

Best Practices for

LEAD EDUCATORS IN MANAGING EXTENSION BOARDS



Welcome to the "Best Practices for Lead Educators in Managing Extension Boards", a comprehensive resource designed to support you in fostering an engaged and effective Extension Board. As a Lead Educator, your role in guiding and collaborating with your board is pivotal to the success of Nebraska Extension's mission. This guidebook provides practical tools, strategies, and resources to help you create and sustain a board that is actively involved, informed, and aligned with organizational goals.

The document is composed of a variety of topics which address key aspects of board management.



Items which are policy and are <u>required</u> to be followed are designated with this symbol. These include topics in the areas of Open Meeting Act, Constitution and By Laws, and Interlocal.

The remainder of the topics are best practices for you to review and identify which makes sense for you to implement or modify.

We encourage you to pair this guidebook with the "Extension Board Member Handbook" (https://go.unl.edu/extensionmemberhandbook), which offers additional information on how extension boards function along with board responsibilities. Together, these resources provide a well-rounded framework for success.

Effective board engagement doesn't happen overnight. By implementing small, consistent changes, you can steadily enhance board dynamics and build a culture of collaboration and accountability. This guidebook is designed to help you identify areas for improvement and take actionable steps toward creating a high-functioning board that drives impact in your community.

Thank you for your commitment to Nebraska Extension and your leadership in empowering your board to fulfill its vital role. Let's work together to make a difference!



The term *Lead Educator* in this document does not imply that the Lead Educator must personally complete every task. Rather, it means they are responsible for ensuring the task is completed, whether by doing it themselves or delegating it to someone else.

TOPICS

Recruiting & Onboarding Extension Board Members	4
Extension Board Member Application & Member Selection	8
Extension Board Member Position Description & Agreement	12
Running Effective Extension Board Meetings	15
Financial Oversight	20

RECRUITING & ONBOARDING EXTENSION BOARD MEMBERS

Extension boards represent and advocate on behalf of communities. Whoever is on the board can drastically change how the board operates and what role it plays. A well-balanced board includes members with a variety of networks, experiences, background, and skills.

Board recruitment is a year-round process. If your board is lacking the diversity you seek, you may find that relying on the personal networks of current board members to identify new board candidates will only reinforce that challenge. If that's the reality that you face, consider other ways of identifying potential board candidates. That could include deep networking through community organizations, your organization's volunteer network, or leaders in your current or past client community.

Consider the following to be strategic:

- Connect with businesses which support their employees volunteering and engaging with the community
- Seek out individuals/businesses not currently engaged with Extension
- Ensure all program area representatives, those working in
 - o Agriculture
 - o Small business, rural business, and industry
 - o Child and youth environments such as schools, afterschool, and childcare centers
- Review the demographics of your county and aim to have the board align with demographics
- Consider aligning board member positions with the county supervisor or commissioner districts



Refer to the "Checklist for Recruitment of Extension Board Members" and "Checklist for Onboarding of Extension Board Members". Use these resources to streamline the process and build a strong, informed board. Note, there is not a task in every quarter.

An Extension Board member binder serves as a comprehensive resource for both onboarding new members and keeping current members informed and organized. It provides a central location for all essential documents, including onboarding materials, meeting agendas, minutes, and financial reports, ensuring that members have easy access to the information they need to fulfill their responsibilities effectively.

Refer to the "Table of Contents for Board Member Binder"

(https://go.unl.edu/boardmemberbinder). Reach out to your EZC if you need the current Interlocal Agreement (ILA) and the current Constitution and Bylaws (CBL). On the Extension Board Membership List, include contact information and terms served.

