

Benchmarking of Best Practices for supporting County Governments' Agricultural Initiatives: Larimer County Ag Advisory Board (AAB)

Lead Mentor: Kerri Rollins, Director, Larimer County Extension.

Other mentors: John Cravens – AAB, Zach Thode – AAB, Becca Jablonski – CSU Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics

In what region(s) will the student be working (county/region)? Larimer County

Please describe the proposed internship goals, scope, and objectives: The goal of this internship is to research how counties similar in size, demographics and agricultural production as Larimer County staff and manage agricultural issues and programs. Some of the questions to be considered include:

- What are some of most critical agriculture issues facing the sample counties and how do the county support staffing to address these issues?
- How do county governments' staff and encourage agriculture in areas such as access to land and water, local food systems and markets, climate change, or urban encroachment?
- Do the sample counties support and fund staff to work specifically on agricultural issues, and if so, what qualifications do staff have and what department supports these position(s)?
- The intern will identify a representative sample of County governments across the United States by collecting data on agricultural production, population, demographics, etc. They will develop a list of criteria for measuring county agriculture policies, programs and practices around local food systems and climate-smart agriculture, and staffing. They will identify appropriate staff that could be the subject of an interview. Using these criteria, they will develop an interview questionnaire and interview these contacts.
- Through these interviews, they will seek to benchmark best practices and develop a report showing how Larimer County can change and improve support for the agriculture community. They will also try to identify qualifications and department responsibilities for counties' agriculture staff.
- If available, the student will attend 2 meetings of the Larimer County Commissioners (date TBD) and 2 meetings of the Larimer County Ag Advisory Board and potential other local planning meetings that address agricultural and local food systems
- The student will prepare a report detailing the research findings, conclusions, and best practices for county agricultural management/development and staff support and how other entities support local food systems through policy and practice.

How was this applied research project identified? Through meetings of the Larimer County Agriculture Advisory Board, the County Commissioners, County staff and CSU Extension personnel.

With which stakeholder group(s) will the intern work? CSU Larimer County Extension, Members of the Larimer County Ag Advisory Board, Various County Government representatives

What student learning outcomes do you anticipate and are there opportunities for professional development? The intern will learn functions and methods of county government pertaining to agricultural policy management and staff support. They will also learn qualitative research methodologies including interview questionnaire development, interview techniques and data collection/reporting.