

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Extension Council Members,

What a year it has been! Not only did we begin our membership year in the midst of a pandemic, but ISU Extension and Outreach also implemented the Structured for Success recommendations. This led to changes in regional structures and staffing in many counties in response to concerns that councils had experienced in prior years.

In a corresponding manner, the Iowa Extension Council Association also has had a year of change. I began my role as executive director on July 1, 2020, replacing Terry Maloy after his retirement. We also changed our board structure, increasing to a record 25 members, representing 27 regions. Our meetings were all held virtually this year which compelled us to change how we do business.

Progress has been made this past year and we have worked to respond to your stated needs. As you examine our year in review, keep in mind that IECA works for *you*. We keep your council's needs in mind as we represent you with decision-makers, investigate county concerns and challenges, share best practices, advocate with lawmakers, and keep you informed.

We persevered in an unusual year; thanks very much for your role in that success.



Jennifer Vit

Executive Director

Iowa Extension Council Association

IECA Board Members 2020 - 2021

- Region 1 - Bertha Lammers, Sioux
- Region 2 - Roberta Hersom, Palo Alto
- Region 3 - Mary Greiman, Hancock
- Region 4 - Linda Schluter, Cerro Gordo
- Region 5 - Emily Schwickerath, Chickasaw
- Region 6 - Al Ralston, Woodbury
- Region 7 - Mollie Scott, Sac
- Region 8 - Le Ann Lawler, Webster
- Region 9 - Tyler Heeren, Marshall
- Region 10 - Bruce Clark, Black Hawk
- Region 11 - Brian McNulty, Benton
- Region 12 - Kelly Jared, Delaware
- Region 13 - Gwen Hanson, Shelby
- Region 14 - Kim Rinker, Boone
- Regions 15-16-17 - Melissa McEnany, Story
- Region 18 - Dr. Joy Prothero, Mahaska
- Region 19 - Lori Donahoe, Johnson
- Region 20 - Michael Ryan, Scott
- Region 21 - Connie Casson, West Pottawattamie
- Region 22 - Jamie Thompson, Mills
- Region 23 - Jamie David, Taylor
- Region 24 - Mark Davitt, Warren
- Region 25 - Alyson Palmer, Lucas
- Region 26 - Barbara Kistler, Jefferson
- Region 27 - Paul Gieselman, Louisa



IECA links councils to decision-makers.

The IECA Board of Directors meets regularly with Dr. John Lawrence, Vice President for Extension and Outreach, and Andrea Nelson, Assistant Vice President for County Services. IECA Executive Director Jennifer Vit meets with the Extension and Outreach leadership

team, regional directors, and other campus leaders. This allows extension council viewpoints to be heard by decision-makers at the highest levels of the organization. IECA provided the following links.

- The Two-Way Communication Scorecard helped councils and extension staff hold one another accountable for each of their responsibilities. The accompanying debriefing guide served to facilitate a discussion of where and how improvements can be made.
- Extension councils were represented on the Open for Iowa Initiative, which served to provide guidance in navigating COVID-19 mitigation protocols on campus and within county offices and programming.
- The IECA Board discussed the desire of councils for county directors, regional directors, and program directors to receive adequate training and guidance in supervision of employees.
- IECA Board member Le Ann Lawler served on the Exceptional Effort Awards Committee to recognize exceptional efforts in serving clientele during the COVID-19 pandemic.



IECA facilitates sharing of best practices.

IECA strives to keep councils informed of their legal obligations as well as protect their best interests in policy development. Best practices were:

- *Custodian of Public Record* training presented by Whitfield & Eddy; custodian identification was written into the formal script for the annual county extension council organizational meeting.
- *County Personnel Handbook* template was reviewed by Whitfield & Eddy Law.
- *Year-end Carryover Projections* presentation was shared with councils.
- The Extension Council Conference was held virtually on March 13, 2021. There were 179 registrants for the day with 19 presenters.



IECA investigates concerns and challenges faced by councils.

The IECA Board of Directors provides an opportunity at each meeting to discuss county concerns. The association has its ear to the ground to notice when trends emerge that impact county extension councils.

- IECA partnered with Open for Iowa and the Office of Equal Opportunity to develop guidance for working with staff requests for reasonable accommodations in the workplace.
- Whitfield & Eddy Law presented a *Divorce, Custody, and Family Law Issues* webinar to help staff understand the legal responsibilities in working with families experiencing these circumstances.
- Legal guidance for employer responsibilities under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act were shared with councils. Whitfield & Eddy researched employer reimbursement options provided in the American Rescue Plan Act.
- Ninety-four councils provided the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) benefit to 388 employees through IECA's contract with the vendor, Employee & Family Resources. The benefit was increased from three to six sessions of free counseling, matching ISU's EAP benefit. Two *EAP Lunch & Learn* sessions helped staff learn more about EAP benefits and how to access them.
- IECA provides background screening services through its contract with First Advantage. Several new resources were developed to assist users with screening procedures.
 - New screening packages were created to meet the needs of counties as well as our requirements put forth by the county insurance provider.
 - An education verification search verifies that an employee candidate received the degree stated in their employment documents.
 - An adverse action letter and process was developed for counties to follow when a candidate is not approved as a result of

information contained in their background screening.