Checklist for Recruitment of Extension Board Members

Quarter	Task	By Whom	Date Complete
	Identify individuals ending 3- and 6-year commitments.		
1	Conduct a conversation with 6-year members to discuss recruitment ideas.	Lead Educator	
	Contact 3-year members and ask them to begin assessing if they would like to stay on the Extension Board. Ask for a decision by the end of July.		
	Complete a board matrix of current expertise, gaps, representation, etc.		
	List current/projected strategic priorities that expanded/modified board capacity could support.	Led by Lead	
2	Develop talking points for Extension Board members to use in recruitment.	Educator during Extension Board	
	Create a Nominating Committee. Refer to CBL	meeting	
	Generate a prospective candidate list, matching the needs of the assessment.		
	Identify sources or channels to spread the word about board openings.	Extension Board & Extension	
3	Review all applicants, prioritizing based on the board needs and CBL requirements.	Nominating Committee	
	Consider creating a mentor/mentee plan with Extension Board members.	Lead Educator	
	Create a plan and timeline for evaluating candidates.	Nom. Committee	
4	Present new board members to the County Board for appointment. Consider sharing an overview of the candidate's qualifications or asking them to attend in-person.	Lead Educator	
	If not already in place, encourage a County Board member to take on a liaison role with the Extension Board. Details of the purpose and benefit are in the Interlocal Agreement (ILA).		

Checklist for Onboarding of Extension Board Members

Quarter	Task	By Whom	Date Complete
Ending year 4 or Start year 1	Schedule an onboarding meeting with new member(s). It could occur 30 minutes prior to the first Extension Board meeting of the year. Introduce a mentor if used in your county and ensure the mentor sets up times throughout the year to meet with the mentee.	Lead Educator & Board President	
year 1	Share the Extension Board Member Annual training hosted by the EZCs.	Lead Educator	
	Provide the Extension Board Onboarding document via binder (and electronic as desired) to new board member(s).		
1	Invite all board members (new and old) to review and sign the "Extension Board Member Position Description & Agreement" during the first board meeting of the year. Make a copy of the signed documents to be filed at the office and place the original document in the board member's binder.	Lead Educator	
	Review of the Constitution and Bylaws (CBL) at a board meeting.		
	Publicly announce new board member(s) on county website, social media, newspaper article, and/or radio. This is an opportunity to boost the Extension brand and the work of Extension Board members.		
3	Check-in with new board members about their integration into the board, what questions they still have, etc.	Lead Educator	
4	Ask mentor and mentee to provide feedback on the process (if applicable).	Lead Educator	



Table of Contents for

Board Member Binder*

Section I

- A. List of Current Board Members and Contact Information
- B. Extension Board Member Position Description & Agreement signed by Board Member

Section II

- A. Meeting Agendas
- B. Meeting Minutes

Section III

Board Reports from Extension Personnel (consider making tabs for each program area)

Section IV

Extension Board Member Handbook

Section V

- A. Current Interlocal Agreement (ILA)
- B. Current Constitution and Bylaws (CBL)

^{*}May be modified to fit your board and preferred structure

EXTENSION BOARD MEMBER APPLICATION & MEMBER SELECTION

A board member application is an essential tool for building a strong and effective Extension Board. It helps ensure a transparent and consistent selection process by providing a clear way for potential members to express their interest and qualifications. The application also allows the organization to assess candidates' skills, experiences, and alignment with the board's goals, fostering a well-rounded and committed team dedicated to advancing Extension's mission.



Refer to the template for the **"Extension Board: Board Member Application"** (https://go.unl.edu/boardmemberapplication), a fillable PDF is also available.

Have this application on your local website and accessible to all in the office.

Before you make this document available to candidates, enter the following information for your county(ies) or provide it to the applicants for them to include when using the fillable form.

Page 1: Enter the county(ies) Extension

- Address
- Email
- Phone number

Page 2: Enter the number of meetings your county(ies) hold each year.

Evaluating and selecting potential Extension Board members is crucial to ensuring the board is made up of individuals who are highly qualified, dedicated, and aligned with the organization's mission. This process helps identify candidates with the expertise, experience, and values necessary for meaningful contributions. By carefully assessing prospective members, the board can establish a strong foundation for effective decision-making, diverse viewpoints, and sustained success.



Refer to the "Guidelines for Reviewing Extension Board Member Applications" for suggested steps in evaluating potential board members.



Extension Board Board Member Application

Thank you for your interest in serving on your local Extension Board. Please complete this application and return it to the county office or via email.

