

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Extension and Outreach

WHITE PAPER

Structured for Success: A Proposal for Model 3

Background

In September 2018 ISU Extension and Outreach began the Structured for Success process. It was time to evaluate our system and examine what had been learned since 2009. The Structured for Success Committee studied our organization, finding that programming and approaches to serving Iowans varied across the state. The committee recognized the need to strengthen the partnership between councils and Iowa State, as well as the university's role in the partnership. (For more information, see [“Structured for Success: A Review of ISU Extension and Outreach’s Organizational Structure.”](#))

The committee set the following goals for identifying potential structures for success. To be successful, an organizational structure must enable ISU Extension and Outreach to:

- effectively educate and serve Iowans with resources from Iowa State University;
- increase focus on engagement, programming, and partnership development;
- recruit and retain talented, professional, and passionate staff;
- reduce the burden on councils related to human resources, finance, and program selection; and
- improve communication and accountability within the ISU Extension and Outreach system.

On August 20, 2019, Vice President for Extension and Outreach John Lawrence shared the committee's proposal, which included two models to begin the discussion. He asked for feedback and extension staff and councils responded – thoughtfully and often passionately. All the questions and comments that were received – from the first webinar, the virtual suggestion box, the area-wide meetings, other face-to-face sessions, and the virtual listening sessions – have been read and considered.

Vice President Lawrence also said he would consider other models. However, any model should educate and engage Iowans, reduce burden on councils, and assure Iowa State a seat at the county table on programming and personnel.

A group of county directors proposed a third model. This white paper

- briefly reviews models 1 and 2,
- introduces model 3,
- shares the updated timeline and process for feedback, and
- describes a two-way scorecard for communication and accountability.

Brief review of model 1

- This model calls for 25 four-county regions with 25 ISU Extension and Outreach regional directors funded centrally.
- Extension councils continue to carry out the duties as set in Iowa code.
- Regional directors work with councils to provide staff supervision and development, budget and finance implementation, and program planning.
- Regional directors would lead county staff development and annual review.
- Day-to-day operations in the county would be similar to current operations and may vary by office.
- County directors would focus more on local education, engagement, and programming.
- County directors would affiliate more closely with and enhance their knowledge in a program area.

Brief review of model 2

- This model provides an option for a regional director to serve one large county or two moderate-sized counties.
- Extension councils continue to carry out the duties as set in Iowa code.
- ISU Extension and Outreach will pay 20% per county of salary, benefits, and travel for the regional director.
- For counties to be eligible for this model, they must meet the following requirements as a single county or as two combined:
 - At least 10 employees
 - \$350,000 operating budget

Model 3 proposal development

About half of ISU Extension and Outreach counties currently have a county director. After reviewing the Structured for Success proposal, a group of county directors were concerned with the proposed direction of their role within models 1 and 2. A subcommittee of county directors proposed an alternative model.

Vice President Lawrence discussed the draft model with the Structured for Success committee, Iowa State Human Resources, and University Counsel. With the initial human resources and legal review completed, model 3 now can be shared for discussion. Like models 1 and 2, this is a proposal and ISU Extension and Outreach leadership is seeking feedback before the model is finalized.

Model 3 proposal accepted by Iowa State

In model 3 the extension council continues to carry out the duties as set in Iowa code, just like models 1 and 2. However, *model 3 includes a county director with both an administrative and a programming role.*

Role of county director

In model 3, the county director implements a county plan of work that focuses on stakeholder education and engagement. The county director:

- oversees day-to-day office operations;
- supervises county staff;
- engages stakeholders, develops and maintains partnerships, and assesses needs;
- recruits and develops volunteers, promotes programs, and nurtures relationships;
- facilitates and/or delivers educational programming in partnership with specialists; and
- evaluates and reports outcomes and impacts to councils, stakeholders, and ISU Extension and Outreach.

