A Case Study of Ohio State University Extension’s 2009 Organizational Restructuring: Perceptions from Area Leaders and Regional Directors

THESIS

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By

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Abstract

Ohio State University Extension’s administration implemented a restructuring plan in 2009, OSU Extension reorganized, maintaining a county presence in 88 counties, into nine multi-county areas organized with three areas in each of three regions. Within the new organizational model, nine Area Leaders and three Regional Directors were primarily responsible as change agents for ensuring Extension educational program services were provided to all counties despite a reduction in force and diminished public funding. The purpose of this case study was to describe implementation of an area structure in the OSU Extension organization, examining the processes used during restructuring and subsequent outcomes of that process over a period of approximately 20 months. Objectives were to describe, from the viewpoint of Area Leaders and Regional Directors with the organization, (a) how the Extension Education and Research Area (EERA) structure had been implemented within the nine areas outlined in Ohio State University Extension’s 2009 restructuring model, (b) what worked or did not work well during the restructuring process, and (c) what was working or not working as a result of the restructuring process.

Qualitative research methodology was used to develop a case study to answer research questions. All 12 Area Leaders and Regional Directors were invited and agreed to participate. A semi-structured interview guide was used to focus on answering the
research questions. Data were analyzed using a coding system and organized by categories related to each research question.

Significant findings from this study describe redefining staff roles in the new structure; creating structures for communication, program planning, and delivery; strategies, goals, and philosophies used in early stages; internal challenges and barriers to implementation, as well as external issues; working in the new structure; benefits to employees and programs; perceived challenges and barriers after 20 months; and what appeared to be working.

Conclusions drawn from the findings indicated that Ohio State University Extension evolved from singular to more collaborative county entities and specialized and connected educators. Underlying dynamics of funding, programming, and staffing affecting reorganization and processes were apparent throughout the study. Guiding change for the future may mean having a solid communication plan and preparing organizational members through more intentional and focused strategies.
This work is dedicated to my parents, Allan & Marsha, and my husband, Kevin.
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Fields of Study

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Chapter 1 Introduction

In decades preceding 2000, state Extension systems have had to decrease staff to fit into budget constraints but appeared to quickly return to their previous status of a local presence in every county when budgets were restored. Since 2000, at least 10 states have announced a plan to reorganize their Extension system. This trend is likely to continue to happen across the United States as state and local governments recover from the long-term fallout of the recent economic recession.

Restructuring is a major change process for people in any organization involving all levels from executive administration to clientele. For Extension, the process includes a variety of public stakeholders including local, state, and federal government as well as land-grant universities. Even though there are many consultants, books, and blogs that discuss the subject of organizational change, making change happen in an organization is not a simple process or selection of a single method.

The Cooperative Extension System has been in formal existence since it was created by the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 to disseminate knowledge of agricultural and home economics research from the land-grant universities to the public. There are partnerships between government, land-grant universities, and communities to accomplish this task. This entity that champions the idea of change agents has persisted through nearly a century of change in agriculture, home life culture, economic booms and
busts, and knowledge expansion. Over the last decade, 2000-2010, multiple state Extension systems have announced organizational restructuring processes coinciding with funding pressures. Even though the Cooperative Extension System is nationally organized under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the presence of Extension services is traditionally known to be in every county in every state. Economics and changes in funding on the local, state, and federal level have driven land-grant universities and Extension systems in many states to consider reorganizing this presence into multi-county or other aggregated systems to fit into budgets and deliver the same service as before.

Extension professionals often refer to themselves as change agents for the work they do that makes an impact on communities and people rather than as change agents within the Extension organization (Bloir & King, 2010; McCormick, 1967). This differs from the people within an organization who are accountable for creating change vision, strategy, and implementation for the organization. When the organization has to make the choice to reduce the workforce, restructure, and draw new lines in the field, staff members may find themselves working hard to maintain the practices they already know or be ready to embrace new ideas and changes. New duties and responsibilities are put into place to help manage the system through the change process.

In Ohio, Area Leaders and Regional Directors were responsible for assisting professionals and staff members with program delivery in the new Extension and Education Research Areas (EERAs) that were established in 2009 (OSU Extension, 2009b). Styles of leadership and philosophies on how to get work done may vary across
the individuals in these roles of Extension leaders resulting in different operations across multi-county or regional systems. These differences could have implications for employee behavior and interest in creating effective change in the future, the public view of the organization, and ultimately the continued service of providing sound research and education to the public. How the organization’s leadership makes this change happen within an Extension system restructuring process is not well documented or researched.

**Statement of Problem**

There is pressure on Extension systems across the United States to restructure staffing and program delivery. Administrators must rely on the ability of professionals in the field to make change effective. It is known that several states have restructured in a variety of ways within the last decade. Ohio State University (OSU) Extension announced the implementation of a restructuring model in March 2009 (OSU Extension, 2009b). A key feature of this new structure was multi-county areas called Extension and Education Research Areas (EERAs). Anecdotal information indicated that there were differing actions and characteristics in how the area structure was being implemented by Regional Directors, Area Leaders, and program educators (Kelbaugh, Smith, Martin, Earnest, & Marrison, 2010; Smith & Cochran, 2010). Information had not been systematically collected with regard to how restructuring has been implemented in the field, including how the administrators in areas have approached working together, delivering programs, and planning future outcomes. Therefore, it was not known if the results were similar across the areas or if leaders approached implementation of restructuring in different ways that resulted in varying experiences.
As change continues in the Extension system it is important to understand the process and learn from it, especially because Extension considers itself to be a learning organization (Rowe, 2010). The ways that each leader may be organizing staff, marketing, and communicating is likely to be different. They each bring their own style, attitudes, and aspirations to their job duties. The infrastructure that is created within each of the multi-county areas has implications for the future as personnel change and questions continue about the best ways to deliver and promote programs to the public. It is important to know how different or similar these areas are operating, organizing themselves, and delivering programming, and to understand what actions leaders consider more or less successful for the future of the whole system.

**Purpose and Research Objectives**

The purpose of this study was to describe implementation of an area structure in an Extension organization. It examined the process used during restructuring and subsequent outcomes of that process. Specific questions that were addressed include:

1. How has the EERA structure been implemented within the nine areas outlined in *OSU Extension Restructuring Model: A Plan for Continued Excellence* (OSU Extension, 2009b)? This would include areas of staffing; structure; roles and responsibilities; and planning, delivering, and evaluating Extension programming.
2. Within areas, what worked well, or not so well, during the restructuring process? This would include issues that are both internal and external to the organization.

3. Within areas, what worked well, or not so well, as a result of the restructuring process? This would include benefits or outcomes and challenges or barriers.

