation of UCCE programs** by more effectively connecting ANR personnel (senior level academics) directly to senior level county leadership (Chief Administrative Officers and members of Board of Supervisors) to advance ANR's mission of public service and ensure challenges important to the county emerge through the dialogue of the MCP.

This process allows direct reporting to county political and administrative leadership and engages them in planning the partnership budget to address relevant problems for their respective counties.