

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Extension and Outreach

Structured for Success: Frequently Asked Questions Archive

This document includes all the FAQs anticipated by the Structured for Success Committee, raised during the Aug. 20 webinar, and submitted Aug. 21-22 via the virtual suggestion box on the Vice President for Extension and Outreach webpage.

FAQ #1: From the Structured for Success Committee

- **Will regional directors need to reapply for their position if their county assignments change?**
No. They will have a small change in their position description to clarify responsibilities. ISU Extension and Outreach Administration will assign regional directors to regions.
- **What will happen to county staff if their current duties are taken away or significantly reduced?**
County staff are encouraged to focus on local programming needs. Engage stakeholders, build partnerships, and facilitate and deliver educational programs.
- **Will county directors be able to apply for open regional director positions?**
Yes, if they meet the minimum requirements.
- **Who has the final decision on the hiring or dismissal of county staff?**
Extension councils make staff decisions and will be supported in the process by regional directors and ISU Human Resources.
- **Who has the final decision on the hiring or dismissal of regional directors?**
The assistant vice president for county services has this responsibility. Counties will be represented on interview committees. During the transition period, ISU Extension and Outreach administration will assign regional directors to regions, but will solicit input from councils.
- **Will council members/county staff be able to provide input on regional director evaluations?**
Yes, as part of annual performance review and by discussions with the assistant vice president for county services at any time. Also, during the first year of this realignment of our structure, the assistant vice president for county services will ask for quarterly feedback on regional director performance and how the transition is going.
- **Will council members still approve financial reports and vouchers, etc.?**
Yes, councils still have financial responsibilities. Regional directors will assist in planning and implementation.
- **Will council members still be accountable to provide oversight on the extension district's tax dollars as per Iowa Code 176.A?**
Yes, councils still must adhere to 176.A.

- **What happens if the legislature reduces the Cooperative Extension budget?**
It depends on the severity of the budget cut. County Services is an important and significant part of ISU Extension and Outreach and will be part of the discussion along with the rest of budget.
- **What if a current CYC doesn't have a bachelor's degree?**
This proposed plan does not change CYC educational requirements.
- **Will the regional structure of Human Sciences, ANR, 4-H specialists, and CED change to better align with the proposed structure?**
Program leaders have been asked to develop programming appropriate for county staff to deliver and county staff will assist program specialists in educational programming. This recommendation is from the Internal Communications Task Force. The Leadership Team is considering the recommendation. The area-wide meetings will continue, and the area boundaries will be revisited.
- **How will the proposed structure impact the extension council's personnel committee?**
The personnel committee makes decisions about staffing and will work with the regional director, who will supervise, mentor, coach, and evaluate staff.
- **Will regional directors still be expected to attend each county's extension council meetings?**
Yes, regional directors have four counties and are expected to work closely with councils.
- **Who approves the regional director going to conferences, professional development sessions, and other training opportunities? How will the cost of these conferences be shared?**
Regional directors are ISU employees supervised by the assistant vice president for county services, who will approve a professional development plan for regional directors. Cost of registration and travel to professional develop will be covered by ISU.
- **Would regional directors have access to the county's bank accounts?**
Regional directors may need to be able to read bank statements (mostly online now) as part of the oversight of the bookkeeper role. Regional directors should have the ability to provide financial oversight and review reports. They do not have spending authority without council approval.
- **Would regional directors be able to sign contracts that obligate the counties?**
No. Extension council chairs should be signing contracts, not regional directors or county staff.
- **Will there be an expectation that regional directors be the face of extension in each county they oversee by joining Rotary, chambers of commerce, or other organizations within each community/county?**
County staff should be the face of extension in that county. Regional directors may belong to civic organizations but should not displace county staff. Regional directors should look to regional partnerships and organizations.
- **Do councils approve what programs are selected for their county or only approve the budgeted dollars for each program area? Would a council be able to decide to not support a program selected by the regional director if they didn't believe it was a good use of tax dollars?**
Regional directors will work with councils and staff to develop a plan of work to provide programming guidance. Programming should address council priorities and ISU's mission and strategic plan. Councils do have authority to determine program decisions.

