



**Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP)
Operating Guidelines as of 3/27/19**

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Purpose:

The purpose of ECOP is to give guidance to issues of importance to the Cooperative Extension Section (CES) of the APLU Board on Agriculture Assembly (see APLU Commission on Food, Environment & Renewable Resources organizational chart at bit.ly/BAAOrg). ECOP is the representative leadership and governing body of Cooperative Extension, the nationwide transformational education system operating through land-grant universities in partnership with federal, state, and local governments.

ECOP focuses on four core themes: 1) Build partnerships and acquire resources; 2) Increase strategic marketing and communications; 3) Enhance leadership and professional development, and 4) Strengthen organizational functioning.

Mission:

The mission of ECOP is to strengthen Cooperative Extension at national, state and local levels. To accomplish this mission, ECOP will:

- Develop policy and administrative guidance that facilitates the advancement of CES;
- Engage CES and the public as partners to reflect the identified priorities of the people we serve;
- Actively communicate policy, functions, and actions of CES;
- Collaborate and communicate with external groups important to the CES mission;
- Implement efficient and effective mechanisms to address CES needs;
- Initiate strategic planning, scenario building, and future-centered activities to anticipate needs, opportunities, and options for the CES;
- Support a mechanism by which members collaborate in program identification, development, and delivery for access to audiences anytime and anyplace; and
- Identify opportunities and coordinate efforts to expand resources available to CES.

Vision:

The vision of ECOP is to enhance and maintain CES as the most effective and dynamic educational outreach and engagement network in the world.

Values and Principles:

- ECOP serves CES, a national educational network;
- ECOP stresses excellence and innovation;
- ECOP builds partnerships to serve its clientele;
- ECOP values diversity and inclusion;
- The work of ECOP is based on the applied scholarship of the Land-grant Universities;
- ECOP is proactively responsive to the changing needs of society;
- ECOP emphasizes the reporting of outcomes, impacts, and results; and
- ECOP seeks continuous improvement in its structure, function, and service.

Goals:

Multi-year emphasis areas with annual action plans are established by the ECOP Chair and adopted annually by ECOP.

ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK

ECOP

Membership

- Three (3) Extension Directors/Administrators from each of the five regions, elected by the Regional Associations, each serving a four-year term on a rotational basis. A quorum is a majority (more than 50%) of these members. The Regional Associations, on a rotational basis, elect the Chair of ECOP. The rotation is as follows: Northeast, Western, North Central, Southern, 1890 Institutions. Changes in the rotation can be accommodated under extenuating circumstances by mutual agreement by affected regions. The past Chair will continue to serve on ECOP, regardless of term of service, for one year after he/she served as Chair. The region will accommodate this rotation by adjusting their member's terms of service if needed.
- The Chairs of the Budget and Legislative Committee and the eXtension Board of Directors (or designees), if not members of ECOP, will serve as ex-officio, non-voting liaisons to ECOP.
- The Director of USDA-NIFA (or designee[s]), the ECOP Executive Director/Administrator (EDA) Team, and the CES representative to the BAA Policy Board of Directors, the BAA Budget and Advocacy Committee, and the BAA Committee on Legislation and Policy serve as ex-officio, non-voting members.
- Additional non-voting liaisons may include representatives from partnering entities as deemed appropriate to the mission of ECOP. These partnering entities (page 4) are encouraged to submit written reports and will be on the ECOP meeting agenda if action is requested.

Role

- To develop program guidelines and organizational policies and procedures that guide national efforts of the seventy-six 1862 and 1890 institutions that comprise the CES. Interactions with 1994 Institutions Cooperative Extension programs also are encouraged.
- To conduct strategic planning on behalf of the System.
- To provide a forum for regions in priority setting and action to move the Land-Grant University System, and particularly Cooperative Extension, forward as a national system.
- To work to develop linkages and supportive relationships with partners including federal agencies, national organizations, foundations, non-profits and associations.
- To appoint task forces and work groups made up of experts from each region, diverse institutions, USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA), and others as needed, with a clearly defined charge, to conduct business on behalf of ECOP and CES.
- To hire and monitor an advocacy firm and initiate efforts to increase the federal resources available to CES when not accomplished by the on-going efforts of the BAA Budget and Advocacy Committee (BAC).
- To hire and monitor the ECOP National Executive Director, Staff Associate, and other staff, as needed, in support of ECOP and CES.
- To develop and implement annual goals and to report on accomplishments.
- To routinely evaluate its operational framework with the desired goal of improving processes and outcomes.

