



## Purpose

The NC Urban Extension Peer-Learning eXchange (PLX) will provide urban agents, program assistants, and county-funded equivalents with a nine-month cohort learning experience to strengthen their relevance, value and impact in urban communities.

North Carolina is the ninth most populous state in the country with over 10.4 million residents. Since 2010, the state's urban and suburban counties have grown in population while many rural counties have experienced population loss. Given these trends, NC Cooperative Extension must continue to demonstrate its relevance and value to urban audiences, just as it has provided, and will continue to provide, incredible value to rural communities. The PLX will bring together urban extension staff from across the state to learn from and support each other as they take on a self-identified "Opportunity for Action" that will help strengthen their work in urban communities.

## Benefits

The PLX is an opportunity for urban extension professionals to:

- Develop leadership skills through structured peer-learning and advising
- Build relationships with other urban agents with whom they can collaborate and call on for support, as a complement to their programmatic agents' association
- Learn about urban programs that they may want to replicate or adapt
- Dedicate time to urban program or strategy development with support from urban extension colleagues across the state
- Connect with Extension specialists and staff who can help address urban issues
- Get involved with National Urban Extension Leaders (NUEL), including opportunities to present at regional and national meetings
- Enhance the agent title promotion package

## The PLX Experience

The NC Urban Extension Peer-Learning eXchange (PLX)-- as its name suggests-- is designed to be a peer-driven professional development experience for extension staff working in urban areas of North Carolina. The PLX supports knowledge-sharing and skill-building primarily through a **structured peer-learning process that is participant-driven** versus a predetermined, topic-based curriculum. Extension specialists, administrators and other content experts can be brought in to share expertise on topics of interest to the cohort.

Throughout the PLX, participants will engage in peer advising and focused assignments to help them make progress on a self-identified "Opportunity for Action" (OFA). Each participant will formulate an OFA relevant to their local needs and context; if addressed, the opportunity would help strengthen the agent's relevance, value and/or impact in the urban communities they serve. See below for sample OFAs.

Examples of Opportunities for Action, written more generally:

- I want to develop a new program or strategy (Rainwater Reuse Program) that's responsive to the needs of urban audiences
- I want to find ways to engage new audiences and ensure that my programs are relevant to specific populations within my urban community
- I am trying to establish a new, strategic partnership that will increase my impact and grow awareness of Extension's value in urban areas
- I want to find better ways to recruit/manage a large and diverse group of volunteers
- I want to develop better metrics or evaluation tools to my impact in urban areas
- I want to develop strategic communications tools to demonstrate the impact of my work

### **Expectations**

In order to fully benefit from the PLX, participants must be self-motivated and interested in learning from and supporting their colleagues across the state. Full participation equates to roughly 8 hours per month and includes:

- Attending all three peer-exchange sessions (one in-person, one virtual, and one TBD) and a minimum of two program group meetings (virtual)
- Actively contributing to peer-exchange sessions and group meetings
- Completing individual assignments in between sessions to make progress on your self-identified Opportunity for Action
- Updating the cohort on opportunities/challenges related to your Opportunity for Action
- Providing input on future peer-learning experiences
- Serving as a resource or mentor to future peer-learning cohorts

### **Selection Criteria**

Agents, Program Assistants (PAs), and county-funded equivalents are eligible to participate in the inaugural PLX cohort. **Priority will be given to Extension staff in the counties of Durham, Forsyth, Guilford, Mecklenburg, New Hanover, and Wake counties.**<sup>1</sup> Extension staff based in **Alamance, Brunswick, Buncombe, Cabarrus, Catawba, Cumberland, Davidson, Gaston, Henderson, Iredell, Lincoln, Orange, Pitt, Rowan, and Union**<sup>2</sup> are also encouraged to apply.

**To apply:** Complete the [online application](#) by **Wednesday, August 25th**. As part of the application, your County Extension Director (CED) must submit a brief [recommendation form](#), also due by August 25th. Selection decisions will be communicated in early September. If you are selected, you will be asked to complete a short enrollment form to confirm your participation in the PLX and to share your preliminary Opportunity for Action.

**Questions?** Contact the PLX facilitator: Kristin Feierabend, Area Agent for Urban Programs, [kristin\\_feierabend@ncsu.edu](mailto:kristin_feierabend@ncsu.edu), 919-856-5212

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<sup>1</sup> These counties have been defined as "urban" by the NC Rural Center due to an average population density that exceeds 750 people per square mile across the county.

<sup>2</sup> These counties have been defined as "regional city and suburban counties" by the NC Rural Center due to an average population density between 250 and 750 people per square mile across the county. While these counties are not as densely populated as those designated as urban, many are experiencing similar challenges that come with rapid growth and urbanization.



## Program Timeline and Activities

Timeline	Activity	Agenda	Format
September 2021	PLX acceptance and enrollment		
October 25	Peer Exchange 1 (4 hours) <i>Full cohort</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PLX overview and participant goal-sharing</li> <li>Presentation “tour” of NC’s urban areas and participants’ Opportunities for Action (OFA)</li> </ul>	<i>Originally scheduled to be in-person at State Conference, but may be shifted to Zoom pending COVID conditions</i>
November	Program Group Meetings (2 hours) <i>Small group meetings by program area</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant program/strategy maps</li> <li>Peer advising on OFA</li> </ul>	Virtual
December	Progress Check	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share progress and sticking points with PLX facilitator</li> </ul>	Virtual / email
January 2022	Peer Exchange 2 (3 hours) <i>Full cohort</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant progress updates</li> <li>Topical workshop and/or Specialist exchange based on cohort interest</li> <li>Peer-advising on OFA</li> </ul>	Virtual
February	Progress Check	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share progress and sticking points with PLX facilitator</li> </ul>	Virtual / email
March	Program Group Meetings (2 hours) <i>Small group meetings by program area</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant progress updates</li> <li>Topical workshop and/or Specialist exchange based on cohort interest</li> <li>Peer advising on OFA</li> </ul>	Virtual
April	Progress Check / Optional Program Group Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share progress and sticking points with PLX facilitator</li> </ul>	Virtual / email
May	<i>Optional: National Urban Extension Conference (NUEC) (3 days)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connect and learn from urban extension professionals from across the country</li> </ul>	Camden, NJ ( <i>TBD if virtual is an option</i> )
June	Peer Exchange 3 (3 hours) <i>Full cohort</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant progress updates and reflections</li> <li>Topical workshop and/or Specialist exchange based on cohort interest</li> <li>Closing and future engagement</li> </ul>	TBD in-person or virtual based on cohort interest