- **If there are moving expenses involved in hiring a regional director, does ISU Extension and Outreach cover these expenses, or are they cost shared with the counties in that region?**
Regional directors are ISU employees and these expenses will be covered by ISU.
- **Will ISU continue to pay counties for hosting the regional director's office?**
Yes, counties hosting a regional director will receive a stipend. There will be a process developed for selecting offices among interested counties.
- **What is the process for a county or pair of counties to be considered for Model 2?**
Interested counties should assess their resources, express interest, and submit a proposal to the vice president for extension and outreach.
- **Why are only larger counties eligible for Model 2?**
It is a matter of efficiency and reducing administration. We want to avoid having a fulltime administrator for a small staff.
- **How will the "map" change if counties opt for Model 2?**
Depending on the number of single and paired counties, the regional boundaries may change. For example, if eight counties opted for Model 2 as single counties or pairs, that would reduce the number of four-county regions to 23 and boundaries would be redrawn.
- **We have talked about health insurance. Will other benefits stay the same – retirement, vacation, and sick pay accruals if I change positions?**
The only benefits discussed in this proposal are ISU health and dental insurance.
- **Currently some regions have contracts for shared staff. What will happen if six counties are in the contract, but the counties will now be in two or more new regions?**
Since those county extension districts signed a contract as their own legal district, the contract can remain in place, despite the size of a region decreasing to four counties. Otherwise, they will need to consult the contract to see what kind of exit language and timeframes exist.
- **Our county uses Time Clock Plus for county staff timesheets. Will the new regional director be approving my timesheet? How can they do that if they aren't there every day?**
All regional directors are currently authorized in the system to approve timesheets. Some counties have their councils do that work. In the new system, regional directors or a local county designee will need to be authorized to approve the timesheets, as we are reducing administrative burden on councils.
- **I'm a county director. My role is mostly administrative. What will I do in the new system?**
We encourage county staff to shift to more engagement and education. Much of the county management will be done by regional directors. County extension councils will maintain the ability to have county directors, but we will be encouraging councils to move county directors into county program coordinator roles and be formally connected to a program unit as well as help maintain the programming direction for the county.
- **The county we work with the most is not in our new region. Is the regional map set in stone?**
Please provide that feedback during the public comment period so regional boundaries can be more closely examined. Also consider if these two counties are a candidate for sharing a director.

- **How will this change the 4-H field teams or Human Sciences blocks?**

This proposal does not address coverage by program specialists. Those program areas will need to be defined by the program unit. However, the Internal Communications Task Force recommends that program and service units respect regional boundaries to limit the number of teams and overlap, and to increase efficiencies.

FAQ #2: From the Webinar

Models 1 and 2

- **How are the council members going to be educated on this proposal?**

Council members have received the same communication as staff. They were invited to watch the live webinar. They received a direct link to a special [Structured for Success feedback](#) page on the County Services website, which includes the Structured for Success executive summary, white paper, FAQs, and archived webinar. The assistant vice president for county services had a call with the Iowa Extension Councils Association Board two days after the webinar. We are scheduling zoom meetings to gather feedback and answer questions that will be held on weekdays, weeknights, and Saturday.

- **Will large counties have a deadline for making the decision to go it alone or partner?**

Counties cannot make decisions until they have the final details of the proposal in late October. The signup date for all counties is January 1, 2020. Counties interested in Model 2 should express their interest to the assistant vice president for county services as soon as is practical.

- **Is it correct that a county just below the threshold you talked about could make a proposal for their county director to become the regional director for just that county?**

Yes, a county near the threshold can submit a proposal to have a single- or paired- regional director. The proposal will be taken into consideration, but we cannot guarantee the outcome without seeing the proposal.

- **Will program directors be encouraged to align specialists with this model?**

County directors are encouraged to align more closely with a program area and to partner with specialists to enhance local programming.

- **Do you see current executive directors becoming people who do programming and no longer being a supervisor?**

In general the plan calls for regional directors to supervise county staff and for county directors to focus more on engagement and education. Depending on the number of staff members in a county, the council may want someone in the county to assist the regional director with supervision as a team lead. However, to avoid confusion about reporting and accountability, staff should only have one supervisor.

