

ISU Extension and Outreach: Historical Timeline

As we review some of the events in the history of Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, we look forward to being part of a better future for all Iowans. Together we will build a #StrongIowa.

- 1903 Sioux County farmers and Iowa State College establish the basis for cooperative extension work.
- 1904 Keokuk County Boys' and Girls' Clubs organize, continuing the movement begun in Page County in 1901—the beginnings of Iowa 4-H and extension youth work.
- 1904–1914 Extension uses trains to deliver education about corn, livestock, and other topics to Iowans.
- 1905 Iowa State's first local short course is held at Red Oak.
- 1906 The Agricultural Extension Act becomes law in Iowa.
- 1912 Clinton County hires the first county extension agent in Iowa. Over the next several years, all counties organize for extension work.
- 1914 The Smith-Lever Act brings together federal, state, and county governments as Cooperative Extension.
- 1916 Iowa's first extension home demonstration agent is hired for Black Hawk County.
- 1921 Extension and county Farm Bureaus cooperate to develop county programs of work.
- 1931 Community clubs enroll more than 27,000 rural youth, teaching them how to run a farm and manage a home.
- 1946 Extension begins public affairs education.
- 1955 The Iowa Legislature creates county agricultural extension districts. Extension councils are elected in every county.
- 1961 Extension begins addressing area economic development.
- 1965 The first area extension office is established in Ottumwa.
- 1966 Iowa State creates University Extension, combining Cooperative Extension, Engineering Extension, the Center for Industrial Research and Service (CIRAS), and the Agriculture Short Course Office.
- 1970 4-H reaches urban and rural youth, emphasizing personal development, citizenship, and leadership.
- 1977 The first ISU Extension Master Gardener class is held in Scott County.
- 1985 Rural Concern Hotline begins, 800-447-1985 (later renamed Iowa Concern).
- 1994 ISU Extension establishes a World Wide Web site.
- 1995 The ISU Extension Information Network is the first statewide extension computer network in the nation.
- 1998 Iowa Association of County Extension Councils is created (renamed Iowa Extension Council Association in 2016).
- 2002 4-H celebrates its centennial nationwide.
- 2002 ISU Extension breaks ground on the Extension 4-H Youth Building.

2003	ISU Extension celebrates 100 years.
2009	ISU Extension restructures from a geographically based structure to an issues-based model, eliminating area offices and moving from county to regional directors.
2011	ISU Extension becomes ISU Extension and Outreach, strengthening our role with the rest of the university.
2012	ISU Extension and Outreach begins celebrating 100 years of county extension work.
2016	The Land Grant Legacy project begins, identifying the original land grant parcels that funded Iowa State, as well as the stories of lowans' connections to their land-grant university.
2020	After nearly two years of careful planning, ISU Extension and Outreach launched a new regional structure to standardize expectations, improve communication, and increase consistency throughout the state.
2021	Building upon lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, ISU Extension and Outreach uses more virtual and hybrid education strategies to engage with lowans remotely and respond to their changing needs for accessing information.

Directors of Extension

Ralph K. Bliss	1914-1946	
Herbert H. Kildee	1946-1949	
Floyd A. Andre	1949-1966	
Marvin A. Anderson	1966-1974	
Charles E. Donhowe	1974-1981	
Robert L. Crom	1981-1988	
Ronald C. Powers	1988-1989 (interim)	
W. John Johnson	1989 (interim)	
Elizabeth A. Elliot	1989-1990 (interim)	
Robert M. Anderson, Jr.	1990-1995	1st Vice Provost for Extension
Nolan R. Hartwig	1995-1996 (interim)	
Stanley R. Johnson	1996-2006	
Jack Payne	2006-2010	1st Vice President for Extension and Outreach
Gerald Miller	2010-2011 (interim)	
Cathann A. Kress	2011-2017	
John D. Lawrence	2017-2018 (interim), 2018-2023	
Jason Henderson	2023-	