



# Southern Region Program Leadership Network (SR-PLN) Structure

(Revised: August 2024)

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## Overview

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The following three groups comprise the SR-PLN:

- **Program Committees (PCs)** -There are eight program committees. Each is composed of one representative from each Southern region 1862 land-grant institution and one representative from each 1890 land-grant institution.
- **Program Leadership Committee (PLC)** -This is a representative committee of 21 with 20 members elected from the PCs, ASRED, and AEA and the Past Chair of PLC as Chair of the Executive Committee.
- **Executive Committee (EC)**-This committee works on behalf of the PCs and SR-PLC, and is comprised of eight members.

The SR-PLN is responsible to AEA and ASRED. Relative to SR-PLN membership, AEA and ASRED members have responsibility for the following:

- Appoint and support PC members who have vision, interest, and a commitment to serve, and provide time and encouragement for service in the roles accepted by appointees.
- Appoint administrative advisors to each of the PCs and the PLC who will attend, participate, provide guidance and support regional efforts of the committees.
- Appoint representatives to the EC who will attend, participate, provide guidance and support the work of the group.
- Receive and respond appropriately to recommendations from SR-PLN in a timely and judicious manner.
- Support appropriately the initiatives of the SR-PLN through the commitment of staff and programmatic support and assessments.

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## Mission

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The mission of the SR-PLN is to foster and strengthen Extension education programming throughout the Southern region by promoting multi-state cooperation, anticipating emerging program issues and needs, and implementing action processes to address them in a timely manner.

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## Vision

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The SR-PLN will anticipate emerging societal issues and recommend or take actions that result in:

- State Extension programs that are strengthened through improved cooperation in well-coordinated and effective multi-state and regional programming efforts.
- Multi-state collaboration involving Extension and public and private sector partners, both within and beyond the Southern region.
- Engaged Extension educational programming involving public and private sector partners, and diverse communities.
- Learning communities that benefit from lifelong education.
- Measurable benefits to individuals and communities.
- Demonstrated and recognized public value.

## Expectations and Responsibilities of SR-PLN Members

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### **Commitment**

It is critical for states and institutions to maintain their own identities, while benefiting from regional cooperation in Extension program development. It is expected that every member of the SR-PLN will be committed to standing and ad hoc committees on which they serve. It is also expected that this commitment will be facilitated by the support of Directors and Administrators such that the work of the SR-PLN becomes part of the "back home" workload. Individually, commitment includes:

- Demonstrating engaged participation in all appropriate committees, joint meetings, teleconferences, and activities (PC, PLC, EC and ad hoc).
- Continuously serving in an active manner, and providing feedback to respective Extension Administrators or Directors.
- Participating promptly via electronic communications in the interim between face-to-face meetings.

The primary support and direction of the SR-PLN is derived from the Administrators and Directors and their respective associations (AEA and ASRED). To this end, Administrators and Directors should encourage individuals new to programmatic and support leadership roles to attend the SR-PLN Annual Joint Conference and participate in the subsequent Program Committee activities with the express goals of contributing to the regional activities of the network and identifying peers in similar roles who can serve as mentors and coaches.

In this same vein, Administrators and Directors should also identify individuals who may be experienced in programmatic or support leadership positions, but who have not participated in the SR-PLN or the PCs and encourage these individuals to participate in conference and committee activities where collaboration, benchmarking/evaluation and peer coaching/mentoring opportunities exist.

These responsibilities are critical in maximizing the participation of both the 1890 and 1862 institutions in regional activities initiated and supported by the SR-PLN. Each of these institution types has unique strengths in a wide breadth of programming and support initiatives. Thus, increased participation would serve to advance the impact of SR-PLN objectives.

### **Function**

SR-PLN's primary function is to provide programmatic leadership for the region by identifying emerging issues and taking action to address them. In addition, current, long-standing, and continuing issues can benefit from SR-PLN leadership which contributes to multi-state and regional cooperation. Examples include the development of curriculum materials and programs, as well as professional staff development.

