

VCE Program Excellence Awards

INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to announce the Virginia Cooperative Extension Program Excellence Awards. These awards recognize Extension field faculty, staff, and volunteers for exemplary major educational programming efforts accomplished during the 2023 calendar year. District first place winners will receive \$500 which can be used for program support and/or professional development activities. State winners will receive *a total of* \$1000 for use in the same manner.

AWARD CATEGORIES AND DESCRIPTIONS

There are eight award categories: Community Empowerment, Interdisciplinary Program, New Initiatives, Program Marketing, Program Evaluation, Program Impact, Program Reporting, and Programmatic Courage. All award nominations must fit one of these categories.

Community Empowerment. This award recognizes efforts by Extension individuals or teams designed to enable groups of people who share a common interest to increase control over the factors and decisions that shape their future. In particular, we are looking for Educator facilitated efforts that have occurred in non-traditional programming areas and with “communities” that are not typical Extension audiences.

Interdisciplinary Program. This award recognizes the educational programs that exemplify teamwork and cross-program area cooperation within or across units. At least two Extension program areas (FCS, 4H, ANR, and CV) must be involved. Roles and responsibilities of each program area must be clearly explained. Community partnerships are encouraged but this award specifically targets the Extension team approach. If possible, include specific efforts to reach identified underserved audiences.

New Initiatives. This award recognizes a new program or a significant adaptation of an existing program. The new initiative must address a specific need or issue that exists in any component of the programming process (i.e., situation analysis, program design and implementation, stakeholder involvement, program evaluation, or reporting). The new initiative must have been completed in order to be considered for the award. If possible, include specific efforts to reach identified underserved audiences.

Program Marketing. This award is presented to a successful, wide scale marketing effort directly related to an educational program or unit. Program marketing entries must not focus on infrastructure or activities. A minimum of four marketing methods (newsletter, flier, newspaper article, radio, website, display, etc.) must be used, with specific efforts to reach identified underserved audiences. Submit examples of marketing materials and/or pictures with district nominations as well as to the State level for the winning district entry.

Program Evaluation. Program Evaluation gauges change in participant knowledge or behavior, identifies the need for program improvement, or determines additional areas of client interest. This award category recognizes outstanding evaluation effort directly related to assessing intended program outcomes. Indicate how results were shared with stakeholders. Multiple and appropriate evaluation methods should be used.

Program Impact. This award recognizes outstanding impact in participant learning, or action, and/or environmental, economic, or social conditions from an educational programming effort. Indicate methods used to determine impact.

Program Reporting. This award is designed to recognize individual or unit efforts to effectively report the outcomes of Extension programming. Programs worth reporting on to stakeholders are those that are relevant, effective and impactful and these messages should be in the forefront. Program reporting methods may be through traditional face-to-face interactions, or through the use of newer technologies that share program outcomes in fresh and exciting ways. You may submit up to two examples of program reporting materials as part of your entry.

Programmatic Courage. This award is designed to encourage and reward faculty for taking appropriate programmatic risks. Like the New Initiatives category, Programmatic Courage relates to a new program or a significant adaptation of an existing program. However, the principle difference between the Programmatic Courage and New Initiatives categories is that, to qualify for the Programmatic Courage award, the programming effort must have not met intended outcomes or otherwise been unsuccessful in the eyes of the developer. Thus, the purpose of this category is to reward courage for trying new programs and approaches, even if the outcome is not guaranteed and the potential for failure is high.

ENTRY CRITERIA

We strongly encourage applicants to submit efforts that represent major educational programs. A major educational program is an effort to structure numerous and varied educational opportunities [learning experiences] to help people better their lives by helping them change their present knowledge, skills, attitudes, or behavior. It is not just an isolated workshop, institute, course, or ad hoc response to the continuous bombardment of urgent requests. Canned programs are generally not acceptable unless there is an innovation of note.

Individuals may submit multiple entries, but can submit only one entry per category. If there are multiple entries by an individual, each entry must be submitted for a different programming effort for each category they enter. Past award winners are invited to submit new nominations. Nominations for programs previously receiving a state award cannot be re-submitted. Please use a separate survey form for each entry submitted.

Programs often cover multiple years. At least some part of the program must have been conducted during the year for which the awards are being given to be eligible for the awards program.

With the exception of Programmatic Courage all categories must include documentation of impact of the programming effort. Entries without measured and documented impact will score low and are discouraged. In addition, entries are expected to highlight educational programs that are a coordinated set of learning experiences focused on a problem and aimed at achieving predetermined expectations or objectives. Not just a one-shot program or activity.



Virginia Cooperative Extension

Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

Entries are subject to removal from the competition by district judges for the following reasons: directions or criteria are not followed; entry entered in a wrong category; impact not described; entries that document an activity and not a comprehensive program. See the attached score sheets for specific ranking criteria.

Nominations are submitted in the same basic format used for impact statements in the Elements report. (See [Writing Effective Impact Statements](#). The following sections are required for every entry:

1. Title
2. Relevance
3. Response
4. Results
5. Collaborators (the people directly involved in conducting the program. Please state agency affiliation of collaborators if not VCE employees)
6. Contact Person (the person submitting the entry)

Contestants will enter this information directly into the survey form. Entries cannot exceed 3,500 characters (including spaces) for the *Relevance*, *Response*, and *Results* sections (sections 2-4 above) including the headings. The collaborators and contact person sections do not count towards the character limit. *Again, please note that entrants will copy and paste information from their impact statement—or type directly—into the Submittable survey which has character limited fields. This is designed to assist both entrants and judges, eliminating the need for judges to count characters and the necessity of disqualifying entrants for exceeding the character limit.

JUDGING

District nominations will be judged by District Program Leadership Team members from outside the District. One first place entry per district will be selected in each award category. Each District winning entry will receive a certificate and \$500 which may be used for program support or professional development activities. District winners will compete at the state level, with both district and state winners announced at the annual VESA Meeting. The state nominations will be judged by a team of faculty and stakeholders representing all program areas as well as members of the target audience(s) (i.e., local government, General Assembly) for our impact statements. A whole number scoring system will be used by all judges in scoring nominations. One state winner in each category will receive a plaque and \$1000 to use toward program support or professional development activities. **Cash awards are not cumulative.** In other words, a state winner receives a total of \$1000, not \$1500. State winning entries may be posted on the Extension intranet and may be used for other public relations efforts.

Please note that Extension specialists at the land-grant universities and AREC's, Program Teams, and others submitting statewide programmatic efforts for consideration constitute their own "region" and are not judged against Unit and district-level entries in the first round. State Program Leaders will judge state-wide programmatic entries in the first round as their own "region," and then the entries that advance will compete against all other entries advancing to the state level from the districts as described above.



Virginia Cooperative Extension

Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

DEADLINES

Please submit award nominations via this online Submittable survey by 5p.m. January 31, 2024:

<https://vce.submittable.com/submit/284296/cy-2023-vce-program-excellence-awards> . In the case of multiple entries, one survey will be submitted for each entry.

Thank you for taking time to participate!