Extension Office Address:		
Extension Email: Extension Phone:		
Registered voter?	Yes No	Verified
Resident of the county/relevant political subdivision? (county, district, county quadrant, etc	.) Yes No	Verified
Applicant Full Name:	County of Residence:	·
Address:		
City:	Zip code:	
Phone:	Email:	
Occupation/Profession:		
Preferred method of communication:	Phone call	Text Email
Qualifications and Experience List current and past affiliations or organizations y professional, civic, religious, etc.)	ou have been involved with:	(community,
Describe your experience in leadership or board ro	oles:	
Share why you are interested in serving on the Ext	ension Board:	
List the skills and expertise would you bring to the	Extension Board: (please high	light experience in

agriculture, education, business, community development, advocacy, or other relevant areas)

ist any relevant certifications or special trainings: (Master Gardener, Certified Crop Advisor, etc.)	
What unique perspectives or experiences would you	bring to the board?
Commitment and Availability	
The local Extension board meets times per year. I board member's needs, please contact the office for special events or programming on occasion to act as a	more details. Board members are asked to attend
Are you able to commit to the time requirements of	serving as a board member? Yes No
How many hours per month can you dedicate to boa	rd activities, including community engagement?
Do you have any current or potential conflicts of interest to land use, agriculture, or educational programs? If yes, please describe:	erest in serving on this board, particularly related Yes
References	•
Name:	Name:
Relationship:	Relationship:
Phone:	Email: Phone:
Submission	
I certify that the information provided in this application knowledge. I have reviewed the expectations for this partners and the expectations for this partners are board will not conflict with my professional or personal	position, and I am qualified to serve on the County(ies). My appointment with this
Signature (Sign or type name)	Date

Guidelines for Reviewing Extension Board Member Applications



Step 1: Form a Nominating Committee

Refer to the Constitution and By Laws to identify the committee structure. If no structure is outlined, it is recommended to have two Extension Board members and one Extension professional.

Step 2: Meet prospective members.

The committee invites prospective board members to meet with the board president/chair and Lead Educator in-person or virtually. Set the tone and expectations for this meeting in your invitation.

Step 3: Review shared talking points.

Prior to the conversations (interviews), review the application and the "Extension Board Member Handbook" to build the talking points for each candidate.

Step 4: Clarify expectations & Candidate's desire to join the board.

Set expectations for board service including time commitments, length of service, advocacy expectations, and attending special events/programs. Invite questions and dialogue to better assess candidate alignment with strategic priorities, compatibility with board expectations/culture, and discover opportunities.

Step 5: Committee convenes to determine priority candidate(s)

Committee and Lead Educator should discuss the candidate(s) application, relevance, ability to serve on the board, strategic vision for the board, etc. Determine which candidates are acceptable and which are unacceptable and why.

Step 6: Contact the candidate, make the ask or thank them for applying.

First contact the candidate(s) the committee & Lead Educator prefer join the Extension Board. Be prepared for candidates to decline and have a plan to suggest other ways to support Extension. As necessary, move down the list of acceptable candidate(s) to offer the EB position if prior offers are declined. Finally, contact all candidate(s) who were not priority and/or unacceptable to thank them for their interest. If appropriate, inform them why they were not accepted for this year. If appropriate, provide suggestions for other ways to support Extension or ask them to apply in a future year.

EXTENSION BOARD MEMBER POSITION DESCRIPTION & AGREEMENT

A board member position description and statement of commitment are essential for maintaining a clear understanding of roles and expectations. This tool provides transparency about responsibilities, ensure alignment with the board's mission and reinforce accountability.

By reaffirming their commitment each year, board members demonstrate their dedication to serving effectively and contributing to the success of the Extension Board.

Refer to the "Extension Board Member Position Description & Agreement" (
https://go.unl.edu/extensionmemberpd), a fillable PDF is also available.

New board members should sign the position description at their first board meeting and returning board members should review and sign/date the document annually.



EXTENSION BOARD MEMBER POSITION DESCRIPTION & AGREEMENT

Board Member:		
Title:	Member,	County(ies) Extension Board.
Term:	This is a three-year term with th three-year term.	e potential for re-election to one additional
Purpose: To serve as a voting member of the advisory both program in programming, advocacy, personnel, and finance members are appointed by the local county both county government.		County(ies) with a focus on inel, and financial stewardship. Extension board

1) Attendance and Participation

- a. Attend every board meeting and adhere to the minimum meeting requirements outlined in the organizational bylaws.
- b. Participate in board member orientation and attend professional and leadership development activities.
- c. Represent the local Extension board at Nebraska Association of County Extension Boards (NACEB) Legislative Day and Summer Experience meeting annually.
- d. Serve on standing and ad hoc committees as requested, contributing time, talent, and resources to further the mission of the organization.