- **Is there the opportunity to combine county councils to match regions in either model 1 or 2?**

This proposal does not address combining councils. One-, two- or four-county regions would be comprised of one, two, or four independent extension districts, as exists currently. (Iowa Code

176A.15 specifically addresses consolidating extension districts.) If you are talking about changing the way the boundaries are proposed in the draft, we will consider suggestions for changes.

- **In the school analogy, the superintendent serves only one community, not three or four counties.**
There are school districts in Iowa that share a superintendent.
- **Does this replace the need for an organizational mentoring program? Currently, our organizational mentors are not staff supervisors.**
No, there is still a need for mentors to help grow our colleagues. The regional directors will be part of that process and will partner with the assigned mentors.
- **Do existing county directors employed by the extension councils lose their jobs or just potentially have new supervision by regional staff? Is the extension council still able to keep staff as desired but not in the supervisory role?** County extension councils will maintain the ability to have county directors, but we will be encouraging councils to move county directors into county program coordinator roles and be formally connected to a program unit as well as help maintain the programming direction for the county.
- **In the beginning it was stated that these were options for councils to review and decide if they want to do, but in the end, it was stated we must give our intentions by January 1. Is this mandatory?**
The current proposal is for counties to choose between the two options. We are gathering feedback and additional options may be developed. Counties will need to adopt one of the final models.
- **If a county fits under Model 2, does the council get to help select the regional director?**
The regional director, even for a single county, would be an ISU employee, and could be an assignment of a current regional director. Councils will have input. If a new hire is necessary, the council would be closely involved in the hiring process, but ISU will make the final decision.
- **Regional realignment, several related questions:**
 - *How do field specialists align to the four-county regions?*
 - *Will field specialists eventually be aligned with this four-county structure as well, or will this be up to each individual program area?*
 - *Are state program leaders being encouraged to re-align their field specialists to match this map?*
 - *Will Human Sciences blocks remain the same or will they change to mimic these new regions?*
 - *Will the 4-H field teams align with the new regions?*

The Internal Communication Task Force recommended developing consistent teams across units for implementation across the state. Program leaders are being asked to consider how their field specialists' coverage areas will align with regions once they are finalized.

Staff turnover

- **You claim that staff turnover is a problem. Has ISU Extension and Outreach conducted any empirical research regarding county staff turnover, i.e., to determine to size of the problem? Have the reasons for turnover been identified and ranked? Are there counties or regions that have a more significant turnover problem than others, and have the reasons for this been identified?**

County staff turnover is a well-known issue that many councils are concerned about. It was also frequently mentioned during the listening sessions of 2018. We are not aware of a formal analysis of why staff leave. Salary and benefits are often mentioned but have not been researched.

- **Currently there is no official mentoring program for CYCs or OAs. Will these positions be included? That could help with turnover.**

We have begun to change that and have included CYCs and OAs in the Mentor Academy. We will have more trained as mentors as we move forward.

- **Staff turnover was high in Polk County until we aggressively raised the rate of pay.**

Increased pay is one factor that impacts reducing turnover. This proposal is providing access to insurance to help reduce staff turnover.

Educational requirements

- **Did we see it correctly, that all county staff must have their master's degree? If so, what is the timeline for that? Will any existing county staff be grandfathered in? Are you going to require all staff to have master's degrees?**

No. Degree requirements differ by position and this proposal does not change from the current requirements.

- **For field specialists who do not have completed master's degrees at this point, will there be a certain amount of time in which they must complete a master's degree to remain in their positions? I was told that I must have a masters to become a Field Specialist II.**

The Field Specialist II minimum requirement is a BS/BA plus five years' experience OR an MS/MA plus three years' experience. The requirement for a Field Specialist III is an MS/MA plus five years' experience. There is no time limit on completing an MS/MA unless it is an agreement between the employee and supervisor.

- **With a new requirement for a master's degree in some positions, would that then also change the salary range/limit of the positions?**

This proposal does not change the current requirements. The requirement for an MS/MA for a regional director or field specialist is not new and salaries are associated with a P grade. The MS/MA for the county educator position is the recommendation from the County Services committee that drafted recommended position descriptions. We have shared information about what councils are paying for different positions across the state.