Role of regional director

In model 3, the regional director would supervise the county director in conjunction with the extension council. The regional director also would serve as a resource to the county and a connection to Iowa State, ensuring that processes align with ISU mission and Iowa code. The regional director:

- provides oversight to the county director and council in human resource topics to ensure compliance with employment laws;
- leads budget and financial management processes and assists the county director with implementation;
- facilitates the needs assessment process with the council and county staff;
- collaborates with the council, staff, and program specialists on program plan of work development;
- assures reporting and risk management implementation; and
- develops collaboration across counties and partners.

Differences

- In model 1, county directors would shift their focus more toward local education, engagement, and programming, and regional directors would have supervisory responsibilities for county staff.
- Model 2 does not include a county director position. Instead, a regional director could serve one large county or two moderate-sized counties.
- In model 3, the county director would oversee day-to-day office operations and supervise county staff. The regional director would supervise the county director with the council.

Increasing capacity in county directors

In model 3, county directors are taking on more responsibilities. To help county directors be successful in this role, ISU Extension and Outreach will increase communication to county directors. ISU Extension and Outreach also will provide county directors with professional development in

- human resource management,
- budget and finance,
- legal compliance, and
- developing partnerships and funding.

This type of training provides professional growth opportunities for county directors and creates a pipeline for developing future regional directors.

Who might consider model 3?

Counties that currently have a county director, or an office manager or office coordinator performing a similar administrative role as a county director, may consider model 3. Councils who have a small number of county staff are encouraged to carefully weigh models 1 and 3. Currently,

- 66% of counties have 4 or fewer FTEs,
- 64% of counties with a director have 4 or fewer FTEs, and
- 64% of counties with an office manager/coordinator have 4 or fewer FTEs.

How model 3 affects model 1

In model 1, regional directors supervise county staff in four counties. In model 3, as county directors assume more responsibility in the county, regional directors may be assigned five or even six counties rather than four, since they would not be supervising county staff in all their counties. Regional directors will be expected to meet regularly with the county director to stay informed on activities in the county and address questions the director or council may have.

Updated timeline

The original Structured for Success proposal included a January 2020 deadline for a decision as the additional shared service fee would impact the FY2021 council budget. *Vice President Lawrence has waived the additional fee for models 1 and 3 for FY2021 to provide extension councils more time to make budget decisions. Counties choosing model 2 are asked to declare in time for the 2021 budget.*

- **November 8, 2019:** Deadline for providing feedback on all three models. In late October ISU Extension and Outreach leadership will send a survey regarding the models and ask councils to provide a nonbinding, general indication of which model they are considering and whether they are interested in offering ISU insurance for county staff.
- **November 22, 2019:** The final plan with cost estimates for each model will be shared.
- **January 15, 2020:** By this date councils will have had time to review the additional information and again will be asked to indicate which model they prefer and whether they are interested in offering ISU insurance for county staff. Those choosing model 2 will be asked for a firm decision.

- **Spring 2020:** The new MOU that incorporates the final Structured for Success details will be ready for councils to review, and councils can make their decision.
- **Spring 2020:** Begin signing the MOU. It must be signed by June 30, 2020.
- **July 1, 2020:** Launch the Structured for Success models.

Two-way scorecard

A committee with representation from councils, county staff, and Iowa State will be developing a formal “two-way scorecard” based on the MOU, which will be implemented across all counties. This scorecard will provide a formal way to provide feedback to partners. Counties will be able to score regional directors, program specialists, and campus administration on defined responsibilities. Similarly, counties will receive feedback on defined expectations. The goal is to improve communication and continue to improve and grow as a system.

Please provide feedback

We thank everyone who has provided feedback on the Structured for Success proposal. We also thank the subcommittee that proposed a third model. You may continue to provide feedback on models 1, 2, and 3 until the November 8 deadline. You may submit questions via the [virtual suggestion box](#) on the vice president for extension and outreach webpage. You may contact Vice President Lawrence by email or phone. You also may contact any of the Structured for Success committee members. Their [contact information](#) is on the County Services website.

As we move forward with Structured for Success, Iowa State is committed to becoming a better partner for county extension programming and personnel.

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