

**A SURVEY OF TEXAS EXTENSION AGENTS' AND SUPERVISORS'
PERCEPTIONS OF THE TEXAS EXTENSION AGENTS' PERFORMANCE**

APPRAISAL SYSTEM

A Record of Study

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine Texas Extension agents' and supervisors' perceptions of the current Performance Appraisal System. A survey instrument was developed to address the research questions. The instrument had two sections: satisfaction with the Current Appraisal System (14 items) and satisfaction with Appraiser Performance – views toward the roles/behavior of the appraiser relative to the performance appraisal process (7 items). The online survey was piloted by eight Extension employees. The instrument was deployed online to the study population.

The population studied consisted of all Texas Extension agents in November, 2014 (N= 596) and supervisors' (N=19), making the total population for the study 615 respondents. The total completed responses were 282 for a completed response rate of 46%.

In this study, seven in ten respondents (74.3%) felt that the current appraisal system should be improved. The desired improvements included: (a) The Extension agents' desire to have an annual appraisal system that rates them fairly (less subjective); (b) the Extension agents' desire for a performance appraisal rubric that more accurately reflects their actual job duties; (c) the Extension agents' desire to make the performance appraisal system less time-consuming and efficient; and (d) information from the appraisal system needs to be able to flow into other reporting system for other required reports.

Overall, Texas Extension agents were satisfied with the roles and behaviors of their appraisers (supervisors). The majority of Texas Extension agents and supervisors viewed their appraiser's performance in conducting the appraisal with positive judgment, fairness, and trust by their subordinates.

The major recommendations emerging from this study are the provision of professional development for all appraisers to ensure accurate and effective performance appraisal, exploration of strategies to require less effort on the part of Texas Extension agents to prepare the appraisal materials, not to use a team approach for performance appraisal, develop a trust-worthy appraisal system and link the appraisal system to merit or salary increase.

DEDICATION

This educational journey throughout my life is dedicated to my Grandfather, Ozel Coleman, who taught me some very important life lessons. He was my hero and my mentor. He would always tell me and his other grandkids stay in school and learn all you can, because no one can take away your education. I know he would be very proud to see how far his grandkids have gone.

I miss you, Grand Dad! I always talk about the good memories and the life lessons you instilled in me. And in the words of Ozel Coleman “I Be John Brown”.
Love you.

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NOMENCLATURE

4-H	4-H Youth Development
ANR	Agricultural/National Resource
CED	County Extension Director
CEP	Cooperative Extension Program at Prairie View A&M
CRED	Community Resource Economic Development
FCS	Family Consumer Science
IRB	Institutional Review Board
USDA	United State Department of Agricultural

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

With today's competitive job market, employee performance becomes more important every day. This study will provide important information to Extension Administration and Extension employees as it relates to the current performance appraisal system. Additionally, this information will be useful to the administrations of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service (AgriLife Extension) and the Cooperative Extension Program (CEP) at Prairie View A&M for possible revisions the current performance appraisal system to ensure the system accurately assesses the employee job performance.

The population for this study was the AgriLife Extension agents, CEP agents and supervisors' in Texas Extension. From this point forward, for the purpose of this study, all Extension agents will be called Texas Extension Agents. As related to the County Extension Directors/District Extension Administrators in this study, the term of supervisor will be used to reference those positions.

This research study surveyed Texas Extension agents' and supervisors' to gain their perceptions of the Texas Extension Appraisal System. The study examined the current performance appraisal system and determined the need for improvement related to the instruments currently being used. The roles and behaviors of the appraisers also were reviewed to assess what needs to be improved from the supervisor's point of

view. Texas Extension has implemented a committee to see what could be improved in the current system. This study will be a resource for the committee.

Without research-based baseline data, this committee could be wasting valuable time and resources. Performance appraisal is a universal phenomenon in which an organization is making measured judgment about one's work and about oneself. This serves as a basic element of effective work performance. Performance appraisals are essential for effective staff management and evaluation. Appraisals aim to improve the organizational performance as well as individual job development and satisfaction.

Cooperative Extension System

The Cooperative Extension System is a non-formal educational program implemented in the United States designed to help people use research-based knowledge to improve their lives. The development of the national Cooperative Extension Service dates back a century to the signing of the Smith-Lever Act (1914) introduced by Senator Hoke Smith of Georgia and Representative A. F. Lever of South Carolina to broaden agriculture and home economics in American rural areas (Gould, Steele, & Woodrum, 2014). The conception of a formal process for supplying information and services to the people of the United States was an unprecedented plan at the time (Gould et al. 2014; Rasmussen, 1989). The service is provided by the state's designated land-grant universities. In most states, the educational offerings are in the areas of agriculture and food, home and family, the environment, community economic development, and youth

and 4-H. The Morrill Act of 1862 established land-grant universities to educate citizens in agriculture, home economics, mechanical arts, and other practical professions. In 1890, an amendment to the Morrill Act was made. If a state's land-grant university was not open to all races, a separate land-grant university had to be established. The Smith-Lever Act, which was passed in 1914, established the partnership between agricultural colleges and the USDA to support agricultural extension work. Extension was formalized in 1914 with this act. It established the partnership between the agricultural colleges and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to provide for cooperative agricultural extension work (USDA-NIFA, 2015).

The Extension system employs educators (county extension agent, cooperative extension agents, agents or educators) who address a wide range of human, plant, and animal needs in both urban and rural areas. These individuals are assigned to a county, parish or geographic region delivering research based education and information through multiple ways such as demonstrations, classroom type education, farm/home visits, newsletters, mass media and other. The Cooperative Extension system always will be relevant due to it being research-based, locally connected, and having innovative educators. Extension will be relevant and effective, and will provide a positive return on society's investment as it moves forward toward the second century milestone (Buchholz, Henning, Ramaswamy & Steele, 2014).

Texas Extension Agent Performance Appraisal Process

AgriLife Extension is an educational agency of the Texas A&M University System (1862) headquartered in College Station and the Cooperative Extension Program at Prairie View A&M (1890) headquartered in Prairie View are both part of the National Cooperative Extension System. Within AgriLife Extension and CEP, the total number of positions in both agencies is 685; AgriLife Extension has 637 total positions and Cooperative Extension Program has 48 total positions. Extension staffs are located in all 254 counties in Texas. Extension offices are located in 250 of the 254 counties in Texas. Job qualifications include undergraduate degrees in agriculture, natural resources, family and consumer sciences, youth development education, and/or related field depending on position assignments. Currently both organizations utilize the same appraisal system for agents.

The Texas Extension performance appraisal system includes the following five performance domains (Appendix A): (a) Educational Effectiveness and Quality – Outcome Program, (b) Educational Effectiveness and Quality – Output, (c) Program and Organizational Support, (d) Cooperation and Coordination and (e) Personal Development of Knowledge, Skills and Behaviors. Within each domain is a rubric of an agent rating of the county faculty member's performance: Exceeds performance expectations, Meets performance expectations and Does not meet performance expectations related to: The last part of the instrument is the Overall Evaluation of the Extension Agent and comprised of four overall ratings:

Exceeds Performance Expectations: Consistently exceeds standards of performance. Outstanding performer - takes initiative. Consistently uses motivation and creativity to enhance program. Clearly exceeds performance expectations on some of the most difficult and complex facets of the job.

Meets Performance Expectations: Meets acceptable standard of performance. Good performer. Completes projects and tasks thoroughly and has consistent output of work. Manages responsibilities of the position in an effective manner.

Not All Performance Domains Were Met: This rating will be assigned if the individual evaluation of any domain is Does Not Meet Performance Expectations. Action must be taken for improvement.

Unsatisfactory and Unacceptable Performance: Job knowledge is inadequate, programming in subject matter is not complete and fails to fulfill the mission of the organization. Individual Improvement Plan will be initiated.

This performance appraisal document must be completed and returned to supervisor a week prior to the scheduled performance appraisal conference. Before an individual performance appraisal conference is conducted, a group County Performance Appraisal Conference for all staff members must be conducted. A Performance Appraisal Conference Agenda is included in Appendix B. During this conference, Texas Extension agents and their supervisor will discuss group efforts and outcomes from interdisciplinary, team, regional, multi-county, and multi-state programs. Cooperation and coordination between county faculty members also will be discussed during this time. Factors identified during the group conference will be considered during the

individual conference. Group goals for progress may be developed during the joint conference (Texas AgriLife Extension Service Performance Appraisal System, 2014). This is a very important process in the appraisal system. Supervisors continue to examine ways Texas Extension agents are working together to carry out the extension mission.

Once the joint performance appraisal conference and individual conference are conducted a rating of the agent performance is established and the document is uploaded into the Texas Extension System employment systems for the employee's E-signature.

Problem

No study has been conducted on the Extension Agents and supervisors perceptions of the Extension Agents' Performance Appraisal System in Texas. Texas Extension administrators need information to know if any change, revision or new system is warranted for the current performance appraisal system. As stated by Donaldson (2011), this study served as a benchmark perception of the current appraisal system so that any changes in perceptions of the performance appraisal system could be tracked. AgriLife Extension annual operating budget is \$113 million in federal, state, county government and grants on personnel salaries and benefits (excludes \$35 million in local operating funds from county commissioners courts) stated in the AgriLife Extension overview, 2014. Thus, having an effective performance appraisal system deemed to be necessary to demonstration to funding partners that we are good stewards

of funds we received. A better understanding of the Texas Extension agents' and supervisors' view and understanding of the current performance appraisal system may influence future revision or development of a new appraisal system. CEP annual budget consist of \$4.4 million from the appropriations funds section 1444 of USDA and \$2.25 million in State of Texas matching funds. Plus, \$1.5 million from the 1890 facilities fund of USDA for computers, equipment, and etc.

Purpose & Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to determine county Extension agents' and supervisors' perceptions of the current Texas Extension Performance Appraisal System.

Specific research questions were as follows:

1. What are the perceptions of Texas Extension agents with regard to the current performance appraisal system?
2. What are the perceptions of the supervisors with regard to the current performance appraisal system?
3. What are the perceptions of Texas Extension agents of any needed improvements to the current performance appraisal systems?
4. What are the perceptions of the supervisors of any needed improvements to the current performance appraisal system?

5. What are the perceptions of Texas Extension agents of the roles and behaviors of your supervisor (specific to the performance appraisal process)?
6. What are the perceptions of the supervisors' roles and behaviors (specific to the performance appraisal process)?

The idea of appraising performance has existed for many years and has revolved largely around an annual review of objectives between manager and subordinate (Lucas, Lupton & Mathieson, 2006). Gluck (2000) stated that companies use performance appraisals for evaluation and developmental purposes. A properly executed appraisal acts as a basis for hiring new employees, training and development of current employees and restructuring of workflow and employee motivation. Performance appraisals offer evidence for employee transfers, promotions, pay increases or terminations. Correctly designed performance appraisals can start dialogue between supervisors, direct reports, clientele, and coworkers that may result in positive outcomes for the individuals and the business. Richard (2014) stated that the performance appraisal doesn't just benefit employees. Positive effects on an organizational performance can be related to performance appraisal. Employee satisfaction, morale and having a healthy work environment greatly can benefit many people, businesses, organizations and agencies.

Organizations that use the results of performance appraisals to identify areas of strength and opportunity can benefit as well. Performance appraisals can provide an indication of areas of training needs as well as direction for leadership development, performance improvement and succession planning. Managing employee performance

is an important function of supervisors within any company, organization and agency. As a supervisor, a fair assessment of each employee is a must for the success of the business.

Employee performance appraisals are designed to document the expectations of individuals and organizational performance, and provide a process by which employees can be rewarded for positive contributions to the organization for each year of positive performance. To administer effective performance appraisals, supervisors and employees need to identify organizational goals to be accomplished and set specific objectives to accomplish these goals. Performance appraisals also provide communication to the employee regarding work performance and identification of development opportunities for the employee as well as the supervisor.

Methodology

This research study used an online survey instrument to measure the Texas Extension agents' and supervisors' perceptions of the current appraisal system and perceptions of the role and behavior of the appraiser. The survey instrument was modified from Donaldson's (2011) research to measure the Extension agents' perceptions of the current appraisal system and perceptions of the role and behavior of the appraiser. The instrument was reviewed by individuals within the Organizational Development Department at Texas Extension. All Texas Extension agents in the 254 Texas counties were invited to participate in the survey. Descriptive statistics were used

including mean, mode and percentage. In addition, some inferential statistics were utilized. Participants were allowed to give written comments, which were analyzed and divided by key themes and each were reported in the study. The study gave the participating members the opportunity to voice their opinions about the appraisal system and what could be done to improve the system without revealing the employee or employee's identity.

Importance of Study

This study was needed to assess Extension agents' and supervisors' perceptions of the current appraisal system. This information will be very useful to administrators in identifying any warranted revisions in the current performance appraisal system. The AgriLife Extension currently is looking at the performance appraisal system for the entire University. This will give some insight and possible needed additions or deletions to the current agent performance appraisal system.

Consistent with Donaldson's (2011) study, a limited amount of studies related to agent performance appraisal systems has been conducted over the past 50 years. Within the Journal of Extension, the author found these related studies on performance appraisal systems. They were Davis and Verma (1993), Donaldson and French (2013), Donaldson (2011), Patterson (1987), Kuckinke, Correthers and Cecil (2008), Rice (2001), Burnett and Verma (1996), Terry and Israel (2004), Donaldson (2011), and Davis and Verma (1993), wherein each study addressed the agent's perspective.

By conducting this study, the Texas Extension administrators can see how current employees view the performance appraisal system and how it relates to job satisfaction. This study served as a benchmark for the current performance appraisal system and when revision, changes or deletion are made, they can be supported by agent data and input. This study also could be used to implement training performance appraisal training for the supervisors conducting the Texas Extension agent appraisal and the data also could be used to document that salary increase or merit raises are needed within the performance appraisal system. This must be a long-range goal and one that we continue to work toward over time. As we proceed in refining our methods, total staff involvement is absolutely essential.

Limitations

1. This study was limited to Texas Extension agents and supervisors employed with Texas Extension System in November 2014.
2. Findings were limited to the content of the survey instrument.
3. Findings are applicable only to Texas Extension agents and supervisors.

Assumptions

1. The researcher assumed that a response rate of 47% was representative of the population of Texas Extension agents.

2. The researcher assumed that the names and email addresses from the Texas Extension Information Technology department were accurate.

Definitions of Terms

1862 Institution – Land-grant institutions established by the passage of the first Morrill Act of 1862

1890 Institution - Land-grant colleges and universities and Tuskegee University established by the Second Morrill Act of 1890 primarily in the South to serve African- Americans

1994 Institution - Native American Institutions receiving land-grant status in 1994 as a provision in the Elementary and Secondary Education Reauthorization Act

AgriLife Extension - Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is a unique outreach education agency with a statewide network of professional educators, trained volunteers, and county offices. It reaches into every Texas county to address local priority needs.

Cooperative Extension Program at Prairie View A&M University - provides educational outreach programs to clientele in 37 Texas Counties. Its mission is to deliver research-based information and provide informal educational opportunities focused on identified issues and needs to Texas diverse ethnic and

socio-economic backgrounds giving primary emphasis to individuals with limited resources.

County Extension Director – a county based supervisor of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service county office. The county directors have no programming obligation; they only supervise agents, secretaries and other personnel assigned to the county Extension office. County Extension Directors are in only seven counties in Texas. These are the seven most populated counties in the state.

County Extension Agent – the front-line educators employed by Texas AgriLife Extension Service housed in 250 counties in Texas and serving all 254 counties across Texas. County Extension agents deliver non-formal, research-based education through multiple means including demonstrations, workshops, seminars, farm, home, workplace visits and mass media. County Extension Agent positions are divided into several program areas. These areas are listed below:

**4-H Youth Development* —cultivates important life skills in youth that build character and assist them in making appropriate life and career choices. At-risk youth participate in school retention and enrichment programs. Youth learn science, math, social skills, and much more through hands-on projects and activities.

**Agriculture* —research and educational programs help individuals learn new ways to produce income through alternative enterprises, improved

marketing strategies, and management skills to help farmers and ranchers improve productivity through resource management, controlling crop pests, soil testing, livestock production practices, and marketing.

**Natural Resources* —teaches landowners and homeowners how to use natural resources wisely and protect the environment with educational programs in water conservation, water quality, protecting our water sources, timber management, composting, lawn waste management, and recycling.

**Family and Consumer Sciences* —helps families become resilient and healthy by teaching nutrition, food preparation skills, positive child care, family communication, financial management, and health care strategies.

**Community and Economic Development* —helps local governments investigate and create viable options for economic and community development, such as improved job creation and retention, small and medium-sized business development, effective and coordinated emergency response, solid waste disposal, tourism development, workforce education, and land use planning.

District Extension Administrators - Provide leadership for the supervision and management of human and material resources and development of county Extension educational programs for youth and adults in 18 to 24 counties.

Extension District – number of counties located in the same geographical area. The number of counties within each district range from 18 to 24.

Extension Region – two Districts comprise a region. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension has six Regions.

Extension System – refers to the Cooperative Extension System, the National network of land-grant university Extension programs and their Federal partner, the United States Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA).

Performance appraisal – The interpretation of a performance measurement in terms of relative or absolute levels of effectiveness and/or the standards of performance met (Bernardin & Beatty, 1984).

Performance dimension – A conceptually defined area of work ranging in specificity from tasks, behaviors, or elements to more generic classifications such as clerical, interpersonal, or supervisory (Bernardin & Beatty, 1984).

Performance – Those outcomes that are produced or behaviors that are exhibited in order to perform certain job activities over a specific period of time (Bernardin & Beatty, 1984).

Regional Program Leader – the regional leaders for Extension programs within Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. This also provides the “overall vision and regional leadership for the development, implementation, evaluation, and interpretation of Extension educational programs. The RPL works with two Extension districts which are called Regions; 18 to 22 counties make up a district. That would make each Region consist of approximately 40 counties.

The RPL's main job functions are to link agents with University resources and coordinate regional Extension events, including staff development.

Subject Matter Expert – refers to the subject matter specialists with job titles such as State Extension Specialist or Area Extension Specialist who provide curricula and publications to Extension agents in conducting various programs. Subject matter specialists typically are faculty of university academic departments with terminal degrees in agricultural sciences, natural resources, community development, family and consumer sciences or youth development.