Relationships with Partnering Entities

It is necessary for ECOP to empower transparent, candid and trust-based relationships as it moves forward on cross-discipline system-wide initiatives, communicates its positions and values, and builds coalitions while in turn amplifying and supporting the initiatives and values of partner organizations. These relationships are established through and maintained by committee appointments and liaison relationships to and from ECOP and relevant organizations. Generally, these relationships are established to:

- validate a commitment to pursuing mutually beneficial goals;
- enhance communication between and among ECOP and its partners;
- promote complementary work goals, processes, schedules and calendars; and,
- share relevant information about issues and activities.

Committee appointments and liaison relationships are coordinated by ECOP such that relationships among the organizations are enhanced. These relationships may exist at the ECOP or standing committee level and are approved by and accountable to ECOP. Consequently, upon recommendation by the ECOP Executive Committee, ECOP can create, modify, and extend or discontinue ECOP relationships on behalf of ECOP and its standing committees at any time. The ECOP Executive Committee will review relationships as needed, but at least every two years (spring of odd-numbered years).

ECOP staff will maintain a record of active and past relationships with partnering entities.

Liaisons to ECOP

Liaisons to ECOP or ECOP committees serve a non-voting, advisory, and informational role. Generally, a liaison to ECOP is expected to

- represent the sending organization's interests and concerns by and while attending and participating in ECOP meetings as designated or invited (face to face and electronic);
- provide to ECOP three written reports annually and oral reports as needed on the intersecting activities of the sending organization. If ECOP action is to be requested on any of the activities, a liaison will submit the request in writing to the ECOP or Committee Chair prior to the meeting;
- alert the ECOP Chair and Executive Director as issues that may impact Cooperative Extension, its partners, goals, and/or activities arise; and,
- report back to the sending organization any and all relevant information that will support maintaining the relationship as outlined above.

Liaisons from ECOP

Liaisons from ECOP are expected to serve a non-voting, advisory, and informational role, with consideration of reasonable expectations communicated to ECOP by the partner organization prior to appointment. Should the expectations of the relationship change, the partner organization may put those changes to the ECOP Executive Committee for consideration.

Generally, a liaison from ECOP is expected to

- represent the needs, vision, and position of ECOP and the Cooperative Extension system as a whole¹;
- conduct themselves with respect and in support of the goals of external partnerships as outlined above;
- attend and be attentive during in-person and virtual meetings of the partner organization;

¹ ECOP's mission, vision, value/principles, and goals are on page 2 of this document.

- provide ECOP with three written reports annually and oral reports as needed on the intersecting activities of the receiving organization; and,
- alert the ECOP Chair and Executive Director of issues that may impact Cooperative Extension, its partners, goals and/or activities.

Appointees from ECOP

Appointees are individuals who are appointed by vote or recommendation and authorization to represent ECOP within a partnering entity in a work producing, voting, and/or leadership capacity. The expectations ECOP has of an appointee from ECOP includes those of liaisons in addition to reasonable expectations that may be identified by the partner organization on a case by case basis. Additional expectations may include but are not limited to

- providing language or research for products;
- coordinating or convening working groups; and,
- voting on official motions.

Active Relationships

Please see the annually updated ECOP List - http://www.aplu.org/members/commissions/food-environment-and-renewable-resources/CFERR_Library/ecop-directory/file for a list of active liaison and appointee relationships to and from ECOP.

OFFICERS AND STAFFING

Chair

Selection

The ECOP Chair is a voluntary assignment and will be elected from among the representatives of one of the five (5) identified regions on a rotational basis. The commitment of Chair is a three-year term inclusive of one (1) year as Chair-Elect, one (1) year as Chair, and one (1) year as Immediate Past Chair. In cases of need, regions may switch their turns in the rotation.

Role

- The Chair serves as the primary contact point for CES on matters related to governance, advocacy, and leadership for the system.
- The Chair will develop an annual set of action strategies to accomplish the multi-year goals of ECOP and present them at the annual NEDA meeting.
- The Chair will interact with the EDA Team on a regular basis.
- The Chair will serve as the direct supervisor for the ECOP Executive Director.
- The Chair, or designee, will represent ECOP and CES by giving presentations and attending meetings of national scope.
- The chair, or designee, together with the Executive Director and other members of the EDA Team, will attend meetings with agencies and organizations with the goal of creating, sustaining and enhancing strategic partnerships.

Chair-elect

Selection

The commitment of Chair-elect is the beginning of the three-year duty as ECOP Chair. In cases of need, regions may switch their turns in the rotation.

Role

- The Chair-elect will perform the duties of the Chair in his/her absence.
- The Chair-elect will be informed on all critical communication by and with the ECOP Chair in order to create a smooth leadership transition.