2) Governance and Compliance

- a. Read and abide by the constitution and bylaws of the organization and be familiar with the interlocal agreement between Nebraska Extension and the local County Board(s).
- b. Actively participate in board meetings, demonstrate commitment, and contribute to the decision-making process.
- c. Ensure all actions align with the governing principles and responsibilities as outlined in the bylaws and agreements.

3) Collaboration and Communication

- a. Work collaboratively with the Lead Educator/Unit Leader and Extension Leadership Team representatives.
- b. Present the organization in a positive light within the community, recognizing that, in the board room, we are many voices, but outside of the board room, we are one unified voice.
- c. Listen respectfully to diverse points of view and strive for board consensus.
- d. Respect the confidentiality of deliberations, contributing to a climate of trust among board members, the Lead Educator/Unit Leader, and Extension Leadership Team representatives.

4) Inclusivity and Education

 Encourage inclusiveness and diversity within the board and among the clientele, staying informed about the needs of the community, including both existing and new audiences. b. Be well-informed on agenda items in advance of meetings, offering skills, knowledge, and leadership to contribute to strategic decision-making.

5) **Community Engagement**

- a. Attend community events sponsored by the organization as requested.
- b. Assist Extension professionals in identifying local and regional educational programming priorities.
- c. When appropriate, collaborate with regional Extension Boards to efficiently meet programming needs.

6) Strategic Planning and Future Vision

- a. Be mindful of the past while helping to build a vision for the future and executing plans to achieve it.
- b. Actively participate in organizational decision-making to shape and execute plans that further the organization's mission.

7) Advocacy and Representation

- a. Represent the organization to the public and advocate for Extension by sharing program accomplishments and impacts with key stakeholders.
- b. Secure the necessary budget, facilities, equipment, technologies, support staff, and managerial professionals (e.g., Extension Assistants/Associates) to accomplish program objectives.

8) Financial Oversight

a. Work with the Lead Educator/Unit Leader, University of Nebraska Extension, and the local County Board(s) to develop and approve an annual program budget, presenting it for consideration in accordance with state and County Board requirements.

9) Board Relationships and Reporting

- a. Establish a positive and productive working relationship with the County Board(s).
- b. Prepare and file an annual report for the County Board(s) that highlights organizational accomplishments.
- c. Provide input on Extension faculty and staff performance to support effective organizational management.

10) Board Development

Statement of Commitment:

- a. Participate in NACEB activities and initiatives to stay engaged with the broader Extension community.
- b. Identify, recruit, and mentor new board members, ensuring continued strength and leadership for the organization.

understand the responsil	bilities and obligations expected of	me as a member of the
	County(ies) Extens	ion Board. I agree to serve for the term
beginning January 1,	and ending December 31,	During that term, I will actively and
responsibly represent Neb	oraska Extension in my community,	county(ies), and the state.
Signature (Sign or type na	me)	Date

RUNNING EFFECTIVE EXTENSION BOARD MEETINGS

Running effective Extension Board meetings requires a well-structured meeting, a purpose-driven agenda, and the opportunity for personal growth for board members.

Meetings

Well-structured meetings ensure that time is used efficiently, all members are engaged, and important topics are addressed thoroughly. Frequency of meetings may depend on current needs but must occur quarterly at a minimum. Research shows that increasing frequency of meetings can contribute to higher engagement; however, too many meetings without meaningful content can reduce engagement.

Board Meeting Structure and Focus:

- **Pre-Meeting Preparation:** Share agenda and board reports in advance; limit in-meeting highlights to 1-2 points per person.
- **Meeting Time Allocation:** Seek to spend no more than 1/3 of meeting time on business agenda items and reserve 2/3 for engagement and board development activities.
- Meeting Frequency and Duration:
 - Monthly and bi-monthly meetings should last between 30 and 60 minutes.
 - o Quarterly meetings may last up to 90 minutes.