- **You talk about a career path that will be easier to follow now. What do you see as the career path or what has changed from the current model?**

The proposal does not change the career path that much. County directors or program coordinators would have to have an MS/MA to become an ISU Extension and Outreach regional director or program specialist and advance beyond Field Specialist II. The county educator title is recommended to have an MS/MA as well. A CYC who does not have a BS/BA would need to obtain the degree to become a county director. The Vice President for Extension and Outreach Tuition Assistance Program can help county staff pay for getting an advanced degree.

- **If the county staff are the “teachers” – will those staff be required to have any formal education as educators?**

No. Neither county staff nor specialists are required to have formal education as educators (e.g., a degree in adult education). This is an area where professional development should be provided.

Expectations for regional directors

- **Will regional directors be re-evaluated to determine if they can handle these new duties, or will you assume they can handle it and “train” them? What training will regional directors be given to take on finance management and personnel?**

There will be training for regional directors as well as expectations defining their new responsibilities. There will be a formal quarterly check-in with councils and staff regarding progress on the plan and on regional director performance; the frequency will decrease after the first year if progress and performance are on track. If corrective action is needed, we will address it quickly. Councils can also contact the assistant vice president for county services at any time with questions or concerns.

- **My worry is that regional directors are not necessarily trained or equipped to be personnel supervisors. Is there a chance for reconsidering whether the regional director position would be open for others to apply for (possibly current county directors who have more experience with that)?**

For new regional director positions, county directors who meet the minimum requirements are encouraged to apply. Current regional directors will be assigned to newly formed regions with input from councils. Additional training will be provided to match the new job expectations. The regional director’s supervisor will be in regular contact with councils regarding progress on the proposal and performance of the regional director.

Most regional directors have had previous supervision experience; many were previously county directors. Regional directors currently provide leadership in keeping personnel policies updated, coach staff on working through difficult issues, and provide guidance on next steps in human resource matters.

- **What is the career path to becoming a regional director? My concern is that regional directors have program experience but don’t have good HR, leadership, or strategic planning skills. How will that change?**

The position description for regional directors will be adjusted to reflect more knowledge and/or experience in human resource management and other assigned tasks. Future hires in the position will reflect these changes. This proposed model provides stronger connections with university human resource professionals, legal counsel, and risk management. Regional directors will be supported by university departments with expertise.

- **Will regional directors be required to be in each office they “supervise” weekly? Will there be a guideline/expectation for them?**

There will be expectations for regional directors about time spent in all four offices and with all four councils and associated council committees.

- **How will you ensure that information reaches the counties? Some current regional directors keep information close to themselves and gatekeep information. If there is no county point person, how will you ensure this doesn't happen?**

The Internal Communications Task Force identified barriers to effective communication throughout the system and made recommendations to address problems. The leadership team is implementing many of these recommendations. The weekly update to all staff and councils, area-wide all-staff meetings, and the Vice President for Extension and Outreach website are ways that we are attempting to keep county staff and councils informed.

- **Will the county staff/council have any say on their regional director?**
Councils will be asked for input regarding our current regional directors. They will be a part of the interview committee and provide formal input on any new hires.
- **Who will be the regional directors' supervisor?**
As is the case now, regional directors report to the assistant vice president for county services.

Regional boundaries

- **What happens if one of your four counties opts for Model 2? Do just three remain? Are regional directors changing?**
It depends, and we will review each case. For every four counties that enter Model 2 there is the opportunity to reduce the number of four-county regional directors by one and redraw the lines. There is the possibility that a region of three counties could exist if one county goes into Model 2 and no other neighboring counties are available to join that region.
- **Interested in how we can help councils/counties with Farm Management/Women in Ag programs. How might we work differently?**
We will broaden the response to all programs. Councils and staff are looking for programs that address the needs of their county. Program areas can help them by providing a menu or catalog of available programs, but more importantly, by prioritizing the list. If there are priority programs that meet their needs, it is a simple discussion. If their needs are not addressed by priority programs, then it is a deeper discussion about other existing programs or the potential for creating or finding new programs.
- **With restructuring regions, how do you hope/intend for this to impact current regional program efforts? Will we still be encouraged to work in regions as such?**
Yes, we still strongly encourage collaboration and regional programming. We hope that regional directors will identify opportunities for collaborating across counties; and working across regional lines is encouraged.
- **What is the process to talk to another county to create our own region?**
Councils and staff are encouraged to talk with neighboring counties if interested in partnering. Express your interest to the assistant vice president for county services as soon as practical and let us know how we can help with the discussions. Eventually, a proposal will need to be submitted for review.