Urban County - the most populated counties in Texas (Dallas, Tarrant, Harris, Bexar, Travis, El Paso and Fort Bend).

USDA - United States Department of Agriculture.

Organization of Study

This study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of the subject matter and the investigation, including statement of the problem and purpose, methodology, research questions, and importance of the study. The second chapter reviews the literature in performance appraisal outcomes, appraiser errors, instruction for appraisers, performance appraisal of Texas Extension agents, Texas Extension Agents performance appraisal process, and job satisfaction. Chapter Three provides the methodology used in this investigation, and includes the population, study design, instrumentation, data collection and analysis. The study findings are in Chapter

Four, organized by the study's six research questions. Chapter Five, contains the conclusions, implications, and recommendations for improvement of the current Texas Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study surveyed the Texas Extension agents, supervisors' perceptions of the Texas Extension Appraisal System. The research questions examined Texas Extension agents' and supervisors' perceptions of the current performance appraisal system including any improvements and perceptions of the behaviors and roles of the appraiser.

Coens and Jenkins (2000) suggested that performance appraisal is a mandated process in which, for a specified period of time, all or a group of an employee's work behaviors or traits, are individually rated, judged, or described by a rater and the results are kept by the organization. Karol (1996) considered performance appraisal to include a communication event scheduled between a manager and an employee expressly for the purpose of evaluating that employee's past job performance and discussing relevant areas for future job performance. Murphy and Cleveland (1995) pointed towards the following five areas as measures of an effective performance appraisal system:

- (a) Determines pay; explains and communicates pay decisions.
- (b) Provides the subordinate with development information and support.
- (c) Fosters mutual task definition and planning of future work goals.
- (d) Documents and recognizes subordinate's performance
- (e) Allows the subordinate to provide feedback about feelings, supervision and definition of work.

Other factors that may influence the effectiveness of performance appraisal systems effectiveness include the type of performance standards employed (Landy & Farr, 1983; Latham & Wexley, 1981; Roberts, 1990), the frequency of evaluation (Bernardin & Beatty, 1984); the presence of written administrative procedures; and existence of an appeals process (Greenberg & Tyler, 1987).

The perceptions of the performance appraisal system for county Extension agents have not been a widely studied topic in past years. A search of the Journal of Extension and the Journal of Education over the past 50 years (1963 - 2013) revealed less than 13 studies of performance appraisal systems have been conducted (Davis & Verma, 1993; Heckel, 1978; Kuchinke, Correthers & Cecil, 2008; Patterson, 1987; Peterson & McDonald, 2009; Rice, 2001; Terry & Isreal, 2004; Zoller & Safrit, 1999; Donaldson, 2011; Walsh, 2003). Out of these studies, only two examined the agent's perspective (Davis & Verma, 1993; Donaldson, 2011). Most performance appraisal systems have been very subjective; thus, in this time and age, objectivity must be reviewed within an employee's performance. This literature review is divided into the following sections: (a) employee perceptions of performance appraisal, (b) the appraisers, (c) performance appraisal of extension agents and (d) job satisfaction.

Historical Perspective of the Performance Appraisal

The history of performance appraisal can be traced back to early the 1900's Fredrick Winslow Taylor Time and Motion studies. Fredrick (1919) stated that

performance appraisal, also known as employee appraisal, is a method by which the performance of an employee is evaluated (generally in terms of quality, quantity, cost and time). Performance appraisal usually involves “evaluating performance based on the judgments and opinions of subordinates, peers, supervisors, other managers and even workers themselves” (Jackson & Schuler, 2003).

Performance management plays an important role in today’s world and, in most cases, it does not completely assess the efforts of an employee. Performance measurement is regarded as a backbone of the organizations no matter whether the organization is large scale or small scale. More than 90 percent of private sector organizations have some type of performance appraisal system in place because they believe the systems are effective (Richardson, 2012). The science of performance appraisal is directed toward two fundamental goals: (a) to create a measure that accurately assesses the level of an individual’s job performance and (b) to create an evaluation system that will advance one or more operational functions in an organization (Milkowich & Wigdor, 1991). Although 91% of respondents reported that their organization had a performance management system in place, over one quarter (28%) said that their managers regarded the appraisal process as an administrative burden only (Allan, 2010).

It is widely accepted that performance management has been a key component of human capital solutions for decades (Performance Management Research Review of Best Practices, 2007). These types of questions still plague employee and managers: Is the Performance Appraisal System a fair assessment for the employee and does it show

the complete assessment of the employee's work? What good is a performance appraisal system without a reward system given to the top performers? Business organizations can survive as a competitive market and fair employer without using the tool of performance management with performance measurement.

Employee Perceptions of Performance Appraisal

According to Marhal Sashkin (1994), "Performance appraisal has been with us for all of human history and it shows no prospects of being ready for the rubbish heap." Few research resources were invested in studies that explored the human aspects of appraisal, specifically, employee perceptions (Lopez, 1968). In the absence of a carefully structured system of appraisal, people will tend to judge the work performance of others, including subordinates, naturally and informally.

Performance Appraisal systems are designed to measure and encourage innovation, self-development and overall programming effectiveness. They also provide the opportunity for employees to identify areas that need improvement so they can increase their effectiveness as professional educators and thereby have an even greater impact in serving others (Texas AgriLife Extension Service Performance Appraisal System, 2000). When reviewing several studies about performance appraisal systems from the employee's viewpoint, researchers found among State of California employees that both employees and supervisors were satisfied with the performance dimensions,

and more than two-thirds of both groups thought the system was satisfactory or improving (Lopez, 1968).

Schuman and Olufs (1988) stated that an effective performance appraisal system should be viewed by both the employees and supervisors. Some studies have found that employee perceptions toward performance appraisal are useful for scientific and practical reasons (Gaby, 2004). The way that organization performance appraisals are conducted and areas of improvements can be linked directly to the employee's perceptions of the individual performance appraisal systems. This can have great impact on the whole organization.

Allan (2010) reviewed research by Sibson consulting. Sibson Consulting conducted a performance management survey in 2010 with 750 employees. Twenty-eight percent of the employees said that their managers regarded the appraisal process as an administrative burden only, 47% saw their performance management system as helping their organization achieve its strategic objectives and 63% stated that the appraising managers lacked the courage to have difficult performance conversations with employees.

A study conducted in the Midwest at a manufacturing firm by Mayer and Davis (1999) studied two performance appraisal systems for the firm. The employees' perceptions were measured and the trust in management and accuracy of the appraisal system were researched. Focus groups were developed with the employees and the researchers established that employees viewed the existing appraisal system as not reflective of the actual jobs. Employee surveys were used to measure the level of trust in

top management. The surveys were based on a five-part scale from agree to disagree. A new performance appraisal system was developed that involved an employee self-appraisal, a supervisory appraisal, and a meeting between the employee and supervisor to reconcile the two ratings before the appraisal was shared with top management. A new appraisal system was viewed as more accurate by employees.

After reviewing the literature related to employee perceptions of the performance appraisal, several conclusions could be made. Employees want to be given an honest assessment of their performance with useful feedback to use for improvement. The employee has a strong belief which indicates the reviewer or supervisor is to be trusted and wants to implement a useful evaluation.

The Davis and Verma (1993) study also stated that 50% wanted a team of well-trained individuals to do the task of performance appraisal. A team approach to performance appraisal, rather than the current single-supervisor evaluation, is favored by agents and merits consideration. More than one-half of the agents wanted to be evaluated by a three-person team made up of the county supervisor, district supervisor, and state/district specialist.

The Appraisal

Edwards and Ewen (1996) stated that the appraiser role in conducting a performance appraisal has always been a factor. The appraiser must keep in mind that the performance appraisal must be individualized. This means that individual aspects of

the job, as well as the particular talents and skills of the employee under review, must be assessed. Nothing demeans the strength of the appraisal more than identical appraisals on different individuals in the same job position. This sort of appraisal destroys appraiser credibility and sends a distinct message to the employees that the performance appraisal is no more than a paper exercise not to be taken seriously. Therefore, each employee's individual attributes, potential and performance must be examined within the job role to ensure the validity of the appraisal. According to Maund (2001), appraisal is a key component of performance management of employees.

Dipboye and de Pontbriand (1981) conducted a research study of 474 professionals at a research and development firm, and found three factors that determined positive employee perceptions of performance appraisal: (a) employees who had a positive perception of performance appraisal perceived that the performance dimensions used to assess their job were relevant to their actual job responsibilities; (b) positive employee perceptions of appraisal were related to employees having time to state their perspective on any issues raised; and (c) positive perceptions were related to a discussion of specific job objectives and plans with their supervisor (Donaldson, 2011).

Research on performance appraisal has been studied for many years, but the employee perception of performance appraisal is a strategy for organizations to manage human resources better (Fletcher, 2001). Any discussion of the performance appraisal should include a definition or rather an explanation of the meaning of performance appraisal. Performance Appraisal may be defined as

“System describes how agency will identify performance standards and core competencies and communicate them to employees. Periodical appraisal helps the company to compare employee’s performance and to take apt decisions for further improvement (Basking, 2013).”

The performance appraisal can be regarded as an administrative tool for planning and controlling the assignment of work and how well or poorly it is completed. It is used to assist in delegating the performance of work and to control the conduct of the work so that the planned results are obtained (Patten, 1982). The most important point is for both the superior and the subordinate to avoid prejudicial views and to examine behavior. Performance appraisal is a process by which organizations evaluate employee performance based on preset standards. The main purpose of appraisals is to help managers effectively staff companies and use human resources, and, ultimately, to improve productivity. When conducted properly, appraisals serve that purpose by: providing feedback to employee; making promotion decisions; making tenure decisions; helping individuals plan their development; identifying and solving problems; inventorying skills; planning human resources records; allocating non-financial rewards (Sashkin, 1986).

Douglas McGregor, author of "An Uneasy Look at Performance Appraisal," concluded that the aims listed above, and others, all could be covered by three basic purposes:

Letting people know where they stand, providing them with performance feedback;

Identifying an individual's training and development needs, in terms of correcting deficiencies as well as helping that person develop his or her potential to the fullest extent;

Providing accurate performance data for organizational decision making, both micro-decisions such as an individual's pay increment and large-scale decisions, such as long-term hiring and development plans. The three key aims of performance appraisal thus could be summarized as feedback, development and assessment.

As a supervisor, manager and human, we tend to make judgments on what we believe and not what the facts are most of the time. Dulewicz (1989) stated a basic human tendency is to make judgments about those with whom one is working, as well as about oneself. In the absence of a carefully structured system of appraisal, people will tend to judge the work performance of others, including subordinates, naturally, informally and arbitrarily (Dulewicz, 1989). Appraiser errors have been found to be common mistakes made while evaluating employees and their performance (Bretz, Mikovich, & Read, 1992). Biases and judgment errors of various kinds may spoil the performance appraisal process. It has been cited that these common errors might occur: (Coens & Jenkins, 2000)

First Impression (primacy effect): Raters form an overall impression about the ratee on the basis of some particular characteristics of the ratee identified by them. The identified qualities and features may not provide adequate base for appraisal.

Halo Effect: The individual's performance is appraised completely on the basis of a perceived positive quality, feature or trait. In other words, this is the tendency to rate a man uniformly high or low in other traits if he is extraordinarily high or low in one particular trait. If a worker has few absences, his supervisor might give him a high rating in all other areas of work.

Horn Effect: The individual's performance is appraised completely on the basis of a negative quality or feature perceived. This results in an overall lower rating than may be warranted. "He is not formally dressed up in the office. He may be casual at work too!"

Excessive Stiffness or Lenience: Depending upon the rater's own standards, values and physical and mental makeup at the time of appraisal, ratee may be rated very strictly or leniently. Some of the managers are likely to take the line of least resistance and rate people high, whereas others, by nature, believe in the tyranny of exact assessment, considering more particularly the drawbacks of the individual and thus making the assessment excessively severe. The leniency error can render a system ineffective. If everyone is to be rated high, the system has not done anything to differentiate among the employees.

Central Tendency: Appraisers rate all employees as average performers. That is, it is an attitude to rate people as neither high nor low and follow the middle path. For example, a professor, with a view to play it safe, might give a class grade near the equal to B, regardless of the differences in individual performances.

Personal Biases: The way a supervisor feels about each of the individuals working under him - whether he likes or dislikes them - has a tremendous effect on the rating of their performances. Personal bias can stem from various sources as a result of information obtained from colleagues, considerations of faith and thinking, social and family background, and so on.

Spillover Effect: The present performance is evaluated much on the basis of past performance. “The person who was a good performer in the distant past is assured to be okay at present also.”

Regency Effect: Rating is influenced by the most recent behavior ignoring the commonly demonstrated behaviors during the entire appraisal period.

Bretz, Mikovich, and Read (1992) generalized that research in the 1980's and 1990's was weighted heavily toward cognitive process issues. Ratee and rater personal characteristics and rating errors and assurance also were researched. The sources of appraisal, appraisal feedback mechanisms, rater training, and performance appraisal format were found to be studied frequently. Martin and Bartol (1998) discussed the need to monitor a performance appraisal system to keep the system responsive to the need of the organization. The major actions required to maintain a performance appraisal system include three major categories: (a) controlling the system, (b) monitoring the system, and (c) furnishing feedback to those who use the system. Control of the system includes the more technical aspects of the system such as rating techniques, rating periods, rater training, and development of performance standards, monitoring the system can include a review of the quality of performance standard, evaluation of actual conduct of the

appraisal process and interview, and analysis of the intended, perceived and actual use of the system.

Performance Appraisal of Extension Agents

Davis and Verma (1993) conducted a study Performance Appraisal - “How Extension Agents View the System”. This study involved six states; (a) Alabama, (b) Arkansas, (c) Florida, (d) Louisiana, (e) Oklahoma and (f) Texas totaling 602 agents. They found that the agents wanted to know what was expected of them, had the system been explained to them in advance, and they wanted to be told in a professional manner whether they were accomplishing the job and supervisory expectations. A well-designed and well-executed performance appraisal system which includes these elements could lead to greater efficiency, effectiveness, and improved employee morale.

Wolford (1985) conducted a research survey of 380 extension agents employed by Virginia Cooperative Extension Service. Within this study, she conducted 12 interviews with agents to analyze perceptions toward performance appraisal, especially relevancy and value. While the agents viewed all of the performance dimensions as relevant to their jobs, they differed on the degree of relevancy by race, gender, program area, and position. Performance appraisal also is one of the most emotionally charged procedures in management (Swan, 1991). People have very strong feelings about being evaluated. Employees can feel vulnerable at this point. Supervisors, African-Americans, males, and those assigned to agriculture viewed the performance dimensions

as much more relevant than agents who did not have supervisory assignments, such as whites, females, or those assigned to 4-H and/or family and consumer sciences. No differences for race, gender, program area, and position were found in value ratings. In the interviews conducted with 12 agents, Wolford found that agents perceived a lack of communication with their supervisors. They viewed the present performance appraisal system with a lack of trust given, questionable accuracy and questionable adequacy.

Davis and Verma's (1993) research stated that a team approach to performance appraisal, rather than the current single-supervisor evaluation, was favored by agents and merited consideration. More than one-half of the agents wanted to be evaluated by a three-person team made up of the county supervisor, district supervisor, and state/district specialist. Edwards and Ewen (1996) stated that single-source assessments reinforce employee accountability and service to that single source, typically the boss or supervisor. In contrast multisource assessment creates accountability and service to all stakeholders: supervisor, external customers, and internal customers, including coworker and direct reports.

Job Satisfaction

Research has found that agents have a higher job satisfaction related to appraisal standards when it is relevant to one's job performance (Tritt, 1990; Wolford, 1985). Locke's (1976) definition of job satisfaction has been "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (p. 1304). A

more recent definition of the concept of job satisfaction is from Hulin and Judge (2003), who have noted that job satisfaction includes multidimensional psychological responses to an individual's job, and that these personal responses have cognitive (evaluative), affective (or emotional), and behavioral components.

Job satisfaction scales vary in the extent to which they assess the affective feelings about the job or the cognitive assessment of the job. Affective job satisfaction is a subjective construct representing an emotional feeling individuals have about their job. Kumari, Joshi and Pandey (2014) stated in a study conducted in India and titled "Analysis of Factors Affecting Job Satisfaction of the Employees in Public and Private Sector", concluded that in India, employees tend to love their job if they get what they believe is an important attribute of a good job.

A more recent definition of the concept of job satisfaction is from Hulin and Judge (2003), who noted that job satisfaction includes multidimensional psychological responses to an individual's job, and that these personal responses have cognitive (evaluative), affective (or emotional), and behavioral components. Job satisfaction scales vary in the extent to which they assess the affective feelings about the job or the cognitive assessment of the job (Furtwengler, 2000). Affective job satisfaction is a subjective construct representing an emotional feeling individuals have about their job (Durham & Smith, 1979). Agents' job satisfaction, morale and employee retention must be at the forefront of Texas Extension administrators. With the three to four different generations working in the work place, Extension must make sure its performance appraisal system is consistent, objective and not subjective. The current appraisal

system that Texas Extension uses leans towards subjective, thus causing issues when supervisors change. When a supervisor changes, one has issues accessing the employee's last performance appraisal conducted with the current instruments. A change is very much needed.

Performance appraisal is a universal phenomenon in which the organization is making judgments about how one is working and/or performing at a particular job or task. Appraisals are a basic element of effective work performance. Performance appraisals are essential for the effective management and evaluation of staff that aims to improve the organizational performance as well as individual development.

Cummings (1983) research speculated on the effect that the performance appraisal process can have on employee trust for the organization. He hypothesized that the use of self-appraisal in the performance evaluation system should be positively associated with trust. Furthermore, Cummings proposed that if the results of appraisals are fed back to appraisees, trust will be enhanced.