### **Communication across Program and Administrative Lines**

The structure of SR-PLN allows multi-institutional communication within and among disciplinary and functional lines. A key to success of cooperative improvement is effective communications. This should include:

- Maintaining communication within and among the PCs, PLC and EC; between the SR-PLN and Directors and Administrators; and with personnel and/or institutions that are not members of committees. Continual dialogue should include electronic reports and conference calls, as appropriate.
- Establishing and maintaining external linkages to promote and maintain partnerships, including entities within the region and with other regions.

## Program Committees (PCs)

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### **Eight Program Committees (PCs):**

- Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) Program Leaders Committee
- Community Development (CD) Program Leaders Committee
- Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) Program Leaders Committee
- 4-H Youth Development (4-H) Program Leaders Committee
- Communications (COM) Leaders Committee
- Information Technology (IT) Leaders Committee
- Middle Management (MM) Leaders Committee
- Program and Staff Development (PSD) Leaders Committee

### **Membership**

Each land-grant institution has the opportunity to appoint an appropriate representative to each PC. The decision to appoint a participant is based upon the mission and direction of the institution. If an institution appoints a representative, it is expected that the appointee will serve at least one three-year term. Representatives may be reappointed to additional terms.

### **Officers, Representatives, and Administrative Advisors**

Each PC will elect a chair and vice-chair to serve a term of one year, beginning the end of the last day of the annual meeting in which they were elected and continuing until the end of the annual meeting in the subsequent year. The vice-chair may be elected as chair following the term as vice-chair. Committees may elect additional officers, e.g., secretary, if needed. Leadership of each PC will be shared between 1862 and 1890 institutions. Ideally, and as representation allows, offices will rotate between 1862 and 1890 institutions.

Each PC elects two representatives to the SR-PLC: one from an 1862 southern land-grant institution and one from an 1890 land-grant institution. The term of appointment is three years. Each PC will develop an internal process for this election and appointment. ASRED and AEA will each appoint an individual to serve as an advisor to each PC; they will serve as co-administrative advisors.

### **Specific Roles for Key Committee Members:**

#### ***Administrative Advisors:***

- Serve as a liaison between the committee and ASRED and AEA.
- Communicate the thinking, priorities and expectations of ASRED and AEA to the committee.
- Provide administrative guidance and perspectives on behalf of AEA and ASRED.
- Communicate the work, ideas and contributions of the committee to ASRED and AEA.
- Encourage committee progress by participating in the annual meeting, conference calls, listserv communication, committee meetings, and video conferences of the committee.
- Communicate and clarify operational procedures governing actions of the committee (i.e., that proposals have to be channeled through PLC).
- Encourage the PC to have a workable Plan of Work that guides its activities and encourage progress on it.
- Encourage the committee to work jointly with other committees and suggest instances in which joint committee work is appropriate.
- Help the committee focus on high priority issues of the region on which committee members can make an important contribution.
- Stress the importance of producing concrete deliverables, not just getting together for a meeting.
- Articulate summative reports and/or findings from other state or national meetings that may directly impact the committee's interests.
- When informed by the chair of a committee that an individual is not fulfilling his/her role on a PLN committee, the Administrative Advisor will notify the committee member's administrator/director.
- Help the PC understand issues/actions that are appropriate for multi-state versus those that are the prerogative of individual institutions.