**Definitions**

**Administrative Cabinet**: Organizational decision-making is guided by the OSU Extension’s Administrative Cabinet. This group within the OSU Extension system includes individuals in the following positions: Associate Vice President/Director of Extension; Chair of Extension/Associate Director, Programs; Associate Director, Operations; Assistant Directors; Regional Directors; Director of Communication and Technology; Director, South Centers; Leader, Business Operations; and Leader, Human Resources. Throughout this study Administrative Cabinet may also be referred to as Administration.

**Area Leader (AL)**: An Extension educator assigned to share administrative services and fiscal management with their respective Regional Director and ensure equitable programming to each county in the EERA. They also act as an additional liaison to local commissioners and legislators, serve on support teams, and organize and oversee an EERA advisory committee. The Area Leader is also responsible for an educational program area. (OSU Extension, 2009b)

**Extension and Education Research Area (EERA)**: A grouping of contiguous counties organized using a tiered system to determine the number educators working
within the area. The educators within each area work as a team to conduct needs assessments; to develop, implement, and evaluate programs; to write impact reports; to seek grant funding opportunities; and to share marketing and promotion plans (OSU Extension, 2009b).

**Organizational Change:** A transition within an organization with expected results in efficiency and improvement of processes or performance.

**Restructuring:** A type of organizational change process that results in changing or shifting job functions or responsibilities and can include a reduction in force.

**Regional Director (RD):** An administrative professional within the Extension organization responsible for overseeing fiscal management, overseeing programming to counties, acting as a liaison to county commissioners and legislators, and conducting staff performance evaluations for their respective region. (OSU Extension, 2009b)

**Limitations**

Limitations of the study include:

1. Change should be considered a constant which was true during the study. During the time that interviews were being conducted, after approximately 20 months of the Area Leaders being in their position, Administrative Cabinet was discussing refinement to the 2009 restructuring model. In September, 2011, Administration announced that the Area Leader position would be phased out. Data for this study were collected prior to this announcement. Four Area Leaders retired at the end
of August, 2011 and were replaced with four interim Area Leaders (OSU Extension, 2011a).

2. This study represents the views and perceptions of the population of Area Leaders and Regional Directors in the Ohio State University Extension system and does not necessarily represent the view of the whole organization.

3. Generalization of this study is limited to the Ohio State University Extension system. Replication of this study conducted with other groups could likely find other unique experiences and perceptions.

Assumptions

It was assumed in this study that:

1. Participants would be honest and open about their experiences as Area Leaders and Regional Directors.

2. Participants would respond to interview questions as presented without taking into consideration the potential changes to the organizational structure that they may have had some knowledge about.

Significance of Study

Changing economic and social trends are likely to continue to affect the Cooperative Extension System resulting in broad-scale organizational change. Insight gathered from this study can be used by Extension professionals and leaders in Ohio and other states to consider factors, resources, or methods to assist staff with future reorganization efforts, adaptation and creative response to change, and integration of strategic planning.
Ohio’s Extension system can create beneficial changes in the immediate future that can help employees get a better understanding of the change process their part in that process. Other state Extension systems can also use this information to make organizational change plans more efficient and effective. Leaders of other organizations, such as non-profits, school systems, and public services who are considering similar organizational changes and processes and want to create a sustainable organization in response to change, may also be able to apply findings for their own purposes of change in the organization.

Because the topic of Extension restructuring is not well-researched, this study will add to the body of knowledge of organizational change in Extension systems. George Morse (2009) answered many questions about the processes used in Minnesota in 2004. Many other answers, as well as alternatives, are yet to be discovered about restructuring processes and their outcomes.
Chapter 2 Review of Literature

This chapter is organized to review the available literature on the Cooperative Extension System, beginning with a brief history of the organization and Extension reorganization trends across the United States. It then reviews general knowledge of reorganization in state Extension systems including a brief description of Ohio State University Extension’s structure prior to 2009 and OSU Extension’s 2009 restructuring model. The final aspect of the review is a summary of organizational change theories and models that have been identified as useful for this study.

Brief History of Cooperative Extension

The Cooperative Extension System is a nationwide, non-credit, educational system that has been in formal existence since 1914 when the Smith-Lever Act established the organization that partners land-grant universities with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) (Seevers, Graham, & Conklin, 2007). Prior to 1914, land-grant universities in various states were organizing opportunities to teach farmers about modern agricultural methods. These opportunities filtered over to the farm wives who also participated in the events that began providing demonstrations in domestic skills. Groups for boys and girls were also established to ensure they were learning about agriculture and household skills such as growing or canning vegetables. These groups were eventually formed into 4-H clubs (Seevers et al., 2007).
The position of county agent developed before the Smith-Lever Act was created. Several actions by legislators and the USDA created land-grant universities and agricultural experiment stations in each state (Rasmussen, 1989). Taking university teachings and experiment station research to the public began with printed communication sent to farm publications and redistributed to farmers in the late 1800’s. These printed materials did not reach enough farmers and printed information at the time was not typically well-received. Farm institutes and moveable schools taught by knowledgeable professors and farmers were also created and promoted as a more personable delivery of education and research. These institutes and schools travelled across many counties within a state. This was achieved using trains, mule-drawn wagons, and other means of transportation available at the time, but these methods were also considered to be limited in their ability to reach the audience.

In 1906, when the boll weevil attacked crops in Texas, a person was appointed to work with farmers in one county to assist them with recovering. This agent was paid for by local businessmen and the model was copied in other counties. In 1911, a New York agent was employed to work in a 50-square mile radius from the city he was stationed, but in a year, this district shrank to the boundaries of the county. This model influenced the structure of Extension, setting a precedent that “a county was a reasonable area of coverage for an agent” (Rasmussen, 1989, p. 38). The county agent is also known by the title of Educator in many state Extension systems (Seevers et al., 2007).

The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 provided for the funding and the framework for cooperation between partners to provide useful and practical information in agriculture.
and home economics to the public. This combination of many parts may be the world’s largest non-formal education system (Seevers et al., 2007). The cooperation is among three levels of public funding stakeholders: federal, state, and local government and three organizational partners responsible for cooperating on providing educational programming. At the federal level the USDA houses the Cooperative Extension System within its organization under the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. The USDA also works with 109 land-grant universities and public institutions in the states (National Institute of Food and Agriculture, 2011). The Cooperative Extension System facilitates the link between the USDA and land-grant universities and institutions by extending scientific knowledge and resources into local communities through employees known as agents or educators (Seevers et al., 2007). At the state and federal levels there are also administrative staff responsible for providing organizational support and oversight for funding and accountability. Extension educators traditionally work out of an office located within a county or a parish with support staff and other educators working with the traditional program areas to provide research-based information and educational programs. Educators may specialize in a particular subject matter within a program area. The four traditional program areas are Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR), Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS), Community and Economic Development, and 4-H Youth Development.

