



## New VCE Onboarding – Professional Development Survey

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### Introduction

This survey was developed in 2021 to provide insight into onboarding and professional development needs for Virginia Cooperative Extension. The survey was used as a census survey across the various roles and program areas represented in the VCE organization. The survey collects data associated with time in VCE and other Extension organizations, as well as self-perceived data of the Extension professional related to their career stage (Rennekamp & Nall, 1994). While the purpose was determining onboarding needs, the survey also provides insight into training needs across career stages as well as training preferences. Data collected for VCE using this survey is available at [https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs\\_ext\\_vt\\_edu/ALCE/alce-278/ALCE-278.pdf](https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/ALCE/alce-278/ALCE-278.pdf).

### The Survey

**Start of Block: Default Question Block**

Q1 Thank you for sharing from your experiences and providing your thoughts and ideas to be used in developing the new VCE Onboarding program.

**End of Block: Default Question Block**

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**Start of Block: Block 1**

Q2 What is your role in VCE?

- Agent
- Specialist
- Program Assistant
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

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Q3 What are the primary program areas in which you work?

- Agriculture/Natural Resources
- 4-H/Youth Development
- Family and Consumer Sciences
- Health
- Horticulture
- SNAP-Ed
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

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Q8 How long have you worked for Cooperative Extension, either VCE or in another state?

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Q5 Have you worked in other state Extension organizations?

- No
- Yes, I worked in one other organization
- Yes, I worked in two or more other organizations

Q4 Where are you in your career with Cooperative Extension. Definitions from Rennekamp & Nall (1994).

- Early or Entry Level (entering the profession, attaining foundational skills, learning about the organization)
  - Colleague (accepted as a member of a professional community and able to independently contribute expertise to problem-solving and program development)
  - Counselor (actively serve in leadership roles within Extension and professional associations)
  - Advisor (play a key role in shaping the future of the organization through innovative ideas and original concepts, or sponsoring promising people, has a distinct competence in several areas of expertise and regional and/or national reputation, catalyst for positive change)
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Q6 Looking back, what do you wish you had known when you began your VCE career?

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Q7 What do you feel you need to know now for your VCE career?

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Q9 What are areas in which you feel you need more training?

- Budget and Fiscal Management
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Communicating with Elected Officials
- Educational Design
- Fundraising
- Grant Writing
- Inclusion & Equity
- Leadership
- Marketing
- Performance Evaluation Reporting
- Professionalism
- Program Evaluation
- Solving Issues Across Disciplines
- Subject Matter Content
- Time Management
- Work-life Integration or Balance
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

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Q10 What is the biggest challenge you face in your career?

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Q11 What training has been most beneficial to you in your career?

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Q12 What were the characteristics of the training you identified that you feel made it most beneficial?

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Q13 What are characteristics of training that you have found less beneficial?

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Q14 Are there any other thoughts and recommendations you would like to share with the long-term VCE onboarding committee?

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**End of Block: Block 1**

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## Potential Modifications

Individuals in other roles participated in the survey so these titles or their equivalent in your organization could be added to question 2 of the survey. These include: Agricultural Research and Extension Center (AREC) Director, Extension Associate, College Administrator, Information Technology Professional, Health Educator, 4-H Center Director/Employee, and Project Coordinator.

Additional responses were provided in question 3, defining additional program areas. These include community viability, food safety, farm to school, substance abuse, and youth safety associate specialist. In addition, a respondent indicated that they work across all VCE educational program areas.

Additional areas in which respondents indicated that they needed additional training in question 9 were assessing impacts, dealing with difficult volunteers or parents, emergency preparedness, government and partner agency relations, employee issues, messaging about who we are and what we do to multiple stakeholders, and volunteer management.

## References

Renekamp, R., & Nall, M. (1994). Growing Through the Stages: A New Look at Professional Growth [Feature Article]. *Journal of Extension*, 32(1). <https://archives.joe.org/joe/1994june/a2.php>

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