Improving Quality of Life in Iowa

The partnerships we build and the learning opportunities we provide have one over-arching goal – to improve the quality of life in Iowa. Periodically we need to step back; to take a look at the research-based educational programs we offer to see if we are meeting our goal. Conducting needs assessments – county-by-county and by program area – gives us useful information to consider. We just completed both types of assessments, reviewed the findings, and are weighing that data against the finite resources available.

The ISU Extension and Outreach portfolio should include programs and services that address real needs in the here-and-now by providing education, while also generating knowledge that can be used in the future and making the most of our resources.

Examining our portfolio

- At the heart of our portfolio are programs that are fundamental to our agriculture-based cooperative extension system and long-term partnerships.
- Next are programs responsive to recent needs assessments and changing Iowa demographics. The top five priorities that emerged from statewide assessment were: strengthening families; youth who are productive citizens and effective leaders; economic development in communities; youth who are literate and ready in STEM; and increasing family financial capability.
- We initiate strategic programs that integrate resources across the university and land-grant system and are multi-disciplinary, diversified, and address signature issues.
- We take on emerging program opportunities that need an educational response. We explore non-traditional engagement and reflect today’s Iowa in our delivery.
- Programs that can be spun off to a partner, sustained locally, or for which an educational need no longer exists must be transitioned.

Over-laying the progressive curves of our portfolio model are the funds available to support programs and services. We are limited in terms of what we can do by the funds we have. We are guided by core principles that we agreed upon at our Leadership Summit:

*Our programs must be (1) relevant, (2) needs driven, (3) research-based, (4) educational, and (5) create impact.*

Funding our portfolio

Answering a series of questions will help us determine how to fund the programs and services that will improve the quality of life in Iowa – and be included in our program portfolio.

What programs and/or services

- Are needed to meet mandates of federal and state government?
- Are needed to meet Iowa State University mandates?
- Are required due to the demands of local citizens?
- Are optional?

What revenues are available to fund any of the above?