

## **Professional Improvement Funds**

County Extension budgets may include identifiable funds for Extension agents' professional improvement. Funds thus identified may be established only if all other needs of the county Extension program are met in the budgeting process (travel, rent, support staff salary and additional agent salary, etc). Professional improvement funds may be up to but not more than \$3,500 per agent per year. Support staff or program assistants may also receive professional improvement funds (up to \$1,500 is suggested). Additionally, counties may allocate up to \$1,000 additional Professional Improvement Funds to be used for participating in state and/or national Epsilon Sigma Phi professional meetings. Use of professional improvement funds will be restricted to dues for Extension Professional Associations, plus meeting expenditures for state and national Extension Professional Associations of agents, and state Extension Professional Associations of support staff and program assistants. Agent approved associations include NEAFCS/KEAFCS, NAE4-HA/KAE4-HA, NACAA/KACAA, Epsilon Sigma Phi, along with opportunities for Fine Arts Agents approved by program leader. Other professional associations, and other professional improvement expenditures must be approved by the Area Extension Director. Funds budgeted for one year cannot be carried over to the next year to increase the agent's total amount over the annual guideline. Funds expended must follow the current state expenses reimbursement guidelines for travel, meals, lodging, etc.

### **Accounting Procedures**

A line item account for each agent, support staff, and program assistant is to be established in the county Extension budget for professional improvement funds.

An electronic request should be submitted to the Area Extension Director for use of professional improvement funds prior to participation in the event.

Agents and staff are responsible for keeping their account accurate and balanced. Any over-spending of professional improvement funds must be repaid by the agent or other staff involved. This cannot be accomplished by transfer of funds from travel, etc. A paper trail must prove the repayment, and be documented in county Extension District Board minutes.

### **Attendance At Professional Meetings**

All staff members are encouraged to participate in professional associations relating to their fields of training or position of assignment.

**Agent** attendance at one national professional meeting per year will be approved, pending availability of funds and acceptable job performance.

Travel time of up to one day to and from the meeting will be allowed, depending on distance to meeting location. Time at this meeting will be on official time.

Agent attendance at other professional meetings will be reviewed on the merits of each case. Additional approval to attend, allowed time, possible reimbursement, etc. will be based on the agent's role at the meeting, participation at other meetings, and the effect on the county program.

Agents are allowed time without expenses for district professional improvement meetings, before or after district staff meetings, or at regularly scheduled times not to exceed one-half day per month or six days per year.

**Support Staff** are encouraged to join and attend Chi Epsilon Sigma's Annual State Meetings. Some important points to remember:

- \*Requests to attend this and other professional development opportunities should be submitted in writing at least 30 days in advance to the supervisor for consideration.
- \*Support staff may use Professional Improvement funds for state meetings only, no national conferences.
- \*Support staff must stay within the budgeted Professional Improvement amount within each year (no carryover of account balances).
- \*Unless your work station is more than 4 hours away from the conference site, all non-exempt staff will be expected to report to your normal work station and work until noon the day prior to the conference.
- \*Pre-conference attendance to CHIES Board of Director's meeting or Conference Planning Committee meeting is allowable; however, this must be discussed with the supervisor.
- \*Agents should make arrangements to keep the office open during the support staff absence.

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