- **We are a county in one region now and in the new model we are in a different region. So, would we have a different regional director?**

The regional boundaries are recommendations to start the discussion. Final boundaries will depend in part on the number of counties and where single and paired counties are located. Regional directors will be assigned to the newly formed regions with input from councils and regional directors.

Roles and responsibilities

- **What are the state staff specialist roles? You only are talking about county staff and regional directors; there are other program area specialists. What do their roles look like if you are making county staff take on a program area?** An objective of the proposal is to increase the capacity for local programming. The proposal asks county directors to shift time from supervision to education and engagement and partner with program specialists to facilitate and, where appropriate, deliver programming in their county. It will be important for program specialists to help this partnership be successful. State-paid program specialists will continue to deliver their program unit's priority programs. Program leaders have been asked to detail which research-based programs county staff can deliver. There are some programs that can be co-delivered by state and county staff.

- **What about staff who have administrative roles in counties (e.g., bookkeepers and OAs)? Are they going to move to providing programs?**

It would depend on whether their responsibilities are moved to the regional director. In most cases the OA and bookkeeper roles are still needed to support the regional director.

- **What about inhouse bookkeepers?**

County councils hire staff and should review the role of bookkeepers under the new structure. However, it is not appropriate for regional directors to do bookkeeping.

- **Would county directors who are currently salaried become hourly like the CYC?**

This is an important question and has implications for labor laws. This will require more research to answer properly.

- **Conversely to the compensation question, will county staff who are switching to a program-only focus and dropping administrative responsibilities be expected to take a pay cut? Will councils be provided guidance in this area with job descriptions and pay scales?**

The proposal values education and engagement, and the hope is that staff shift more time to these responsibilities without a cut in pay. We can share aggregated salary guides and recommended position descriptions.

This is an important question and has implications for labor laws. This will require more research to answer properly.

- **Will county staff have freedom to choose their new area of program focus?**

County staff will need to work with their council on choosing which program area to more closely align with to ensure it meets the needs of the county.

- **Regional directors weren't able to fill the county director void in 2009. That's why counties hired county directors. What's changed now except for wanting more money from the counties?**

In 2009, regional directors were instructed to be a liaison between campus and counties – not an administrator, and not a supervisor. Counties were left to figure out how to cover those functions. This proposal calls for regional directors to be responsible for supervision and assist councils with their role under 176A. The county staff should focus more attention on programming, partnerships, engagement, and education.

- **With a regional director covering four counties, who is in charge of the day-to-day operations in a given county? With only having a regional director at your office one day per week per se, in this new model, how are they supposed to manage the day-to-day, especially with Time Clock Plus being mandated?**

The regional director's supervisory role is to help staff be successful and implement the council's personnel policy and program plan of work. This involves onboarding, mentoring, coaching, supervision, and annual performance review. Many of our ISU Extension and Outreach team (e.g., field specialists, regional directors) are coached and evaluated without daily supervision. If the council believes that constant supervision is necessary, then we will work out a plan for that location.

The council, staff, and regional director will work to define daily operation responsibilities that occur now. The discussion will be about which responsibilities will change under the model selected.

- **How much of a supervisory role will regional directors now have regarding budget and spending in county offices? Currently our county director approves program spending and monthly expenses on a daily basis. Will counties now have to call their regional director and ask every time we want to spend money?**

Councils have fiscal policies that address who has spending authority and to what amount.

- **Will the regional directors now work with councils regarding purchases, contracts, grants, etc., as opposed to county directors?**

Regional directors are expected to be involved in the discussion. The county council chair signs contracts.

- **Will regional directors manage county grants?**

The proposal calls for regional directors to do more administration in the counties. Depending on the volume of contracts and size of the staff in the county, management of the grants may be handled differently. Grants typically are to increase capacity for educational programming. Grant management may fall under a county director or county program coordinator's responsibilities.

- **If a county can only fund one coordinator in addition to the CYC, can they do programming in the other three programming areas? How does a county fund an educator in ag, human sciences, youth, and community development? They are all important.**

These are legitimate concerns. The proposal asks county staff to affiliate with and enhance their knowledge in a program area. Please provide feedback on how to balance building capacity for local programming with budget constraints and competing interest.

