

Association of Northeast Extension Directors
Exceptional Local Educator Award: 2026 Request for Nominations

Due May 1, 2026

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Association of Northeast Extension Directors' (NEED) Exceptional Local Educator Award (ELEA) celebrates an Extension professional who provides leadership for the delivery of an exceptional, locally responsive, and robustly evaluated program at the community level. The nominee may deliver the program alone or be a member of a program team.

This award is intended to parallel the ECOP Excellence in Extension award, which is built to recognize individuals with large scholarship portfolios and statewide leadership responsibilities. Nominations should not be submitted to both programs in the same year.

WHAT IS A PROGRAM? For the purposes of the ELEA, an Extension program is defined as a group or series of presentations, workshops, functions, demonstrations or other events and activities that form a comprehensive outreach, community coordination, or education curriculum, methodology or process that—along with associated resources—facilitate learning and/or behavioral change in audiences over time. For example, a conference developed and offered to address nutritional needs for teens would be an activity rather than a program.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR SUBMITTING NOMINATIONS? Every northeast LGU may endorse and submit one ELEA nomination per cycle. Only NEED representatives may endorse and submit nominations. Extension personnel are encouraged to make recommendations to their NEED representative by providing them a nomination package as outlined below. Self-nominations are encouraged. Nominations will be managed, reviewed, and recommended by the NEED Awards Review Committee.

HOW IS THE WINNER CHOSEN? WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? Nominations are managed, reviewed, and recommended by the NEED Awards Review Committee. Once the winner is chosen, both the nominator and nominated individual will be notified of their commendation over email. The winner will be awarded \$1,000 to support their professional development. The winner will also be honored during a region-wide webinar, during which they will present their program to NEED and guests from the northeast and beyond. This presentation will be recorded and posted to NEED's website.

NOMINATION FORMAT & DETAILS

COVER PAGE: Nominators will use the template provided and will include the name and email of both the nominator and nominated individual; the title of the exceptional program; the institution submitting the nomination; and a program abstract (no more than 150 words).

NOMINATION NARRATIVE: The nomination narrative should make a strong case for the individual and program being delivered. Narratives must address the following five criteria written in 12 pt. font or larger, single spaced, 4000 words or less (ADMINISTRATIVE: 5 points).

- 1. ISSUE STATEMENT (15 points):** Briefly describe the issue or need and the reason for the program. This should be written as if it were being presented to the public.

2. **NEEDS ASSESSMENT (25 points):** Clearly describe the actions taken by the nominee to formally assess the needs of the target audience. This section should detail how the nominee collected quantitative or qualitative data through surveys, interviews, focus groups, other formalized methods of stakeholder input and engagement, or use of secondary data. The best nominations reflect the active role the nominee took to identify needs before, and possibly during, the program.
3. **PROGRAMMATIC APPROACH AND DELIVERY (15 points):** Explain the key components of the Extension program. For each program component, include why it was needed. Present any relevant partnerships and give special emphasis to any collaborative components.
4. **EVALUATION AND IMPACTS (30 points):** Describe the methods used to evaluate the program and the program's immediate-, mid-, and when possible long-term impacts. The best nominations will make the connection between the underlying need for the program and data demonstrating the program has meaningfully contributed to medium-term (e.g., behavior change, new practices adopted) or long-term outcomes (social, economic, or environmental impact).
5. **CREATIVE WORKS (10 points):** List any creative works (e.g., curriculum, peer-reviewed fact sheets, social media, videos, etc.), conference presentations and/or proceedings, and refereed journal articles that were developed as a result of this program.

SUBMISSION INFORMATION AND DUE DATE

Endorsed nominations must be submitted to NEED Executive Director, Ali Dunigan (adunigan@northeastextension.org) by the LGU's NEED representative over email under the subject line "2026 NEED ELEA Nomination" by 11:59 PM ET on May 1, 2026. Only PDF electronic submissions will be accepted. Nomination packages that exceed the word limit or do not meet the definition of an Extension program as defined above will not be reviewed.

Questions may be directed to adunigan@northeastextension.org . Nominators will receive a "confirmed receipt" email within one week of submission. If confirmation is not received, the submission should be resent.