Immediate Past Chair

Selection

The Immediate Past Chair is the last segment of a three-year term of duty as ECOP Chair. The Immediate Past Chair shall remain on ECOP for one additional year in order to complete the term as Past Chair, if necessary.

Role

- The Immediate Past Chair has direct responsibility for orientation of the incoming Chair.
- The Immediate Past Chair will serve on committees as needed as a regular member of ECOP.
- The ECOP Immediate Past Chair, together with the ECOP Executive Committee and an appointed committee as needed, will plan the National Extension Directors and Administrators (NEDA) and Cooperative Extension Section Business Meeting. This meeting is scheduled in the fall to allow for occasional joint meetings with the Experiment Station Section.

Executive Director/Administrator (EDA) Team <http://www.aplu.org/members/commissions/food-environment-and-renewable-resources/board-on-agriculture-assembly/cooperative-extension-section/ecop-members/ecop-documents/EDA%20Team%20Responsibilites.pdf>

Function

The EDA Team works in partnership with ECOP to accomplish its goals. The team establishes a directory which identifies who has responsibility for various functions.

Composition

The 7-person team is composed of a full-time Executive Director and Assistant Director, housed in Washington, DC, and 25 percent full-time equivalent of each of five regional Executive Directors and Administrators representing the Northeast, South, North Central, West, and 1890 Regions. The regional EDAs are employees of their respective regions and the ECOP National Office staff are employees of APLU through an agreement with ECOP.

Process

The National Executive Director coordinates the work of the team and, on behalf of the team, is responsible to ECOP for direction, priority-setting, and accountability.

STANDING COMMITTEES OF ECOP

Executive Committee

Membership

- One ECOP member per region, identified by the respective regional associations, including the current chair, immediate past chair, and chair-elect.
- The Director of USDA-NIFA (or designee[s]), serves as an ex-officio, non-voting member.
- The chair of the Budget and Legislative Committee (BLC) will serve as an ex-officio, non-voting member unless appointed to the Executive Committee by his/her respective region.

Role

Conduct business requiring immediate attention when ECOP is not in formal session; set goals and develop action plans; appoint task forces, innovation teams, and think tanks as needed; recommend action to ECOP as appropriate; track outcomes and indicators of success. This committee reports to ECOP.

Professional Development Committee

Membership

- One ECOP member per region as identified by the respective regional associations, with one member designated chair and one as vice chair.

Role

- Within the ECOP mission, vision, values and goals, identify and recommend action on emerging future personnel and organizational issues important to the Extension System.
- Recommend, coordinate, monitor and recommend dismissal of task forces related to national priority personnel initiatives.
- Create and/or promote personnel communication networks and systems for national sharing and learning.
- This committee reports to ECOP.

Groups Reporting to the Professional Development Committee

- Excellence in Extension Awards Selection Committee(s)
- New Director/Administrator Orientation

Program Committee

Membership

- One ECOP member per region as identified by the respective Regional Associations, with one member designated chair and one as vice chair.
- CEO of the eXtension Foundation

Role

- Within the ECOP mission, vision, values and goals, identify and recommend action on emerging future programs, program related issues, and delivery systems important to the Extension System.

- Recommend, coordinate, monitor and recommend dismissal of task forces related to national priority program initiatives.
- Create program communication networks and systems for national sharing and learning.
- This committee reports to ECOP.

Groups Reporting to the Program Committee

- **National Extension Diversity Award Selection Committee**
The committee is formed by the Program Committee; includes Program Committee members, former winner, eXtension Diversity Community of Practice lead, USDA-NIFA representative and others experienced in diversity leadership.
- **Rapid Response Protocol Groups**

Budget and Legislative Committee (BLC)

Membership

- Three (3) representatives from each region, elected by the Regional Associations, each serving a 3-year term on a rotational basis.
 - One BLC member is appointed as chair by the ECOP Executive Committee. The chair serves a three-year term which can be renewed. The chair represents the Cooperative Extension Section on the Board on Agriculture Assembly (BAA) Budget and Advocacy Committee (BAC) and reports to ECOP as a non-voting, ex officio member.
 - One BLC member is appointed as vice-chair and assumes responsibilities of the chair when the chair is absent. The vice-chair serves a three-year, renewable term and can assume the chair position at the approval of the ECOP Executive Committee.
- USDA-NIFA representative as an ex-officio, non-voting member.
- Cooperative Extension Section representative to the BAA Policy Board of Directors as an ex-officio, non-voting member.
- Cooperative Extension Section representative to the BAA Committee on Legislation and Policy.
- Ex-officio, non-voting liaisons will be represented from the Council for Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching (CARET), Experiment Station Committee on Organization and Policy Budget and Legislative Committee (ESCOP BLC), Board on Human Sciences (BoHS), and Joint Council of Extension Professionals (JCEP).

