



IOWA EXTENSION COUNCIL ASSOCIATION YEAR IN REVIEW

2023-2024



Extension Council Conference on the Road participants in Emmetsburg.

Extension Council Conference on the Road

IECA hosted six Extension Council Conferences on the Road this spring in lieu of a statewide conference.

The focus of this year's conference was connecting to your communities. Council members enjoyed an evening to think about the public value of Extension and Outreach, how to create partnerships in their communities, and strategized solutions to best develop and retain extension employees as it relates to the ISU Extension and Outreach Strategic Vision and Direction.

Vice President for Extension and Outreach Jason Henderson shared how councils can serve the needs of their communities through initiatives outlined in the ISU Extension and Outreach Strategic Vision and Direction.

The sites were in Greenfield, Oskaloosa, Monticello, Nashua, Emmetsburg, and Sioux City. Feedback indicated that council members appreciated having on-site training near their communities.

IECA Helps Guide Extension and Outreach Strategic Vision and Direction

IECA held two virtual Strategic Idea Workshops that provided council members opportunities to provide feedback about what Extension needs in the next strategic plan.

The Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Strategic Vision and Direction was released in January and functions 2024 to 2029. Executive Director Jennifer Vit represents IECA on the unit leadership team that works on implementation plans.

Vice President for Extension and Outreach Jason Henderson has provided regular updates to the IECA Board about what the strategic vision and direction means for counties and councils.

Training Helps Councils Succeed



Serving as an extension council member is a complex role. IECA works to ensure council members are knowledgeable about the issues and where to go for information when needed by providing training and resources. In addition to our extension council conference, we provided online webinars for council members.

A **Conflict of Interest** webinar with Kay Oskvig from Whitfield and Eddy Law was held in August 2023. The information covered conflicts of interest law as it relates to both county staff and extension council members.

The **Property Tax Impacts on Extension Districts** training was held in February in partnership with Extension's Community and Economic Development staff. They addressed changes in Iowa tax code, property tax reform, and how it affects county extension districts.

An **Employer Update** was provided on May 20. It was presented by IECA Executive Director Jennifer Vit and Andrea Welchans, Assistant Vice President for County Services. The update focused on new regulations for Fair Labor Standards Act, independent contractors, Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, and employees in volunteer roles.

All training recordings are available on the IECA website: www.iaextensioncouncils.org. Click on the *Council Training* tab.

Legal Services Benefit Continues to Provide Value to Extension Councils

This year was an active year to help provide clarity and guidance to council members and staff about a variety of statewide issues. Whitfield and Eddy Law provided two legal opinions. One covered the application of Iowa Code Chapter 66 for the removal of elected officials from office and the second addressed employees in volunteer roles. Whitfield and Eddy also recognized that councils are challenged when dealing with real estate issues, whether as owner or lessee. A real estate best practices checklist was created to aid councils when dealing with leases or purchases of office space. Employee relations continue to be the primary reason that councils sought legal services from Whitfield and Eddy.

County Insurance Savings

IECA Executive Director Jennifer Vit and Assistant Vice President for County Service Andrea Welchans meet with our county insurance provider, AssuredPartners, when it's time to discuss a policy renewal.

It's not very often that you're told that your insurance premium is actually going down, but we received that great news at the end of fiscal year 2024.

Additionally, AssuredPartners increased coverage while reducing the state's combined premium by nearly \$20,000! This reduction is passed on directly to extension districts.

Policies with AssuredPartners include insurance coverages such as liability coverage, cyber crime, and worker's compensation.



Hamilton County Extension Council member Tyler Burton (right) shares materials showing the "Real Impact" of Extension with Rep. Shannon Latham.

Legislators Learn of Extension's Real Impact at IECA Legislative Breakfast

The second annual legislative breakfast at the Iowa State Capitol provided an opportunity for legislators to learn more about extension and how counties are funded. Twenty-five council members and staff attended the breakfast. They spoke with 45 legislators to highlight the real impacts of ISU Extension and Outreach and its outstanding public value.