Extension agents' performance appraisal systems have not been studied widely (Ladewig & Shiao, 1983) but the need for an appraisal system that utilizes best practices and tools for agents has been a need for the Extension system across the nation. Tritt has found that agents have a higher job satisfaction as it relates to appraisal standards when it is relevant (Tritt, 1990; Wolford, 1985). In terms of the office supervisor, such as county directors, the agents are more satisfied with their appraisal systems due to the better and more frequent office communication (Vogt & Van Tilburg, 1989). The Davis and Verma (1993) study found that a team concept for agent appraisal is better than the

one supervisor appraisal. Another very important factor related to job satisfaction is co-worker relationships (Dunham & Smith, 1979). Vogt and Van Tilburg (1989) stated that the importance of good co-worker relationships is enhanced when the work involves teams of individuals working together closely to accomplish organizational goals, as in the case with Ohio Cooperative Extension Service county faculties.

Satisfaction of an employee's work has been validated with their overall performance. Direct supervisor trust and satisfaction with the performance appraisal system equals employee satisfaction (Mani, 2002). Performance appraisal systems must reflect the actual job of the employee to maintain the employee perception of fairness in the performance appraisal system (Narcisse & Harcourt, 2008). The employee's perceptions of the performance appraisal system are very important.

Studies have found that employees are more interested in a fair performance appraisal process than their actual appraisal rating (Greenberg, 1987; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Swiercz et al., 1993). Research has found that employees who have positive perceptions of the performance appraisal instrument, system, and strategy have been more productive for organizations and easier to manage from a human resources point of view (Fletcher, 2001).

Conducting successful performance appraisals have been found to be tied to a successful training process with the appraiser (Davis & Verma, 1993; French & Malo, 1987). Well-developed appraisal systems have been found to provide an overall job satisfaction for organizations and agencies (Jawahar, 2006). Spector (1985, 1997) stated that job satisfaction can be determined by nine areas:

- a.) performance-based rewards,
- b.) supervision,
- c.) promotion,
- d.) fringe benefits,
- e.) pay,
- f.) procedures,
- g.) rules,
- h.) nature of work, and
- i.) communication

A study by Church and Pals (1982) stated that low salary of Extension agents has contributed to poor job satisfaction. The same could be true with the Texas Extension. If AgriLife Extension and CEP administration are willing to make a needed improvement within the appraisal systems, they would need to seek similar input from studies of their current performance review system and strategies.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The study was designed to survey Texas Extension agents and supervisors regarding perceptions of the Texas Extension Appraisal System. Study research questions used to determine such perceptions included:

1. What are the perceptions of Texas Extension agents with regard to the current performance appraisal system?
2. What are the perceptions of the supervisors with regard to the current performance appraisal system?
3. What are the perceptions of Texas Extension agents of any needed improvements to the current performance appraisal systems?
4. What are the perceptions of the supervisors of any needed improvements to the current performance appraisal system?
5. What are the perceptions of Texas Extension agents of the roles and behaviors of your supervisor (specific to the performance appraisal process)?
6. What are the perceptions of the supervisors' roles and behaviors (specific to the performance appraisal process)?

This chapter outlines the methods used to address these research questions. It includes these descriptions: (1) population, (2) design of the study, (3) instrumentation, and (4) data analysis. The study was constructed to be no-biased and the employee had

the opportunity to speak freely without being identified. This study will be very useful to AgriLife Extension and CEP administrators in making key decisions regarding the current appraisal systems and any potential of improvement to the system.

Population

The population of Texas Extension agents employed by AgriLife Extension and CEP in November, 2014 was 596 and the supervisor employed during the specified time was 19 making the comprised target population of 615. The total number of positions between both agencies was 685. AgriLife Extension had 637 total positions and CEP has 48 total positions. AgriLife Extension had 637 total positions and CEP has 48 total positions. Job qualifications include undergraduate degrees in agriculture, natural resources, family and consumer sciences, youth development education, and/or related field depending on position assignments. Agents are required to have a Bachelor's of Science degree in a related field and also required to obtain a Master degree within 8 years of the date of their employment (if one does not have such a degree at date of employment). Some Texas Extension agents also have a doctoral degree, but it is not required.

Within Texas, County Extension offices are arranged into twelve districts and six geographic regions: North, Central, East, West, Southwest and Southeast shown in Figure 1. While an Extension District in Texas consists of 18 to 24 counties, a region consists of two districts. Within each district, there is a District Extension Administrator

(DEA), 4-H Specialist and Regional Program Leader (RPL) Ag/NR or FCS. Each region is comprised of two DEAs', RPL – Ag/NR and RPL – FCS, and two 4-H specialists. Four of the six regions have a County Extension Director (CED) on the region team. CED positions are located in the seven heaviest populated counties, which are Dallas, Bexar, El Paso, Fort Bend, Harris, Tarrant and Travis. District Extension Administrators provide leadership for the supervision and management of human and material resources and development of county Extension educational programs for youth and adults in 18 to 24 counties (Table 1). County Extension Directors (CED) are county based supervisors of the AgriLife Extension and housed in one of the fore mentioned urban counties. These CEDs have no programming obligation; they only supervise agents, secretaries and other personnel assigned to their county Extension office. Regional Program Leaders (RPL) are the program leaders for Extension programs within Texas Extension Service. These RPLs provide the “overall vision and regional leadership for the development, implementation, evaluation, and interpretation of Extension educational programs. The District 4-H specialists serve as an educational resource to Texas extension agents, conduct regional educational programs, and organize youth activities and events.

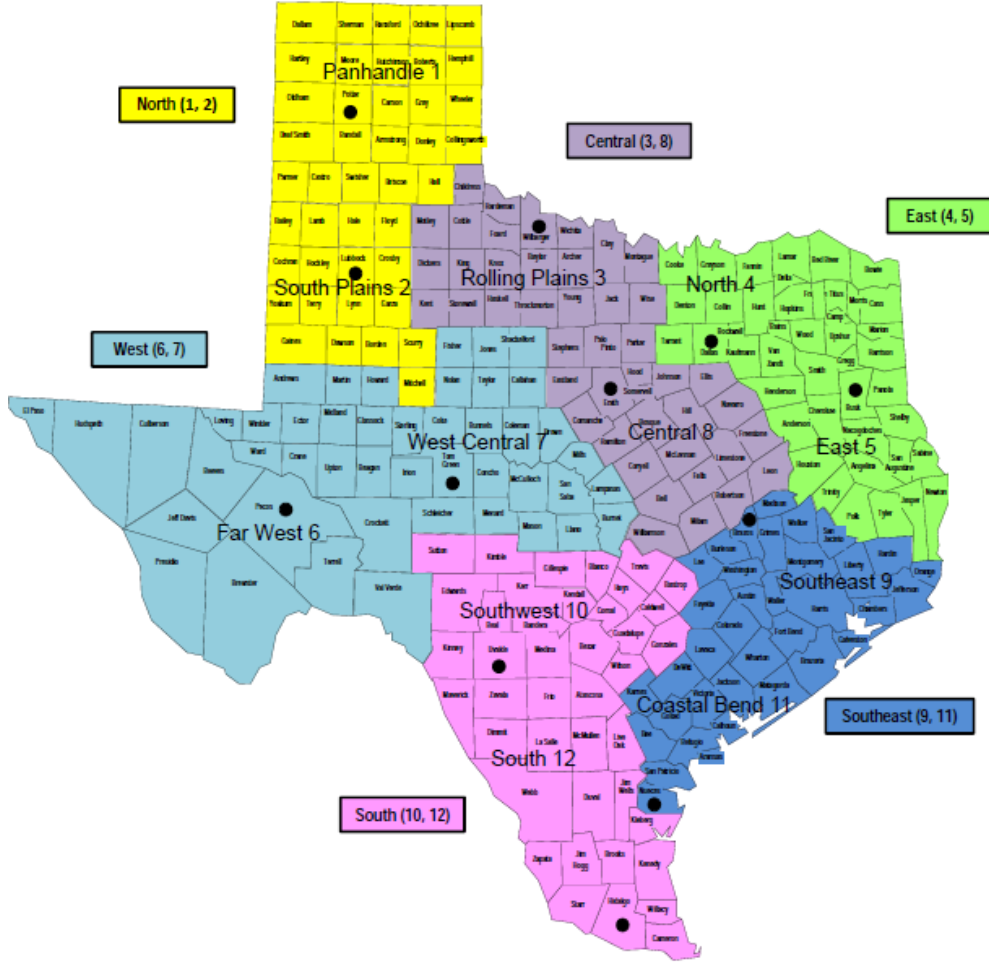


Figure 1. Texas Extension Geographic Regions

Table 1 Texas Extension Districts with Number of Counties and Texas Extension Agents

District By Region	<i>Urban Counties</i>	<i>Number of Counties</i>	<i>Number of Agents</i>
North Region		42	88
District 1		22	43
District 3		20	45
Central Region		45	103
District 3		24	45
District 8		21	58
East Region		44	115
District 4	Dallas & Tarrant	22	60
District 5		22	55
West Region		46	83
District 6	El Paso	23	40
District 7		23	43
Southeast Region		36	116
District 9	Fort Bend & Harris	18	66
District 11		18	50
Southwest Region	Bexar & Travis	41	96
District 10	Bexar & Travis	21	53
District 12		20	43

Texas Extension is present in all 254 with offices located in 250 of the 254 counties in Texas. The Cooperative Extension Program at Prairie View is located in 37 counties in Texas (Table 2). These two population were combined for purposes of this study and are referred simply as “Texas Extension.” Each county has minimum of one

agent (smaller counties) and up to 15 agents in the larger urban counties (Bexar, Dallas, El Paso, Fort Bend, Tarrant, Travis and Harris). These counties have larger staffs to serve a large county population.

Table 2 Number of Agents within the Cooperative Extension Program at Prairie View A&M

District By Region	<i>Urban Counties</i>	<i>Number of CEP Counties</i>
North Region		1
District 1		1
District 3		
Central Region		8
District 3		
District 8		8
East Region		10
District 4	Dallas & Tarrant	5
District 5		5
West Region		1
District 6	El Paso	1
District 7		
Southeast Region		8
District 9	Fort Bend & Harris	6
District 11		2
Southwest Region		7
District 10	Bexar & Travis	2
District 12		5

Within Texas Extension, agents are assigned a major program area under which each of them work, the Agriculture/Natural Resource (ANR) agents (290 of 596) make up 48% of the Extension workforce, Family Consumer Science (FCS) agents (217 of 596) make up 36% of the Extension workforce and 4-H Youth Development (4-H) agents (84 of 596) make up 14% of the Extension workforce and Community & Economic Development (CRED) agents (5 of 596) make up 1% of the Extension workforce (Table 3).

Table 3 Number of Agents by Program Area and Extension System

Agent Position – Program Area	AgriLife Position	CEP - Position	Total Positions
Agricultural/Natural Resource	285	5	290
Family & Consumer Science	205	12	217
4-H Youth Development	75	9	84
Community & Economic Development	0	5	5

A survey instrument was modified from Donaldson’s (2011) research to measure the Texas Extension agents’ and supervisors’ perceptions of the current appraisal system and perceptions of the role and behavior of the appraiser. The instrument was reviewed by a panel of individuals with experience in performance appraisal systems. This study targeted the entire Texas Extension agent staff in the 254 counties in Texas. The data collected included mean, mode, percentage and written comments from the participants.

Instrumentation

The instrument development process modified from Donaldson (2011) for this study included the following elements: pre-testing, expert panel review and pilot testing. The survey instrument slated for use in this study had a total of 47 items, in which five items were demographic questions. The instrument addressed agents' satisfaction with the Current Appraisal System (14 items) and satisfaction with Appraiser Performance – views toward the roles/behavior of the appraiser relative to the performance appraisal process (7 items). A Likert scale was used to measure the constructs to reflect the scope and purpose of the evaluation (Colton & Covert, 2008). The instrument was developed to measure the constructs from the vantage point of Texas Extension agents.

Six response categories were on the survey: (a) strongly disagree, (b) disagree, (c) neither agree nor disagree, (d) agree, (e) strongly agree, and (f) don't know. The survey also had one open-ended question for the participants to share any thoughts about the system or other perceptions. The survey (Appendix D) was administered online and emailed with a cover letter explaining the study and inviting individuals to participate (Appendix E).

To ensure that the online survey worked properly and was easy to navigate for the user, an instrument information sheet was developed (Appendix D). The online survey was piloted by eight extension employees and the data deleted. The eight extension employees reviewed the information sheet, instrument and research questions and then each of them completed the instrument online. Once each individual completed

the online instrument each of them either called, emailed or visited with the researcher in person. The eight extension employees provided feedback on what needed to be changed or explained more to make the survey more user friendly. No suggestions were made, each of them were just looking forward to hearing the Texas Extension agents' and supervisors' viewpoint on this study. Once the pilot was complete, the survey instrument was forwarded to Texas Extension Administration for their approval.

This study was approved by the Texas A&M University Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix F). Once approval was given from IRB, the study population was sent an email by Extension administration (Appendix G). The population of Texas Extension agents employed by AgriLife Extension and the CEP in November, 2014 was 596.

The researcher secured permission from the Texas Extension administration team to conduct this survey with all extension agents. Participants were informed that they could complete the instrument from anywhere they had internet connectivity. The survey request email (Appendix H) invited participants to participate in the study and informed them that the survey would arrive electronically before the end of the same day. The study explained to the respondent that the instrument was voluntary and would be kept confidential. This allowed the agent to comment freely without threat of possible negative consequence from any comments presented.

The survey instrument was administered on-line using Qualitric® On-line Surveys and ensured anonymity of the respondents' responses. "Qualitrics® is a sophisticated on-line survey software enabling users to create and conduct on-line

questionnaires for research purposes” (Qualtrics® On-line Surveys, 2013). Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) encryption is used in Qualtrics® for secure transmission of data. Therefore, names were not connected to any collected data. Qualtrics® provides the following features relating to analysis:

- a) graphs,
- b) filter data,
- c) drill downs,
- d) response tables,
- e) survey respondent overview, and
- f) question statistics tables;

While reporting features include export reports, email scheduled reports, and export individual responses. Data analysis options included download data, cross tabulations, cross tabulations analysis, conjoint analysis, scoring and grading, and other options such as recoding choice values and variable labels, excluding items from analysis, and renaming question labels for easier reference. (Qualtrics® On-line Surveys, 2013, para.)

The survey was available for two weeks, beginning on November 20, 2014 and reminders were sent twice before the closing date of December 3, 2014. The first reminder was sent on November 25, 2014, and the second reminder was sent December 2, 2014. This process was based on the tailored design method (Dillman, Smyth, Christian, & O’Neill (2008).

The total received responses were 282 for a completed response of 47%. The 282 completed responses were the classified by contact are as follows: 166 responses

from the initial contact (59%); 14 responses from the first follow-up (5%); 73 responses from the second follow-up (26%) and 28 responses did not complete survey once started (10%). The completed responses per contact are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Participant Response Rates by Contact (N=282)

Contact	Date	N	%
Initial Contact	November 20, 2014	166	59
First Follow-up	November 25, 2014	14	5
Second Follow-up	December 1, 2014	73	26
Started but not completed		28	10

A total of 282 completed surveys were received in the database. The data base recorded 28 surveys were started but not completed. The researcher is unclear why the individuals started but did not complete. One can only speculate reasons individuals did not complete the entire survey instrument.

Descriptive statistics used were mean, mode, and percentage. The demographic information included; employee role (Texas Extension agents and supervisors), employee status, number of years employed, and program assignment (ANR; FCS; CRED; and 4-H). Because this study was a survey of a population, inferential statistics were not used for data analysis. The last open-ended question on the survey asked, “If there is anything else you would like to share about the performance appraisal system, please type it in the box below.” Of the 282 respondents, 107 provided written

comments. The comments offered by participants were analyzed and used in this study. The written comments were reported and described in tabular form (Appendix I).

Summary

This study used an online platform to deploy the survey instruments to the survey population. The instrument addressed Texas agents' and supervisors' Satisfaction with the Current Appraisal System (14 items) and Satisfaction with Appraiser Performance – views toward the roles/behavior of the appraiser relative to the performance appraisal process (7 items). The instrument employed a Likert scale and used six response categories: (a) strongly disagree, (b) disagree, (c) neither agree nor disagree, (d) agree, (e) strongly agree, and (f) don't know.

The instrument development process modified from Donaldson (2011) for this study included the following elements: pre-testing, expert panel review and pilot testing. The on-line instrument was pilot tested with eight extension employees. The pilot members were selected from the Texas Extension District 4 location. Based on results from the pilot test, no changes were made to the instrument.

The entire population of the Texas Extension agents and supervisors was invited to participate in the survey. This survey instrument was deployed online through Qualtrics. The population was sent the initial survey and after 5 days the first reminder was sent, then after 5 more days the second and final reminder was sent to the population. This resulted in 282 total responses received out of 615 for a response rate

of 46%. However of the 282 responses received, 28 did not completely fill out the survey. This brings the completed response rate to 43% of the total population of 596.

The data set was constructed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, 2011) at the 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive statistics used were mean, mode, and percentage. Because this study was a survey of a population, inferential statistics were not used for data analysis. The comments offered by participants were analyzed and used in this study. The written comments were reported and described in tabular form (Appendix I).

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study is to determine Texas Extension agents' and supervisors' perceptions of the current Texas Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System. Specific research questions will be the following:

1. What are the perceptions of Texas Extension agents with regard to the current performance appraisal system?
2. What are the perceptions of the supervisors' with regard to the current performance appraisal system?
3. What are the perceptions of Texas Extension agents of any needed improvements to the current performance appraisal systems?
4. What are the perceptions of the supervisors' of any needed improvements to the current performance appraisal system?
5. What are the perceptions of Texas Extension agents of the roles and behaviors of your supervisor (specific to the performance appraisal process)?
6. What are the perceptions of the supervisors' roles and behaviors (specific to the performance appraisal process)?

The population for the study consisted of Texas Extension agents and supervisors employed in November, 2014. The total population was 615. AgriLife Extension had

584 total positions and CEP had 31 total positions at the time of the study. Table 5 shows the number of agents employed by each agency and program area.

