

## COVID-19 Recovery Action Plans: Answers to Common Questions

This document provides answers to questions that were asked during the virtual area-wide meetings in September 2020.

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### **When are county staff expected to start working on action plans? Who should be involved?**

Start right away. Most of your councils have identified their priorities; begin working through the action plan tool with your top 1-2 issues. Check your county data and talk to your council, specialists, and stakeholders as you create your plan. Your plan has budget implications and councils start budget planning in November, so be ready. Your plan clearly has implications for program planning, which is also occurring around the end of the year.

### **Can we do more than one action plan for each initiative area?**

You can use the action plan process on any issue, but how many priorities can you have? We recommend focusing on 1 or 2 priorities because you will have other programming as well. Where do you place your emphasis?

### **Who is responsible for making sure action plans are completed?**

In model 3 counties, the county director, working with the regional director, is responsible for making sure action plans are completed. In model 1 counties, the regional director has this responsibility. On the final page of the action plan be sure to add the coordinator's name and team members. Councils should add a regular item to their agenda to receive your reports on the progress of your action plans.

### **Is there an expectation that work toward one or more of the initiatives will occur in each county?**

Yes, all counties have been impacted by COVID-19 and the recession. Many have been impacted by the drought and/or derecho. As you look at the 6 initiatives, we are confident that your county can benefit from programming in at least one of these areas.

### **How often will we be expected to submit progress reports? To whom will we report our efforts?**

Regional directors will be asked to track progress on an ongoing basis.

- We will be sending periodic evaluation surveys to gauge progress. For example, we will be monitoring the listserv sign-up to see which counties chose which initiative. In January we will ask whether your council budgeted resources – either dollars or people – toward the initiative.
- We will ask whether you have staff participating in professional development on the topic and whether you have events scheduled.

- Next summer and fall we may ask for outcomes such as the number of events offered or number of people reached. Later we will ask for impacts, what happened because of the programming.
- Councils should add a regular item to their agenda to receive a report on progress and how they can support the action plan steps.

**How will county councils be kept informed on this effort?**

They already received the video from the vice president asking them to prioritize the initiatives for their county. They will be involved in reviewing the action plan and, if needed, allocating resources to it. Directors should keep councils informed of outcomes and impacts through updates and stakeholder reports. We will also share the statewide evaluation and reports.

**How will using the COVID-19 Recovery Action Plans across all county offices help tell how ISU Extension and Outreach has helped Iowa recover?**

Using a common evaluation and reporting format will be important for telling our statewide story. Those details will be developed, vetted, and shared with counties in the coming months. Our goal will be to align our evaluations, annual reports, news stories, etc., under these priorities so telling our story can be clearer to the public and to decision makers.

**Why is it important for us to brainstorm short, medium, and long-term outcomes for each action plan?**

This recovery will be a marathon and not a sprint. We are here for Iowa for the long haul and not a flash in the pan. As such, we need to think of meaningful milestones that we can use to measure our progress.

**Why are there only 6 initiative areas for focusing our action plans?**

The initiative areas are broadly defined and encompass much of what we do. That is not to say that we can do business as usual and call it recovery, but rather, that is where we have strengths that we can deploy.

**This area-wide meeting only discussed three of the priorities in the breakouts. Has Iowa State already determined to narrow the initiatives from six to three?**

No, we selected three priorities to have meaningful discussion as we trained participants how to create an action plan locally. All the priorities will be discussed in breakouts over the course of six area-wide meetings. We will share all the area-wide meeting example action plans. Councils will select which of the priorities they'd like to focus on. We look forward to hearing what priorities they've selected.

**We're already hosting programs in these six priority issues. Are we required to have an action plan?**

The action plans are organized in a way to help you also tell others what your short and long-range goals are. The plans will help you communicate to your communities how your work is important and relevant.

**My council chose a priority that no one in my office has expertise in. How will we move forward effectively? Is campus going to help fund the work or capacity needed?**

- This is one reason why we have area-wide meetings – so we can familiarize ourselves with regional experts on our team. It will be critical to understand not only who has the expertise , but what is their reasonable capacity. Making a plan and speaking with specialists will be critical to your success.
- Work with specialists on what they can provide. In a virtual format, we may be able to provide some opportunities that travel would have made it too difficult to accomplish previously.
- Program leaders are in discussion about how their program units will be directing resources and capacity to respond to this effort.
- Many councils appreciate program planning prior to creating their budgets. We encourage you to look for opportunities to leverage local dollars or regional dollars to coordinate your response. That is one reason you should work with your regional director and your area’s specialists to develop ideas that work together, knowing some limitations will exist.