Role

- Within the ECOP core themes and annual goals, establish a federal legislative, budget and advocacy agenda for CES.
- Represent Extension priorities to the Budget and Advocacy Committee (BAC) and Committee on Legislation and Policy (CLP).
- Encourage APLU Board on Agriculture Assembly (BAA) support and implementation of CES priorities.
- Provide information to CARET and other customer groups for use in effectively advocating on behalf of the System's priorities at the federal level.

- Work with the advocacy firm engaged by the BAA Policy Board of Directors to identify strategies for moving the BAC and other Extension federal authorization and appropriations agendas forward.
- Through the BLC chair, actively engage with the BAA BAC to advance Cooperative Extension legislative and budget priorities.
- Scan the federal landscape, including USDA and other federal departments, to identify legislative and budget opportunities in alignment with ECOP priorities.
- Recommend the formation, coordination, monitoring, and discharging of task forces related to national funding priorities.
- This committee reports to the ECOP Executive Committee.

Procedures

- Working with ECOP Executive Committee, manage decision-making regarding signing onto advocacy letters.
- Any vote of the BLC requires a quorum of the 15 voting members (8 members). Actions are forwarded to the ECOP Executive Committee for recommendation to ECOP for approval.

4-H Leadership Committee

Membership

- Five (5) 4-H Program Leaders and five (5) Extension Directors/Administrators will be selected by the regional associations (one PL and one D/A per region) of the five Cooperative Extension regions (northeast, south, north central, west, and 1890 institutions).
- Two ex-officio, non-voting members, one from National 4-H Council and one from USDA-NIFA, will be full participants in committee discussions and deliberations.
- The committee will be co-chaired by an Extension Director/Administrator and a 4-H Program Leader (PL) selected from within the committee by committee members.
- The Extension Director/Administrators and ECOP Liaison will be an ex-officio members and attend meetings as needed to enhance communication with ECOP on matters related to 4-H.
- Terms of service will be on a three-year rotational basis. Members can be reappointed to more than one term.

Role

- Engage in regular and substantive discussion about issues of national importance related to the LGU Cooperative Extension System implementation of the 4-H program, including issues of organization and policy.
- Enhance the ability of the 4-H system to discuss and make recommendations on a variety of issues and include a range of ideas before major decisions affecting the national 4-H system are made by the partners.
- Help define a coordinated approach to implementation of the national 4-H vision and mission.
- Develop and submit recommendations to ECOP for policy and organizational discussion and consideration of next steps and/or implementation.

Operating Procedures

- The committee will meet at least quarterly by phone, webinar, or similar method, and face-to-face twice a year. Additional meetings may be scheduled based on workload.

- Meetings will be facilitated by the co-chairs or their designated facilitator.
- The meeting agenda will be distributed prior to the meetings.
- The committee will develop an annual plan of work that outlines priority work areas and who will do what and when.
- Following thoughtful and thorough discussion, final recommendations for consideration by ECOP will be developed using modified consensus, with two-thirds or more support within the group.
- Term rotation will occur after the NEDA annual meeting.
- Co-chairs will serve a staggered two-year term and may be reappointed.

OTHER GROUPS

eXtension Foundation

The eXtension Foundation is part of the Cooperative Extension System. As a 501(c)(3) foundation, it operates under separate rules while maintaining close alignment with ECOP.

National Impacts Database Committee [with Experiment Station Section]

This committee reports to the ECOP Executive Committee.

Other Task Forces, Innovation Teams, and Think Tanks

Special task forces, innovation teams, and think tanks will be appointed as needed to carry out the work of the ECOP and the CES. One of the standing committees or one of the Committees of ECOP will coordinate these short-term groups. These groups are meant to be flexible and dynamic—they will be task-focused depending upon ECOP’s goals and priorities.

Amendments to the Operating Guidelines

The ECOP Executive Committee will frame any changes to this document for consideration and vote by the full ECOP Board. Any changes would be distributed at least two weeks in advance of scheduled vote.

Revision history:

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[3.20.12](#) – Edited and revised

[2.27.14](#) – ECOP BLC portion revised

12.16.14 – Revised to reflect changes in ECOP Organizational chart

12.14.16 – Revised to reflect changes in organizational structure.

4.11.19 – Revised to reflect the addition of 2 sections, Relationships with Partnering Entities and Amendments to the Operating Guidelines.