Table 5 Number of Agents per Agency and Program Area (N=615)

Agent Position – Program Area	AgriLife Position	CEP Position	Total Positions
Agricultural/Natural Resources	285	5	290
Family & Consumer Sciences	205	12	217
4-H Youth Development	75	9	84
Community & Economic Development	0	5	5
County Extension Director/District Extension Administrator	19	0	19

Within this study 282 (47%) individuals responded to the survey. Of the responses received, 28 did not complete the entire survey. This yielded a total response rate of 41% for the entire survey. Respondents were asked to indicate their assignments in the organization using one of the Extension base programming areas:

Agricultural/Natural Resources(which includes Horticulture, Integrated Pest Management and Coastal & Marine Resources agents), Family & Consumer Sciences (which includes Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program agents), 4-H Youth Development (which includes Urban Youth Development agents), Community & Economic Development and County Extension Directors/District Extension

Administrators. The respondents to the survey per program area assignment were, 127 (45%) ANR, 83 (29.4%) were FCS, 31 (11%) were 4-H, 8 (2.8%) were CED/DEA and 33 (11.7%) assigned program area were not reported (Table 6). The response by region showed consistent participation across the state (Table 7).

Table 6 Respondents Based Program Assignment and Gender (N=282)

Base Program Area	N	%
Agricultural/Natural Resources	127	45
Family & Consumer Sciences	83	29.4
4-H Youth Development	31	11
Community & Economic Development	0	0
County Extension Director/District Extension Administrator	8	2.8
Missing Program Area	33	11.7
Gender	N	%
Male	125	44.3
Female	121	42.9
Missing Gender	36	12.8

Table 7 Region Participation Across the State (N=282)

Region	N	%	Total State Pop. by %
Southeast	55	19.5	19
East	53	18.8	19
Central	37	13.1	17
West	37	13.1	14
South	36	12.8	16
North	30	10.6	15
Missing	34	12.1	

Within this study, an equal distribution among the years employed by Extension was indicated. The years employed were set on a 1 to 5 year basis up to 25 years and more. The responses for each group are listed in Table 8.

Table 8 Years of Extension Experience (N=282)

Number of Years	N	%
1-5 Years	50	17.7
6-10 Years	47	16.7
11-15 Years	44	15.6
16-20 Years	40	14.2
21-25 Years	30	10.6
More than 25 Years	36	12.8
Missing	35	12.4

An independent samples t-test was performed to assess whether means differed significantly for male and female agents in relations to the role/behavior of the appraiser. The Levene's Test was used to determine if the variances differed. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was assessed by the Levene test, $F = .011$, $p = .918$; this indicated that no statistical differences existed. Therefore, the pooled variances version of the t-test was used. At the 0.05 level of significance, the mean for unbiased in making appraisal rating scores exhibited no significantly differences across means as did the other parameters (Table 9).

Table 9 Independent Samples t-Test for Agents Views by Gender the Role/Behavior of the Appraiser

Perceptions	t	df	p
Was unbiased in making appraisal ratings.	.230	226	.819
Exercised good judgment in making appraisal ratings.	-.421	229	.674
Needed more instruction in performance appraisal.*	.770	226	.442
Provided confusing instructions about the appraisal.*	.782	230	.435
Gave an honest assessment of my job performance.	-1.277	228	.203
Understand my work better than anyone else in this organization.	-.538	229	.591
Showed no appreciation for the work I do.*	.492	228	.623

Note. *Items with an asterisk have a reverse polarity whereby disagreement is a positive response. Leven's test for equality of variances was $F = 2.256$, $p = .134$.
 $p < .05$ level

Research Questions One and Two – What are the Perceptions of Texas Extension Agents’ and Supervisors’ with Regard to the Current Performance Appraisal System?

Respondent’s perception of the current performance appraisal system was measured on a five-point scale: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree. Consistent with the Donaldson (2011) study, the instrument had a total of 14 items for perceptions of the current performance appraisal system representing five major factors relative to employee satisfaction; fairness, job description, multiple appraisers, professional development, and overall effectiveness. Percentages for these responses are shown in Table 8. For the purpose of this discussion, the data have been collapsed, so that disagreement is represented by strongly disagree and disagree responses and agreement is represented by strongly agree and agree responses. A sixth answer category for “don’t know” was provided on the instrument.

Performance Appraisal System with Overall Effectiveness – The item with the strongest agreement among all items regarding satisfaction with the current performance appraisal system was “the performance appraisal system needs to be improved” (74.3%). More than half, 56.7% respondents disagreed that the performance appraisal system is “close to ideal.” With 29.1% of the respondents selecting neither agree nor disagree system is “close to ideal.” These findings indicate that the majority of the Texas

Extension agents and managers/supervisors perceived that the present performance appraisal system lacks overall effectiveness.

Performance Appraisal System with Multiple Appraisers – Nineteen percent (19.3%) of the respondents expressed that it “would be more accurate if a subject matter specialist served as the appraiser.” Forty-eight percent (48.2%) disagreed on the item of “would be more accurate if a team of the district extension administrator, county extension directors, regional program leader and subject matter specialists served as appraisers.”

Performance Appraisal System Fairness – Regarding fairness, 55.7% agreed that the performance appraisal system “is fair” and 51.4% agreed that the performance appraisal system “is implemented fairly.” About equal number of respondents agreed (33.1%) and disagreed (32.2%) that the performance appraisal system “is unbiased.”

Performance Appraisal System Based on Job Description – Regarding job description, 42.6% agreed that the performance appraisal system “reflects my major job responsibilities” and 44.3% “helps me understand my job duties.” About equal numbers of respondents agreed (40.0%) and disagreed (39.6%) that the appraisal system “represents what I do on the job.”

Performance Appraisal System that Provides Professional Development – Thirty-five percent (34.9%) respondents agreed that the performance appraisal system “has helped me improve my professionalism.” Forty-two percent (41.9%) of the respondents disagreed that the performance appraisal system “causes me confusion about job responsibilities.” Percentages for items listed in the above information are

shown in Table 10. Table 11 illustrates the descriptive statistics for respondents' perceptions of the Current performance appraisal system. The response to the Perceptions of the Current Performance Appraisal System highest rating was "needs to be improved" with a mean of 4.13. The response to the perceptions of the current performance appraisal system lowest rating was "it is close to ideal" with a mean of 2.38.

An independent samples t-test was performed to assess whether means differed significantly for the performance appraisal system. The Levene's Test was used to determine if the variances differed. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was assessed by the Levene test, $F = .094$, $p = .759$; this indicated that no statistical differences existed. Therefore, the pooled variances version of the t-test was used. At the 0.05 level of significance, the mean for District Extension Administrator, County Extension Directors did not serve as appraisers' statistically significant difference in the mean values (Table 12).

Table 10 Respondents' Perceptions of the Current Performance Appraisal System (N=282)

Perceptions	% Strongly Disagree	% Disagree	% Neither Agree/Nor Disagree	% Agree	% Strongly Agree	% Don't Know/No Answer
Is fair	3.1	14.5	23.5	45.5	10.2	3.1
Has discouraged me.	6.3	28.5	26.9	23.3	13.0	2.0
Is unbiased.	4.8	27.4	31.5	29.0	4.0	3.2
Represents what I do on the job.	12.9	26.7	19.2	31.4	8.6	1.2
Is implemented fairly.	2.4	14.5	27.5	43.1	8.2	4.3
Helps me understand my job duties.	6.7	22.7	24.7	36.5	7.8	1.6
Needs to be improved.	.8	4.0	18.2	33.2	41.1	2.8
Is close to ideal. *	17.7	39.0	29.1	9.1	2.4	2.8
Reflects my major job responsibilities.	7.1	24.5	20.6	39.1	7.1	1.6
Cause me confusion about my job responsibilities.	4.0	37.9	27.7	20.6	7.5	2.4
Would be more accurate if a subject matter specialist served as appraisers. *	20.9	33.1	22.8	15.0	4.3	3.9
Would be more accurate if a team of the county Extension director, regional program director and subject matter specialist served as appraisers. *	19.2	29.0	22.7	18.4	7.5	3.1
Has helped me improve my professionalism. *	4.3	25.6	29.1	28.7	10.6	1.6

Note. *Items with an asterisk have a reverse polarity whereby disagreement is a positive response.

Table 11 Descriptive Statistics for Respondents' Perceptions of the Current Performance Appraisal System

Perceptions	N	M	SD
Needs to be improved.	246	4.13	.912
Is fair.	247	3.47	.978
Is implemented fairly.	244	3.42	.933
Helps me understand my job duties.	251	3.16	1.081
Has helped me improve my professionalism. *	250	3.16	1.067
Reflects my major job responsibilities.	249	3.15	1.099
Has discouraged me.	248	3.08	1.14
Is unbiased.	240	3.00	.997
Represents what I do on the job.	252	2.96	1.21
Causes me confusion about my job responsibilities.	247	2.89	1.031
Would be more accurate if a team of the county Extension director, regional program director and subject matter specialist served as appraisers. *	243	2.65	1.124
Would be more accurate if a subject matter specialist served as appraisers. *	244	2.47	1.127
Is close to ideal. *	247	2.38	.967

Note. *Items with an asterisk have a reverse polarity whereby disagreement is a positive response.

Note. N=Population Responded, M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation

Table 12 Independent Samples t-Test of the Performance Appraisal System

Perceptions	t	df	p
It is fair.	-1.204	245	.230
Has helped me improve my professionalism.	-.675	248	.501
Has discouraged me.	.531	246	.596
Is unbiased.	-1.105	238	.270
Represents what I do on the job.	-.687	250	.493
Is implemented fairly.	.392	242	.696
Helps me understand my job duties.	-.303	249	.762
Need to be improved.	-.038	244	.970
Is close to ideal.	.747	245	.456
Reflects my major job responsibilities.	.014	247	.989
Would be more accurate if a subject matter specialist served as an appraiser.	1.113	242	.267
Would be more accurate if a team of the District Extension Administrator, County Extension Directors, Regional Program Leaders and subject matter specialist served as appraisers.	1.240	245	.216
Would be more accurate if District Extension Administrator, County Extension Directors did not serve as appraisers.	2.720	241	.007

Note. *Items with an asterisk have a reverse polarity whereby disagreement is a positive response. Leven's test for equality of variances was $F = .094$, $p = .759$. $p < .05$ level

Research Question Three - What are the Perceptions of Texas Extension Agents of any Needed Improvements to the Current Performance Appraisal Systems?

The survey included an open-ended question that stated, "If there is anything else you would like to share about the performance appraisal system, please type it in the box below." All of the Texas Extension agent respondents' comments are detailed in the

Appendix C. Of the 282 Texas Extension agent respondents in the survey, 104 (37%) respondents provided written comments. Analysis of the written comments revealed these key themes relative to an improved performance appraisal system. The following summarizes the respondents' written comments.

Merit Raises, Pay Increases – Several respondents (n=29) described the need to implement a system of merit, salary increase and/or financial rewards.

Supervisor Affect with the Appraisal System – Several respondents (n=20) discussed how supervisor can make the performance appraisal system effective or ineffective.

Connect Reporting, Performance Appraisal & Career Ladder System – Several respondents (N=19) would like to see the performance appraisal system connected to reporting and the agent career ladder process to reduce redundancy and to eliminate need to repeat the information in several different formats for other reports.

Ineffective System – Several respondents (n=19) stated that the system had issues and needed to be overhauled.

Current System Redundant or Repetitive – Several respondents (n=15) noted that the current system has the agent repeating the same information.

Lack of Communication Between Supervisor and Agent – One respondent (n=1) noted that the system could be improved if the supervisor and agents increase communication between the two.

Several respondents stated that the performance appraisal system could be updating, revised or developed into a new system. Respondents also stated that the current system does not account for the day-to-day work of agents and the programs they

manage. Thirty-eight (36%) of the 104 provided written statement about needed improvements to the performance appraisal system. Comments from several respondents:

- “I do feel that it could be improved. I feel that it is a little more in depth than what we need. I have many friends in professional jobs, including my spouse, and they don’t have to go through nothing like we do. Between mid-year reviews, program planning, and annual performance appraisal it feels like our performance is constantly under the gun. In my opinion that is not a healthy working environment.”
- “Much of it is a re-hashing of reports that have already been turned in or submitted.”
- “The most frustrating thing about the current system is no consistency, no accountability and it's repetitive. Why do we have to compile information again that has already been included in monthly, quarterly and end of the year reports? There is no real incentive for exceeding expectations other than personal pride. Personal pride doesn't pay the bills unfortunately.”

Twenty-nine of 104 (28%) provided statements related to the need for salary increases being connected to the performance appraisal system. Comments from several respondents:

- “Performance appraisal is a great tool to use, if you are being supervised directly. We work on programs all throughout our counties and to really base a performance appraisal you would need to be at that program to watch agents in action and see the impact they are making first hand to get an accurate performance appraisal and pay raise incentive.”
- “I think it is a fair performance system that analyzes what we do as county agents. When I receive Exceeds Expectation, it lets me know that I am doing an outstanding job in my county. The thing that is disappointing related to the performance appraisal is that even if I receive all Exceeds Expectation, there is no monetary incentive for that rating.”
- “As every county is unique, I would hope that the system allows for enough individuality that the appraisers can acknowledge the work that is being accomplished and reward the agent for that exemplary work.”

Twenty respondents (19%) of the 104 provided statements related to the issues of supervisor training or oversight needing improvement. Some of the respondents felt that the current system is extremely cumbersome and time consuming. Current document is too redundant. Comments from several respondents:

- “I honestly think that the performance appraisal system is the best that we have had in many years. Does it need improvement, yes.

The one thing that I see that needs improvement is: that regional program leaders are working with agents on program planning and approving those plans and helping them throughout the year. I feel that there is sometimes lack of communication between RPL's and DEA's and that agents sometimes get caught in the middle. We are sometimes told by one boss to do programming one way but when it comes to performance review agents are sometimes questioned why was the particular program conducted a certain way. I feel that communication between RPL's and DEA's is the key to a better performance appraisal system.”

- “I feel that the system could be more streamlined with the monthly reports that are completed by each agent and the career ladder program. We have a lot of redundancy in Extension between these three areas that could work better together. I also feel that this system will never be 100% unbiased until all agents are held to the same standards across the board and between agencies.”

Research Question Four - What are the Perceptions of the Supervisors' of any Needed Improvements to the Current Performance Appraisal System?

The survey included an additional an open-ended question that stated, “If there is

anything else you would like to share about the performance appraisal system, please type it in the box below.” All of the supervisors respondents comments are detailed in the Appendix D. Of the 8 respondents, 3 (38%) respondents provided written comments. The three comments were:

- “I have always received good performance reviews as an agent. I've only completed performance reviews once as a DEA. The agents currently in District 10 are all exceptional. That makes performance review easy. Only small suggestions are needed for them to improve and succeed. Not sure how to change the instrument to make it easier to complete and utilize to encourage success.”
- “It is hard to rate individuals across a statewide organization when you have different supervisor performing the task state wide. Supervisor "A" might evaluate easy while Supervisor "B" might evaluate with great difficulty. This makes it hard to be uniform when it comes to merit increases based on Performance Evaluations.”
- “The performance appraisal system, the TExAS Monthly Reporting System and the dossier/curriculum vitae need to be connected and self-populating.”

Research Questions Five – What are the Perceptions of Texas Extension Agents of the Roles and Behaviors of Your Supervisor (Specific to the Performance Appraisal Process)?

Perceptions of the roles and behaviors of appraisers (specific to the performance appraisal process) were measured on a five-point scale where: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree. The instrument had a total of seven items representing three major factors relative to appraiser performance: appraisers' judgment/fairness/trust, appraisers' understanding of the job being appraised, and appraisers' skill/instruction in performance appraisals. Percentages for each response are shown in Table 13. For the purpose of this discussion, the data have been collapsed, so that disagreement is represented by strongly disagree and disagree responses and agreement is represented by strongly agree and agree response. A sixth answer category for "don't know" was provided on the instrument.

The item with the highest positive response relating to Texas Extension agents' perceptions of the appraiser was the "County Extension Director/District Extension Administrator – Exercised good judgment in making appraisal ratings 67.2%. Followed by 65.9%, showed their approval for the appraisers' performance by disagreeing with the statement "showed no appreciation for the work I do." Also, 63.4% agreed that their appraisers "gave an honest assessment of their job performance." Six out of 10 (60%) of the respondents agreed that appraisers "were unbiased in making appraisal ratings." Fifty seven percent (57.5%) of the respondents showed approval by disagreeing with the

statement that their appraiser “provided confusing instructions about the appraisals.” As it relates to the appraiser “needed more instruction in performance appraisal,” 23.7% agreed, but 42.9% disagreed. Finally 39.7% of the respondents indicated that the appraiser “understands my work better than anyone else in this organization.” Table 13 provides the respondents perceptions of the Role/Behaviors of Appraisers. Table 14 illustrates the Descriptive Statistics for Respondents’ Perceptions of the Role/Behaviors. The response to the Perceptions of the Current Performance Appraisal System with the highest rating was “Exercised good judgment in making appraisal ratings” with a mean of 3.72. The response to the perceptions of the current performance appraisal system with the lowest rating was “showed no appreciation for the work I do” with a mean of 2.21, this lowest rating was a disagree rating. This was a good rating. Over six in ten respondents (65.9%) showed their approval for the appraisers’ Role/Behaviors with their performance by disagreeing with the statement “showed no appreciation for the work I do.

Table 13 Respondents' Perceptions of the Role/Behavior of Appraisers (N=282)

Perceptions	% Strongly Disagree	% Disagree	% Neither Agree/Nor Disagree	% Agree	% Strongly Agree	%Don't Know/No Answer
Was unbiased in making appraisal ratings.	3.3	11.8	20.4	44.9	16.3	3.3
Exercised good judgment in making appraisal ratings.	3.2	8.5	18.2	49.8	17.4	2.8
Needed more instruction in performance appraisal.*	7.8	35.1	30.2	18.4	5.3	3.3
Provided confusing instructions about the appraisal.*	10.6	46.9	25.3	9.8	5.3	2.0
Gave an honest assessment of my job performance.	4.1	11.0	18.7	46.7	16.7	2.8
Understand my work better than anyone else in this organization.	9.7	23.1	24.7	24.3	15.4	2.8
Showed no appreciation for the work I do.*	29.3	36.6	18.7	7.3	5.3	2.8

Note. *Items with an asterisk have a reverse polarity whereby disagreement is a positive response.

