

Extension Council Conference 2024

Strategic Vision and Direction Commitment #4: Invest in people and partnerships.

Strategy 1: We will foster a healthy work environment that supports employees to live balanced work lives.

1. CURRENT REALITY:

Strengths

- Benefits: EAP, Calm
- Flexible work hours - 11
- Remote work opportunities - 4
- 4 to 4 ½ day work week - 2
- Health insurance - 2
- Time off generous - 2
- Knowing you make an impact - 2
- Shorten work hours on Fridays – 2
- Professional learning
- Technology/tool to make job easier
- Finances
- Wage survey
- Create a positive culture
- Person knows the community and they know the background
- Believing in Extension
- Adjustments to office hours
- Adapt to the needs of employees
- Shorter hours
- Job stability
- Office layout/space (specific to X county)
- Encourage family time
- High performing employees

- Additional/flexible PPO (health insurance?)
- Interesting project/programs
- All full-time employees
- Service-minded
- Diversity/variety of benefits
- IPERS
- Team building
- Staff team
- Can take a meeting at a different restaurant/coffee shop
- Extension council supports our employees. Even if someone doesn't agree, they keep disagreements out of the office and more for the personnel committee.

Weaknesses

- Evening/weekend work schedule – 6
- Pay scale - 2
- Inequitable – not standard benefits in all counties
- No policy on how to maintain activity instead of sitting all day
- Long hours
- Time constraints lead to staff feeling like they can't take time off

- Guilt of having not done enough
- Rural vs urban counties
- Advancement
- Keeping office open in flexibility
- Ergonomics
- Stressful volunteer relationships
- Not open enough – perceived as not accessible
- Affordable health insurance
- Difficult work environment
- Insufficient training
- Human Resources
- Staff and council's pay
- Office space (specific to X county)
- Capable employees are discouraged when less-capable employees don't pull their weight
- Too much work
- Understaffed
- Pay levels/benefits
- Lack of benefits
- Evening trainings take away from family time
- No privacy in some offices
- If employees are out of the office, we need to hire someone to staff it
- Job vs career
- Pace of technology

- Keeping confidential information confidential (i.e., the whole council

does not need to know all personnel issues)

Opportunities

- Work regionally/shared positions - 3
- Get to know communities - 2
- Collaboration - 2
- Study regional strengths
- Provide examples to be replicated elsewhere
- Work with diverse partners
- Offer remote work
- Growth of support by using ISU resources
- Resources from campus
- Meet people and know communities
- Opportunities to learn – personally
- More attention to design and ergonomics
- Have staffing for positions
- Budget-tax balance
- Program funds freed up vs all going to salaries
- Identify new funding opportunities
- Open conversation between council and employee

- More team bonding and ways to make a community with your coworkers
- Program diversity
- Offering trainings staff are interested in
- Encouraging continuing education
- Technology
- New opportunities for programming
- Ext. councils sharing what's happening in other counties
- Sharing programming with other counties
- Fail forward
- Pivot quickly
- New ideas may come in
- Excitement/ownership for networking

Threats

- Budgets - 3
- Competition for employees in the community - 2
- Burn out - 2

- Not able to pay market rates for staff
- Teaching salary starts at \$50,000
- Wages
- Paying livable wages
- Inequity between staff wages
- Insurance costs
- High percentage of budget to staff payroll and benefits
- Volunteer-based
- No sense of community
- Getting overwhelmed
- Shortage of large staff and competent volunteers
- Volatile relationships
- Work for other organizations for more money down the road
- Tax levy changes
- Public expectations that are unreasonable and abusive
- Staff turnover
- Staff being taken by schools
- Staffing issues are common in all industries right now
- Natural attrition
- Work/life balance
- Office hierarchy

2. SUCCESS INDICATORS

- Improved retention rates – 13
- Subsequent climate studies would show improvement - 4
- Career advancement opp's available and communicated w/ employees - 3
- Increased salary range capabilities - 2
- Increased programming - 2
- Able to promote from within
- Top 10 places to work in Iowa!
- Premiere workplace
- We would spend less resources on recruitment and more on retention
- Staff are willing to accept challenges and step into new roles
- At least 50% of summer interns/extra staff apply to return as a volunteer, part-time or full-time employee within 5 years
- Job well done – positive feedback
- Increased 4-H program participation
- No new hires
- Staff feel valued and appreciated
- Stayed within budget
- Positive office culture
- Increased training and development to grow as leaders
- Career pipeline – different levels
- Better communication
- Staff feels comfortable working with the public and feels supported by the extension council and supervisors
- Reach additional/broader clientele
- Add'l funding from diverse sources

