How To View Ask an Expert Participation Metrics for Your County

Participation in the Oregon Ask an Expert system is an important activity for all Extension personnel. This training module is designed to show you how to:

• Track the number and nature of questions answered by your county.
• Track the number and nature of questions answered by your faculty and staff for professional review purposes.
• Scan answers to any question submitted to your county.

Overview: On Evaluation of Ask an Expert Activity

Ask an Expert is a system designed to bring more efficiency to a historically vital element in Extension activity: providing science-based answers to our client’s questions. It’s also a means of reaching many new Extension clients who prefer going online for information and research.

With this in mind, the number of questions answered by any one individual is not the critical factor: what is critical is their availability and willingness to answer the occasional questions that come their way. The more participation we have across all of Extension, the more efficient the system becomes, and no one set of individuals is burdened with the majority of questions.

Some program areas receive many, many more questions than others. Historically, horticulture (specifically home horticulture) and agriculture account for more than 70% of all questions handled nationally in Ask an Expert.

We do have Ask an Expert superstars, who answer literally hundreds of questions a year, and we are happy to have them. But few of us are in that position (or program area) to expect to reach that level of activity.

So as you examine participation metrics, it’s not necessarily the number of questions answered that is important or relevant. Instead, we encourage you to look for the following:
1. **Are they signed up for eXtension?** By signing up for eXtension one is automatically available to receive questions from Ask an Expert. Please encourage your faculty and staff—including office support staff—to sign up.

2. **Have they entered tags into their Ask an Expert profile?** This is critical for our system to be able to accurately identify who should receive which questions. It only takes a minute or two to add descriptive tags to one’s profile. (Training materials are available to help with that simple process.)

3. **Are they answering questions?** Again, the *number* of questions answered is not necessarily important. Certainly those superstars who do answer huge numbers of questions have been and should continue to be recognized (and sometimes rewarded) by the system. But for most of us, the question is instead, “Am I answering questions when I get them?”

   You can see if an individual has received questions, but not answered them (how to do so is outlined below in this training module.) Sometimes not answering questions may be due to receiving questions outside their expertise (hence the need for tags!)

   Other times, questions that sit too long can be snagged by other experts anxious to provide timely answers. We try hard to answer questions within two working days.

   **Suggested actions:**
   - Urge them to answer questions more quickly. The system uses a 48-hour (2-work days) as a benchmark. Research into Ask an Expert has shown that typically clients lose interest in the question after 48 hours. If a question sits too long in their queue, it’s likely to be snagged by another expert, or reassigned by a Question Monitor.
   - Suggest they attend a refresher course (or view online training modules) on how to use the Ask an Expert system. (Online modules are available 24 x 7 x 365. On-site trainings less so.)
   - If they have **not been receiving questions at all**, confirm first that they have entered **tags** in their profile. They can easily add tags in their profile in their AaE settings.

     Of course, some areas of expertise—just by their very nature—may seldom if ever get questions from the public. But then, they might be surprised if they enter appropriate tags.

4. **Are they providing good answers to the questions?** We look for accuracy, brevity, a friendly tone, and references to outside materials, such as links,
publications, etc. We also encourage them to write their answers in a way that is search engine friendly, that is, that adheres to good SEO (Search Engine Optimization) principles. For example, the first sentence of their answer should contain the key words of the question. Starting their answer with “Thanks for your question,” does little for search engines.

5. **Has one (or more) of their questions been selected as a “Question of the Week?”** Every week a particularly well-written answer to a high-interest question is selected for special recognition and distribution on its own Extension web page. These questions have garnered national attention, and it’s a feather in their cap to have their answer chosen. See an example [here](http://youtu.be/j0W63PLYqh0).

Ultimately it is up to you, the local administrator to decide how to best incorporate Ask an Expert activity into performance reviews of faculty and staff. But it is our hope that participation in Ask an Expert becomes as typical (and accepted) as answering questions that come in on the phone, or through the front door. They really all provide the same thing: service to our clients. Providing informed feedback and encouragement about Ask an Expert to your faculty and staff can help get us there.

**Tutorial**

View a short [YouTube video about viewing participation metrics in your county](http://youtu.be/j0W63PLYqh0).