Note. SD=1, D=2, ND/NA=3, A=4, SA= 5

Table 14 Descriptive Statistics for Respondents' Perceptions of the Role/Behaviors

Question	N	M	SD
Exercised good judgment in making appraisal ratings.	240	3.72	.970
Gave an honest assessment of my job performance.	239	3.63	1.029
Was unbiased in making appraisal ratings.	237	3.61	1.013
Understand my work better than anyone else in this organization.	240	3.13	1.229
Needed more instruction in performance appraisal.*	237	2.78	1.023
Provided confusing instructions about the appraisal.*	240	2.51	.998
Showed no appreciation for the work I do.*	239	2.21	1.117

Note. *Items with an asterisk have a reverse polarity whereby disagreement is a positive response.

Note. N=Population Responded, M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation

Research Questions Six – What are the Perceptions of the Supervisors' Roles and Behaviors (Specific to the Performance Appraisal Process)?

Perceptions of the roles and behaviors of appraisers (specific to the performance appraisal process) were measured on a five-point scale where: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree. The study instrument had a total of six items representing three major factors relative to appraiser perceptions of their performance with the agent: appraisers' judgment/fairness/trust, appraisers understanding of the job being appraised, and appraisers' skill/instruction in performance appraisals. Percentages for each response are shown in Table 15. For the purpose of this discussion, the data have been collapsed, so that disagreement is represented by strongly disagree and disagree responses and agreement is represented by

strongly agree and agree response. A sixth answer category for “don’t know” was provided on the instrument.

Overall, all the Supervisors (100%) “Exercised good judgment in making appraisal ratings.” Three other items had very positive responses relating to the appraiser perceptions of their interaction with the agent: 87.5% agreed that they “were unbiased in making appraisal ratings,” 87.5% agreed that they “gave an honest assessment of the Texas Extension Agent job performance” and 87.5% disagreed that they “showed no appreciation for the work the agent conducted.” Six out of eight (75%) agreed they “needed more instruction in performance appraisal” and five out of eight agreed that they “understand the agents’ work better than anyone else in this organization.” (Table 15) Table 16 illustrates the Descriptive Statistics of the supervisors’ Perceptions of the Role/Behaviors. The response to the Perceptions of the Current Performance Appraisal System’s highest rating was “Exercised good judgment in making appraisal ratings” with a mean of 4.38. The response to the perceptions of the current performance appraisal system’s lowest rating was “you showed no appreciation for the work the agents conducted” with a mean of 1.75, this lowest rating was a disagree rating. This was a good rating. Seven out of eight respondents (87.5%) showed their approval for their Role/Behaviors performance by disagreeing with the statement “you showed no appreciation for the work the agents conducted.”

Table 15 Managers/Supervisors' Perceptions of the Role/Behavior (N=8)

Perceptions	% Strongly Disagree	% Disagree	% Neither Agree/Nor Disagree	% Agree	% Strongly Agree	%Don't Know/No Answer
You were unbiased in making appraisal ratings.	0	12.5	0	50.0	37.5	0
Exercised good judgment in making appraisal ratings.	0	0	0	62.5	37.5	0
You understand the agent work better than anyone else in this organization.	0	0	25.0	25.0	37.5	12.5
Gave an honest assessment of my job performance.	0	0	12.5	75.0	12.5	0
Needed more instruction in performance appraisal.	0	12.5	12.5	25.0	50.0	0
You showed no appreciation for the work I do. *	12.5	25.0	0	0	12.5	0

Note. *Items with an asterisk have a reverse polarity whereby disagreement is a positive response.

Note. SD=1, D=2, ND/NA=3, A=4, SA= 5

Table 16 Descriptive Statistics for Managers'/Supervisors' Perceptions of the Role/Behaviors

Question	N	M	SD
Exercised good judgment in making appraisal ratings.	8	4.38	.518
You understand the agent work better than anyone else in this organization.	8	4.14	.900
You were unbiased in making appraisal ratings.	8	4.13	.991
Needed more instruction in performance appraisal.	8	4.13	1.126
Gave an honest assessment of Agent job performance.	8	4.00	.535
You showed no appreciation for the work the agents conducted. *	8	2.21	1.389

Note. *Items with an asterisk have a reverse polarity whereby disagreement is a positive response.

Note. N=Population Responded, M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter will give meaning to and expand upon findings related to the perceptions of the current Texas Extension Performance Appraisal System. It is organized into four parts: (a) conclusion, (b) discussion, (c) recommendations for improvement of the Texas Extension Performance Appraisal System and (d) recommendations for future research.

The purpose of the study was to determine the Texas Extension agents' and supervisors' perceptions of the Texas Extension Performance Appraisal System. The research questions were:

1. What are the perceptions of Texas Extension agents with regard to the current performance appraisal system?
2. What are the perceptions of the supervisors with regard to the current performance appraisal system?
3. What are the perceptions of Texas Extension agents of any needed improvements to the current performance appraisal systems?
4. What are the perceptions of the supervisors of any needed improvements to the current performance appraisal system?
5. What are the perceptions of Texas Extension agents of the roles and behaviors of your supervisor (specific to the performance appraisal process)?

6. What are the perceptions of the supervisor's roles and behaviors (specific to the performance appraisal process)?

The survey research design was used with a total of 47 items, in which five items were demographic questions. Methodology included the following items: (1) population, (2) design of the study, (3) instrumentation, and (4) data analysis.

There were 596 Texas Extension agents and 19 supervisors that comprised the target population with a 46% response rate. The survey instrument was administered online using Qualtrics® Online Surveys. The use of this online survey site ensured anonymity of the agents and their responses. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were run on these constructs to determine Texas Extension Agents' and supervisors' agreement of usage and acceptance of Texas Extension Performance Appraisal System.

Demographics collected during the perceptions of the current Texas Extension Performance Appraisal System study were used to determine if there were statistically significant differences of means. These personal characteristic variables included districts, Extension regions, agent program areas, gender, Extension experience, highest degree level and number of counties worked. Mean, standard deviation, and t-tests were used for this portion of the survey results.

Conclusions

For *Research Questions 1 and 2*, the respondents were asked their *Perceptions of the Current Performance Appraisal System*. Texas Extension agents perceive that the performance appraisal system lacks overall effectiveness. Texas Extension agents perceive an overall lack of effectiveness with the performance appraisal system as the majority of respondents (74.3%) stated “the performance appraisal system needs to be improved.” More than half, 56.7% respondents disagreed that the performance appraisal system is “close to ideal.” Texas Extension agents perceive the most positive aspects of the current performance appraisal system to be the involvement of managers/supervisors as appraisers, fairness, and the improvement of the Texas Extension agents’ professional development by having participated in the appraisal system. Almost half of the respondents, 48.2%, disagreed on the item of “would be more accurate if a team comprised of the district extension administrator, county extension director, regional program leader and subject matter specialist served as appraisers.” Regarding fairness, 55.7% agreed that the performance appraisal system “is fair” and 51.4% agreed that the performance appraisal system “is implemented fairly.” Thirty three percent (33.1%) of the respondents agreed that the performance appraisal system “is unbiased” and 32.2 % disagreed. Regarding job description, 42.6% of the respondents agreed that the performance appraisal system “reflects my major job responsibilities” and 44.3% of the respondents agree that it “helps me understand my job duties.”

For *Research Questions 3*, the Texas Extension agents were asked, what are your *Perceptions of any Needed Improvements to the Current Performance Appraisal Systems?* The current appraisal systems need improvements as perceived by Texas Extension agents. Texas Extension agents identified areas for improvement in the written comments section. Salary increases being connected to the performance appraisal system were stated with 29 of 104 respondents provided statement relating to salary increase, a 29% response. Supervisor training or oversight could be improved was stated with 20 of 104 respondents, a 19% response. Of the 282 respondents, 104 (37%) respondents provided written comments.

For *Research Questions 4*, supervisors were asked, what are your *Perceptions of any Needed Improvements to the Current Performance Appraisal Systems?* The current appraisal systems need improvements as perceived by extension. Supervisors identified areas for improvement in the written comments section: (a) Making the instrument easier to complete, (b) instrument too subjective, needs to have some type of rubric system, and (c) connect the appraisal, reporting, and promotion systems. Of the 8 respondents, 3 (38%) respondents provided written comments.

For *Research Questions 5*, the Texas Extension agents were asked, *what are your Perceptions of the Roles and Behaviors of Appraisers/Supervisor (Specific to the Performance Appraisal Process)?* The majority of Texas Extension agents had positive perceptions of the performance of the supervisors' in conducting the performance appraisal. Appraisers are viewed as exercising positive judgment and fairness, and they are trusted by their subordinates. Appraisers are viewed as exercising positive judgment

and fairness, and they are trusted by the agents. The majority of the respondents (67.2%) agree that the appraisers “exercised good judgment in making appraisal rating.” Sixty three point four percent (63.4%) agreed that their appraisers “gave an honest assessment of their job performance” and six of ten 61.2% were “unbiased in making appraisal ratings.” Overall, 57.5% of the respondents showed approval by disagreeing with the statement “provided confusing instructions about the appraisals.”

For *Research Questions 6*, regarding the supervisors, what are your *Perceptions of the Roles and Behaviors of Your Supervisor (Specific to the Performance Appraisal Process)*? All the supervisors’ are viewed as exercising positive judgment and fairness, and they are trusted by their agents. All the appraisers (100%) agree that the supervisors’ “exercised good judgment in making appraisal ratings.” Eighty seven point five percent (87.5%) agreed that their appraisers “gave an honest assessment of the Texas Extension agents job performance” and “unbiased in making appraisal ratings.” The appraisers responded 87.5% with a disagreed that they “showed no appreciation for the work the agent conducted.” Overall, 57.5% of the respondents showed approval by disagreeing with the appraisers “provided confusing instructions about the appraisals.”

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should be conducted to explore gender, race and age in more detail. Specifically, looking into the effects of race or ethnicity in regards to performance appraisal has been studied primarily from the perspective of subgroups

receiving different scores on a variety of performance measures (Arvey & Murphy, 1998). There is evidence in the performance appraisal literature which indicates that African-Americans receive lower performance ratings than whites on both subjective and objective measures (Ford, Kraiger, & Schechtman, 1986). Also, future research, on the effect of the gender of the person being appraised and the gender of the appraiser on performance appraisal should be investigated.

For future research regarding employee perceptions of performance appraisal, the first survey question should ascertain if the employee has worked long enough to have experienced the performance appraisal system. In the present study, several members of the population sent emails to the researcher to inform that they were declining to participate in the survey because they had been employed less than 12 months, and they were not familiar with the Texas Extension Performance Appraisal System. This is an issue with this study, as it is not known how many members of the population were unfamiliar with the current Performance Appraisal System.

This research was limited to a survey of Texas Extension agents and managers/supervisors' perceptions, and a more vigorous assessment of the performance appraisal system should examine the degree to which the system achieves the major positive outcomes of performance appraisal, including increasing communication between supervisors and employees (Bennett, 1981) and setting action plans for the coming year (Bennett, 1981; Wright & Evans, 2008). Research is needed to identify the Texas Extension Performance Appraisal System performance dimensions to make the system less subjective.

To strengthen future studies, researchers should conduct future studies to explore the agents participation per district to understand if any difference exists or what differences one's supervisor makes.

Recommendations for Agency Actions

Recommendations to the Agency for application and applied the research:

- 1) Ensure supervisors serve as the appraiser for the agent performance appraisals. Other individuals serving as the appraiser would not be as beneficial or provide a positive assessment of the agent's job performance. This recommendation is further supported by the Dipboye and DePontbriand (1981) study.
- 2) Eliminate the team approach to the performance appraisal system. A team approach would not be an effective way to conduct the agents' performance appraisals. Input from regional program leaders could be used for the agents' performance appraisal, but the team approach would not provide a positive outcome. Although this is different from results reported by Davis and Verma (1993), the results of this study clearly suggest that Texas Extension agents prefer a one-person evaluator.
- 3) Employee satisfaction is a key element to employee morale. Salary increases, whether merit or some other type, along with promotions should be connected to the performance appraisal system, which is consistent with

Murphy and Cleveland (1995) and Davis and Verma (1993). Budget restraints are a limiting factor that might hinder this process, but some adjustments to this system would increase morale across the agency.

- 4) When developing or modifying the performance appraisal system, making it a trust-worthy system would benefit the agency. Similar results were reported by Mayer and Davis (1995) and Edward and Ewen (1996). The current system has flaws that cause trust issues for some Texas Extension agents.
- 5) Develop the performance appraisal system that allows the appraisers to provide positive judgment and fairness as it relates to the agent's job performance. Research results reported by Dipboye and DePontbriand (1981) & Lind and Tyler (1988) concur with this conclusion.
- 6) Consistency among the supervisors conducting performance appraisals would ensure the appraisals are conducted at the highest quality possible. Similar to McGregor (1972) and French and Mayo (1987), results indicated that some type of supervisor training should be implemented to improve the appraisal system and process.
- 7) Texas Extension should explore strategies or a system that would require less duplicative effort on the part of Extension agents to prepare for his/her appraisal. As time constraints become a major factor among agents and supervisors, the development of a comprehensive reporting system that offers a better retrieval system with the capacity to export needed information for

performance appraisal purposes would decrease the time needed for agents to prepare the performance appraisal document.

- 8) The performance appraisal system is a needed tool in any management tool box. Having a system that connects the reporting, career ladder and the performance appraisal system together would be valuable asset among State Extension programs.
- 9) Additional analysis related to the supervisor concerns should be conducted. This would help the agency improve the performance appraisal system outcomes and possibly improve the management portions of the system.

With these additional recommendations, the Texas Extension System could develop a performance appraisal system that considered both agents and supervisors input. The amended system would also be a better way to evaluate the agent's performance along with providing an incentive for the agent. The performance appraisal could become a worthwhile teaching tool for the agency.

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APPENDIX A

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Performance Appraisal System Instrument



Performance Appraisal System

Extension Agent 2014 Performance Summary

Name _____ County _____

Educational Effectiveness and Quality OUTCOME PROGRAMS

The core of Extension efforts lies in the design, delivery, and impact of educational programs. Outstanding educational programs include a comprehensive educational plan, appropriate program delivery, proper evaluation techniques, and program interpretation involving program committee members, clientele, and key community stakeholders in all phases. Extension educators should use a variety of available resources, creative and innovative methods, and technologies to create a quality learning environment using effective teaching techniques. Extension Agents must always consider affirmative action and provisions for the standards set forth by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Extension Agents must use appropriate evaluation tools and techniques to review, enhance and determine outcomes in educational programs. The Extension Agent must be effective, timely and complete in reporting and marketing efforts. They must also interpret outcomes to local stakeholders and key leaders.

Domain Performance Outcomes: Discuss each of these points in the agent=s summary: (A copy of the Outcome Program Summary can be attached or pasted in lieu of completing this section. For more detail, see Appendix D.)

- § *Relevance/Issue Description. Include scope and severity of the issue. Provide justification for why plan was conducted. Is it a base /traditional program or TCFF issue? Include listing of PAC=s/task force/LAB or other volunteer groups involved in the program development process.*
- § *Identify target audience.*
- § *Response or what educational activities, events, and or experiences were delivered to address this issue? What were the methods used B mass media, conferences, field days, series, workshops, result demonstration, etc.?*
- § *Identify marketing efforts.*
- § *Partners and/or collaborators involved in the program and their role.*
- § *Evaluation strategy and efforts. Include what formal evaluation instrument was utilized? (Needs assessments, base data, pretest, post test, pre/post, retro respective, etc?)*
- § *Results: What happened as a result of this program? Document the targeted audience=s changes (knowledge, skills or adoption) as a result of the educational program. Economic impacts (dollars saved or earned) should be emphasized if possible.*
- § *Interpretation efforts. Who and how were the program results interpreted? Include key leaders, stakeholders, commissioner courts, school board, civic clubs, etc.*

Agent's Summary:

Supervisor's Summary:

Goals for Progress:

Rating of county faculty member's performance:

- Exceeds performance expectations
- Meets performance expectations
- Does not meet performance expectations related to:

NOTE: An agent will be assigned a composite rating of AUnsatisfactory and Unacceptable Performance if performance expectations are not met under this domain.

Educational Effectiveness and Quality OUTPUT PROGRAMS

The core of Extension efforts lies in the design, delivery, and impact of educational programs. Outstanding educational programs include a comprehensive educational plan, appropriate program delivery, proper evaluation techniques, and program interpretation involving program committee members, clientele, and key community stakeholders in all phases. Extension educators should use a variety of available resources, creative and innovative methods, and technologies to create a quality learning environment using effective teaching techniques. Extension Agents must always consider affirmative action and provisions for the standards set forth by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Extension Agents must use appropriate evaluation tools and techniques to review, enhance and determine outcomes in educational programs. The Extension Agent must be effective, timely and complete in reporting and marketing efforts. They must also interpret outcomes to local stakeholders and key leaders.

Domain Performance Outcomes: Provide highlights for each output program where you were the lead agent. Bullet statements with brief explanations are appropriate. (For more detail, see Appendix D.0)

- § *Output plan title and planning group involved*
- § *Educational program events and methods conducted*
- § *Evaluation results B customer satisfaction survey or other informal and formal methods.*

Agent's Summary:

Supervisor's Summary:

Goals for Progress:

Rating of county faculty member's performance:

- Exceeds performance expectations
- Meets performance expectations
- Does not meet performance expectations related to:

NOTE: An agent will be assigned a composite rating of Unsatisfactory and Unacceptable Performance if performance expectations are not met under this domain.

Program and Organizational Support

Program and organizational support depend greatly upon appropriate use and proper management of human and material resources to enhance educational programming and program outcomes of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Cooperative Extension Program.

Human resources, including the knowledge and skills of the entire Extension faculty as well as our support staff, paraprofessional staff, volunteers, and others play a vital role in the planning and implementing of county Extension programs. The ability to plan, train, utilize, evaluate, and allocate or manage human resources are examples of skills and actions that should be identified and coordinated for program achievement.