Refer to the "Extension Board Meeting Preparation Guide".

Verbal and written staff reports should avoid sharing day-to-day busy work, but rather focus highlighing recent successes along with sharing future opportunities.

Agenda

A well-crafted agenda prioritizes key topics, sets clear expectations, and ensures that all important issues are addressed, making the best use of time and fostering effective, purpose-driven decision-making.



To align with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act, a meeting agenda must include the following key elements:

- Date, Time, and Location: Clearly state when and where the meeting will take place, ensuring the public has access to the meeting.
- Specific Agenda Items: Each item should be described in enough detail to inform the public about the topics being discussed or acted upon. General or vague terms like "Other Business" should be avoided.
- Notice of the Meeting: The agenda must be posted or made available to the public in a timely manner, typically 24 hours before the meeting. This notice should include the agenda and be accessible to the public.

- Opportunity for Public Comment: The agenda should provide a designated time for public input, ensuring transparency and community engagement.
 - Key Points to Manage Public Comment Section
 - Sign-in Sheet: Individuals wishing to speak during public comment should sign in on a sheet with their name, address, and the topic they want to address.
 - Time Limit per Speaker: To manage the duration of public comments, establish a set time limit for each speaker, commonly around 3 minutes.
 - President's Discretion: The Board President has the authority to manage the public comment period, including enforcing time limits and addressing disruptive behavior.
- Closed Sessions (if applicable): If any part of the meeting is to be held in a closed session, the agenda must clearly state the reason for the closed session, citing the specific legal exemption under the Open Meetings Act.

Potential Agenda Topics by Quarter

1	Review the Board Members Civil Rights Responsibilities
	Establish a budget committee
2	Review staff positions and their funding sources (i.e. – county paid vs University paid)
	Discuss the county budget draft
3	County and State Fair planning/follow-up
4	Remind board members that they will receive an email from the Dean's Office in December asking for feedback regarding University paid staff's performance



Refer to the "Extension Board Meeting Agenda Template"

(https://go.unl.edu/extensionboardagenda). If using your own template for a meeting agenda, ensure it complies with the Nebraska Open Meeting Act requirements.

Board Member Growth

Board member engagement and development is key to empowering individuals with the skills and knowledge they need to be effective leaders. By investing in engagement and development activities, you are not only strengthening the Extension Board but also equipping members with skills needed for future leadership roles in other boards, committees, or community groups.

Engagement & Board Development Activities Examples:

- Board Modules: Complete during meetings.
- Resource Sharing: Demonstrate or discuss Extension resources.
- Educator Engagement:
 - o Local Educators present upcoming changes or successful programs.
 - Accountability Educators highlight broader county work, either virtually or in-person, with optional community guest involvement.
- Board Member Reports: Short reports on relevant industry updates or engagement efforts.
- Off-Site Meetings: Occasionally meet at different locations for learning or networking.

Extension Board Meeting Preparation Guide

Key Areas	Ac	Completed	
	Between board meetings, est information necessary to brin up an Extension Board folder everything in that folder)		
	Set up a date/time to meet w to create the agenda for the i	rith the Extension Board President next board meeting	
Prepare & Review Meeting Agenda		Review previous meeting minutes to follow-up on pending items or decisions that need to be made	
	Create the board agenda with the President to	All the information in your Extension Board folder	
	include at a minimum:	Engagement or Board Development Activity	
	Clarify roles to ensure Extension Board President and you know who is responsible for what.		
Gather Necessary	Communicate with all educators/instructors who serve your county to send board reports at least quarterly. Work with the office manager/support staff on the county budget report and other financial items your county presents. Prepare any documents needed for activities or presentations.		
Documents			
Logistics	Ensure reasonable advance public legal notice is made to: the local newspaper considered widely read in the area, on the paper's website (if available), and on www.nepublicnotices.com		
	Send invitations and reminders at least one week in advance.		
	Test the technology you'll be using on the day of the meeting.		
Follow-up	Ask for feedback at the end of the meeting from those in attendance to continue to improve Send out meeting minutes within 1 week of meeting		

NEBRASKA EXTENSION IN COUNTY BOARD MEETING

Meeting Date & Time Meeting Location Office Phone Number

Extension Board Vision: To empower our community through education which strengthens families, inspires communities, empower young people, conserve and protect natural resources and advance farms, ranches and businesses.