**Committee Chair:**

- Convene committee conference calls on at least a quarterly basis. This entails setting dates and arranging logistics, sending out notices appropriately, preparing and disseminating an agenda, and ensuring that a record of the decisions is maintained and posted on the Web site.
- Promote meaningful multi-state and cross-committee work to address emerging and over-arching issues.
- Seek input from committee members on key issues needing attention.
- Incorporate issue-focused strategies in the Plan of Work, ensuring that timely progress is made toward identified goals.
- Cultivate cross-committee work on appropriate issues by seeking out and/or allowing time for joint committee discussions and planning.
- Lead the annual face-to-face meeting, which includes preparing the agenda, facilitating the development of a Plan of Work for the next year, updating the current Plan of Work, completing accomplishment reports, preparing information and action items to be shared with ASRED and AEA, and any other reporting required from the committee.
- Serve as the first point of contact for the committee ensuring that timely communication advances to all members via conference calls, Web site, listserv.
- Work with the PLN Webmaster to ensure that all committee information is submitted in a timely manner and kept current. (i.e. minutes, contact information, officers, Plan of Work, etc.). NOTE: Some committees assign a role of “secretary.” If this position exists, the Chair is still charged with ensuring that tasks are complete. Communicate with committee AEA and ASRED advisors to ensure that committee work is meaningful and useful to both the committee and their advisors during the allocated times of advisor participation in Program Committee meetings.
- Ensure fulfillment of committee member obligations by monitoring individual commitments and discussing expectations with members to ensure understanding and commitment. When necessary, the Committee Chair should notify the Administrative Advisor of emerging participation issues so the Director or Administrator of the employing institution may be alerted.
- Explore the appropriate use of information technologies that allow extended participation in committee meetings of as large an audience as possible.

**Committee Vice-Chair:**

- Provide side-by-side support for the Committee Chair in all assigned roles.
- Provide leadership for the Chair’s assigned roles if he/she is absent for a call.
- Be prepared to serve as Chair the following year to provide a sense of continuity for the Program Committee.
- Be prepared to assume tasks delegated by the Committee Chair.

**Committee Secretary:**

- Take minutes of monthly/quarterly and annual meetings
- Set up virtual meetings
- Share agenda a week prior to meetings
- Share minutes to committee members and Southern Rural Development Center
- Maintain committee member lists and share with Southern Rural Development Center as updated.
- Prepare to serve as Vice Chair (1-yr term), Chair (1-yr term), and Past-Chair (1-yr term), in subsequent years to provide a sense of continuity for the Program Committee.

**Program Leadership Committee (PLC) Representative:**

- Participate in PLC calls and meetings to represent the Program Committee.
- Be prepared to report committee successes/progress to the entire PLC.
- Serve as a communication bridge between the PLC and Program Committee.
- Ensure that the Program Committee Chair is apprised of any new information coming to or from the PLC.
- Ensure that the needs and concerns of the Program Committee are voiced to the PLC as appropriate.
- Serve as an effective member of the planning and implementation team for the Annual PLN Joint Conference.

### **Participation Guidelines for Those in Key Roles to Foster Performance of Duties:**

- All Program Committee members should be encouraged to take ownership of the committee's work year-round. However, given the nature of the leadership role, officers, advisors and representatives should be required to participate in at least 75 percent of all committee communication including conference calls, meetings, etc.
- If a person cannot participate, he/she should designate someone to sit in and report in his/her place.
- All representatives and officers should have the support of their administrators/directors before accepting a leadership role.
- If an individual serving on a Program Committee is not fulfilling his/her role (i.e. chair, vice-chair, PLC Representative, committee member) on a PLN committee, the Administrative Advisor, after being notified of the issue by the chair of the committee, will notify the person's administrator/director.
- If an individual serving as Administrative Advisor is not fulfilling his/her role, the Chair will notify the appropriate Executive Administrator/Director.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

In support of the mission and vision of the SR-PLN and from the perspective of the particular program area, each PC should recognize the potential benefits and opportunities that accrue to the individuals and institutions that participate and focus its activities on increasing the value of the SR-PLN to participants. To this end, each PC will develop an Annual Work Plan (AWP) that will be posted on the Web and shared with PLC for integration into a SR-PLN AWP. The AWP for each committee will be brief and will include major goals, objectives, timelines, action items and designations of responsibility for the work of the committee during the year. AWP's should generally be developed during the annual PLN meeting.

Each PC will develop a description of the roles and guidelines relevant to the respective committee, which will be posted to the SR-PLN Web site. These descriptions should include the roles of officers and representatives, as well as operational guidelines that may be unique to the particular PC.

