Memorandum of Understanding Frequently Asked Questions

The draft of the proposed 2013 Memorandum of Understanding between Iowa State University Extension and Outreach and County Agricultural Extension Districts as introduced during the Nov. 26, 2012 webinar has been under review by partnership members since that time. Overall, comments have been very positive in regards to the format and the general terms of the agreement. From feedback received, the committee has identified six frequently asked questions about the document to provide further clarification.

After a final review by the MOU committee, the official Memorandum of Understanding was made available March 1, 2013 for action by the partners. A signed agreement should be submitted by the Extension District to the office of the Vice President for Extension and Outreach by June 15, 2013. With the signatures of both parties, this agreement continues the relationship begun 100 years ago. It is the next step in working together towards a vibrant future for Iowa, one where Iowans have ready access to the resources of the land-grant university.

Q1. When do ISU policies pertain to Extension Districts? How do Extension Districts know what policies to follow?

Not all Iowa State University policies apply to County Extension Districts. Iowa Code requires that each County Agricultural Extension District have fiscal and personnel policies in place. Our partnership with USDA requires policies also be in place that comply with federal and state policies on the Americans with Disability Act, Equal Employment Opportunity, sexual harassment, and child protection. Reference should be made to University policies when there is no district policy in place to govern a situation (e.g., IT Security, Conflicts of Interest and Commitment reporting).

Q2. Will all programs offered by Extension and Outreach be reviewed?

It is not programs that are being peer reviewed; it is curriculum used within the programs. A curriculum review process is under development, will be subjected to a pilot and vetted before it is finalized within the year (2013). The proposed process will be carried out by each of the five program units and will be a true peer review with both campus-paid and county-paid staff involved in review process. Once the peer review process is in place, all new curriculum developed for extension programming use will be peer reviewed prior to implementation. There will be no charge or fee associated with the review process.

Q3. How will current curriculum be handled?

For current curriculum that has not been peer reviewed, a phased-in voluntary review will go into effect under this MOU. There will be no charge or fee associated with the review process. The effectiveness of Extension and Outreach programs often lies in the research-
base of educational programs, curriculum, and educational materials. Educational programs lose quality and impact when they are not research-based, evidence-based, evidence informed, or based on best practices. A peer review process of educational curriculum and materials to determine the extent of the research and evidence base for use in Iowa enhances program quality and impact.

Q4. What is the conflict resolution procedure?

A process has been established for resolving issues in the event that one partner does not fulfill the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding. This standardized process provides a method of open communication and early intervention; provides both parties a clear-cut means to address issues in a timely manner; and creates more consistency and objectivity.

The two-step process begins with a request for a face-to-face meeting between the two parties (regional director and county council), identification of issue, discussion, and agreement to resolution. If resolution cannot be reached in this first step, the issue will go to the MOU Advisory Council for a review of concerns and determination of appropriate resolution.

Q5. Will background checks only be required for new staff and new volunteers? Does “all volunteers” include Master Gardener interns – if so, who has to pay to have the background checks done?

Background checks are required on ALL NEW staff and volunteers (including Master Gardeners, 4-H volunteers, Master Conservationists, etc.) Background checks will be completed on current volunteers and employees a minimum of every three years. Extension Districts will continue to pay the cost of background checks, as they currently do. Extension and Outreach is exploring the use of a background check service as means of controlling the costs incurred by implementation of this item. Potential new employees and volunteers will be asked to sign a release so the hiring partner can have checks completed BEFORE employment or training begins.

Q6. What are the shared services involved in determining the shared services fee?

IT and financial services are listed as budget line items in 2014-17MOU Budget Sheet for Shared Services Fee, posted on the IACEC and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach County Extension Council websites. As indicated by those numbers, 72 percent of the District’s shared services fee covers IT support and 28 percent of the fee is for county accounting system support. The service costs covered by District fees and those covered by ISU Extension and Outreach are further explained below.
• **IT costs covered by the County Agricultural Extension Districts cost share fee** includes routers and switches in county offices; yearly maintenance for routers, switches, and rental cost for equipment on campus to connect field network to campus; travel to county offices for network maintenance and support (does not include office moves); hotline and equipment support to assist counties with IT problems and upgrades; backup services and file retention. It also includes Adobe Connect licensing and staff support to each county for distance education program delivery. It supports group purchasing of county equipment. Set-up costs for equipment, such as computers, are billed to individual users.

• **IT services covered by ISU Extension and Outreach** include Exchange email, central calendaring, campus IT infrastructure, data recovery, disaster recovery, etc.

• **County accounting system costs covered by the Districts’ shared service fee** include software licensing, staff training and support to bookkeepers, and yearly maintenance.

• **ISU Extension and Outreach covers accounting costs** that include the coordination with Iowa Department of Management and State Auditor’s office on fiscal responsibilities, and centralized equipment support for county accounting (servers).

• ISU Extension and Outreach covers the costs for development and implementation of organizational brand marketing and public image messaging, as well as the costs of name badges and business cards for all staff.

If ISU Extension and Outreach asked Districts to cover all costs for their portion of the shared services, the approximate rate would be 3.3% of the maximum county tax asking. The committee felt it would be burdensome to many districts to jump to this level of support for shared services. To reduce the burden, a step fee is in place.

**Processes Supporting the Memorandum of Understanding**

between Iowa State University Extension and Outreach and County Agricultural Extension Districts (*Links will be added at [http://www.extension.iastate.edu/content/countycouncils](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/content/countycouncils) as they are finalized.*)

• Conflict Resolution Process
• Peer Curriculum Review Process (in development)
• Background Check Procedures