The mission of Extension work as stated by the Smith-Lever Act amended in 2002 is “…the development of practical demonstrations of research knowledge and giving of instruction and practical demonstrations of existing or improved practices or
technologies in agriculture, home economics, and rural energy” (Seevers et al., 2007, pp. 8-9). This mission is accomplished through approaches such as improving skills through sharing knowledge in educational training or programming events, identifying solutions to problems for clientele, and linking research or scientific knowledge to clientele requests.

As the Cooperative Extension System reaches 100 years, it has changed with the needs of people. Several laws and policies have reformed the Extension services and its initiatives (Seevers et al., 2007). It is known that the population of farms and rural communities in the United States has drastically changed during the last century. Even though the original mission of Extension was to provide research-based information for farmers and farm families, the need for Extension has not diminished. Extension professionals and research-based information also reaches out to urban and non-farm audiences.

**Extension Reorganization Trends Across the United States**

The Cooperative Extension System continues to serve the public but is currently challenged with many internal changes across the country primarily due to financial pressures from county and state budgets, what George Morse (2009) calls “the money crisis” (p. 4). Challenges for the Cooperative Extension System, according to Schmiesing and Safrit (2006), are balancing budgets under extreme financial constraints, integrating and balancing technology with tradition, reorganizing and reducing staff, repositioning efforts in a global society, implementing cost recovery strategies, and managing risks associated with community-based programs. While Extension
administration is dealing with these items of business, local agents and specialists are dealing with a publish-or-perish mindset (Smith, 1991) that may be preventing staff from conducting better business with clientele and expanding their audience. Tondl (1991) of the University of Nebraska points out a shift from disciplinary-based programming to issues-based programming, also known as interdisciplinary or integrated, that began at the turn of the 21st century. This shift was also supported by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities in Strategic Opportunities (2010), which pointed out the opportunity to improve personnel skills on issue-focused programs. The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities also pointed out organizational opportunities to modify Extension systems by adopting more flexible staffing patterns. The Cooperative Extension System seems to be at a crossroads on how to meet community needs and improve on research-based knowledge given the fluctuation of staff and funding.

Administrators must consider the financial stakeholder decisions when planning and managing organizational changes. State and county budgets continued to be cut back through the lengthened economic recession and recovery, which has caused many states to push through plans of restructuring and reorganizing. For a few states, the process is another trial in reorganization. In decades just preceding 2000, Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Nebraska, Ohio, and Michigan created models of county clustering, regionalization, and extension educator specialization (Morse, 2009). All of these states, except Nebraska, have recently reorganized again. They have been joined by Oregon, Alabama, Wyoming, and Georgia. Throughout these reorganization processes, state administrators try to preserve as many people as financially possible, but reductions are still inevitable. In
some cases, such as Iowa, retirements have assisted with decreasing the stress of eliminating positions and staff (Fischer, 2009). There is still concern about how to reorganize and restructure without having to worry about additional impending severe budget cuts.

There is not a cookie cutter solution to reorganizing Extension services within states. In 2002, Wyoming made its transition to an area model with extension specialists and county coordinators (University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service, 2002). Minnesota created 18 regional centers for educators or agents, while county staff positions were maintained if funded fully by counties (Morse, 2006). Iowa eliminated its district structure to implement 20 collaborative regions across the state (Iowa State University Extension, 2009). In Ohio, 88 counties were divided among nine multi-county areas which were assigned to three existing administrative regions (OSU Extension, 2009b). Michigan transitioned early in 2010 to thirteen multi-county districts of counties ranging from three to eleven counties each (Michigan State University Extension, 2010). University of Illinois Extension created multi-county operations with three to seven counties collaborating together (University of Illinois Extension, 2010). The Chicago metropolitan area is the only exception to this clustering. Georgia reorganized in a tiered system by allocating the number of educators or staff in a county based on funding available, leaving two counties without any staff support (University of Georgia Extension, 2010). Fostering collaboration between county educators and keeping a county presence appear to be major priorities throughout. Extension educators were asked to become more specialized based on priorities set out by each state’s
administration. Specialization and collaboration appear to be strong components in the restructuring process.

The fluidity of the organization to change is challenged by funding, community and public needs, and staffing. The big question appearing for the state Extension systems that have restructured is if their method to organize continues to provide quality service and information to the public while meeting the budget crunch. Each state has created a new way to define its structure in geographic terms of areas, regions, tiers, and multi-county groupings as well as redefining the job descriptions, locations, and specializations of educators or agents, field specialists, program assistants, and program coordinators.

**Reorganization Management in Extension**

Information about managing or leading in an Extension organization varies in published material. Buford, Bedeian, and Lindner (1995) devote a section in their book about management in Extension to organizing, with chapters on performance and change and development. They write that “an Extension Service needs to change continually in response to developments, such as evolving expectations of clientele, new technology, and changes in relationships with funding partners” and that organizational development is about “changing employee attitudes and behavior” (p. 103).

Throughout reorganization, the preservation of county input and youth programs, particularly 4-H, are fierce conversations at all levels of clientele. Tondl’s (1991) report showed that county board members, who are key stakeholders, were uncomfortable with the change in Nebraska’s reorganization, resulting in a perceived loss of power and
authority in program decision-making. Iowa used a futuring process in order to preserve citizen input on restructuring. Jack Payne, Vice President of Extension and Outreach, summarized his experiences with this process by acknowledging that the public needed and wanted more from Extension but Extension would have to provide this service with smaller budgets and more technology (Iowa State University Extension, 2009). After much debate, Minnesota chose to write business plans for programs in order to develop a better sense of program needs, funding sustainability, and stability of operations (Morse, 2009). However, very little has been shared about how current reorganization processes are being worked through in the short periods of time between decision making and implementing action. There is a great challenge to understand if the current reorganized systems will be sustainable for the long term and not just a short-term fix to budgetary problems.

The process used in reorganizing a state’s extension service is yet to be seriously studied. Increased educator specialization seems to accompany reorganization strategies (Morse, 2009). Studies have been done on the impact and perception of specialization and duties of Extension personnel during reorganization, but it is not clear how specialization impacts reorganization (Rockwell, Furgason, Jacobson, Schmidt, & Tooker, 1993; Schmitt & Bartholomay, 2009; Slocum, 1969). A 2005 study released by the Battelle Memorial Institute of the impact of Ohio State University Extension supports that the future is in a knowledge economy and Extension can achieve prominence working with teams and specialists to diffuse this knowledge. Cost-benefit analysis has been used by O’Neill and Richardson (1999) to demonstrate financial impacts of
Extension education. The pressure of developing specialists in a regional environment poses an opportunity to better understand the impact of the knowledge diffusion while county staff manages and coordinates programs. The decisions of measuring impact of skills, funding and spending, surveying clientele perceptions, making effective use of teaching tools, marketing effectiveness, and much more may be driven by decision-making politicians and university administration.