3. FIRST YEAR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Increase in employee benefits
 - Better personal boundaries
 - Time and energy prioritized
 - The staff we want to stay do stay
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- Conduct a climate study - 4
 - Meaningful benefits - 3
 - Staff training and mentorship - 2
 - Onboard new staff with work/life harmony/balance in mind
 - Good onboarding
 - Council involvement to help encourage employees
 - Review public comments – both personally and public
 - Meetings to encourage networking of employees in similar sized counties
 - Work with CIRAS for ergonomics
 - Co-youth positions
 - Create volunteer coordinator position
 - Better volunteer managers to help avoid burnout, delegate
 - Numbers maintaining or growing
 - Program growth for structure and stability
 - Mentoring leads to connection, outlet, idea sharing
 - Initial evaluation during hiring to see if they have the appropriate talent/drive
 - Work on hiring process to find quality candidates that are a good fit for job

- Staff education on council support/format
- Ensure a stable/standard review process
- Setting SMART goals
- Positive evaluations to and from staff
- Evaluated as a council member
- Council members come to one program once a year outside of fair – or volunteer at one program
- Communicate with staff > annually
- Implement two initiatives to improve enjoyability of the workplace (council involvement too?)
- Council educates public about expectations
- Begin strategic planning (for the county) to identify resource needs and community needs
- Get quotes for insurance
- Work on office remodeling
- Self-discipline of remote workers
- Listen to employees – improve issues/concerns
- Shared programming
- Changing to do program staff like or feel knowledgeable in (working to people's strengths)
- Employees set boundaries to reduce burnout
- Prioritize personal time
- Better insurance contribution
- Working on projects staff enjoys
- Career projections
- Build a positive work environment in which staff feel secure and safe.

Strategy 2: We will support staff growth and provide opportunities for skill enhancement, career advancement, and personal development.

1. CURRENT REALITY

Strengths

- Professional development access – 5
- Tuition reimbursement/assistance - 2
- General flexibility - 2
- Well-educated staff
- Talented staff/professionals
- Campus resources
- Opportunity to engage with community
- Current staff is young and deeply grounded in the community
- Increasing wages and added health care benefits
- Resources for continuing education
- EAP
- We have the need for staff
- Some meetings/collaboration
- Mentors within the state
- LOTS of leadership training opportunities
- Intrinsic rewards
- Partnerships in field to create new professional development
- Intentional state effort to provide relevant in-person training
- New/scaffolded opportunities
- Professionals coming to us as they believe in our mission

- Annual conference
- Daily variety
- Regional/state meetings to continue education
- Individual staff training
- Can ask staff what we can do
- Staff can pick what training they would like
- Benefits
- Exploring non-monetary benefits

Weaknesses

- Somewhat limited career advancement - 2
- Staff workloads
- Too many programs?
- Confusion on “who is the leader – Director or council?”
- Turnover is good when managed
- Holding people accountable/being well-managed
- Limited flexibility in some counties
- Just because we have long-term staff doesn’t mean we have “good” staff
- Not all staff know about prof. development opportunities
- More training available than staff realize
- Disconnect between counties and state

- Supporting families with young children
- Work-life balance
- Can’t compete
- Rewards
- Staff don’t feel they have time for themselves
- There aren’t as many skill-based OA trainings
- We depend on our staff for a LOT!
- We have a very hierarchical system. The only way to grow is growing up to a new position (“The only way up is out”)
- Lack of money
- Lack of incentives
- Programs need to be offered after “normal” hours
- Lack of physical connection post-COVID
- Distance to travel
- Scheduling
- Affordability (mileage, meals, motel, training fees)
- Letting staff go to training requires working on coverage
- Staff is thin – where would there be time?
- Bandwidth
- Budget
- Salaries

