

# Oregon State University

## Principles and Guidelines for Service Districts with Combined Extension and Research Missions

### **Context:**

OSU Extension's mission is to convey research-based knowledge in a way that is useful for people to improve their lives, their homes, and their communities. OSU Extension faculty work with growers, foresters, other business people, youth, community leaders, and the public. They see first-hand what's working, and what's not working, in Oregon communities. Extension educators work with scientists at Oregon State University to help focus their research on the real issues important to people. Results from that research circle back to the community through Extension programs. Knowledge grows from this cycle of reaching out and engaging the people who use it.

The Oregon Agricultural Experiment Station (AES) is the principal agricultural research agency in the state. Its mission is to conduct research in the agricultural, biological, social, and environmental sciences for the economic, social and environmental benefit of Oregon. People and partnerships are the heart of the Oregon Agricultural Experiment Station research enterprise. Oregon producers, processors, marketers and our OSU scientists, technicians, support staff and students are critically important to identifying and addressing the agricultural, environmental, and natural resource challenges that confront people today.

Oregon statute allows formation of districts to provide a wide range of public services, including "agricultural educational extension services" (ORS451(1)(i)). Oregon State University is the principal partner with such districts throughout the state. Voters in many Oregon counties have chosen to form districts to support their local Extension Service programs, and in two counties (to date) voters have included support for their local Experiment Station. Thus, county service districts have become an important mechanism by which OSU's Extension and Agricultural Research missions can be brought to bear on local issues.

### **Principles Underlying Service Districts with both Extension and Research Missions:**

For more than 100 years, the Agricultural Experiment Station and the Extension Service have been partners in providing research-based knowledge to solve problems and improve the lives of Oregonians.

Addressing many of Oregon's agricultural, biological, and environmental challenges requires that the research be done regionally due to Oregon's diverse geography, climate, and ecosystems. The Agricultural Experiment Station's network of fifteen branch research stations evolved to meet these regional needs.

Service districts provide a mechanism for funding integrated applied research that informs Extension programs focused on solving local problems. The decision to approve the formation of a district that includes both missions is that of the voters, and should be clearly articulated in the district's ballot title and other formation documentation. This provides the clear legal standing to offer both types of service to the public through district funding.

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## **Guidance for Operationalizing Service Districts with Extension and Research Missions:**

**Key Values:** Inclusiveness, Stakeholder Primacy, Transparency, Accountability, Impact

OSU will appoint co-representatives (one from Extension and one from AES) with joint responsibility for all interactions with a county service district established in support of these functions. (This could be one person in situations, e.g. Klamath, where one individual shares the Regional Administrator and Branch Station Director duties.)

OSU's co-representatives have shared responsibility for prioritizing research and Extension programs to be supported by service district revenues in partnership with local government. Advisory committees play important roles in needs assessment and prioritization of services.

OSU's co-representatives will work jointly to develop annual work plans and specific research and Extension budgets for meeting the objectives of the service district.

OSU's co-representatives will work together to coordinate administrative procedures and account for service district expenditures and activities.

The Agricultural Experiment Station and Extension Service are jointly responsible for delivering the research and Extension impacts envisioned during the service district's formation.

### **Summary:**

Service districts are becoming increasingly common as mechanisms to provide secure funding for Extension offices and applied research programs throughout Oregon. Extension relies on research-based information to develop its programs and services, and in many cases that research base is developed by Agricultural Research Stations. Both units contribute to OSU's ability to address local educational needs. Formation of districts that support both the Extension and applied research missions can be of great value to local communities. Successful operation of these districts depends upon close cooperation among faculty and leaders in each unit and between units as they strive to meet needs of their audiences. This type of collaboration is a hallmark of OSU's outreach mission in communities statewide.