- A background screening advisory group was created to identify ways to continue to serve counties well through the background screening benefit.
- First Advantage Background Screening System users were surveyed to find out what's working, what's not, and how we might be able to better serve them.
- The Background Screening online document library was updated.



IECA Finances

The association is in a good financial position at this time. The board will continue to monitor dues income to ensure that IECA has a strong financial base to provide the benefits its members expect. Once new census numbers are released, the dues structure will be adjusted to slate counties in the appropriate tier.

Below is a summary of IECA's finances for Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21), along with the FY22 budget.

IECA FY21 Income and Expenses, FY22 Budget

Category Description	FY21 Actual	FY22 Budget
INCOME		
Membership Dues	\$ 27,300.00	\$ 25,500.00
EAP Enrollment Fees	9,747.25	9,000.00
Extension Council Conference		500.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 37,047.25	\$ 35,000.00
EXPENSES		
General		
Bank Charges	\$ 21.40	\$ 30.00
Copies	313.90	500.00
Misc.	134.50	-
Office Supplies	77.06	300.00
Postage	309.35	275.00
Travel	-	6,426.00
Insurance	975.00	975.00
Total	\$ 1,831.21	\$ 8,506.00
Communication & Networking		
Communications	155.84	\$ 400.00
Promotions	-	250.00
Total	\$ 155.84	\$ 650.00
Human Resources & Member Services		
Council Conference	\$ 477.82	\$ 1,000.00
EAP Services	8,846.40	9,000.00
Legal Services	16,175.50	15,000.00
Total	\$ 25,499.72	\$ 25,000.00
Finance, Policy, & Legislation		
Legislative Contacts	\$ -	\$ 750.00
Total	\$ -	\$ 750.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 27,486.77	\$ 34,906.00
NET TOTAL	\$ 9,560.48	\$ 94.00

The Iowa Extension Council Association executive director and program assistant salaries are funded by the Vice President for Extension and Outreach.



IECA communicates with its membership.

- The *Extension Council News* provides timely updates for council members and other subscribers on topics of interest to councils.
- IECA staff created two new e-newsletters to enhance communication with stakeholders: 1) *News of Your Benefits* is distributed bi-monthly to county staff sharing helpful information about EAP benefits as well as articles and resources to improve employee health and productivity. 2) *First Advantage User News* communicates with county staff who run background screenings.
- Virus mitigation guidance was shared with council members as it was updated.
- Strategies to help support good mental health (and reduced stress) in employees was shared with council members.
- IECA Executive Director Jennifer Vit visited two county extension council meetings in person and three new council orientation sessions.



IECA provides legislative monitoring and leadership.

IECA partnered with Iowa 4-H to present the *Iowa Legislative Insider* virtual legislative event featuring Lieutenant Governor Adam Gregg. Seventy-two individuals participated in the event.



Iowa Extension Council Association

611 Roosevelt St.

Lisbon, IA 52253



Save the Date

IECA & 4-H Legislative Day

Feb. 9, 2022

Extension Council Conference

March 5, 2022



IECA looks to the future.

In November 2021, the IECA Board of Directors will be working on future planning which will form an agenda for the coming years. You are invited to an engaging day at the Iowa Capitol on February 9 and our Extension Council Conference on March 5, 2022.

Councils are encouraged to communicate with the regional IECA board representative (see below). Invite them to a meeting to share what's on the horizon or to listen to your concerns. Contact information can be found on the IECA website under the *About Us* tab or through your regional director.

IECA Board Members 2021 - 2022

Region 1 - Vacant

Region 2 - Roberta Hersom, Palo Alto

Region 3 - Mary Greiman, Hancock

Region 4 - Linda Schluter, Cerro Gordo

Region 5 - Emily Schwickerath, Chickasaw

Region 6 - Al Ralston, Woodbury

Region 7 - Mollie Scott, Sac

Region 8 - Le Ann Lawler, Webster

Region 9 - Tyler Heeren, Marshall

Region 10 - Bruce Clark, Black Hawk

Region 11 - Sara Pinckney, Jones

Region 12 - Kelly Jared, Delaware

Region 13 - Gwen Hanson, Shelby

Region 14 - Kim Rinker, Boone

Regions 15-16-17 - Melissa McEnany, Story

Region 18 - Dr. Joy Prothero, Mahaska

Region 19 - Brent Ness, Iowa

Region 20 - Michael Ryan, Scott

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Region 22 - Jamie Thompson, Mills

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Region 25 - Alyson Palmer, Lucas

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