- **Will there be any encouragement from campus/administration to have some presence regarding ALL programs, i.e., Human Sciences and Community and Economic Development as well as ANR and 4-H?**

County councils are responsible for programming decisions with input from ISU Extension and Outreach. Regional directors working with councils and staff to develop a plan of work are expected to provide programming in all four program areas. We hope staff will self-select to best serve the needs of the county. Also, regional directors may see opportunities to collaborate across county lines within their region.

- **Is a four-county region required to have a regional director if counties have someone in place to supervise employees? Seems like it is increasing mid-level management, not decreasing.**

The proposal shifts part of the county director's responsibilities to the regional director. The goal is that by having one regional director supervise staff from multiple counties, there will be efficiency gains compared to multiple people being supervisors.

- **Why not train county staff to be supervisors as they are the ones in the office every day doing all the work/seeing what issues there are? That gives counties ties to ISU Extension and Outreach since campus is providing the training. Looking at the chart [in the PowerPoint], councils and regional directors were really low. Why put the supervisory role in their hands?**

Two objectives of the proposal are to build capacity for local programming and to reduce administrative burden on council members. One goal of having regional directors take on more supervision is to have one individual be able to mentor, coach, and evaluate more staff; to have them specialize and train; and to hold them accountable to do it well. The second goal is to free county directors to shift more attention to local programming.

- **Relationship between CYC, YPS, and regional director; several related questions:**

- *Will regional directors be expected to onboard, mentor, and train CYC's or will that remain a role for youth program specialists?*
- *What will the regional director's role be in program selection for 4-H programming? Again, currently, the 4-H program specialists often work with county staff and councils on this.*
- *Will 4-H youth program specialists still have a programmatic supervisory role?*
- *What does this mean for the YPS positions?*
- *When will conversations about the YPS team begin?*

We want to review the supervision of CYCs with the new 4-H program leader, Dr. Nistler. While all programs have county program coordinators associated with their program, clearly 4-H has the most. We expect that there will be a strong partnership between County Services and 4-H regarding CYCs. As before, and continuing forward, *programmatic* supervision of 4-H outreach by CYCs will be the responsibility of the youth program specialist. *Administrative* supervision of county paid 4-H staff will simply move from county directors to regional directors (for example).

Program specialists in every discipline will continue to provide regional directors and councils with input on priority programs. Regional directors will retain responsibilities to work with council program committees to develop county program plans of work based on those recommendations and community needs. The current proposal will not affect day-to-day function of the youth program specialist role, or any other specialist role. Regional directors will onboard CYCs in county

employee-based responsibilities. YPS will continue to onboard, mentor, and train CYCs in programmatic responsibilities and delivery.

Funding

- **How do you expect four small counties to be able to afford \$70,000+ for a regional director and still be able to maintain their county staff salaries?**

Counties in four-county regions will not pay regional director salaries, benefits, or travel. They will pay the additional shared services fee of 2-3% of the county's maximum tax ask.

Larger counties that are eligible to have a single or paired director will contribute to the director cost but not the additional shared service fee. ISU will contribute 20% of salary, benefits, and travel per county (20% for one county and 40% for two counties).

- **Current regional directors make \$70,000-plus a year. How will county staff salaries compare?**
County staff salaries vary depending on responsibilities, experience, and education. In general, regional directors are higher paid than county positions and require substantially more travel and knowledge of legal requirements for county extension districts.
- **Is there an option to get on the ISU insurance before July 2020?**
Potentially, but it is likely January 1 would be the soonest. We still need to gather information on the number interested to be able to finalize the premium structure.

FAQ #3: From the Virtual Suggestion Box, Aug. 21-22

Thank you to those who took time to write comments and questions in the virtual suggestion box. I have read them and have taken to heart what you have said. I have addressed the questions and I have also tried to reply to the comments. Several related to the Structured for Success proposal were similar; I have paraphrased them and then offered a response. There will be other opportunities to discuss and comment on the proposal, so please continue the dialog.