Material resources, which may include funding, equipment, and supplies for Extension program needs can often be found from external sources such grants and donations through organizations, foundations, charitable trusts, businesses, government, or private citizens. Internal sources such as county and/or state Extension budgeted funds are also available and should be reviewed annually by the total county Extension faculty and staff to determine fair and equitable distribution according to program needs and goals. In the course of soliciting program and organizational support, Extension faculty must assure that those groups and organizations solicited do not in any way discriminate on the basis of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, or national origin.

Domain Performance Outcomes: Discuss each of these points in the agent=s summary. (For more detail, see Appendix D.)

- § *Human resources: Number of volunteers (adult and 4-H) and how they are managed, recruited, trained, involved and recognized, and dollar value for their time volunteered. Include number of Ascreened@ volunteers. Discuss management of support staff (secretaries, paraprofessional, etc.).*

- § *Material resources: External donations (funds and equipment), grant management and support, gifts, sponsorships, etc. Internal sources such as funding support provided by county commissioners court (report increased and/or decreased funding level as compared to previous year budget).*

Agent's Summary:

Supervisor's Summary:

Goals for Progress:

Rating of county faculty member's performance:

- Exceeds performance expectations
- Meets performance expectations
- Does not meet performance expectations related to:

Cooperation and Coordination

Establishing effective working relationships with co-workers, colleagues, supervisors, volunteers, clientele, key community leaders, TAMUS system partners, institutions of higher education, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service partners, county and state agencies and organizations, stakeholders, and people in the political arena is critical to the success and enhancement of a visible and viable Extension Program. The identification, development, and involvement of teams/partners/collaborators are examples of the behavior, skills, and actions necessary for the domain of cooperation and coordination. Cooperation and coordination significantly impacts the desired program outcome results and increase the effectiveness of Extension and the county faculty members.

Domain Performance Outcomes: Discuss each of these points in the agent=s summary. (For more detail, see Appendix D.)

- § *Collaborator/partnership - List and describe relationship of all major external collaborators and partners utilized in Extension programming. Example: local, county, state and federal agencies, stakeholders, local and county organizations and clubs, private businesses, agribusinesses, financial institutions etc. List all Extension organizations and membership enrollments (4-H clubs, master volunteer groups, TEEA clubs, study groups, etc.)*
- § *Teamwork: Highlight examples of effective teamwork with co-workers, peer Extension agents, supervisors, etc. Highlight examples of interdisciplinary programming (LAB, Youth Board, PAC, 4-H cluster programming etc.).*
- § *New Audiences: Identify new audience(s) reached by Extension programming during the past program year.*

Agent's Summary:

Supervisor's Summary:

Goals for Progress:

Rating of county faculty member's performance:

- Exceeds performance expectations
- Meets performance expectations
- Does not meet performance expectations related to:

Personal Development of Knowledge, Skills, and Behaviors

The future of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Cooperative Extension Program depend upon the effectiveness of our employees. To maintain and enhance professional competence, county faculty members should participate in staff development efforts such as in-service training, graduate study, professional organizations, and externally-sponsored training.

As professionals, Extension agents are expected to participate in applied research, creative activities, intellectual and scholarly work whose significance is validated by peers and shared with other professionals. Effective agents interpret and integrate research-based knowledge from multiple sources including current events, professional publications, workshops, seminars, and professional affiliations, bringing new insights to issues.

The success of our organization also depend on employees who have a clear understanding of the organizations= mission and vision, and who are willing to accept additional leadership assignments that contribute to the mission and vision.

Domain Performance Outcomes: List the major efforts for each of these points in the agents=s summary.

- § *Professional development training (Extension and External)*
- § *Graduate Study - Include hours/courses and status of timeline for completion*
- § *Professional organizations membership, leadership and recognition*
- § *Scholarly contributions (publications, fact sheets, newsletters, web pages, handbooks, etc.*
- § *Career Ladder Status and plans for promotion*
- § *District/State Extension committee leadership and involvement.*

Agent's Summary:

Supervisor's Summary:

Goals for Progress:

Rating of county faculty member's performance:

- Exceeds performance expectations
- Meets performance expectations
- Does not meet performance expectations related to:

Overall Evaluation of Extension Agent

County Faculty Member _____

Job Title _____

Period of Review _____

Supervisor Conducting Review _____

Date of Review _____

Rating of county faculty member=s overall performance:

- Exceeds Performance Expectations:** Consistently exceeds standards of performance. Outstanding performer. Takes Initiative. Consistently uses motivation and creativity to enhance program. Clearly exceeds performance expectations on some of the most difficult and complex facets of the job.
- Meets Performance Expectations:** Meets acceptable standards of performance. Good performer. Completes projects and tasks thoroughly and has consistent output of work. Manages responsibilities of the position in an effective manner.
- Not All Performance Domains Were Met:** This rating will be assigned if the individual evaluation of any domain is *Does Not Meet Performance Expectations*. Action must be taken for improvement.
- Unsatisfactory and Unacceptable Performance:** Job knowledge is inadequate, programming in subject matter is not complete and fails to fulfill the mission of the organization. *Individual Improvement Plan* will be initiated.

Summary:

Extension Agent Signature _____ Date _____

Supervisor's Signature _____ Date _____

Supervisor's Signature _____ Date _____

Reviewing Administrator's Signature _____ Date _____

Reviewing Administrator's Signature _____ Date _____

Reviewing Administrator's Signature _____ Date _____

<http://countynoprograms.tamu.edu/cnoadmin.htm>

APPENDIX B

Performance Appraisal Conference Agenda

***Performance Appraisal
Conference Extension District 4
Agenda***

County:

Date:

I. General Items

- Purpose of Performance Appraisal Conference
- Highlights and Accomplishments from Outcome Programs
 - Outcome Program Summaries
- Highlights and Accomplishments from Output Programs
- Programming Plans to Address County Issues

II. Extension Program Development, Interpretation, and Outreach

- Leadership Advisory Board Meetings and Membership
- Program Area Committee/Task Force Meetings and Membership
 - Co-Branding with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension & PVAMU Cooperative Extension Program
- Other Planning Groups
- Extension Annual Meeting/Banquet
- Leadership Advisory Board Sponsored Educational Activity(ies)
- Interpretation Events with Commissioners Court & Legislators - Information Events
- Newsletter and Printed Reports

III. 4-H and Youth Program Review

- 4-H and Youth Program Enrollment
- 4-H Volunteers/Master Volunteers Involvement
- County 4-H Management
 - < 4-H Club Manager Training
 - < 4-H Adult Leaders Association Meetings
 - < 4-H Council Meetings
 - < 4-H Volunteer Training
- 4-H and Youth Development Success Stories
- Goals for 4-H and Youth Development Program and Enrollment

IV. Staff Management

- Office Conferences
- Support Staff Supervision
- County Budget and Resource Acquisition
- Annual Review of Support Group Funds

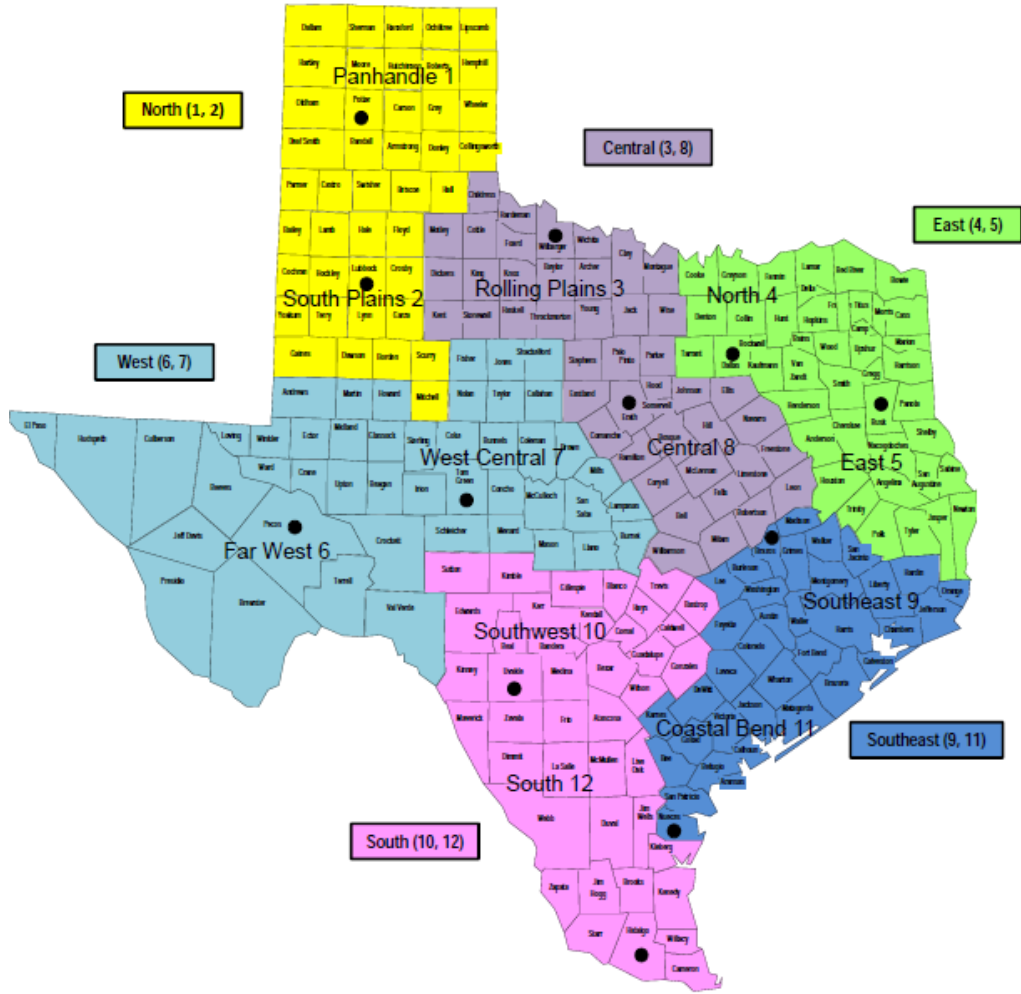
V. Individual Agent Conferences

VI. Adjourn

APPENDIX C

Texas Extension Service Region Map

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

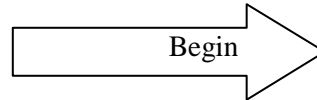


APPENDIX D

Online Survey

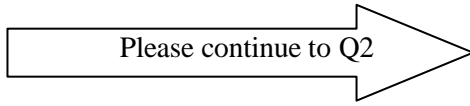
By beginning the survey, you acknowledge that you have read this information and agree to participate in this research, with the knowledge that you are free to withdraw your participation at any time without penalty.

Click "begin" to start this survey.



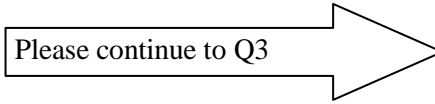
I. Think about your experiences with the current Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service County Extension Agent performance appraisal system. Also, consider the possibility of other appraisers in addition to or in place of the current appraiser. Please mark one answer to show your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service County Extension Agent Performance Appraisal	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Is fair.						
Has helped me improve my professionalism.						
Has discouraged me.						
Is unbiased.						
Represents what I do on the job.						
Is implemented fairly.						
Helps me understand my job duties.						
Needs to be improved.						
Is close to ideal.						
Reflects my major job responsibilities.						
Causes me confusion about job responsibilities.						
Would be more accurate if a subject matter specialist served as an appraiser.						
Would be more accurate if County Directors did NOT serve as appraisers.						
Would be more accurate if a team of the County Directors, regional director and subject matter specialist served as appraisers.						

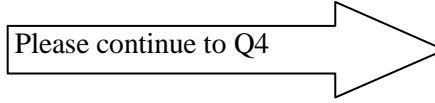


II. What is your current job position?

- AGENT

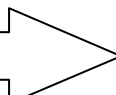


- COUNTY EXTENSION DIRECTOR/
DISTRICT EXTENSION ADMINISTRATOR



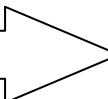
III. Think about your experiences with the County Extension Director/District Extension Administrator who rated your job performance using the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service County Extension Agent Performance Appraisal System. Please mark one answer to show your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
The County Extension Director/District Extension Administrator:						
Was unbiased in making appraisal ratings.						
Exercised good judgment in making appraisal ratings.						
Needed more instruction in performance appraisal.						
Provided confusing instructions about the appraisal.						
Gave an honest assessment of my job performance.						
Understands my work better than anyone else in this organization.						
Showed no appreciation for the work I do.						

Please continue to Q5 

IV. As the County Extension Director/District Extension Administrator conducting agents job performance using the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service County Agent Performance Appraisal System. Please mark one answer to show your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

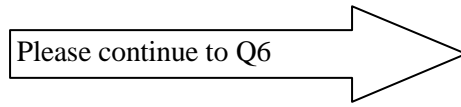
County Extension Director/District Extension Administrator:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
You were unbiased in making appraisal ratings.						
Exercised good judgment in making appraisal ratings.						
Needed more instruction in performance appraisal.						
Gave an honest assessment of the County Extension Agent job performance.						
You understand the agent work better than anyone else in this organization.						
You showed no appreciation for the work the agent conducted.						

Please continue to Q5 

V. Now, please describe your job satisfaction. Please mark one answer to show your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
I consider my salary to be fair.						
I have opportunities for promotion.						
This is a dead-end job.						
My direct supervisor respects me.						
I consider my salary to be below that of others doing similar work.						
My direct supervisor is not interested in my professional growth.						
I am satisfied with my salary.						
Overall, I am satisfied with my job.						
This job has too many standard procedures.						
This is clearly the right job for me.						
My coworkers are helpful.						
I consider my benefits to be above that of others doing similar work.						
This job needs more standard procedures.						
Communication in my workplace is good.						
The performance appraisal system contributes to my job satisfaction.						
I would be more satisfied with my job if I was better suited for it.						
My supervisor and I have positive communication.						
Rewards here are not based on performance.						
I would be more satisfied with my job if the performance appraisal system changed.						
Communication among my coworkers is a big problem.						

Please continue to Q6



VI. What base program or programs best identifies your work? (Please mark all that apply.)

- AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES
- FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES
- 4-H & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
- HORTICULTURE
- RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
- EA-EFNEP
- INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT
- COASTAL & MARINE RESOURCES
- URBAN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

VII. Gender

- MALE
- FEMALE

VIII. Please indicate your Extension experience?

- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21-25 years
- 26-30 years
- More than 30 years

IX. Highest degree level obtained?

- B.S
- M.S.
- Ph.D or Ed.D

X. Number County you have worked in within the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

_____ Number of Counties worked in

XI. If there is anything else you would like to share about the performance appraisal system, please type it in the box below:

Thank you.

Thank you very much for your participation.
Questions about this questionnaire may be directed to: Hurley Miller

Submit

APPENDIX E

Survey Cover Letter

***An Assessment of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Agent Performance
Appraisal Process and Relationships to County Extension Agent Job
Satisfaction***

Information Sheet

Purpose of the study:

This is a study in educational psychology being conducted by Hurley Miller, Ed.D. candidate in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications at Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas. The purpose of this study is to determine Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service County Extension Agents' over all view of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service County Agent performance appraisal system, their views of an ideal system, and any relationships to job satisfaction.

Information about participants' involvement in the study:

You will complete a survey, which will take 15-20 minutes to complete. The survey includes questions about your experiences with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service County Agent Performance Appraisal System. Other survey questions will address your perceptions of proposed changes to the performance appraisal system and factors associated with your job satisfaction. I will also ask for some demographic information (e.g., gender, years experience, education level) so that we can accurately describe the general traits of participants.

Benefits of the study:

You will be contributing to knowledge about performance appraisals. After the study is completed and data is analyzed, group results will be available for you.

Risks or discomforts:

No risks or discomforts are anticipated from taking part in this study. If you feel uncomfortable with a question, you can skip that question or withdraw from the study at any time. If you decide to quit at any time before you have finished the questionnaire, your answers will NOT be recorded. Some questions will ask about actions or behaviors of the person who completed your performance appraisal (e.g., county extension director or district extension administrator). This survey may be completed from any Internet connection at your home or public library, for example, and it does not have to be completed at your worksite.

Confidentiality:

Your responses are anonymous, and responses will be kept completely confidential. I will NOT know your IP address when you respond to the Internet survey. The list of e-mail addresses of participants will be stored electronically in a password protected folder; a hard copy will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. After I have finished data

collection and have sent you a copy of the results of the study, I will destroy the list of participants' e-mail addresses.

Decision to quit at any time:

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw your participation from this study at any time. If you do not want to continue, you can simply leave this website. If you do not click on the "submit" button at the end of the survey, your answers and participation will not be recorded. You also may choose to skip any questions that you do not wish to answer.

How the findings will be used:

The results of the study will be used for scholarly purposes and possible assist in the addition or change with the current performance appraisal system. The results from the study will be presented in educational settings and at professional conferences, and the results might be published in a professional journal in the field of Extension education.

Contact information:

If you have concerns or questions about this study, please contact:

Hurley Miller

Or study advisor:

Dr. Scott Cummings

APPENDIX F

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

DATE: October 31, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO: Scott Cummings
ALRSRCH - Agrilife Research - Ag Leadership, Education & Communication

FROM: Dr. James Fluckey
Chair
Institutional Review Board

SUBJECT: Initial Review Submission Approval

Study Number: IRB2014-0658

Title: A Survey of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Agents' Perceptions of the Extension Agents' Performance Appraisal System

Review Type: Expedited

Approval Date: 10/31/2014

Continuing Review Due: 09/15/2015

Expiration Date: 10/15/2015

Documents Reviewed and Approved: Survey Participants Email (Version 1.0)
Survey Instrument Revised (Version 1.1)

Document of Consent: Waiver approved under 45 CFR 46.117 (c) 1 or 2/ 21 CFR 56.109 (c)1

- This research project has been approved. As principal investigator, you assume the following responsibilities:
1. **Continuing Review:** The protocol must be renewed by the expiration date in order to continue with the research project. A Continuing Review application along with required documents must be submitted by the continuing review deadline. Failure to do so may result in processing delays, study termination, and/or loss of funding.
 2. **Completion Report:** Upon completion of the research project (including data analysis and final written papers), a Completion Report must be submitted to the IRB.
 3. **Unanticipated Problems and Adverse Events:** Unanticipated problems and adverse events must be reported to the IRB immediately.
 4. **Reports of Potential Non-compliance:** Potential non-compliance, including deviations from protocol and violations, must be reported to the IRB office immediately.
 5. **Amendments:** Changes to the protocol must be requested by submitting an Amendment to the IRB for review. The Amendment must be approved by the IRB before being implemented.
 6. **Consent Forms:** When using a consent form or information sheet, you must use the IRB stamped approved version. Please log into iRIS to download your stamped approved version of the consenting instruments. If you are unable to locate the stamped version in iRIS, please contact the office.

