

Colorado State University Extension

Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) Position Statement

December 2016

In the past, salaries of CSU Extension field staff have been established by the University Salary Exercise (SALX) regardless of the source of funding for those salaries. Thus, salaries of fully county funded Extension employees have not considered the related county pay scales. We recognize that this procedure for setting CSU Extension employee's salaries has the potential to result in a salary discrepancy (particularly in high cost of living areas of the state) between what CSU pays its agents and what counties pay comparable employees of their own. Given this fact and the possibility that CSU-set salaries may lag behind comparable county salaries, CSU Extension recognizes that individual counties may want to offer a cost of living adjustment (COLA) at their own expense. This adjustment would be applicable and paid directly by the county to all CSU Extension paid employees in the county. The county would also need to address any tax implications of the COLA to the individual employees.

Whether a COLA is warranted in any particular county is a decision that is left up to individual counties. Nor is it CSU's intention to give a recommendation on how much a COLA should be. We would suggest counties compare existing agent salaries to salaries of other county employees with similar comparable job responsibilities to determine the amount of adjustment that is appropriate. Various studies do compare the cost of living or living wages between communities in Colorado. These studies can also be used by counties as guides to determine what COLA might be appropriate for a specific County.