Each PC will convene at least quarterly conference calls to include the following agenda items:

- Emerging issues
- Review of regional AWP status/progress
- Review of PC Web site and listserv
- Other items as determined by the PC

Each PC is responsible for ensuring that current e-mail addresses and phone numbers are provided to the SR-PLN Webmaster so that the Web site can be kept current and so that communications can be prompt and inclusive.

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## **Southern Region Program Leadership Committee (PLC)**

### **Membership**

The PLC is comprised of twenty one (21) members from the PCs and from ASRED and AEA, as follows:

- One 1862 representative from, and selected by, each of the eight PCs.
- One 1890 representative from, and selected by, each of the eight PCs.
- An administrative advisor each from ASRED and AEA, selected by their respective groups.
- One representative from and selected by ASRED.
- One representative from and selected by AEA.
- Past Chair of PLC, as chair of Executive Committee.

Members selected by PCs serve three-year staggered terms to provide continuity. One-third of the PC representatives rotate off each year. Members from ASRED and AEA serve terms designated by their respective organization. It is the obligation of the member's director or administrator to help ensure that

each member actively participates and does not miss electronic or face-to-face meetings. The PLC Chair, with assistance of the regional 1862 Executive Director and 1890 Executive Administrator, will notify the appropriate Director or Administrator of absences of members.

### **Officers**

The SR-PLC selects a chair and vice-chair from its membership of PC representatives. Each serves for one year. The term of office begins at the end of the last day of the annual meeting and continues for one year through the end of the annual meeting the following year. The chair and vice-chair are jointly responsible for communication to the total Extension system. A nominating committee will be appointed by the PLC Chair to present a slate of candidates. The committee will check with candidates to verify ability and willingness to serve.

### **PLC Responsibilities**

- Provide leadership for development of Southern region multi-program area proposals that address existing or emerging issues. These issues are identified by Program Committees in the form of proposals or information.
- As the primary program planner for the SR-PLN Annual Joint Conference, the PLC should constantly explore methods and activities to enhance cross-state and cross-program discussions and activities to maximize collaboration, benchmarking/evaluation and peer coaching/mentoring opportunities.
- Receive, review, and comment on Program Committee reports and makes recommendations to Southern Directors and Administrators. Copies of program reports, with recommendations, are sent to the chair of the SRPLC prior to forwarding to the Southern Directors and Administrators.
- Monitor the needs for regional and national programming in the Southern region including:
  - The establishment of regional task forces or committees,
  - Monitoring and recommending approval of multi-program area regional activities,
  - Monitoring and recommending approval of regional activities originating in the Program Committees, and
  - Reporting and recommending of approval/disapproval of activities to the Southern Directors and Administrators on a semiannual basis.
- Assure that information related to regional multi-program area activities is distributed to program committee representatives as well as Southern Directors and Administrators. This information includes SRPLC actions and task force reports. PLC representatives will distribute this information to their respective Program Committee chairs and members as appropriate.
- Coordinate and plan the annual Joint Southern Region Program Committee meeting.
- Evaluate and approve all program proposals that involve two or more committees.
- Submit approved proposals to administrators and directors for approval before they can be initiated.
- Communicate continuously with Southern Region Administrators and Directors regarding important information items, proposals, the progress of task forces, and emerging program direction. This communication should also consistently include the value to individuals that accrue as a result of participating in the SR-PLN Annual Joint Conference and Program Committee activities that take place throughout the year.
- Communicate the status of proposals to appropriate Program Committee representatives or to the task force chairperson after action has been taken by administrators and directors. The SRPLC also gives oversight to implementation and success of the proposed actions approved.

### **Specific Tasks of the PLC:**

- Develop a regional, integrated AWP, generally during the annual meeting. It will include and build upon the input from the PCs and from PLC discussions of emerging issues. It will be posted to the Web, shared with Directors and Administrators, and will serve as a major programmatic leadership document for the region.
- Convene at least quarterly conference calls that will include the following agenda items:
  - Emerging issues
  - Review of regional AWP status/progress
  - Review of PLC Web site and listservs

- Review annual conference details
- Other responsibilities as assigned by SR-PLC chair
- Ensure that current e-mail addresses and phone numbers are provided to the SR-PLN Webmaster so that the Web site can be kept current and so that communication can be prompt and inclusive.
- Develop functional descriptions for each committee role, i.e., chair, vice-chair, member, Administrative Advisor, and others, and will develop operating guidelines for posting to the Web.
- Prepare a plan for an Orientation and Leadership Retreat to be held annually for the incoming leadership and advisors of the PCs, PLC and EC. New directors, administrators and newly appointed associates will be encouraged to participate.