As land-grant universities and government work through service and budgetary issues, there are lessons to be learned in the process of reorganization, management of regional and county operations, targeting and evaluating impacts, and preserving funding. The situation is urgent as Extension services are threatened with extinction (Fischer, 2009). Recession, economics, and many other factors are likely to continue to pressure the status quo.

**Ohio State University Extension: History and Structure**

Ohio State University (OSU) is the land-grant university in Ohio created by the Morrill Act of 1862 (OSU Extension, 2011b). By the early 1900’s Ohio State University had established research farms and recognized the need for getting information to the people. Trains travelled around Ohio to teach and demonstrate about agricultural practices to improve production. Albert B. Graham is known for creating the first 4-H Clubs in the United States in Springfield, Ohio, in 1902 and later became the first superintendent of Agricultural Extension in Ohio. Employees called county agents were housed in offices in each county of the state and helped to get Ohio through tough economic times. Over the years, OSU Extension helped carry out New Deal programs in
the Depression Era, developed the Farm Science Review to exhibit the latest farm
technology, and established the Sea Grant program, the Master Gardener program, and
the Family Nutrition Program.

OSU Extension has changed the design of its structure several times over the last
three decades (J. King, personal communication, November 2, 2011). Some of these
changes were primarily administrative, grouping counties in a geographic area into an
area, district, or region for administrative and programmatic support; others affected the
geographic area an Extension professional serves and how programming is delivered to
clientele. Initial use of geographic groupings of counties for administrative and
programmatic support dates back to the late 1960s when OSU Extension began to
implement an area concept (C. Cunningham, personal communication, June 14, 2012).
In the early 1980s, the state reorganized into five multi-county districts with district
directors providing leadership for operations and district specialists supporting
programming. District specialists, representing program areas, were assigned to each
district with a focus on supporting educators and serving as a link between state level
specialists and county educators. In the late 1980s, OSU Extension experimented with
multi-county agents – Extension professionals who were responsible for programming in
multiple counties (Bartholomew & Smith, 1990). The five districts were sustained for
several years and then were downsized to four districts around the year 2000.

In July of 2004, the system was reorganized into three regions with three regional
directors providing leadership for county operations and coordinating with Extension
centers on program opportunities. Three centers, staff by center directors and Extension
center specialists were formed with a focus on program development, interdisciplinary programming, and applied research. The 2004 reorganization was implemented to assist in cost-savings from a 6% state budget reduction for OSU Extension (OSU Extension, 2004). This state budget reduction resulted in a 10.5% decrease in budgets for administrative and academic department units and an increase in the county cost-share for educators. In early 2009, Ohio’s Extension Director, Keith Smith, announced a new multi-county structure maintaining three regions, dividing 88 counties into nine areas (OSU Extension, 2009b).

Ohio State University Extension has provided several educational services and programs. Extension services have been maintained throughout the years despite a variety of changes in structure.

**Ohio State University Extension’s 2009 Restructuring Model**

In 2009, OSU Extension reorganized, maintaining a county presence in 88 counties, into nine areas while continuing the path of the strategic plan put into practice in 2008 (OSU Extension, 2008; 2009b). The rationale used to explain the reorganization was that economic constraints were putting pressure on the OSU Extension system to work in “new ways.” Extension Education and Research Areas (EERAs) was the term used to refer to the new multi-county units organized in alignment with already existing areas of the Ohio Resource Conservation and Development program (see Figure 2.1). These areas were named Maumee Valley, Erie Basin, Western Reserve, Top of Ohio, Heart of Ohio, Crossroads, Buckeye Hills, Miami Valley, and Ohio Valley. Each EERA has nine, ten or twelve designated counties. There was a tiered system for determining
the minimum number of educators in an EERA based on the funding available and other obligations. The four-tiered plan adds up to a minimum of 180 full time equivalencies (FTEs) for educators around the state.
Figure 2.1: Ohio Extension Education and Research Areas (OSU Extension, 2009b)
EERA Teams are the combination of educators in the EERA, Area Leader, Regional Director, and Assistant Director charged with developing, implementing, and evaluating the four program areas: Agriculture and Natural Resources, Community Development, Family and Consumer Sciences, and 4-H Youth Development (OSU Extension, 2009b). Regional Directors continued their administrative duties for the regions, the boundaries of which changed slightly to encompass three entire EERAs for each Regional Director. Each EERA was led by an Educator designated as the Area Leader to assist the Regional Directors with duties. Other teams included in the restructuring model are Extension Teams and Signature Program Teams. These teams were expected to meet as a group to address programming in those specified areas. State Specialists were expected to participate in the teams to provide guidance on research, curriculum, and teaching. Impact Area Leader positions were carried over from the strategic plan into the restructuring model to manage impact area research, programming, grant writing, and to work with the teams on issues related to the impact areas. These four impact areas were Enhancing Agriculture and the Environment, Strengthening Families and Communities, Preparing Youth for Success, and Advancing Employment and Income Opportunities. However, to-date, funding has not been available to fill these positions. Supervision within the counties was to be the responsibility of County Coordinators.

The *OSU Extension Restructuring Model: A Plan for Continued Excellence* (OSU Extension, 2009b) describes the allocation of resources to pay for educators and travel. The cost for educator services to the counties is shared between county and state. The
local cost for educators in the county increases when additional educators are added to
the county. Grant writing and donations are encouraged in the plan. One of the goals of
the strategic plan was to introduce development officers to bring funding to OSU
Extension (OSU Extension, 2008).

The restructuring model includes a disclaimer about being static or lasting
forever. Thus, the organization’s structure should continue to be evaluated and to
determine if it is the most productive and efficient model possible. While the model
includes staff expectations and basic directions for identifying with the new structure, the
accountability for the way change happens was given to personnel at all levels.

**Organizational Change Theories and Models**

People and organizations approach change in very different and independent
ways. Variables include individual histories, personality traits and style, organizational
culture, and current trends. Every combination of partners between the issues at hand and
the decision-makers could be tremendously different.

Kurt Lewin, a German psychologist, originated the term *organizational change* in
1951 (Green, 2007). Green (2007) comments that Lewin’s original concept of change is
considered too linear: unfreezing, effecting change, and refreezing. Instead, Green
proposes that change happens without boundaries or gridlines and with constant motion.
Green’s model is set in a honeycomb shape and includes six tasks and processes:
orientation, organization, mobilization, implementation, transition, and integration (see
Figure 2.2). Within the core are three fundamentals: mind-set, culture, and leadership.
Mind-set is how those involved with the organization approach change. Culture is the
way the organization operates and the identity associated with the organization. Leadership is the tasks, roles, and style of individuals throughout all organizational levels at any time during the change process. This is a conceptual approach to change management attempting to demonstrate a more structured and orderly way to deal with the unpredictability of change within organizations.

