Welcome

January marks the start of the New Year and the time when Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) Boards of Directors across the state seat new members. Whether you are a new or returning board member, welcome! Your contribution of time, talent and energy is vital to achieving our collective mission of connecting New Yorkers to their land grant university so that they may improve their lives, businesses and communities.

Most associations provide an orientation for new Board members that combines an introduction to the history, mission, and structure of the extension system along with the staff, organization and customs unique to the local association. Your State Extension Specialist is available to assist with this orientation upon request and schedule permitting. A great resource throughout your tenure as a Board member is the Board Toolbox: http://www2.cce.cornell.edu/board/Pages/default.aspx

FLSA Rule Change Update

Work continues throughout the CCE system to prepare for anticipated changes to the federal Fair Labor Standards Act rule distinguishing between exempt and non-exempt employees. Throughout the fall HR staff in CCE Administration worked diligently to develop a new position classification system for program staff, which was recently released. Position profiles for the administrative family of positions are currently under development. Tools, training and other resources to help with the transition to the new system are being rolled out as rapidly as possible. Nevertheless, there is no getting around the fact that employees, supervisors, executive directors, and SBN HR Leads will need to invest considerable time in writing new job descriptions, aligning them with the new profiles, properly classifying them and then developing a defensible compensation plan. The time and effort invested now will help insure that we have a classification and compensation system that is equitable, legally defensible, and provides upward mobility for association staff. CCE Administration tentatively plans to develop a compensation plan tool for associations to use if they wish, but not until late this year or early 2017.
Changes to County Law 224

This past fall the Governor signed legislation amending County Law 224, the basic state authorizing legislation for CCE associations. The changes were outlined in the previous edition of this Report to Boards. They reflect a more contemporary articulation of basic extension work, and align better with the reality of today’s diverse funding streams.

One of the changes, expanding the legislative definition of extension work from “agriculture, home economics and community betterment” to the more contemporary “agriculture, community and economic vitality, environment and energy, nutrition and healthy families, and youth development” will require each CCE association to update its constitution at the time of the next constitution review, if not before.

County Funding

As of this writing 39 associations have reported on the results of their 2016 county appropriation. Five associations report a decrease in county funding, fifteen report an increase, and nineteen report level funding. Overall there has been a net decrease of $12,334.

SBN analysis underway

The system-wide analysis of Shared Business Networks (SBNs) is under way. Representatives from the Center for Governmental Research (CGR) have begun reviewing, updating and supplementing data characterizing the scope of association administrative operations that were collected when the SBNs were first being developed several years ago. The next phase of the project will involve personal interviews with SBN staff as well as CCE Administration. A final report is expected by late spring, in time for the June statewide Executive Director and Board Leadership Conference.

June Executive Director and Board Leadership Conference

Speaking of which, the Executive Director and Board Leadership Conference is currently being planned for June 15-16 at the Statler Hotel on campus. Each association Board President is encouraged to attend, along with their executive director. Past participants have remarked on the value of sharing with peers from other associations, learning about and providing input on system-wide initiatives, and the opportunity for dialog with the Director of Cornell Cooperative Extension, Dr. Chris Watkins.