

Decision on Restructuring Geographic Administration

March 3, 2017

Overview of the Decisions

Building on the foundations laid by the initial [programming](#) and [organizational](#) work groups, the Integration Work Group (IWG) was charged with making formal recommendations for changes to Cooperative Extension's structures, positions, and partnership agreements. This group recently released its [first set of six recommendations](#) for a 2-week feedback period by staff, partners and stakeholders. Comments from over 300 individuals were provided to the IWG for consideration as they finalized initial recommendations regarding the geographic restructuring of administration. On specific survey questions related to Area Extension Directors, we received 305 responses (132 from Cooperative Extension Employees, 77 from County Partners, 32 from those identifying as community members, volunteers, etc. and 64 who did not identify themselves).

The Executive Sponsors and Chancellor Sandeen decided to begin implementation (implementation details are at the end of this document):

We will recruit one full-time Area Extension Director to lead each single- and multi-county area identified in the map that was announced in Chancellor Sandeen's February 2016 memo. Each Area Extension Director will:

- Be fully-funded by Cooperative Extension;
- Be responsible for managing the relationship with county governments and the county-based staff, including how to best represent Cooperative Extension at local meetings;
- Have ultimate hiring authority for the county-based staff in their area;
- Coordinate programming efforts in the county(ies) they oversee, by identifying needs in the communities;
- Leverage county, regional, and statewide resources to address those needs; and
- Develop program priorities and staffing plans with the county governments.

We will recruit two Assistant Deans to lead and manage the Area Extension Directors, [organized into a North Zone and South Zone](#), who would report directly to the Dean of Cooperative Extension.

In response to comments received during the feedback period, we will ensure that counties can provide input on the candidates that we interview for the Area Extension Director positions. We will share information about the finalists for these positions with county officials and solicit their input through a formal process. County officials will be provided with the timeline and process for the reviews in advance.

Rationale for the Decision

Restructuring administrative leadership across all 72 counties is necessary to streamline administrative tasks and increase efficiency and efficacy. Reorganizing the regional administration will provide a number of benefits to Cooperative Extension including:

- **Focused Investment:** Because these Directors would be funded by Cooperative Extension, county funding would go directly to staff delivering programming in the counties - not to administration.
- **Advocacy:** Area Extension Directors would be a conduit to the broader Cooperative Extension network, linking counties and tribes to regional and statewide resources, including UW campuses and Cooperative Extension centers.
- **Commitment to Area Success:** Area Extension Directors would be dedicated to managing and administering extension programs in each county, and would not split their time between management, programming, and scholarship.
- **Efficiency:** As shown in [Figure 1](#), we want to reduce the amount of effort expended on administrative work (moving from 35-40 FTE spread across 100+ staff to ~26 FTE and individuals), and eliminate a layer of administration (moving from four layers in the current state to three).
- **Proximity:** Area Extension Directors would have direct hiring authority for county-based Cooperative Extension staff, moving decision-making closer to the county partners.
- **Survey Results:** Survey respondents' most frequently cited the importance of the following topics in their comments on this issue: Building Relationships, Human Resources, and Understanding County Needs. Of those who responded to the question, "As a local resident, would you be in support of your county/tribe housing the Area Extension Director in a dedicated space (one county of the multi-county area)?", 83% responded "yes" and 17% responded "no".

Next Steps

Assistant Deans:

We posted an internal [recruitment within Cooperative Extension for the Assistant Dean positions on February 27](#). The Search and Screen Committee will review and interview candidates throughout the first half of March with the goal of naming the new Assistant Deans by the end of March. The members of the Search and Screen Committee are:

- Carrie Edgar, *UW Extension Department Head in Dane County*
- Kandi O'Neil, *4-H Associate Program Director*
- Ann Keim, *Interim Family Living Program Director*
- Dave Williams, *Associate Program Director for ANRE*
- Patrick Robinson, *Interim CNRED Program Director*

Area Extension Directors:

Following selection of the Assistant Deans, we will immediately begin recruitment for Area Extension Directors as a cohort. The first round of recruitment will be competitive to Cooperative Extension employees only. If we are unable to fill all of the positions through internal hires, we will open a second round of recruitment for the remaining positions to external applicants. County officials will be provided with advance notice of when they can access materials for and provide input on the finalists in their area for both rounds of recruitment.

We anticipate naming the Search and Screen Committee by the end of March with the goals of interviewing internal candidates in April and naming the internal hires for Area Extension Directors by early May. The external recruitment, if necessary will likely continue into June and July.

We encourage you to send any questions or concerns to nextgencommunications@ces.uwex.edu.

Sincerely,

Executive Sponsors of the *nEXT Generation* project

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University of Wisconsin-Extension

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