Figure 2.2: Tasks and processes in change management. From Change management masterclass (p. 7), by M. Green, 2007, London: Kogan Page. Copyright 2007 by Mike Green. Adapted and used with permission.
Green’s (2007) model of change tasks and processes works from the top of the honeycomb towards the bottom, while the core remains an interactive part throughout all tasks and processes. Tasks and processes are simultaneously occurring throughout organizational change processes. This conceptual model organizes and integrates several known theories and ideas about organizational change and is useful for understanding the integration of those theories and ideas in tasks and processes.

Harvard Business School professor John Kotter (1996) has analyzed organizational initiatives in terms of restructuring, reengineering, re-strategizing, acquisitions, downsizing, quality programs, and cultural renewal. Kotter’s eight-stage change process is developed from eight errors that he describes are associated with failure for organizations to make intended changes (see Figure 2.3). Kotter’s model is reflective of Lewin’s three stages. The first four stages are used to defrost the status quo; the following three stages are implementation and practice. The final stage is the grounding of the new practices into the organizational culture. Each stage is presented as an idea for moving through change with the understanding that any part of the organization could be at multiple stages at the same time. The eight stages are illustrated in Figure 2.3.
Figure 2.3: Kotter's Eight Steps to Transforming Your Organization. Adapted from *Leading Change* (Kotter, 1996).

Kotter (1996) also talks about the difference between management and leadership. Management is orderly and predictable, seeking short-term results. Leadership defines the future, produces change, and provides the inspiration to make change happen. He is adamant that successful change requires leadership over management. This is not to say that leaders are the only individuals with a role in conducting change, but a balance of
both leaders and managers is needed to ensure vision is communicated and then put into action.

Jim Collins (2001) conducted research about why companies can make great sustained success through change and published the findings as *Good to Great*. Collins’s team distilled the attributes of great success to develop a framework of multi-layered concepts. It is important to note that Collins conducted a retrospective study of publicly traded companies over several years; he did not follow these organizations from a starting point of change. Collins described his conceptual model as a process of build-up and break through, with a “flywheel” encircled around the entire framework, which includes three broad stages that each contains two key concepts (see Figure 2.4).
The first stage, “Disciplined People,” includes the concepts of “Level 5 Leadership” and “First Who…Then What.” Level 5 Leadership refers to the highest level of executive leadership within an organization exemplifying the traits of personal humility and professional will. This is not to say that every executive automatically has these traits, and Collins found evidence showing that corporations selecting celebrity-like
executives over Level 5 leaders – who were potentially created internally – were making a damaging decision for the business because the celebrity-like executives did not show Level 5 Leadership traits. For the concept “First Who…Then What,” Collins discusses that the first thing leaders should be concerned with is getting people on the staff who will commit themselves to making decisions and taking action for the future of the organization. This is an essential step to making sure people are committed to follow the leader when what is expected changes. His research showed that when the leader chose what he or she wanted people to follow before choosing the right people of commitment and character, leaders without the right people first had difficulty motivating them when things changed. Finding the right people and getting the wrong ones out of the organization also required rigorous decision-making.

The second stage of Collins’s (2001) Good to Great model is “Disciplined Thought” with two concepts: “Confront the Brutal Facts” and the “Hedgehog Concept.” Leaders need to be honest with the reality of whatever situation is present. “Confronting the Brutal Facts” is achieved through questioning, dialogue, consideration for what has happened without blaming, and building mechanisms to signal a situation that cannot be ignored. The concept is surrounded with the idea that every organization competing for the same clientele and using similar resources has to deal with similar economies and other harsh realities. Not being realistic and motivating people through incentives does not change the situation and can result in loss. The “Hedgehog Concept” is considered the turning point in the model from good to great. Collins found that most transitions occurred within a time period of a few years after a “Hedgehog Concept” was developed.
in an organization. Developing the concept took an average of four years. This concept is designed by three intersecting circles, each asking a question: (a) what are you deeply passionate about, (b) what drives your economic engine, and (c) what are you the best in the world at? The third question in the “Hedgehog Concept” seems to hinge on what an organization cannot do best and for what it has capacity to be the best at as well as adhering to a strict standard.

The third stage in Collins’s (2001) model is “Disciplined Action” with two concepts: “A Culture of Discipline” and “Technology Accelerators.” “A Culture of Discipline” could be described as connecting the disciplined thought of the “Hedgehog Concept” with the actions that are necessary to engage the organization in opportunities to grow. Opportunities that do not fit within the “Hedgehog Concept” circles should be ignored to maintain consistency between disciplined actions and thought. “Technology Accelerators” are the carefully selected technologies an organization applies to the organization’s “Hedgehog Concept.” Technology was used to boost the growth already present, but in great organizations technology was not used to make changes for the sake of keeping up with the rest of the world.

Good to great results for an organization are not a dramatic, momentous occasion (Collins, 2001). They are ultimately a culmination of the people, thoughts, and actions put into motion to create the flywheel effect. Conversely, Collins selected comparison companies that should have been successful but took a turn for the worse in their decision-making, discipline, and actions resulting in falling into a doom loop. Just because an organization does not get to the level of momentum and acceleration that the
“great” companies demonstrated in the study does not mean that all organizations find themselves in the doom loop and could be eliminated.

Putting change processes into action and achieving the visionary goals is a daunting task. While the concepts of stages and models for change presented above can help guide an organization through the process, there are people within the organization responsible for making this happen. Harvard Professor Todd D. Jick (1991) says there are three broad action roles in organizational change efforts: strategists, implementers, and recipients. The change strategist’s role initiates the change process, identifies the need for change, is the visionary for desired outcomes, and chooses who will be the sponsor and defenders of the vision. Change recipients represent the largest group in an organization. They must institutionalize the change vision. The key for this group is that their behavior determines whether changes happen or not. The most challenged group is the change implementers. Implementers must make the change happen by managing day-to-day processes, facilitating progress, and enabling the vision of strategists. The key for implementers is their responsibility to the demands of superiors while trying to gain cooperation from those below. Jick says implementers often fail to receive support from above, while recipients are balking, resulting in the feeling of having insufficient authority to make change happen. All members of an organization must be participants for the change process to be successful.