Extension Board Mission: To provide leadership, guidance, and advocacy to ensure impactful Extension programming.

Meetings follow the Nebraska Open Meetings Act: A copy of the Act is available at the meeting site.

Board Members

[#] of board members required for a quorum.

Name - President

(Term Started or email address)

Name - Vice President

(Term Started or email address)

Name - Secretary/Treasurer

(Term Started or email address)

Name

(Term Started or email address)

Name

(Ex Officio, 4-H Council Rep., Term Started)

Name

(Ex Officio, Ag Society, Term Started)

Name

(Ex Officio, County Commissioners, Term Started)

Next Extension Board Meeting

[Date & Time]

Agenda

1.0 Call to Order

- 1.1 Roll Call (announcement of a quorum)
- 1.2 The Open Meeting Act is posted [Location]
- 1.3 The date and location of Extension Board meeting was published in [Paper] on [Date]
- 1.4 Welcome Guests

2.0 Public Comment

3.0 Approval of Minutes

3.1 *Review and approval of minutes from [Date of Previous Meeting]

4.0 Financial Reports

- 4.1 General Tax Fund
- 4.2 *Motion to approve financial reports for [Time Period]

5.0 Reports & Updates

- 5.1 4-H Council
- 5.2 Fair Board/Ag Society
- 5.3 NACEB Update
- 5.4 Faculty & Staff
- 5.5 Engagement Zone Coordinator
- 5.6 Board Member

6.0 Unfinished Business

6.1 [Agenda Item]

7.0 New Business

- 7.1 [Agenda Item]
- 7.2 [Agenda Item]

8.0 Board Module or Presentation

8.1 [Module Topic or Educator, Focus Area]

9.0 Adjourn

* Requires a motion

FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT

Extension's majority funding comes from taxpayer dollars, be it county, state, or federal. We have a responsibility to ensure and communicate our how we are good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

Through the County Budget, please ensure each county includes the following:

- Budget that shows monthly spending,
- Percentage of budget spent by each section and total budget year to date
- Planning for expenses that would require county supervisor or commissioner approval—this
 will vary by county and their thresholds for approval.

It is also important to work with the County Boards to determine their policies on spending amounts, as most counties have a requirement to obtain bids for purchases larger than a certain amount.

Extension cost objects/WBS accounts are not necessary to share during Extension Board or County Board meetings, as they have no oversight of these funds. You may share; however, we caution you if you do provide these to educate the Board(s), so it does not create conflict.

Refer to the "Extension Board Bi-Annual Financial Overview Report"

(https://go.unl.edu/extensionboardfinancialreport), if you have an Extension Board or a County Board that would like to know more about your fiscal responsibility and your work to obtain outside funding.

This document is available to help you communicate this to the Board twice per year. The purpose is to show how we seek other revenue, the impact of in-kind donations and volunteering, and how funds are used.

Discuss this document with your Extension Board to assess if there is a benefit or a risk of conflict if this document is shared with the County Board.

Put this on your county(ies) letterhead.

Money value of volunteers can be figured by multiplying the totals hours volunteered by the current value of a volunteer time. The Independent Sector organization has the current volunteer rate at \$33.49 (as of April 2024).

Extension Bi-Annual Financial Overview Report

[January-June] [July-December], 2025

Purpose: As a steward of taxpayer dollars in [COUNTY] County, the Extension team would like to bring additional transparency to our work and fiscal responsibility of the county funds.

Revenue Sources

Source	Amount Received
County Budget for Extension	
Fees from Programs	
Sponsorships & Donations	
Grants	

Expenditures

Category	Amount Spent
Program Implementation	
Administrative Costs	
Marketing & Outreach	

Community Engagement & Volunteerism

Activity/Program	Volunteer Hours	Monetary Value (estimated)

Grant Applications

Grant Name	Amount Requested	Amount Awarded	Status

Sponsorships & In-Kind Donations

Sponsor Name	Amount Contributed	In-Kind Support

Prepared by Nebraska Extension

[Name], [Title] [Date]