— *John D. Lawrence*

Iowa State University Vice President for Extension and Outreach

- **The SFS proposal calls for regional directors to take on more administration. Taking on the role of bookkeeping work for counties with an external bookkeeper seems fiscally irresponsible to pay two people to do the same thing.**

Agreed. It is not appropriate for regional directors to do bookkeeping.

- **We have developed a strong working relationship with a neighboring county and with our regional director. The proposed map puts our two counties in different regions. I am afraid that we will lose our regional director and neighbor partner and it will be a set back to our staff and programming.**

Thank you for your input. The regional boundaries are proposed and may shift depending on the number and locations of counties accepted into model 2. We will try to take boundary requests into account, but eventually will have to make decisions. I know it can be complicated by being in

different regions, but please continue to work with partners. If you and a neighboring county have a border request, please let me or Andrea Nelson know.

- **Under the proposal, county directors will be asked to shift supervisor duties to focus more on programming. However, they will still be in the office with the staff that they currently supervise, and the regional director is now the new supervisor. What are you doing to help the staff potentially caught between a former supervisor who is always around and the new supervisor who will see us once a week?**

Fair question. I recognize that change will be difficult for many reasons and the transition that you describe will be one that we must plan for. We will work with councils and staff to clarify roles and responsibilities and how the county program plan of work can help set expectations.

- **As you proceed, please make clear regional directors' roles in county staff training, mentoring, etc., in partnership with field specialist roles. Also, clarity in program selection would be helpful. For instance, youth program specialists have been told they are to ensure program fidelity. If the expectations can be clear up front, it could prevent many staff conflicts with one another.**

Good observations. Councils, county staff, program specialists, and regional directors should all be involved in program planning and selection. That will require good communication locally as well as from the program leaders about priorities and offerings.

- **The proposal calls for a county program plan of work. This is not new, but it is not used in all counties or regions. Who will be responsible for seeing that is completed, that appropriate parties are involved in the discussion, and appropriate, up-to-date programs are selected?**

Iowa code 176A.8 calls for the educational program on extension work to be developed, reviewed, and carried out. In the proposal it is the regional director's responsibility to see that the plan of work is prepared, and that county councils and staff and ISU program areas are part of the plan development and implementation.

- **Recommendation for a Model 3: eliminate regional directors; four counties operate as a pod for ANR, Human Sciences, Community Development. Hire 10 more Ag field specialists, 8 more Human Sciences, 2 more community development.**

Thank you for proposing a third model. The committee had discussed something similar and other states have something similar. If you would like to discuss or refine in more detail, please contact me or one of the committee members.

- **Under the proposed new 2020 restructure, for county coordinators/educators without a master's degree but years of experience, will we have to resign/depart before the July 2020 effective date?**

No. This proposal does not change from the current educational requirements. The requirement for an MS/MA for a regional director or field specialist is not new. The MS/MA for the county educator position and BS/BA for county directors and county coordinators is the recommendation from the 2017 County Services committee that drafted recommended position descriptions. If a county or pair of counties wanted to apply to have a regional director under model 2, they would become ISU employees and the requirement would apply. If they are county employees under model 1, then there is no change.

There were several similar comments that I will paraphrase here. I apologize if I misrepresented your statement.

- **The proposal left many county directors feeling unappreciated and undervalued. They do not believe they and their work were adequately represented on the planning committee and that the committee does not understand all that county directors do for their county and ISU Extension and Outreach.**

I am sincerely sorry that the presentation came across as it did. I and the committee value the local engagement and education that county directors provide, and the intent of the proposal is to emphasize this role. I talked with a dozen county directors the next morning and now understand how my message was received by county directors.

- **The way the proposal was announced caught a lot of people off guard and was insensitive to the people that the proposal impacts. An announcement of this kind by webinar is the height of unprofessionalism and backhanded to people impacted.**

I apologize that people were hurt by the proposal announcement. There is no simple way to let people know about the proposed changes. We followed a recommendation of the Internal Communication Task Force to let everyone know at the same time. I will take this into consideration before the final model(s) are presented.