Organizational change theories and models can be useful in understanding the processes and changes an organization experiences. As concepts, these models and theories could be used daily or for major scale strategy and changes. Green’s (2007)
tasks and processes model is useful for understanding the scope of various ideas that can occur during organizational change. Kotter’s (1996) eight stage process model is useful for understanding where an organization or individual could be focused and how to proceed with changes at that stage. Even though Collins’s (2001) research is based on profit-making businesses his key concepts and findings appear to have very little to do with just making more money. Therefore, the concepts are applicable to other types of organizations. The key concepts in Collins’s model - leadership, who’s on board with change, facing the brutal facts, transcending tradition, cultural discipline, and accelerating technology - are all echoes of what is happening to Extension. Schmiesing and Safrit (2006) speak to Collins’s concepts of “brutal facts” including who’s on board, tradition, cultural discipline, and technology. Bloir and King (2010) reference more than 15 published documents spanning decades back to the 1960’s of issues that continue to be brought to Extension’s attention but do not seem to be resolved because Extension culture tends to avoid making changes internally to address these issues. They also challenge Extension members to consider using John Kotter’s eight-stage change model to focus on the act of implementing change rather than just talking about what needs attention. It is not known how organizational change models and theories are applied to restructuring in Extension systems.

Summary

The Extension system has been well established in the United States and Ohio for nearly a century. Travelling schools and farm institutes were the common methods of teaching farmers about current research and experiments from land-grant universities.
County agents and educators developed from initial placement of field agents in Texas and New York before Extension was formalized by the Smith-Lever Act in 1914. Today, Extension staff continue to serve the mission of Extension in four program areas: Agriculture and Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Sciences, Community Development, and 4-H Youth Development.

The Extension system is challenged to maintain the traditional county presence when funding resources are diminished. Other challenges identified by professionals and organizations are staffing patterns, moving towards a global society, changing community-based needs, and using technology. Several state Extension systems that have been through restructuring and reorganizing processes seem to have exhibited two trends: moving from single county entities to multi-county entities and increasing focus on educator specializations. Restructuring also tends to result in a reduction of staff.

The management used to implement restructuring processes in state Extension systems varies. Extension administrators in two states have used futuring processes and business plans. Maintaining a local 4-H presence seems to pose some resounding difficulty in reorganizing. Little research has been done across the United States to see how organizational changes have affected the challenges of funding and staffing that Extension systems are facing. Will these newest organizational structures be resistant to changing financial resources and responsive to community needs through adjusted staffing patterns?

Ohio State University is one of the land-grant universities created by the 1862 Morrill Act. Its Extension system has assisted with numerous social and economic needs
throughout the years. Ohio also has a 4-H program with rich history and tradition. After 1980, it is known that Ohio State University Extension has been through several periods of organizational change. Reorganization has ranged from multi-county districts to regions with regional centers. Most recent reorganization has been largely in response to financial constraints. By 2009, the system of 88 counties was organized under three administrative regions.

Ohio State University Extension announced a restructuring model in March 2009 (OSU Extension, 2009b). This model organized Ohio’s counties into nine areas, known in the model as Extension Education and Research Areas. The nine areas were equally divided among the three regions. A new position of Area Leader was created and implemented to ensure Extension’s educational programming would continue to be available to the public in all 88 counties based on county funding support.

The concept of organizational change is fairly new. Change models are prevalent today in literature on business and leadership. Three models were identified as useful for this study: Green’s (2007) tasks and processes associated with change; Kotter’s (1996) eight-stage process to transforming your organization; and Collins’s (2001) Good to Great model. Each model is unique. Green’s model encompasses several concepts and organizes them into a conceptual task or process that can occur in organizational change. It is useful for categorizing aspects of change that are commonly known or have been published. Kotter’s model is a process for leaders to use when implementing change that is expected to eventually become instilled into an organization. This process model is useful for gauging where an organization or individual may be during change processes.
Collin’s model is reflective of the success that corporate organizations had achieved over several years of time. This model takes time into consideration and offers a retrospective view of how organizations survived social and economic change, which could be useful in planning future organizational strategies.

One other theory on organizational change is about the different roles of change agents. Jick (1991) describes three major roles: strategists, implementers, and recipients. These roles seem to be specific to groups involved with organizational change. The implementer role is essentially a change agent because it is the most involved in dealing with day-to-day actions in a change process. Implementers can find themselves having difficult experiences in the management of the processes. Literature on organizational change and restructuring in Extension systems has very few references to using known organizational change models.

Restructuring is a process that takes time and patience even when change needs to be swift. Eliminating staff and minimizing spending are catalysts in creating major change initiatives within organizations. What does it take to develop and implement a strong team of leaders to guide the Extension system through changing times whether they are difficult, such as losing staff or funding, or a change in concept, such as developing issues-based programming? How does the team communicate mission, vision, and goals to its constituents and beyond effectively? Getting a better understanding of how the process has happened in Ohio may be able to help Extension staff within the OSU Extension system or in other states working through organizational change processes.
Chapter 3 Methods

The purpose of this study was to examine implementation of the *OSU Extension Restructuring Model: A Plan for Continued Excellence* (2009) by Area Leaders and Regional Directors including a retrospective view through 20 months of working with this plan. Qualitative research methodology using a case study developed through semi-structured interviews of these leaders accomplishes this purpose.

**Research Methodology**

Qualitative research is “understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (Merriam, 2009, p. 13). Merriam describes four characteristics for understanding qualitative research. The first is to focus on meaning and understanding, where the researcher delineates how people interpret their experiences in order to make meaning. The second characteristic is the use of the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. This human instrument is important for expanding, clarifying, and summarizing materials while providing necessary checks for monitoring biases and shortcomings. The third characteristic is that qualitative research is an inductive process. Merriam says that “qualitative researchers build toward theory from observations and intuitive understandings gleaned from being in the field” (p. 15). The framework is created around what is learned in the field. The fourth major characteristic of qualitative
research is a rich description. Data is used in the form of quotes, field notes, communication, and several other ways to support the description the researchers convey in their findings. Using a qualitative approach will build the base of knowledge to be available for future research.

A case study is defined by Merriam (2009) as “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p. 40). The bounded system means that it is a particular object or unit with boundaries that is to be studied. Case study design is an appropriate qualitative research methodology for “investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon” (p. 50). Merriam continues to describe case study as valuable for providing “rich and holistic” accounts that are insightful to reader experiences and playing “an important role in advancing a field’s knowledge base” (p. 51). The results can be useful in understanding practices that can affect future policy-making and actions. Using case study is a strategy to answer how and why questions when an investigator has little control over events and the focus is on real-life context (Yin, 1989). A case is an entity through which a construct such as leadership and change can holistically be defined, described, and evaluated (Merriam, 2009). Case study is relevant for the current phenomena occurring in Extension systems across the United States, particularly what has happened in Ohio during the OSU Extension system’s restructuring announced in 2009.

Interviews are common in social culture but are more of a systematic technique when used in social science research (Merriam, 2009). “Interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them. It
is also necessary to interview when we are interested in past events that are impossible to replicate” (p. 88). Merriam describes that a factor to consider when choosing case study research is if the number of people involved is limited. In this study, the case was a collective set of the nine EERAs and the three regions composed of three EERAs each. A census of twelve people was interviewed to collect the rich data needed for analysis. This was the limit of available participants.