## **Executive Committee (EC)**

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### **Membership**

The SR-PLN Executive Committee is comprised of eight PLC members:

- PLC Chair
- Immediate Past Chair of SR-PLC
- Administrative Advisors from ASRED and AEA
- One Director chosen by ASRED
- One Administrator chosen by AEA
- One member elected by and from the four PLC program areas (ANR, FCS, CD, and 4-H of PLC).
- One member elected by and from the four PLC non-subject matter areas (MM, COM, IT, and PSD of PLC).

Members of the EC will serve two-year, staggered terms. It is the obligation of the member's director or administrator to help ensure that each member actively participates and does not miss electronic or face-to-face meetings. The PLC Chair, with assistance of the regional 1862 Executive Director and 1890 Executive Administrator, will notify the appropriate Director or Administrator of absences of members. In addition to the eight regular members, the Executive Director of ASRED and other equivalent officers will serve as ex officio members of the EC.

### **Officers of EC**

The immediate past chair of the PLC serves as the chair of the EC. The current PLC chair serves as the vice-chair and will succeed to the EC chair. The EC chair and vice-chair serve one-year terms. Terms of office begin at the end of the last day of the annual meeting and continue through the end of the annual meeting the following year.

### **Meetings**

The EC will meet once during the annual SR-PLN meeting and other times as needed. A detailed report of proposals and actions will be presented each year to the joint ASRED/AEA meeting.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The EC is the action arm of the SR-PLN and is responsible for ensuring prompt action on emerging issues and on a regional AWP, (generally developed during the annual PLN meeting) and for promoting effective communication between the SR-PLN and Directors and Administrators. The EC will be responsible for SR-PLN activities, particularly in the interim between scheduled meetings of PLC and will have the authority to act on issues that emerge in the region. It will be responsive to the guidance of PLC and responsible to the ASRED and AEA.

While most leadership will come from the components of SR-PLN, the EC may appoint teams or task forces to address multi-program issues. Like the PCs and PLC, ad hoc groups will develop and share AWP's.

As actions are taken, communication with PLC, PCs, ASRED, AEA, and the entire Extension system is important.

## Annual SR-PLN Conference

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The annual conference is planned to provide opportunity for each SR-PLN group to meet separately as well as jointly. All participants are expected to attend appropriate PC sessions and all joint PC and PLC sessions. The purpose of the joint sessions is to address emerging issues common to all PCs and to encourage networking and partnerships. PC sessions focus on issues specifically related to the committee assignment. Committees are encouraged to work together when issues involve more than one committee.

SR-PLN meetings are planned to correspond with and partially overlap the beginning of the ASRED/AEA fall meeting so that Directors and Administrators can attend and be involved in SR-PLN sessions. Recommendations from SR-PLN can then be heard and acted on at the subsequent ASRED/AEA joint meeting.

The annual conference is typically scheduled at the end of August or in September. Meeting sites rotate around the region according to the ASRED/AEA schedule of fall meetings.

## History of the Program Leadership Committee

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### Establishment of the Joint Program Committee Meeting and Program Leadership Committee

Coordination of programs and sharing resources within the region has been a long-standing priority of Southern Extension Administrators and Directors. For years, the Southern Extension Directors looked to four Program Committees to share resources and coordinate programs across the Southern region - Agriculture and Natural Resources, Family & Consumer Science, 4-H Youth, and Community Resource Development.

This worked well until the economic, social, and political environments in the South and nation began changing so rapidly and frequently that a new structure was required, one that would enable the system to respond rapidly with multidisciplinary, issues-based programs.