- **The proposal puts more responsibility for supervision and administration on the regional director. This is a new responsibility for regional directors and some of them have no experience in these roles. Some comments indicated that staff and councils do not regularly see their current regional director. How will regional directors with four counties supervise staff who they see once a week?**

Most regional directors have had previous supervision experience; many were previously county directors. The position description for regional directors will be adjusted to reflect more knowledge and/or experience in human resource management and other assigned tasks. Additional training will be provided to match the new job expectations. The regional directors' supervisor will be in regular contact with councils regarding progress on the proposal and performance of the regional director. This proposed model provides stronger connections with university human resource professionals, legal counsel, and risk management. Regional directors will be supported by university departments with expertise.

- **You say you will get input from regional directors and council members about assigning regional directors to region. How can county staff provide input to the decision?**

For newly hired regional directors there will be an interview process; we will provide a method for county staff to provide input on regional directors. For existing regional directors, I encourage staff to contact me or Andrea Nelson and to talk to the chair of the county extension council.

- **Looking at the committee, there was no representation from office managers, office assistants, program coordinators, or CYCs. How can these members of ISU Extension and Outreach have their ideas and concerns heard?**

True, we have county directors, county councils, a regional director, and field specialist, and the leadership team represented, but not others who are part of ISU Extension and Outreach. Please take this opportunity to provide feedback on the proposal. Please include what you would like to see as well as what you do not like about what has been proposed.

- **If regional directors replace county-paid directors, and are no longer paid by the county or subject to the same benefits/processes, how can county staff trust that the ISU-paid regional director will have county-paid staff's best opportunities in mind? Our current director has negotiated and worked very hard to ensure county staff are paid fairly and receive benefits because their interests were aligned with the rest of the county staff.**

Thank you for the comment and one that the committee will take into consideration. I also have countless examples of how our regional directors worked very hard in the county staff's interests to secure health insurance and other benefits, salary increases, etc. Regional directors can bring examples of HR and compensation best practices to the councils; but you are correct, it will be less personal for them than it would be for a county director. Because they are not direct beneficiaries, they can bring an objective voice to the discussion.

- **Our county director is hyper-aware of the needs and opportunities in our unique county. They are immersed in our county. They are valuable, appreciated, and key to program growth and staff mentorship. I have concerns about quality of mentorship/support that would be replacing our director as they are removed from their position with the proposed model.**

What you describe about being immersed in the county, engaging stakeholders, and bringing ISU educational programming to the county is what we are trying to increase. The proposal is to free up a county director's time to do more of that, because the regional director is handling more of the HR issues.

- **Throughout the process you talked about having two to four alternative models to discuss. The proposal has two models and for all but a few counties, there is only one option. Since the 2009 reorganization many counties have purposely hired a county director and have made great strides forward. My fear is that the proposed changes will set these counties back many years, as we have to rebuild trust and relationships. Is there room for a third model? Are you serious about input or is your mind made up?**

I and the committee are sincere about wanting your input. We are getting feedback on concerns in the proposed plan and we will take those into consideration. We are also asking for solutions to the problems you identify. Yes, we are open to a third or fourth model. My objective is that it should enhance local programming, reduce burden on councils, and assure ISU Extension and Outreach a seat at the county table on programming and personnel.

- **Severe concerns about the proposed structure removing administrative duties from the county and placing it with a regional director who was not hired with the skill set necessary to supervise our large county. How will they do that for a county after you've eliminated their county director? Don't be fooled that county directors will be able to step down and become program coordinators without impact on the staff and volunteer teams that have placed that director in a respected, leading role.**

Thank you for your input. These are important observations that the committee will discuss.

- **What has me nervous is that I don't like to fix what isn't broken. Having a full-time director that is hired and supervised by our council has worked well for us. It would be nice to have more FTE devoted to programming and capacity building as opposed to administrative tasks, but I'm not sure how it would look for us. Right now, it seems the strengths and passions of our staff align well with their job descriptions. I am worried that changing that structure would lead to a**

misalignment of those things and cause anxiety, thereby creating retention issues that have not been a problem for us. I know that restructuring is not meant to be personal, but it's a mistake to try to take the "person" out of personnel. Experience has taught me that what is more important than getting the right job description is getting the right person. This is more likely to happen with local control.

Thank you for your input. It sounds like your county is not experiencing the concerns that I was hearing from other counties. Yes, we are open to a third or fourth model; specifically, a model that makes sense for counties that already have a director. My objective is that it should enhance local programming, reduce burden on councils, and assure ISU Extension and Outreach a seat at the county table on programming and personnel.