750 Agronomy Road, Suite 2701
1186 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-1186
Tel. 979.458.1467 Fax. 979.862.3176
<http://rcb.tamu.edu>

7. **Audit:** Your protocol may be subject to audit by the Human Subjects Post Approval Monitor. During the life of the study please review and document study progress using the PI self-assessment found on the RCB website as a method of preparation for the potential audit. Investigators are responsible for maintaining complete and accurate study records and making them available for inspection. Investigators are encouraged to request a pre-initiation site visit with the Post Approval Monitor. These visits are designed to help ensure that all necessary documents are approved and in order prior to initiating the study and to help investigators maintain compliance.
8. **Recruitment:** All approved recruitment materials will be stamped electronically by the HSPP staff and available for download from iRIS. These IRB-stamped approved documents from iRIS must be used for recruitment. For materials that are distributed to potential participants electronically and for which you can only feasibly use the approved text rather than the stamped document, the study's IRB Protocol number, approval date, and expiration dates must be included in the following format: TAMU IRB#20XX-XXXX Approved: XX/XX/XXXX Expiration Date: XX/XX/XXXX.
9. **FERPA and PPRA:** Investigators conducting research with students must have appropriate approvals from the FERPA administrator at the institution where the research will be conducted in accordance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) protects the rights of parents in students ensuring that written parental consent is required for participation in surveys, analysis, or evaluation that ask questions falling into categories of protected information.
10. **Food:** Any use of food in the conduct of human subjects research must follow Texas A&M University Standard Administrative Procedure 24.01.01.M4.02.
11. **Payments:** Any use of payments to human subjects must follow Texas A&M University Standard Administrative Procedure 21.01.99.M0.03.

This electronic document provides notification of the review results by the Institutional Review Board.

APPENDIX G

Population e-mail about the Survey

Hurley Miller

From: Susan Ballabina
Sent: Thursday, November 20, 2014 6:56 AM
To: EXT - Mgmt DEA; EXT - Mgmt CED
Cc: Jeff Ripley; Scott Cummings
Subject: Survey Request

This e-mail is being sent blind copy to all CEAs.

County Extension Agents:

Hurley Miller is currently working on the dissertation "A Survey of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Agents' Perceptions of the Extension Agents' Performance Appraisal." I am requesting your help in assessing agents' perceptions.

The purpose of this study is to determine county Extension agents' and supervisors' perceptions of the current Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Performance Appraisal System. Please take a few moments of your time to share your opinion and experience. We believe the results of this research will ultimately benefit Extension administrators in identifying any warranted revisions in the current performance appraisal systems. Your responses are voluntary and will be kept confidential. The survey should be sent out within the next 24 hours.

Your response is important. The survey will close on December 3, 2014. It will take approximately 20 minutes to complete the survey.

If you have any questions about this survey instrument, please contact Hurley Miller at (972)972-952-9263 and/or Dr. Scott Cummings at (979)847-9388, or by email at Hmiller@ag.tamu.edu, or s-cummings@tamu.edu.

Susan Ballabina, Ph.D.
Associate Director for Program Development
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
600 John Kimbrough Blvd, Suite 509
7101 TAMU
College Station, Texas 77843
979-862-3932 | fax: 979-845-9542

APPENDIX H

Participants Survey request e-mail

Dear Survey Participants:

I would like to thank you for your input in advance. I am currently working on my dissertation “A Survey of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Agents’ Perceptions of the Extension Agents’ Performance Appraisal.” I am requesting your help in assessing agents’ perceptions.

The purpose of this study is to determine county Extension agents’ and supervisors’ perceptions of the current Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Performance Appraisal System. Please take a few moments of your time to share your opinion and experience. We believe the results of this research will ultimately benefit Extension administrators in identifying any warranted revisions in the current performance appraisal systems. Your responses are voluntary and will be kept confidential.

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If you have any questions about this survey instrument, please contact Hurley Miller at (972)972-952- 9263 and/or Dr. Scott Cummings at (979)847-9388, or by email at Hmiller@ag.tamu.edu, or s-cummings@tamu.edu.

APPENDIX I

Participants Written Responses

Agents Written Response

Codes:

1. Merit Raises, Pay Increases, etc. (N=29)
2. Connect Reporting, Performance Appraisal & Career Ladder System (N=19)
3. Current System Redundant or Repetitive (N=15)
4. Supervisor Affect with the Appraisal System (N=20)
5. Lack of Communication between Supervisor and Agent (N=1)
6. Ineffective System (N=19)
7. Other (N=16)

Responded Number	Respondent Comments	Codes
1	An employee should not have to complete a dissertation to get a promotion/pay raise. That should be the responsibility of the supervisor. Each year agents go thru an annual and midyear review. Then if we want an increase in level/pay we must complete this huge undertaking that is more suited to academia than it is for extension agents. It is report each month, report it again at midyear and again at end of year appraisals and then a repeat of everything for the last number of years in the dossier. The process takes a great deal of time from the actual reason we are hired in the first place with no guaranteed results.	1
2	A new system is in the works.	7
3	As every county is unique, I would hope that the system allows for enough individuality that the appraiser can acknowledge the work that is being accomplished and reward the agent for that exemplary work.	1
4	Congratulations Hurley Miller! Getter done!	7
5	Creating a system to evaluate the performance of any employee, but especially an Extension Agent, is a difficult task. A system that is fair, unbiased, comprehensive, flexible, encouraging and accurate is likely unobtainable, but the agency should always working to improve the way we do things, but especially performance evaluations, career ladder, promotions, and salary increases. Any evaluation and rating system that is implemented fairly, but lacks any professional or financial benefit to the employee does nothing to improve or motivate the performance of the employee. Although I received an exceeds expectations year after year, I see no direct benefit to me regarding my salary or promotion. As an agent I am not motivated to do my job because of performance expectations, appraisal systems, job descriptions,	1, 6, 2

	<p>monthly and annual reports, career ladder or promotions. I am motivated by the difference that I make in other people's lives, and by helping people. However, I would hope that the agency would be willing to reward and compensate me for my hard work and the great efforts that I accomplish through my work. I think many agents feel that the agency and county governments more often hinder us from doing our jobs, than supporting or rewarding us in our work. I don't believe you can survey employees about a performance appraisal system without receiving input on the promotion system (aka career ladder). The agency's division of the performance and promotion doesn't make any sense. The career ladder promotion system is a larger problem than the performance appraisal system. The career ladder promotion system is broken, flawed and needs a major revision. The amount of time, effort, hassle, and procedural non-sense an agent must do to get promoted doesn't reward agents, but rather is a form of punishment. If a promotion is meant to encourage and motivate an employee it should not be a burden, and it should not be rampant with bias from their peers. We are not tenure track professors and shouldn't be promoted by a system that is so similar. Agents don't have the same expectations for grants, contracts, research, and scholarly work, and shouldn't be expected to adhere to a promotion system based on tenure review. Many agents see the career ladder system as a way to reward agents who like writing reports, but don't actually do any work; and it rewards agents who know how to "please" the "right" people to get the votes to get promoted. The bottom line is the agents who are working hard to do their jobs, don't have time to stop their work to write a document to tell everyone how great they are. I believe if the agency starts promoting, rewarding, and recognizing agents who are doing TRULY outstanding work, we will start making a real difference across the state of Texas.</p>	
6	DEA's opinions at performance appraisal time can impact your working relationship with other CEAs (i.e. midyear reviews not being conducted in all counties).	4
7	DEA's should have the option to choose which agents need more in depth looks for performance appraisals. If he or she knows what's going on in your county and an agent is working with him or her closely, then they should get the option to do an abbreviated appraisal. The DEA should choose what is needed, not someone that doesn't even work in a county and doesn't know each agent and their programs.	4, 6
8	Depending on the supervisor, it can or cannot be a good tool and experience. I have had supervisors in the past that were extremely	4

	<p>biased prior to the review and others that did an excellent job of determining the outcome with common sense and a true understanding of educational programming within various counties. The best performance appraisals are usually performed by administrators that have had actual experience with that job and counties within of the same type as the person that they are evaluating. The worst experiences in performance appraisals that I have had have been with subject matter specialists that became supervisors and are not aware of the actual job that agents do in counties where they are supposed to be proficient in so many areas of expertise; other bad experiences are when an administrator forgets what it is like to be an agent in a county and only looks at numbers without any reasoning behind them; or that they were not the "super-agent" themselves when they were an agent. In my opinion, performance appraisals should be done throughout the year as supervisors stay abreast of the agents they supervise and their activities, not just a one day event. Performance appraisals can be a good learning tool or a measuring stick for agents to learn and for them to find opportunities of job improvement; not "I gotcha's".</p>	
9	Didn't we already have dual line supervision?	7
10	Each agent's performance should not be judged against other agents. The ranking system is not fair. Performance appraisal should be completed based on the agent's work in the county and meeting the needs of clientele. My DEA gave only positive feedback throughout the year, and then marked me as "meets expectations" at performance appraisal. No justification was given for the lower ranking. Very little given in areas of improvement. Told to "keep doing what you're doing" for a rank of "exceeds expectations" next year.	4
11	Employees should be able to rate or evaluate job performance of Supervisors. The performance appraisal system is a top-down design that puts the Supervisors in control of the process without the opportunity for the employees to provide valuable feedback or input to Supervisors about their performance. Supervisors can use the system to play favorite, retaliate for personal issues, and to show their power. Employees are left only with the recourse to show disagreement, but not with the capability to cast their judgment on their Supervisors.	4
12	Have it directly relate in with the advancement process and pay increases. In other words make it relevant.	1
13	Having a written response at the end and part of the performance appraisal systems for each agent to validate the process or to rebut particular results, would be great consideration.	6

14	Having experienced 7 different supervisors in various capacities in Extension, my most resounding comment would be that there is a great need for more learning and knowledge and application on the part of those conducting the performance evaluations to help them better prepare for the evaluations, to be consistent with interpreting expectations and to be clear about requirements and points of measurement. As impossible as it may be, it is important to be more cognizant of what the agent is doing and can best be done by 'plugging in' as time allows with all their different modes of monthly reporting and attending some of the agents' more major events to get a real feel for how the agent is the Face of Extension in their County for our Organization...and I say this from a position of consistently scoring high on evaluations...	4
15	I am a brand new agent, and I haven't had a performance appraisal yet. This is why I answered those questions with "I don't know".	7
16	I am confident that the performance appraisal system could be improved. An even bigger problem is the giant range in agent salaries and the lack of consistent financial rewards for high performance. Much of an agent's compensation seems to be a matter of luck, county policies, etc.	1, 6
17	I am confused as to why we have a Performance Appraisal System that is not tied to salary. It would make more sense to use our Dossier instead and tie the PAS to our Career Ladder promotion.	1,2
18	I am in hopes that with the new Texas Data system the information put in the reports will be easily retrievable by domains to match the Performance Appraisal system.	2
19	I believe that the performance appraisal system could use more updating. I feel that it does not account for the day-to-day work of agents and the programs they manage.	6
20	I believe the current performance appraisal system works pretty well. I do not believe that adding a whole committee would strengthen this process. I currently believe there is a big disconnects between agents and some specialists me honestly I don't feel that would be very positive including them on agent's performance appraisals. We already have enough bosses as it is in our counties and organization and I feel adding specialist to the performance appraisal component it would make some individuals feel they have a need to supervise if they are on the particular "committee". Thanks Michael Wilkes Roberts County	7
21	I don't believe the performance appraisal system document "paints" an accurate picture of what we do as CEA's. What get lost are the personal relationships that are built; extra time and effort spent doing the job; level of satisfaction with our job and the	4

	performance of other people we work with (RPD's, DEA's, Specialists, etc..). Also I have a concern with the amount of paperwork CEA's are required to complete. There is absolute no good reason that we should have to do online monthly reports plus monthly commissioner's court reports plus an annual county report plus completing the PAS document. Each supervisor should be able to come to the performance appraisal conference in full knowledge of what has been accomplished in the county for that year without the agent having to fill out the PAS document.	
22	I don't feel like the evaluation is fair across all 254 counties. Some counties don't have cropping work or livestock work or neither and some have all fields.	6
23	If anything, quit making agents put together folders containing all of the year's supporting documents! These documents are submitted monthly to the district office. There should be no need to put them all together again at the end of the year. This causes extra time to be spent by agents and support staff to prepare for the appraisal, and takes away from time spent serving clientele in the county. The district administrators already have the opportunity to see these documents on a monthly basis, if needed. The recent abbreviated performance appraisal system seemed to be more ideal in this regard.	3, 2
24	I feel that I could work 24 hours a day 7 days a week and it would not be enough to be acknowledged by my supervisor. An example on the performance appraisal system is that one year I did 3-4 evaluations on my programs and received exceeds expectations. The following year I set a goal to do more program evaluations and did 7-8 evaluations, that year on the performance appraisal I received meets expectations. The way PAS is written now, as agents, I have no idea of what is expected.	6
25	I feel that the system could be more streamlined with the monthly reports that are completed by each agent and the career ladder program. We have a lot of redundancy in Extension between these three areas that could work better together. I also feel that this system will never be 100% unbiased until all agents are held to the same standards across the board and between agencies.	3, 2
26	I feel the current one is too generic. I would like it to be more specific to my job and what I do. I see no benefit or penalty for doing or not doing some of the core things my job entails.	6
27	I feel there is (and should be) a difference between program management and program development. My DEA plays an important role in both by helping me to manage my overall county program and should be the one to appraise my overall	4, 6

	<p>performance. He should be the one I have communication with and, therefore, the one that has the overall picture of whether I am successful as an agent. I feel my RPL is helpful in being a resource for me to develop programs, and the one I can go to when I need help getting a program developed. Understandably, he or she doesn't have an overall picture of my job responsibilities. Therefore, it would hard for them to give an accurate assessment of my performance. I see them as being helpful in giving input about whether I am innovative and/or successful in building new programs, forming new partnerships and securing new resources. To me, it is less confusing that way.</p>	
28	<p>I feel we are getting away from the foundation that made us who we are. I hope that we can stay with what we have all grown to respect in Extension and not stray away from that! We are getting stretched too thin and it is killing are satiability with in the counties!!!</p>	7
29	<p>If the dossier is part of the performance appraisal system, I would say that writing a dossier is extremely overwhelming, and more importantly, a repeat of what it is reported in the TExAS system. I believe that it is a very time consuming project, significant time and energy is lost that could otherwise be used in productive projects to make a difference in the community and ultimately make sense of AgriLife Extension's mission.</p>	2
30	<p>If you have an issue in one area, you do not meet expectations for your whole appraisal. This is not fair and does not make any sense. Every county is different and some programs are not going to do as well as they do in other counties.</p>	6
31	<p>I have a good relationship with and respect my supervisor. The scoring system and the current PAS form are the problems. In my county and in the case of others in my situation, we do a little bit of everything. 4-H, Agriculture, Horticulture, Wildlife, Community Development, etc. The current system rewards specialized "Banner Programs" and that is difficult in my diverse role as an Extension Agent.</p>	4
32	<p>I have had appraisals from supervisors that understand the job and offered constructive direction on how to improve. Also expressed appreciation of service.</p>	4
33	<p>I have not seen the new appraisal system, but there is no reason to require an updated vita as part of the document. If an agent wants to do the dossier, they can do one. Peer review does NOT work. It is still the select few promoting each other. The system we have used is repetitive and there is no reason to fill it out except that supervisors cannot seem to get what they want from the reports.</p>	3