**Research Context**

OSU Extension is a county-based educational outreach program provided through the land-grant institution, Ohio State University, as described in the Smith-Lever Act of 1914. There are 88 counties in the state of Ohio. County-based program personnel include educators, program coordinators, and program assistants. Offices also have support staff to assist with operations and functions in the office. The *OSU Extension Restructuring Model: A Plan for Continued Excellence* (OSU Extension, 2009b) outlines the new organization of counties into nine EERAs. Each Regional Director is given the responsibility to provide administrative and fiscal management to three EERAs in their respective region. A new position, Area Leader, was created to provide assistance to the Regional Directors in their duties. The Area Leaders are also responsible for conducting educational programming as an Educator. Their appointments are split between these two major responsibilities. Educators provide programming in Agriculture and National Resources, Community Development, 4-H Youth Development, and Family and Consumer Sciences working on both state and county levels. Within each county there may be program and office support staff to assist the Educators. Educators and program
staff are primarily responsible for what happens within a county in terms of delivering programs.

The research proposal was presented to the OSU Extension Administrative Cabinet for approval due to the nature of working with personnel. Permission was given to proceed with the study. The Office of Responsible Research Practices was consulted and it was determined that Institutional Review Board approval was not needed because the nature of data to be collected was considered to be public in nature.

**Participants and Sampling Strategy**

Participants included three Regional Directors and nine Area Leaders in the current OSU Extension system. A census was necessary because of the limited number of available participants. This method also ensures representation of all the EERAs. Regional Directors and Area Leaders are responsible for direct implementation of restructuring and strategic plans. They are described throughout this study by title or, collectively, as “leaders.” During data analysis they were assigned a code to maintain confidentiality.

**Instrumentation**

An interview guide was developed with open-ended questions for interviewing Area Leaders and Regional Directors. These guides were based on the research questions and a review of literature. Questions had probes to encourage discussion about when the restructuring plan was first implemented and current practices. Area Leaders and Regional Directors were asked a separate, but similar, line of questions (See Appendix A & Appendix B). Merriam (2009) explains that the semi-structured format allows the
researcher to be more flexible in terms of ideas and views that emerge during the interview.

**Procedures for Data Collection**

The case study includes a review of participant interviews for data for analysis. Interview guides were developed for gathering data from Area Leaders and Regional Directors. The interview questions were shared with two volunteers from Extension administration as a pre-pilot to ensure that questions were understood and complete. They were e-mailed a request to review the interview guides and return their comments to me (Appendix C). Pre-piloting interviews is a practice supported to help researchers and interviewers clarify questions and communication for the interview process (Glesne, 2006). Questions were refined for use based on the feedback received.

Each Area Leader and Regional Director received an e-mail explaining the research study (Appendix D). This included an invitation to participate in the study and asked them to confirm their availability for a two-hour interview time. All Area Leaders and Regional Directors agreed to participate and interviews were scheduled over a two-month time period. All participants received a phone call to confirm a meeting location and the time for me or a member of the graduate committee to conduct the interview (Appendix E). This was also followed with a reminder e-mail including the confirmed meeting information and emergency contact number (Appendix F).

Individual interviews with 12 Area Leaders and Regional Directors were conducted by multiple interviewers. I conducted 10 interviews with Area Leaders and Regional Directors. A graduate committee member was chosen to conduct two
interviews because these participants were in the area and region of my employment during the time of the study. This was done to avoid potential bias or error on the part of the researcher or the participants due to a working relationship within the region and EERA. The committee member selected is in an administrative position and separated from direct program work in the EERAs and counties. He was familiar with county office operations, which was appropriate for conducting the semi-structured format of the interview guide. Interviews were recorded using a digital recorder, then transcribed for analysis. To conclude data analysis, Area Leaders and Regional Directors were asked to provide a member check to verify interpretations of data and quotes used in findings (Appendix G).

**Procedures for Data Analysis**

The interviews from this study were used to create the case report. Interviews were transcribed by an outside service and I subsequently reviewed the transcripts. I shared these transcriptions with my advisors for peer review. Data analysis was an ongoing process once data collection began using constant comparison methods. This method uses a process for going back and forth between data and concepts to make better meaning out of findings (Merriam, 2009). I made field notes during each interview and kept a researcher log during data collection to capture insights throughout the process. Coding was used to assign meaning to bits of data. I used open coding throughout the data analysis process to identify information that could build the case report to answer the research questions. Open coding assigns words or concepts to data and can be used later in sorting for further analysis (Merriam, 2009). This initial coding was developed based
on the research questions. I scanned the transcripts for bits of information to be selected as useful and relevant and coded them based on my initial reactions. Researcher notes were added to the researcher log and initial theme categories were constructed. Category construction is referred to by Merriam (2009) as a method of creating codes. The categories created are an inductive analysis of the data. Merriam recommends that categories and codes stay flexible throughout this inductive part of analysis in order to allow for renaming, reorganizing, and re-categorizing. After codes and categories were paired with data, they are refined by testing the research questions against them. Merriam (2009, pp.185-186) outlines several criteria to help researchers in the deduction process such that deduction should:

- Be responsive to the purpose of the research categories – they are essentially “answers” to the research questions.
- Be exhaustive – all important data are categorized.
- Be mutually exclusive – if not, refine the categories.
- Be sensitizing – outside individuals reading the study can understand meanings.
- Be conceptually congruent – using purpose statements for each display and filling in subcategories.

I used Microsoft Excel to organize and sort codes and data bits purposely selected from each of the transcripts. The worksheets were then organized into a separate worksheet by region. Using Excel allows for sorting by code and filtering by selected word. Researcher notes and coding for lines of data helped to aid in this selection process. I used codes, categories, and other selected words to sort and filter data. Data
that supported a category were charted in a separate document under that idea and referenced for further analysis. Data put into the chart were highlighted in the worksheet so they could be easily identified as used. This supports Merriam’s concept of being mutually exclusive in the process of deduction.

I used member checks after analysis to verify quotes, interpretations, and descriptions. Participants were e-mailed a request to read a copy of the findings and respond with any questions or changes. The copy of the document sent to each participant was customized with their codes highlighted for easy review. A couple participants were asked specific questions to clarify data bits that were used where meaning could have been misinterpreted.

As data were processed for analysis, the graduate committee members were used for peer review. I logged changes, suggestions, and decisions as the data analysis proceeded. As the researcher, I reflected on my personal perceptions while conducting data collection and analysis.