In 1989, the Southern Extension Directors appointed a Southern Region Task Force on Organization to make recommendations on how to organize to meet regional issues and meet multidisciplinary issues. These members were:

Bill Allen	Warren McCord	Walter Walla
Jim App	Bobbie McFatter	Paul Warner
Bill Clinkscales	Jan Montgomery	Ed Yancy
Laverne Feaster	Marilyn Purdie	

Directors Roy Bogle and Zerle Carpenter served as administrative advisors to the group.

Directors approved the Task Force on Organization's recommendations at their September 1989 meeting. This action:

- Established a more interactive and multidisciplinary system for regional committee program planning, implementation, and accountability;
- Established an operating structure that encouraged anticipation of emerging regional issues and the ability to lead programming related to both single disciplinary and multidisciplinary programs;
- Created an ongoing dialogue with directors and administrators related to program needs, which



- avoided program duplication among committees; and
- Strengthened state programs.

The task force members and directors from 1989 to 1990 are the architects for the current Southern Region Program Committee and Program Leadership Committee.

In 1995, 1890 Administrators and 1862 Directors requested the Joint Southern Region Program Committee Meeting officially include 1890 partners in each committee. Although 1890 colleagues had been attending the joint meeting and several committees since the first annual meeting, the original structure did not specify 1890 membership on PLC.

The Southern Region PLC developed and approved new structure for the Southern Region Program Leadership Committee. The proposal was prepared by an ad hoc group of PLC which included Susan Holder, Billy Caldwell, Shirley Callaway, and John Bentley. The draft procedure was also shared with all program committees during the 1995 joint meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina. The proposal was accepted by Southern Region Directors and Administrators following the 1995 joint meeting. In 1996, two representatives, an 1862 and 1890 representative, were appointed from each committee to be on the Program Leadership Committee.

### **Expectations of Extension Directors and Administrators**

The Southern Region through the Joint Regional Meeting and the Program Leadership Committee is charged with four primary functions:

#### **Strategic Planning**

- Coordinating regional issue identification, development, and review process, and recommending emerging issues as new regional initiatives.

#### **Program Leadership**

- Providing leadership for anticipating emerging issues and implementing new initiatives.
- Planning and facilitating interdisciplinary Extension programs, responding to regional critical issues, and embracing the needs of diverse communities.
- Establishing and coordinating regional task forces to develop content and educational plans for new initiatives.
- Developing and recommending a program review process to set program priorities and improve Extension programs.
- Encouraging multi-state, multi-region, and international programming.
- Establishing and maintaining external linkages to promote and maintain program partnerships.

#### **Personnel and Staff Development**

- Initiating and promoting a regional system for maintaining professional competence among all employees.
- Implementing staff development to effectively address diversity issues.
- Reviewing and recommending proven methods of delivering Extension programs.
- Encouraging multi-state professional improvement.

#### **Commitment to Committee and PLC**

- Demonstrating engaged participation in all committee and joint meetings.
- Continuously serving the committee to which appointment is made by the Extension Administrator or Director.
- Demonstrating engaged commitment when appointed to serve on the Program Leadership Committee.

## Helpful Links and Tools

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### Directories

- *1862 Association of Southern Region Extension Directors (ASRED)*  
[http://asred.msstate.edu/directory/members\\_state.html](http://asred.msstate.edu/directory/members_state.html)
- *1890 Association of Extension Administrators (AEA)*  
<https://www.1890aea.org/directory>

### Institution and Association Web Sites

- *Association of Extension Administrators (AEA)*  
<http://www.1890aea.org>
- *Association of Southern Region Extension Directors (ASRED)*  
<http://asred.msstate.edu/>
- *Southern Region Program Leadership Network*  
<http://srpln.msstate.edu/>
- *Southern Rural Development Center*  
<http://srdc.msstate.edu/>

### Project Web Sites

- *Cooperative Extension Curriculum Project (CECP)*  
<http://srpln.msstate.edu/cecp/updatefinal.pdf>
- *Extension Foundation*  
<https://extension.org/>