Each legislator received a custom printed folder featuring some of our million dollar impacts. It also provided funding information for Extension and Outreach. Included in the folders were stakeholder reports for each county in their district as well as the overall Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Impact Report.

Key discussions took place with many legislators that morning. One discussion developed into funding for a new extension forestry position in northeast Iowa. Legislators unable to attend received folders in their mailboxes.

Any council member can share the impact of ISU Extension and Outreach with their county's stakeholders and elected officials. Go to the IECA Government Relations webpage (<https://www.iaextensioncouncils.org/inside-ieca-government-relations>) for tips on how you can craft your messages. You will also find links to source information and data.

Councils Represented on Statewide Committees

Extension council members have participated in several state-level committees this year. Council member Ann Leonard, Jasper County, served on the 4-H Youth Director search committee. Sac County council member Mollie Scott served on the search committee that interviewed candidates for the ISU Extension and Outreach Human Sciences Program Leader.



Scan this QR code for tips and resources you can share with your legislators.

IECA Board of Directors 2024-25

The IECA Board of Directors represents the needs and interests of the 900 extension council members in Iowa. The members of the 2024-25 Board of Directors are listed below.

- Region 1 - Ryan Freese, O'Brien County
- Region 2 - Roberta Hersom, Palo Alto County
- Region 3 - Mary Greiman, Hancock County
- Region 4 - Kirk Phelps, Mitchell County
- Region 5 - Sara Kuboushek, Winneshiek County
- Region 6 - VACANT
- Region 7 - Mollie Scott, Sac County
- Region 8 - Le Ann Lawler, Webster County
- Region 9 - Ruth Wilcox, Grundy County
- Region 10 - Bruce Clark, Black Hawk County
- Region 11 - Megan Fagle, Linn County
- Region 12 - Roger Helmrichs, Delaware County
- Region 13 - Gwen Hanson, Shelby County
- Region 14 - Joan Wiskus, Carroll County
- Regions 15-16-17 - Kasey Peters, Polk County
- Region 18 - Ann Leonard, Jasper County
- Region 19 - Jenny Lichty, Johnson County
- Region 20 - Tom Monroe, Scott County
- Region 21 - Connie Casson, West Pottawattamie County
- Region 22 - VACANT
- Region 23 - Christy Sayler, Taylor County
- Region 24 - Mark Davitt, Warren County
- Region 25 - Phil Masters, Lucas County
- Region 26 - Chrissy Westercamp, Van Buren County
- Region 27 - Paul Gieselman, Louisa County
- Region 28 - Bruce Clark, Black Hawk County
- Region 29 - Megan Fagle, Linn County



Extension Council members pause for a photo with ISU President Wendy Wintersteen and Vice President for Extension and Outreach Jason Henderson at Henderson's welcome reception.

New *Calm* Benefit Offered

Beginning April 1, extension councils could offer access to the *Calm* app to county employees. *Calm* is a subscription-based app that helps users manage stress and anxiety through guided meditation, music, sleep therapy, and more.

IECA committed to subsidize 50% of the cost of the subscription for the 2024-25 enrollment year to incentivize counties to offer this stress-reducing benefit to employees.

Currently 35 counties are enrolled, providing 132 employees access to the *Calm* app.

IECA Action Plan Update

In November 2021, the IECA Board developed an action plan to guide their decisions for 2022-2025. The board continues to work to identify ways to enhance council engagement and provide tools to assist councils in fulfilling the mission of ISU Extension and Outreach. IECA board members are available to attend your council meeting to share how IECA is working for you, answer questions, and listen to your concerns. We want to make sure council members have the tools they need to be successful.

Contact IECA with your ideas, concerns, and questions. Go to iaextensioncouncils.org and click on the "Contact Us" link in the footer.