



Extension Council Update August 9, 2021

As we wrap up the summer county fair season and head into State Fair and back-to-school, I'd like to share some simple reminders to our councils. Each of the items below have been questions or issues brought up over the course of the summer and I thought it might be helpful for all 100 extension districts to review some of these principles.

As always, contact me if you have questions or an issue you need assistance with.

Jennifer Vit
IECA Executive Director

Council Gatherings of 5 or More Members

Whenever five or more extension council members are present discussing extension business, you must follow open meetings law by publicly posting the date, time, place, and agenda at least 24 hours before the meeting. Minutes also must be taken. Council members need to be cognizant of scenarios when more than four council members might gather and ensure council business is not discussed. It might be at the county fair, at an extension program offering, or joining in a staff meeting. Anytime extension business is discussed with five or more council members, it immediately becomes a "meeting".

Here is information from the appendix of the [Extension Council Resource Manual](#) Learning Module 20 about Iowa Open Meeting Laws:

- Open meetings apply if a majority of council members are present discussing or taking action on any matters within the scope of their decision making power. Open meetings can be formal or informal and in person or by electronic means.
Gatherings that include a majority of members for ministerial or social purposes (no

Approval of Volunteers on Council Agendas

Council members should verify that all volunteers listed for approval on your council agenda have been successfully background screened. Ask your staff members to confirm screening status. Another way to verify screening is to match up the number of volunteers approved with the First Advantage invoices (sent monthly). If you see volunteers listed for approval on your agenda, but no invoice to approve for background screening services, you should start asking more questions. Invoicing isn't required to approve a volunteer, but it is a tool you can use to confirm screenings are occurring.

County Extension Districts, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, and the Iowa Extension Council Association (IECA) continue to work together to implement the background screenings required by the Memorandum of Understanding. Screening creates and maintains the best possible environment for clients and program participants.

Did you know? Approved volunteers are covered by the county's liability insurance coverage through LMC Insurance and Risk Management and American Income Life. Failure to screen and approve volunteers may jeopardize this insurance coverage. Screening employees and volunteers also reduces exposure to risk allowing a reduction in county insurance rates.

Read the [Background Screening Process](#) document to learn more about background screening or review the information on the [IECA website](#).

Approval of Volunteers in Council Minutes

Do your council meeting minutes list the names of volunteers approved by the council? The first and last names of authorized volunteers should be listed in your meeting minutes. If your council chooses not to authorize a volunteer applicant, the minutes should reflect that decision as well.

Screening New Hires

When hiring new staff, the hiring process is not yet complete until after the approved candidate receives a favorable background screening report. Employment contracts should not be signed prior to receiving the results of the screening.

Council Committee Meetings

Has your council committee met yet this year? If your committee (policy/personnel, program, legal/finance, building, etc.) hasn't met yet, suggest a meeting to get your group focused. Remember a committee should include no more than four council members or they should plan to follow Open Meeting Law (see referenced Open Meetings requirement above).

County Fair Partnership Agreements

As 2021 county fairs are wrapping up, its hard to already shift focus to 2022. However, if your county has an expired or expiring fair partnership agreement, starting early is smart. Tweaking and renewing the document now will allow extension staff and your fair board begin planning next year's programs and events that make us all love the county fair. If you need guidance on your fair partnership agreement or working with your fair board, reach out to your Director of Field Operations ([Bryan Whaley](#) = north; [Gene Mohling](#) = south). Here is a [template](#) if you need a place to start.

Remote Work

We're sort of back to normal, but still sort of not. If your staff is asking about workplace accommodations or remote work options, there are some resources currently in use in MyExtension (your county or regional director can access these for you or email Jennifer to help you).

The *Document for Accommodation* is a form for county employees to request special accommodations. It's been utilized for health-related or extenuating circumstances and generally are for a short-term need. The *Guidance for Flexible Workplace Requests* helps councils think through considerations in discussing flexible workplace options for county employees. It was drafted to address the pandemic need, but could have applicability still if your councils and staff supervisor agree to it.

Save the Date

- **IECA and 4-H Legislative Day** - Wednesday, February 9, 2022
- **Extension Council Conference** – Saturday, March 5, 2022 (target audience is council members, but staff also encouraged to attend)
- **Extension Annual Conference** – Tuesday, March 8, 2022 (all staff and council members may attend)