**How To View Participation Metrics for Your County**

**STEP 1: Signing In**

Go to [https://ask.extension.org](https://ask.extension.org)
If you are not signed in to eXtension, do so by clicking on Sign in button (upper right).

On the sign-in page, click on Sign in with eXtension.

**Forgot your eXtension password?** Follow these instructions:

Go to the login page at [http://people.extension.org/](http://people.extension.org/), and click “Forgot your password?” You’ll be asked to enter your eXtension ID OR the email you used to register with when you first signed up. You’ll be emailed directions for resetting your password.

2. If you don’t know what email address you used to sign up with, go to the sign up page at [http://www.extension.org/people/signup](http://www.extension.org/people/signup) and proceed as if you are signing up for the first time. If you use the same email you used before, you’ll be alerted that you are already a member. So then you can go back to step one and enter your email in order to reset your password.

**STEP 2: Navigating to the AaE Expert (Internal) Site**
Once logged in, you’ll see the **Ask an Expert Public view**:

![Ask an Expert Public view](image)

To get to the internal site, click **AaE Experts** in the upper left corner of the navbar. This takes you to the internal site:

![Internal site](image)

You are now on the internal site---called the **Expert Dashboard**, with an expanded navbar. It gives you quick access to other internal sites. For example, clicking on **people** will take you to a page where you can search for specific people in the eXtension system.

**STEP 3: Navigating To Your County**
Under **My Locations** on the left side, click on **Oregon**.
This takes you to the page indicating the current status of questions in the system for Oregon:

On the right side, you'll find a list of counties.
Click on the county you wish to examine.
The resulting page will list all experts who have selected to answer questions from your selected county:
* For larger counties, you may have to click “view all” at the bottom to bring up a full list of experts.

Note that some experts who may not reside in your county might appear here as well. Experts have the option to select multiple counties in which to field questions.

**STEP 4: Viewing Data On Expert Activity**

To examine data on a specific expert’s activity in the system, click on their name. I’ll demonstrate with my friend and colleague *Amy Grotta*. 
This page gives information on the expert, including their public profile – what the public sees about them, and what tags (categories) they have entered in the system, and what groups they belong to.

*NOTE:* If any of your experts do not have any tags entered please advise them to do so ASAP. Entering both general and specific tags will help the system to send them appropriate questions. If they don’t have any tags they may be assigned questions outside their expertise which is both frustrating for them and inefficient for Ask an Expert. Or they may receive few if any questions. So do stress the addition of tags to their profile.

Let’s find out more about the quantity and quality of Amy’s answers. Click on “Answered/Assigned Metrics” in the gray box on the top right side.
This will bring up a page that has a table summarizing Amy’s activity. It begins with the current year broken down into months.

For example, you can see that Amy was assigned 3 questions, and answered 1. Remember, sometimes questions are grabbed or re-assigned before experts can get to them, hence the discrepancy. Over time, no one—including Amy—could ever maintain a 100% response rate.

If you want to take a thin slice of the questions and Amy’s answers, just click on the number under “Answered Questions.” For Amy, I’ll click on the “3” just to the right of 2013-03.
This brings up a list of the questions by title, with resolution data that Amy answered in March of 2013:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Last Status</th>
<th>Submitted</th>
<th>Last Resolved</th>
<th>Last Resolved By</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>planting madrone</td>
<td>resolved</td>
<td>March 17, 2013, 2:17 PM PDT</td>
<td>March 19, 2013, 2:43 PM PDT</td>
<td>Amy Grotta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>greenhouse blueprints?</td>
<td>resolved</td>
<td>March 17, 2013, 8:02 AM PDT</td>
<td>March 21, 2013, 8:54 PM PDT</td>
<td>Amy Grotta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what kind of tree is this</td>
<td>resolved</td>
<td>March 12, 2013, 2:17 PM PDT</td>
<td>March 12, 2013, 2:53 PM PDT</td>
<td>Amy Grotta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you click on one of the questions, for example, “Planting Madrone”, you’ll bring up the original question, along with Amy’s answer, along with any additional comments from others, as well as a history of internal notes about the routing of the question posted by Question Monitors and other faculty and staff.

Use your browser’s back button to return to the “Yearly Answered/Assigned Statistics for Amy Grotta”
This is where you can make notes to your personnel file about participation levels for the review period you are interested in. For example, Amy answered 10 questions in 2012.