Opportunities

- Bigger budgets/funding for staff development opportunities
- Fridays off
- Skill building to support career ladders within Extension, not within counties
- Offer professional and personal development opportunities
- Perry
- Get to know the community
- Professional development curriculum already established
- Restructure
- Partnerships
- Increased skills
- Leadership
- Improve leave
- Improve staff expectations
- More uninterrupted time for staff (closing on Fridays)
- Variety
- Flexibility to explore and be creative
- Internal growth training opportunities offered by ISU
- Partnerships with colleges to promote Extension careers
- Potential training opportunities outside of Extension
- Isle
- Local
- Bring in new excitement for trainings

Threats

- Funding - 4
- Competition for employees - 3
- Train and educate staff and they move on to other jobs - 2
- Higher cost of living - 2
- Higher paying jobs
- In rural areas, bigger cities equal more opportunities
- Programming that doesn't align with ISU Extension and Outreach's mission
- \$50,000 salaries for new teachers threatens CYC market
- Insurance
- Funding sources can't be limited to tax dollars at federal, state and local levels
- Time loss when traveling to training
- Even in an excellent work environment, pay trumps experience
- Static schedule
- Mass turnover
- Finding council members
- If we go outside of Extension for training, does it align with our mission?
- People – dwindling population = less \$ to do things

2. SUCCESS INDICATORS

- Reduced turnover - 10
- More staff with 5+ yrs of service - 3
- Growing programs - 3
- Promotions - 3
- Identify outside funding sources/growth - 2
- Keeping the “right” staff
- Advancement opportunities for staff at the county level
- Employee satisfaction and engagement (both employers and as managers) meets targets with no difference by identity markers, measured and reported annually with positivity concerning management capacity of supervisors
- Employees have job career progression with skill development and content deepening opportunities, aligned with career interest
- Cohort experiences for employees to connect, develop, celebrate one another
- More internal candidates for positions
- Being able to offer sustainable programming
- Increased outreach to youth/enrollment in programs
- Serving a larger population
- Weekly touchpoints
- Increased partnerships

- Adapt to changing communities
- Extension council term limits → change the people to change the culture
- Personnel policy change to support all chapters of life
- Flexibility to serve each community as needed
- Staff can define success in their own terms: moving to a new position, higher quality of work, higher level of work
- Culture shift from thinking an improvement of my position is about _____ - changing the perception of colleagues
- Staff excel, then stay
- Realize realistic expectations with program care, family, and work-life balance
- Pay, benefits, creative hours
- Staff get help when needed
- Competency skills sets – career pipelines
- Remain on budget
- Variety of programs being effectively implemented that impact the community members
- Healthier climates

3. FIRST YEAR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Mentoring relationships - 2
- Tuition assistance - 2
- Staff have written goals/professional development plan – 2
- Identify what area(s) of personal and professional growth interests staff
- What can our office do to help provide training for all?
- Visit expectations with regard to job scope (not too busy or too unbusy)
- Recognition of high achievers with stretch/cross-functional opportunities
- Creation of job career ladders, with job progression, across Extension but with limited geographic range (i.e., want to live in SW Iowa, not to do a stint on campus)
- Building management skills of supervisors with regard to setting goals, giving feedback, advocacy, celebrating successes
- Plan professional development
- Setting up a timeline
- Community networking in X town
- Having results and impact on the community
- Regional Directors and council personnel committees are aware of and help identify professional development needs of staff
- Developing partnership agreements and layout out expectations

- Something with the state to help with onboarding, assistance, transitions
- Identifying sources and making connections
- Personnel policy
- Schedule flexibility to support all stages of life
- Flexibility with jobs
- Review vacation policy
- Better orientation/onboarding
- Transparency with councils and staff about year 1 struggles
- Team building activities
- Keep turnover within the organization (i.e., CYC becomes a Youth Program Specialist or Regional Director)
- Make connections with/identify potential external sources of funding
- Provide a dedicated day for personal/professional development of the staff member's choice
- Open conversations about how the staff member is "feeling"; work satisfaction
- Permission to pursue something/topic that may or may not be part of their current position
- Encourage community involvement by flexing staff member's schedule
- Job shadow/mentor similar position of a staff member in another county
- Support to try something new – encouraging them and being positive
- Celebrations of stages of progress
- Valued and trusted