

**University of Minnesota Extension
Liaison Position To The
Association of Minnesota Counties
(AMC)**

What is the AMC Extension Liaison position and how did it evolve?

The position originated in 1997 as an annual fellowship established to nurture the relationship and communication between AMC and the University of Minnesota Extension.

The position, housed full time at AMC, was staffed with mid-career county Extension educators who held the fellowship for 1 to 14 months and then returned to their county position. In 2005 Extension decided to expand the position to *Assistant Director in Government and Constituent Relations and Liaison to AMC*. In 2009 the position transitioned to *Field Operations Outreach Director and Liaison to AMC*.

Extension pays the salary of the liaison position and AMC provides office space, technology support, conference expenses and consulting fees for strategic planning and facilitation work conducted by the Liaison and other Extension staff. There is currently an additional contract in place between Extension and AMC to facilitate the Extension Liaison to coordinate leadership programming.

The position, is currently held by Toni Smith, and she is housed two days a week at AMC and three days a week on the University campus.

Is there a formalized advisory structure for Extension at AMC?

An AMC Extension Committee consists of 21 county commissioners appointed regionally for a three year term by their fellow commissioners. This committee, staffed by the Extension Liaison, meets four times a year with the Extension Dean and other administrative staff. The committee plays a key role in providing a statewide sounding board for Extension communication and negotiation of the county memorandum of agreement (MOA).

Link to the AMC Extension Committee page:

http://www.mncounties.org/Affiliated_Organizations/extension/extension.html

What is a memorandum of agreement (MOA) and how is AMC involved in the process?

Extension delivers programming through state Extension faculty housed in University departments; regional staff housed in 16 regional centers; and local staff contracted through MOA's with counties and other local funders.

The MOA language and cost is negotiated annually between Extension and the AMC Extension committee. The MOA agreement covers the salary & fringe benefits for positions, enhanced programming from regional Extension educator staff, program supervision, travel (mileage, meals, and lodging), in-service training within the program area, payroll, and accounting services.

This contract has a one or three year option and it is used in all 87 Minnesota counties.

What type of collaborative work is the Extension Liaison conducting themselves or coordinating with assistance from other University staff?

MINNESOTA FUTURES PROJECT

Toni Smith and Kim Boyce Extension Educator are facilitating the AMC County Futures process which provides a place, space and time for a broad sector of county government leaders to:

- Discuss how counties can create continuous systems improvement;
- Envision effective, efficient and sustainable county government; and
- Create high quality public services where the well being of citizens is paramount.

[HTTP://WWW.MNCOUNTIES.ORG/FUTURES.HTML](http://www.mncounties.org/futures.html)

COUNTY COHORT LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The County Futures leadership group recognized the need for additional leadership programs in counties. Extension Community Vitality staff helped design and deliver the cohort program that works:

To build leadership capacity within a county or group of counties to improve effectiveness of county government.

To assist in creating team environments within and among communities to expand professional networks.

AMC 4-H COMMUNITY YOUTH LEADERSHIP AWARDS

AMC selects two 4-H projects that show outstanding community leadership efforts in Minnesota communities. These 4-H community leadership projects are judged by the AMC Extension committee members and recognized yearly at their annual legislative conference with trophies, monetary award and a keynote luncheon presentation.

EXTENSION WORKSHOPS AND FACILITATION:

- Designed and facilitated organizational strategic planning efforts for board and staff at AMC.
- Offered Facilitators Workshop for AMC staff.
- Offered Evaluation Workshop for AMC staff.
- Facilitated a new process to conduct AMC regional meetings.
- Facilitated workshop for new county commissioners.
- Designed and facilitated workshop for AMC and Minnesota Indian tribes.
- Facilitated initial meeting of collaborative work being done between AMC, Minnesota League of Cities, and Minnesota School Boards Association.
- Linked AMC staff with University of Minnesota staff on topics of concern.
- Presented at AMC and NACo conferences.
- Assisted staff in the transition process of a new director.

What specific efforts have occurred to improve communication and public relations between AMC and Extension?

- Extension news articles clearly branded and printed in *Minnesota Counties* monthly newspaper. http://www.mncounties.org/Publications/minnesota_counties.html
- Presence on AMC website with news articles, awards and page dedicated to Extension links: [www.mncounties.org/Affiliated Organizations/extension/extension.html](http://www.mncounties.org/Affiliated_Organizations/extension/extension.html)
- Educational /promotional booth and workshops at the AMC annual conference which attracts approximately 600 county commissioners and department heads. Extension staff has taught workshops on board conflict, public engagement; and the Extension booth has featured a variety of educational activities.
- Educational/promotional booth at the Association of MN Counties, League of MN Cities, and MN School Board Association joint legislative conference. Extension offered a “Non-Trivial Pursuit” game in their booth in 2007. This game quizzed conference participants on their knowledge of Extension programming. In 2008 through 2010 they have completed several engagement activities to attract conference participants into a deeper discussion about Extension programming.
- Targeted mailings to commissioners, county Extension committees and county administrators, including *SOURCE* Magazine. www.extension.umn.edu/source/
- On-going interaction between 15 regional directors and county commissioners, county administrators and county Extension committees (CEC) across the state.
- Recruitment of County Extension Committee members and commissioners for “Extension Day at the Capitol.”
- County commissioners’ involvement on the state Extension Citizens Advisory Committee.



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