In 1862, Iowa was the first state to accept the terms of the Morrill Land Grant Act, establishing Iowa State as our state’s sole land-grant institution. The purpose of the land-grant colleges was to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts... in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life.”

In 1914, Iowa State became the first land-grant institution to accept the terms of the Smith-Lever Act and establish cooperative extension. Iowa State University Extension and Outreach is part of the federal Cooperative Extension Service — a network of 106 land-grant institutions and the U.S. Department of Agriculture serving communities and counties across the United States.

The Smith-Lever Act created the federal Cooperative Extension Service to “aid in diffusing among the people of the U.S. useful and practical information on subjects related to agriculture and home economics, and to encourage the application of the same.”

• The act provides federal funds for cooperative extension activities, based on funding that has been frozen at the 1962 level as the base. Increases in the appropriations are distributed based on a formula dependent upon rural population, farm population, and a division among U.S. Department of Agriculture, the states, and territories.

• Cooperative extension work is defined as development of practical applications of research knowledge and giving of instruction and practical demonstrations of existing or improved practices or technologies.

• The act requires that states provide a 100 percent match from non-federal resources.

• The act also authorizes special extension projects under section 3(d). Current projects funded under this authority include the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), Farm Safety, Integrated Pest Management (IPM), and Children, Youth, and Families at Risk (CYFAR).
The act requires a minimum of 25 percent of funds be expended on multistate activities in which two or more states cooperate to solve problems of concern to more than one state.

ISU Extension and Outreach programs in Agriculture and Natural Resources, Community and Economic Development, Human Sciences, and 4-H Youth Development are part of Cooperative Extension. While ISU Extension and Outreach is federally mandated to provide education within these areas, citizens in partnership with ISU Extension and Outreach can determine the mix of programs offered locally.

State Extension in Iowa

Although the Smith-Lever Act did not establish extension nationally until 1914, the Iowa Legislature enacted the Agricultural Extension Act in 1906 to make funds available for agricultural demonstration projects. This appears to be the first specific legislation establishing state extension work. Iowa State College took responsibility for the state extension service in 1906, which led to the creation of a Department of Extension at the college.

University Extension

In 1913, Dean Anson Marston pioneered the development of the Engineering Extension Service (EES) to help in the transfer of technology from the engineering experiment station. In 1963, the Iowa Legislature appropriated funds and authorized the Board of Regents to establish the Center for Industrial Research and Service (CIRAS) to counsel industry, advise on appropriate procedures for growth, and conduct research and testing programs where necessary.

- CIRAS became part of ISU Extension in 1966, when the short courses service group, farm demonstrations service group, Engineering Extension Service, and CIRAS were merged to establish a new entity, University Extension.
- The federally mandated Cooperative Extension continued to encompass the other four areas of Extension.

In 2009, university-mandated budget cuts resulted in reorganization, removing ISU funding of county and area directors and developing a new structure consisting of 20 regions. ISU Extension and Outreach now partners with the 900 elected county extension council members who represent the 100 county agricultural extension districts, and who are responsible for determining local county programs — as set forth by the County Extension Law, Code of Iowa, Chapter 176A — to provide access to education meeting local needs.

County Extension and State Law

As set forth by the County Extension Law, Code of Iowa, Chapter 176A:

- Each county, except Pottawattamie, is constituted and established as a county agricultural extension district. Pottawattamie has two districts, East and West, resulting in 100 district offices and councils.
- Each extension district has an extension council consisting of nine elected members. Each extension council member shall be a resident registered voter of the extension district.
- Each council is responsible for the preparation, adoption, and carrying out of the extension educational program of the district.
- Each council serves as an agency of the state, manages and transacts all of the business and affairs of its district, and controls all of the property acquired by it and necessary for the conduct of the business of the district.
- Annually each extension council estimates the amount of money required to be raised by taxation for financing the county extension education program. The board of supervisors of each county annually levies the taxes necessary to raise the county agricultural extension education fund.
- Each council enters into a Memorandum of Understanding with ISU Extension and Outreach, setting forth the cooperative relationship between the extension service and the extension district.
- Extension councils are specifically authorized to cooperate with ISU Extension and Outreach and the United States Department of Agriculture in the accomplishment of extension education, so that the federal funds allocated to ISU Extension and Outreach and the county agricultural extension education fund of each district may be more efficiently used by ISU Extension and Outreach and the extension council.
- The director of extension (Vice President for Extension and Outreach, ISU) shall coordinate the county agricultural extension education program in the several extension districts.
- Any two or more districts may be consolidated to form a single extension district.

Additional Responsibilities from State Law

ISU Extension and Outreach work includes additional responsibilities as set forth by the Code of Iowa, Chapter 266:

- Cooperative agricultural extension work,
- a state extension fruit specialist,
- financial management services,
- soil test interpretation, and
- a beginning farmer center.

ISU Extension and Outreach also includes a local food and farm program coordinator, as set forth by the Local Food and Farm Program, Code of Iowa, Chapter 267A.

Extension and Outreach

In 2011, in support of a broader vision of capacity building across the entire Iowa State campus, the unit became Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. ISU Extension and Outreach works across all seven ISU
colleges and campus units to build capacity and support efforts across the state. In 2012, central administration was streamlined into four units reflecting core business functions:

- County Services and Outreach supports county-based efforts and extension councils, builds partnerships, and coordinates program implementation across the state and locally.
- Program Leadership leads efforts in educational program development, needs assessment, and evaluation of program impacts.
- Operations focuses on business activities, human resources, finance, and information technology.
- Organizational Development provides professional development; facilitates human resources; and communicates efforts to partners, stakeholders, and others.

In 2014, CIRAS moved from ISU Extension and Outreach to the Office of Economic Development and Industry Relations.

**Funding**

ISU Extension and Outreach is funded through federal, state, and county partnerships. In recent years, federal funding through base funds remained flat while the federal government moved to more competitive funding models. In response, ISU Extension and Outreach was one of the first institutions to adapt, seeking external grant funds, contracts, program development fees, and private donations to manage financial challenges.

County funding as part of the total ISU Extension and Outreach budget has been increasing as more counties passed a local extension referendum. Total county revenue includes property tax revenue, user fees, grant receipts, and other sources.

- Ninety-eight of Iowa’s 100 county extension districts have voted to increase the maximum tax levy rate used to fund local county extension programs since 1992.
- In counties that pass the referendum, additional tax monies are available to maintain and expand county programs or can be pooled with other counties for work across county lines.
- The increase in the maximum tax levy rate is based on each county’s population. In counties that pass the referendum, annual property taxes could increase an average of less than 10 cents per $1,000 of valuation. The increase may be even less because counties are not required to budget legal maximums. Each year, locally elected county extension councils set the budget to fit the needs of the county.
- In counties in which the referendum failed, the law requires that the levy and maximum revenue limits for extension be frozen at 1985 funding levels.

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