

Partnership Considerations

More frequently, ISU Extension and Outreach is called upon to be a potential partner with other groups in collocation and/or sharing staff and resources. The intent of this document is a resource for extension councils to guide that decision-making process.

Mission of Cooperating Organizations/ Mission of ISU Extension and Outreach

- Is the mission of the county extension office and that of the partnering organization similar or compatible? Is the program being offered research-based, educational or is the task service only?
- What is the length of the agreement and is there a clause to allow for early termination? Would the agreement allow for a trial period for both parties?
- What are the political implications for extension to enter into an agreement with partner? Will other county partners/stakeholders perceive this to be of benefit? Is there disruption for other county entities in this agreement? Are there public perceptions that should be considered in this agreement? In some cases, positions may be lost or the partner plans to change the way services are delivered. This may have considerable opposition from the general public, decision makers and those who the service is intended. Will Extension lose creditability if perceived as a partner?
- If this program fails or has implementation difficulties beyond extension's control would citizens be critical of extension?
- Will extension have input into how the new partner initially implements and maintains the co-location?
- Does the partner have interest in introducing their clientele to Extension or using our programs?
- What changes or opportunities in programming will this partnership bring which are not present without this agreement or arrangement?
- What if some counties say yes to this and some say no? What message does this send to the public we serve and community decision makers?
- Bottom line: What is best for the citizens of Iowa (or that county/region) and what's in it for ISU Extension and Outreach?

Equipment and Facility Considerations

- Due to reduced and constrained budgets, extension councils may be called upon by agencies and organizations to provide space to agencies and organizations. This may also include equipment, office staff and or administrative services at or through the county extension office. It is important the true value of the resources be considered carefully and not be understated. It is important that a thoughtful analysis of all costs associated with office space including but not limited to such costs as interest on a building loan, current and projected rent, cleaning service, utilities, etc.
- How much office space is required or needed? How many partner staff and what hours will they be in the county extension office? Is privacy a consideration for Extension or partner? What is policy on use of meeting rooms?
- Is additional equipment needed to provide the service at the extension office? Who will supply the equipment? How will office supplies and extension council equipment use be handled? Are there special phone or Internet needs by partner? (800 number, answering service, FAX capabilities)

- Will the equipment be new or used and who will provide insurance, and assume responsibility for the deductible against fire, theft or breakage?
- Will additional liability for extension staff be required due to the service provided?
- Do the office hours of the extension service meet the needs of the partner or will the hours need to be extended? Cost to cover additional hours.
- Are there potentially dangerous substances to be stored or handled? Ammunition, explosives, chemicals, radioactive material, etc.?

Clientele Considerations

- How will a client with special needs be served? (hearing, sight, literacy or limitations associated with physical motion).
- How will client questions be answered if no partner staff is available? Appropriate compensation/training?
- What has been the clientele traffic over the past 90 days? Is parking, accessibility, waiting room at the extension office adequate?
- Is virtual education an option for this clientele?

Extension Office Staff Expectations

- Will training be required for extension staff to assist citizens? Frequency of training, compensation for extension staff time for training/updating.
- Who will handle updates/maintenance to software/ hardware/service? What print materials are needed, and space required for storing?
- Consider if extension staff are required to teach partner clients any skills in-order to use the software or equipment. Additional time to support partner?
- If equipment and software are required, will there be daily or weekly maintenance required? If so, how much time might be required and what skill level is needed to perform the maintenance? Are there hazardous materials involved?
- What trouble shooting is available to Extension if partner's equipment requires maintenance? Who is called?
- Will incidental expenses associated with the service be incurred such as postage, utilities, telephone, Internet, faxing or scanning of documents to provide the service?
- How will changes in staff or office space affect the efficiency and teamwork of current staff?

Special Unique County Considerations

- Is this a new working relationship? If this is the case, why is Extension being asked to partner?
- Why would Extension want to enter into this agreement?
- What is the probability of overall success?