	Having worked in the business world and for another government related agency, the amount of reporting Extension requires and the time it takes is extremely excessive. It seems that cost recovery is the only thing that matters and there isn't time to do those programs and still do the other programs required for BLT funds matching, etc.	
34	I honestly think that the performance appraisal system is the best that we have had in many years. Does it need improvement, yes. The one thing that I see that needs improvement is: Those regional program leaders are working with agents on program planning and approving those plans and helping them throughout the year. I feel that there is sometimes lack of communication between RPL's and RPD's and that agents sometimes get caught in the middle. We are sometimes told by one boss to do programming one way but when it comes to performance review agents are sometimes questioned why you did a particular program a certain way. I feel that communication between RPL's and RPD's is key to a better performance appraisal system.	4
35	I liked the system where numbers 1-10 were given and under each number was what you needed to accomplish to earn the higher numbers. The supervisor that I had during that time shared program ideas or how to strengthen current programs to earn these higher numbers and I always felt motivated to do a better job. For the past 10 years, especially the last 8 years, I'd felt like no one knows what direction they want agents to go, so during performance appraisal it's more like I got you and now I want you to feel miserable about Extension so hopefully you will leave. I also think longevity needs to be considered and each individual agent should be treated that way. A high performing agent may actually have a bad year and instead of being demeaned and put down, should be encouraged, especially if they are in an office where the work requirements are not equal.	6
36	In my opinion our Performance Appraisal System and Career Ladder System need work. Performance Appraisal less than Career Ladder but with all the reports that we complete we should not have to fill out another large report and tell our supervisors what we did all year. That information is or should be available in the reports we complete monthly. Career Ladder is another topic but this is one of the only jobs I know of where our supervisor cannot just tell us how good of a job we are doing and give us a raise. Again another huge report that may or may not be completely factual in order to prove that we deserve a raise in pay. Our performance should be enough to justify such raise.	2, 1
37	I strongly feel that the current instrument does not need to be so	3, 2

	repetitious and needs to be shortened in terms of its length based on years served in AgriLife Extension.. Also it does NOT coincide with current Dossier application at all. . In some cases, RPL seems to play a major role in my current performance appraisal. Just seems to me, that the entire process needs to be more consistent across the state.	
38	It's not bad, really, but it is sometimes very difficult to fit all that I do into the categories we are required to use. Perhaps if agents of every discipline were more involved in creating the instrument it would be a better fit.	7
39	I the monthly Texas Data system was set up properly it could simplify the appraisal system. The Texas system is better than some state's system.	2
40	I think it is a fair performance system that analyzes what we do as county agents. When I receive Exceeds Expectation, it lets me know that I am doing an outstanding job in my county. The thing that is disappointing related to the performance appraisal is that even if I receive all Exceeds Expectation, there is no monetary incentive for that rating.	1
41	I think it is an effective system.	7
42	I think it would be better to bring back the CEP appraisal grading system due to the different expectation between Texas AgriLife and CEP agents. It would create a much fair level field for both agencies in the Texas A&M system; funding is just completely different and can alter on what agents can do for goes funding and research opportunities. I like to also add that both agency are doing similar programs but CEP agents are specialize to reach a more limited or underserve audience and appraisers must understand change is gradual step in these communities. A good grading procedures for CEP agents should be based on persistence/efforts and meeting the needs in these hard to reach areas in our counties. Again, both agencies are just a little different on expectations and the grading system must approve in order to be fair for both sides.	7
43	I think the performance appraisal should be the tool we use to evaluate merit raise not the stupid English novel paper (Dossier) we are currently using that is reviewed by a committee that does not truly realize what we are doing in our counties. The DEA should have an instrument that allows him to determine career ladder advancements	1, 4
44	I think the performance appraisal system should be used to determine if an agent receives a raise.	1
45	I think there could be a better unstinting from a DEA's point of extenuating circumstances out of ones control before a grade of	4

	does not meet expectations is given. Such situations would be missing one of four Leadership Advisory Board meetings, or committee meetings, or a major program is cancelled or delayed until the next year. I think either giving more authority to a DEA to make leniency decisions for situations out of county agents hands. (Such situations could include, personal illness, natural disaster, epidemic such as swine flu, and illness of volunteers serving on committees).	
46	I think both organizations should be on the same page, that the agents are not conflicted with job description.	7
47	It is a redundant re-reporting of work done. My DEA and any other supervisor have access to all of my reports. I should not have to re-report and summarize the work I have been telling them about all year. If a summary is needed, use the Making a Difference summaries but don't make me do another report.	3, 2
48	It seems a little redundant to produce all the PAC and other documentations for the performance appraisal, since we have already sent those to our DEA on a monthly basis.	3, 2
49	It seems there are more in supervisory roles that are grading us than supporting us. There seems to be unexplained expectations till it is time for performance appraisal. We are not appreciated for what we do or accomplish but seem they are looking for the things that did not occur. It really worked better when we were directly supervised by a DEA, when RPL was added it was really become harder to meet to goals and standards as they all seem to have a set of goals and standards.. I find it hard to meet each one's expectations.	5, 6
50	It sounds like you want to know if you need to add another layer of administration in the evaluation process. No. I have 21 years professional and personal experience in and around Extension in three other states. My position includes 4-H Coordinator. In a 2-agent county, the position of 4-H Coordinator is not equitably to the County Coordinator position and not compensated. In fact, 4-H is a burden that the more fun it is made to look; the less respect we receive from our colleagues. In AgriLife, there appears to be a prevalence of neurosis among mid-carrier Ag Agents and egotism among 4-H Agents which has no place in a professional workplace and trickles down to the culture among volunteers and parents. Root out the lack of communications between agents and this will likely make the performance appraisal process easier for the DEAs. Forcing interdisciplinary programming where there is a lack of time and money is the slower method of forcing teamwork.	7
51	I would just like to see Agent input in creating the goals and/or	6

	performance measures. I also think that different parts of the evaluation need to be ranked based on importance. Right now, if you don't meet one goal, you are marked unsatisfactory. It is harsh.	
52	I would like to know if I am being rate against my peers or against a "standard." If given a "Meets Expectations," I would like to know more specifically what it would take to "Exceed Expectations." I already feel like I am killing myself working so much, and I get "Meets." I shudder to think what it would take to "Exceed." I would also like to know if we are talking quantity or quality of programs and have that taken into consideration during program planning and performance evaluation. I would rather have 2 outstanding programs per year than 6 mediocre ones. I would also like to know what the expectations are for agents that are in 1, 2, 3 or more agent counties and how they are different. I would like to see leadership roles and responsibilities taken into more consideration. I feel like we should be recognized for holding offices in professional organizations and serving on planning committees... Those things take up a significant amount of time and planning.	6
53	I would like to see it improved, but it does not impact the way I feel about my job or Extension.	6
54	More compensation for performance more appreciation for agriculture expertise and performance	1
55	My DEA uses the appraisal tool as support to help me do our job better rather than a "gotcha" too. I do not think he is looking to find things WRONG in our job performance.	4
56	Needs to be administered fairly regardless of whether you are male or female, ag or FCS/4-H. Very biased towards good ole boy system	6
57	None at the moment, I guess the biggest complaint that I have is that the "reviews" or paperwork that we have to do prior to the evaluation is VERY repetitive. And repeats it numerous times when we are filling it out.	3
58	Not so much worried about the performance appraisal but more worried about the program planning and job responsibility. Too many bosses coming up with items for use to do without evaluating the existing work load. County commissioner and other community stakeholders are already vested and have expectations of program and personnel adding another layer of job duties and bosses. Appraisals of workloads need to look at the size. Of programs and complexity instead of just what is new. That is where the dissatisfaction comes in. I know the gathering of certain numbers is important for funding issue; but it's a slippery slope	7

	when the majority of the numbers generated means nothing to the people we are counting.	
59	Outcome and Output programs are very heavily weighted in present system. So if you get a poor rating in either one of those you fail your PA. It makes it look like you didn't do anything in that year, even if the rest of document looks great. It could be one area that didn't have enough numbers according to "rating" and then you get a down rated PA. Needs to be some other ratings listed at end of those 2 areas.	6
60	Overall the PAS system is pretty well organized and does a fairly good job of evaluating performance. I would like to see it more streamlined to reflect the new planning/reporting system and the dossier system. It also seems like a lot of extra work to put the support information together for the PAS document...if it was more in line with the planning/reporting system then it would be simpler to be able to just pull up and end-of-year summary for everything...	2, 3
61	Performance appraisal doesn't give us a chance to earn recognition and/or salary increases, it just justifies our job and what we do.	1
62	Performance Appraisal instrument is too long. We need an easier way to access and print our completed reports. Love this job and the two DED's I've served under. We have a real opportunity to contribute to our industry and have a positive impact on the youth in our Counties.	6
63	Performance appraisal is a great tool to use, if you are being supervised directly. We work on programs all throughout our counties and to really base a performance appraisal you would need to be at that program to watch agents in action and see the impact they are making first hand to get an accurate performance appraisal and pay raise incentive.	1
64	Performance appraisal is based solely on monthly reports, giving an individual that has a flair for writing/reporting a definite advantage over someone that has only mediocre writing/reporting skills. No one has a better perspective of the job an agent is doing than the clientele he serves within his own county. This clientele in turn discuss an agent's performance with their County Commissioner's and Judge on a regular basis. Thus, members of the county court should have significant input as to the agent's value to the county.	2
65	Performance appraisal is ok and I understand it, however we should not have to retype, reorganize, or reinvent anything. Our district directors should be able to find out everything they need from the monthly reporting system and then just do an oral	2, 3

	appraisal with us. The performance appraisal document is time consuming and is just a regurgitation of other reports put in a different format.	
66	Performance Appraisal results should lead to job promotions instead of dossier process. Performance Appraisals are comprehensive and take all areas of job performance into account. I cannot imagine that I will ever have time to work on a dossier without neglecting other work on which my performance appraisal is based. I don't have a problem with the performance appraisal, I just feel like it should mean more.	1
67	Performance appraisals should play a larger role in determining salary increases!!!	1
68	Performance appraisal system could use some changing. However, the career ladder system that is in place should be totally eliminated. Base pay raises on your job performance, do not involve other agents' perception of your job performance.	1
69	Should reflect more county accomplishments and if the county is pleased with the job you are doing.	6
70	Since I have been in extension for a little over a year, I did not have a full performance appraisal last year. I did not have to fill out the entire packet, but I did have a one-on-one with my DEA. I thought what he filled out and did was fair since I had been in the job/county for six months.	7
71	Supervisors/DEA's should not handle HR issues and provide performance appraisal too. There is a conflict in what some supervisors/DEA's think their job is. If you are not a liked person or there is a conflict in the county beyond your control, some supervisors need to take your performance into consideration and not the conflict that is not a part of your performance. Also, it needs to be taken into consideration when there is a full staff and then there is one or few, like when a secretary retires and a new one is hired, it takes time to train the secretary to Extension ways and demands. An agent should not suffer on PAS because of lack of coworkers or support help.	4
72	The annual performance appraisal should not be based on the completion of a performance appraisal document. It should be based upon the merits of the employee and what they have done during that programming year in completing worthwhile education programs. It should be based upon the discussion between the employee and the supervisor on all aspects of their job during that year.	4
73	The appraisal system is cumbersome. I understand that there is no perfect system, but the current system could be improved. In some	3

	cases, DEA's are not trained and equipped to evaluate Agent performance objectively.	
74	The biggest issue with the Performance Appraisal system is that it feels like you are having to defend yourself a second time in the career ladder promotion system. The other issue is that the appraisal system seems to function largely based off the DEA you are under. I am fortunate to have a DEA in District 9 who shows a strong level of professionalism, fairness, values the full extension program, and doesn't play favorites. I have heard that in some district that is not the case. I realize this could just be agents griping about administrators they don't get along with, which is entirely likely, but it is disturbing to hear all the same.	4
75	The current system does not take into account when a county position is vacant for more than one to three years and the 4-H work load has to be assumed by the ag. Agent. This leads to neglect of the ongoing ag. Program due to spending too much time working with a large 4-H youth program. During PAS there is no mention or appreciation for the strong support of the youth program that is not my primary responsibility to start with. Also there is no monetary compensation for assuming the additional work load for several years. The current PAS does not take this into consideration and I feel that as long as the job gets done no one really cares.	1
76	The most frustrating thing about the current system is no consistency, no accountability and it's repetitive. Why do we have to compile information again that has already been included in monthly, quarterly and end of the year reports? There is no real incentive for exceeding expectations other than personal pride. Personal pride doesn't pay the bills unfortunately.	3
77	The overall performance appraisal system is adequate. I do feel that it could be improved. I feel that it is a little more in depth that what we need. I have many friends in professional jobs, including my spouse, and they have to go through nothing like we do. Between mid-year reviews, program planning, and annual performance appraisals it feels like our performance is constantly under the gun. In my opinion that is not a healthy working environment.	3
78	The PAS does not get the full scope of the job responsibilities/duties an extension agent has on a day-to-day basis. The instrument only identifies the politically correct areas (team work, interdisciplinary, civil rights, interpretation, etc.) and outcome summaries. It falls short of everything else an extension does with the people in the counties he/she serves. It is difficult to understand how we expect performance from our support staff and	5

	evaluate them on numerous responsibilities/duties but the agent's evaluation (PAS) is weak in this regard.	
79	The performance appraisal system does not truly measure what you do on a day to day basis. It is a little unfair because agents that just do the minimal can right up a good PAS and look good on paper. I think DEA and RPL should work together on the PAS for a fair evaluation, specialist do not need to be involved because they only work with an agent in a certain area. Why do we do a PAS and a Dossier? Shouldn't the PAS determine if we move up in levels and get salary increases. If every agent in the district is doing a good job they should all "exceed" expectations, if none of them are doing anything then they should all "does not meet".	1
80	The Performance appraisal system for Career Ladder needs to be changed to be more specific with the job responsibilities of the Agent serving in a County role verses a Specialist or someone whose job is research and producing publications. The Career Ladder System is most disappointing and a barrier to salary increases and promotion. An employee can Exceed or Meet Expectations throughout their career and never receive more than a 1 or 2 % increase over the course of 7 years. The salaries in Urban Counties is NOT competitive with job description and the number of hours worked and the challenges of logistics in an Urban County.	1
81	The performance appraisal system seems to favor those who are better at making themselves look good on paper versus those whose primary objective it to take care of constituents in their county. The current appraisal system is more like a sales pitch/job interview to receive a higher ranking for merit raises.	1
82	The performance appraisal system should be used for individuals to get raises and promotion. A lot of work goes into the performance appraisals so they should carry more weight for raised and promotions and recognitions. Especially when someone receive high marks.	1
83	The performance appraisal system should be the only indicator for promotion rather than the agents being required to create a dossier. There's so much repetition in Extension work in reporting and appraisal, that I'm very discouraged when it comes to spending hours on the dossier for no more than I would get a raise. Why in the world all the "systems" we used monthly to report to can't be used for the dossier is beyond me. It's ridiculous. It seems the more education administrators get, the less accountability in making promotional decisions they want. Administrators shouldn't be in the position if they're not big enough to make those promotional decisions. This is typical of the opinion of most	2, 3

	agents across Texas!	
84	The problem with the performance appraisal is it is rarely tied to a reward. Until recently we have not had any merit raises based on performance. I have watched agents with bad performances get raises right along with good agents. Until agents are rewarded for a good performance appraisal there is very little incentive to do well except for personal pride (which we have a lot of). I know we have had a few merit raises recently but they have been few and far between.	1
85	The quality of the appraisal for the county agent depends on our district director. I now have one who is fair and open about the appraisal. Sometimes it is a difficult system because with all of our reporting we still have to write our own appraisals. Needs to be a way to not have to constantly write your own appraisal, own dossier for salary/level increase, awards, etc. Also, it seems to be subjective about what is needed on the appraisal document. What is enough or not enough.	1
86	The question about the appraiser being unbiased is misleading. The person providing the appraisal should offer non-preferential appraisal but bias might be the wrong word. I can see an appraiser showing positive bias toward an agent who goes beyond performance expectations. At the same time I can see an appraiser showing negative bias toward a low performing problematic agent. I would like to see our performance be linked to monetary reward. If agents excel provide them a merit raise. The biggest complaint I have with performance is I excel and seem to be punished by being asked to do more and more and more. There are neighboring agents that barely meet the minimum expectations and they don't seem to be having to burden the same load I do. That is frustrating. Granted I am respected and have promotion opportunities but at what cost? I am spending less time at home and have less time to do things I want to do after work hours because I am spending more time working after hours and on weekends. The current performance system is not broken, but the reward from Extension for excelling as an agent doesn't exist. There needs to be more emphasis placed on rewarding those that excel. Money talks, everyone would understand if money was offered as a bonus for exceeding expectations. Good luck on your research.	1
87	There is no way to take into account for personal issues interfering with job performance with the current document. There is also confusion to me as to whether a quality educational experience is more important even for a few participants which is what I understood from previous directors versus just getting large numbers involved with programming activities. I consistently get	4

	marked down for having small numbers in my programs.	
88	The reporting system, performance appraisal system and career ladder system, all need to tie together to make our jobs a little more easily. There is a lot of repetition in our jobs which makes it really stressful as so many new requirements are being added to agents while some responsibilities aren't being taken away. I don't think we need to change our Performance Appraisal System too much, if we aren't going to change the career ladder packet. I was able to copy and paste from my Performance Appraisal to my Dossier and added in a few sections, so that made it nice for me. So, unless the Career Ladder system is changing then our performance appraisal doesn't need to change. Another thing that I've asked about before was that we don't report about professional development anymore, but we are evaluated on it. We need to make sure that new agents know to document their professional development since there isn't a place to report it, but that they will be evaluated on it at the end of each year. That's also a big part of dossier, is professional development. Unless you are a very organized agent and remember every professional development training attended, you are going to report it in your monthly reports. I hope this helps. I just don't want us to create a new system where we have to type up another report when we have been typing up our reports all year long. I know a group of us met to review the performance appraisal system and present a new one, but I don't know what happened with that.	2
89	There seems to be a number system and a DEA is only allowed to have so many agents in each category. Merit raises are based on this. This is not a true appraisal of a person's performance it is only a ranking system that has too many variables to be effective such as years in a county, years in extension, type of work done in the county, number of agents that share the workload in a county, etc.	1
90	The system reflects our job responsibilities and has become easier to understand as it has evolved. However, administrators are biased and reward only their favorites. Merit raises are not distributed according to performance.	1
91	The system seems to be something we just check the box on anymore. Since the inception of the Career Ladder, there is no need to work toward a good performance appraisal. I believe this system should be tied to advancements within your career, i.e., money. Financial gain and bettering your family's lives is a great motivator in any organization.	1
92	This current system is extremely cumbersome and time consuming. Much of it is a re-hashing of reports that have already	3

	been turned in. In other words, I find the current instrument to be tedious and redundant.	
93	This system is a complete waste of time. Advancement is not determined by the appraiser, but by some sorry excuse of a committee who does not understand the work of individual counties as opposed to some cookie cutter idea of what an agent should do. If a supervisor is reading the monthly reports, he/she knows what work is being done by the agents and would be able to address poor performance as needed without this tedious yearly process.	3
94	This system is not conducive to program plan goals for agents and there is no incentive for agent to strive to do better. Also the Performance Appraisal system, Dossier, and all interpretation that is needed, needs to be tied together for agents to stop "re-inventing the wheel". Agents with more than 15-17 years in have been left out with salary increases and have been passed over more than once in dossier submission for career advancement and raises. The entire system has been broken and still is not fixed.	1
95	This system is what should be used to acquire promotions. The Dossier System is way too much and discourages many from attempting it. Not because it is hard work but because we don't have time due to Extension's multiple responsibilities.	1
96	We do not discuss anything that has an impact on clientele. Clientele would not be impacted if the performance appraisal system was immediately eliminated. The program planning/implementation process would continue. It has the feeling of another box my supervisor has to check off. That being said, my supervisor is very supportive, so the problem lays in the performance appraisal system itself and not management personnel.	4
97	Wish information could be generated by computer from monthly reports.	2
98	Would be better for agents if somehow the career ladder system/monthly reports/PAS were more seamless with less regurgitation and rote work on the agent's part in the process.	2
99	Would like for it to be easier. More open discussion	7
100	N/A	7
101	None	7