**Trustworthiness**

Using strategies to prove authenticity of information and interpretation is important in qualitative studies. A collective case study analysis “adds confidence to findings” according to Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 29). Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Merriam, 2009) list four concepts for identifying trustworthiness and validity in qualitative studies. These are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Merriam’s (2009) list includes several strategies to incorporate these concepts into a study. In this study, member checks were used for verification of data

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used in findings and for permission to use quotes. Rich, thick descriptions were developed for transferability and understanding. Where possible, a researcher log was used to consider researcher bias and reflexivity and follow steps of the iterative processes used to develop a description of findings. This log was reviewed periodically by both the researcher and peers. My graduate committee advisors served as peer reviewers by auditing the data analysis process and challenging the interpretations explained in findings. These peers were selected for their knowledge of the Extension system and experience in evaluating qualitative research data. Transferability ultimately depends on the reader, but the intentions of using the findings of this study include Extension systems primarily within the United States and around the globe. Transcripts were analyzed and reviewed in a thorough manner so that rich, thick descriptions could be written to support the opportunity to use findings for the benefit of other settings. Data that were potentially useful were identified within the database with highlights or check-marks. To ensure that data were exhausted and appropriately accounted for required an iterative process, returning to the original transcripts and reviewing data for appropriate coding, categorization, and description.

The researcher is an aspect of qualitative research since they are the primary resource for collecting and analyzing data (Merriam, 2009). Merriam describes the human instrument as being more adaptable and responsive to developing understanding in qualitative research. The researcher uses their own understanding to explore meanings. Any person can impact a study with their own biases and subjectivity, but Merriam recommends averting this effect by monitoring biases and subjectivity
throughout the study. Maintaining responsiveness to bias and subjectivity is accomplished using steps to ensure trustworthiness including the researcher log tool to compare or clear thoughts about research findings.

As the researcher, I have four years of experience working as an Extension Program Coordinator and Program Assistant within the OSU Extension system. Growing up in 4-H for nine years, I learned about Extension and agricultural education and used my earlier collegiate studies and career to learn more about how agricultural knowledge was shared around Ohio. I participated in student teaching in a Highland County school district and held full-time teaching positions in Licking and Sandusky Counties. My career path changed and I learned about business management and customer service before the opportunity to return to teaching youth through 4-H. I have always been interested in making operations more functional and efficient. I believe it is important to gain a better understanding of an organization by learning about past experiences. As a former county-based Extension employee I also believe using a grassroots approach is a unique perspective on viewing those experiences and can be very valuable for anyone in an organization. This approach can be helpful to those in decision-making roles to build understanding of the levels within an organization and it can also be helpful for other colleagues to appreciate other perspectives combined to share a picture the organization as a whole. My experiences in 4-H helped me to understand descriptions of program needs and challenges while conducting this study. The knowledge of Extension terminology and programs besides 4-H were also very helpful in interview conversations and data analysis. I drew upon my other career experiences to stay as un-biased as
possible throughout the process. My own subjectivity was shared in a researcher log and other notes so that I could be aware of potential bias throughout the task of distilling useful data.
Chapter 4 Findings

The purpose of this study was to describe what happened during restructuring of the Ohio State University Extension system from the view of Area Leaders and Regional Directors. This study was not meant to decide whether they were successful or not in how the new structure was implemented. The intention was to show what happened throughout the approximate time period of 20 months from the beginning of the restructuring announcement to the time that this study began and the actions and decisions made by Extension leaders in the positions of Area Leader and Regional Director. In order to answer the research questions, Area Leaders and Regional Directors were interviewed individually using a semi-structured interview guide. Findings are presented for each question and are referenced with a letter and number code. These codes refer to evidence in the data supporting and describing the finding.

**Research Question #1: How has the EERA structure been implemented within the nine areas in OSU Extension’s 2009 restructuring plan?**

Defining and creating the EERAs was a part of the restructuring plan that was announced in March 2009. The state was already divided into three regions, but the regions were adjusted with new geographic boundaries. Each EERA consisted of between 9 and 12 counties, with each region comprised of three EERAs (refer to Figure 2.1 – Ohio Extension Education and Research Areas map in Chapter 2, p. 21). These multi-county groupings were designed to improve the efficiency of program delivery.
given current economic constraints. Specifically, the purpose of developing the EERAs was to “(a) allow educators to share their specialized knowledge across a broader geographic area and (b) allow OSU Extension to address local and state needs at a greater depth and in a more efficient manner” (OSU Extension, 2009b, p. 1). The plan itself did not appear to give any further guidance as to how the structure was to be implemented.

While the plan broadly outlined roles for staff, the task of implementation fell to the personnel with the new leadership assignments – the Regional Directors and the Area Leaders. Therefore, the first goal of this study was to understand how these leaders had undertaken implementation of the new structure. They did this by defining staff roles, creating structures for communication, and creating structures for program delivery.

Figure 4.1 shows a basic structural relationship and communication flow of Regional Directors, Area Leaders, county Extension offices, and local community. These are the groups of people most involved in the structural changes in the OSU Extension system. The Regional Directors are the administrative branch overseeing three areas with three Area Leaders as part of their team. Each Area Leader is responsible for the group of counties in their assigned EERA. In this example there are nine counties in the EERA, but in some EERAs there are 10 or 12 counties. For each county office, an ideal staffing structure is to have at least one educator for each program area, a County Extension Director who may also be an educator in a program area, program support staff such as program coordinators or program assistants for each educator, and at least two office support staff. Each county has a unique set of stakeholders who are county commissioners, Extension advisory boards, and other community members who have
partnerships with the county office. Clientele are all the people within a county who receive services from Extension. Several other staff members in the OSU Extension system were not included in this chart because they did not appear to have direct accountability for developing the area system.

Figure 4.1: Relationships and communication flow among staff in regions, EERAs, and counties. This figure does not show or infer supervisory lines or the official organizational chart of OSU Extension.
Developing Staff Roles and Levels of Staffing

One of the primary needs defined in the *OSU Extension Restructuring Model: A Plan for Continued Excellence* (OSU Extension, 2009b) was “to change the staffing pattern of OSU Extension to allow a focus” (p. 2) on “needed resources” including “research-based curriculum, the ability for educators to focus on their highest skills, and reduced time spent on administrative matters” (p. 1). Several staff positions were described from an organizational relationship viewpoint in the plan under Administration and Leadership including State Specialists, Impact Area Leaders, County Coordinators, Area Leaders, Regional Directors, Associate Chairs, Assistant Directors, and Program Assistants and Coordinators. The County Coordinator position was intended to be a modification of the County Extension Director. It did not go into effect and County Extension Directors did not change titles. For purposes of the current study, leaders were asked questions about their work in the area system as Area Leaders or Regional Directors as well as their view of the roles of educators, program support staff, and county-level office support staff within their respective areas.

**Regional Directors.** Regional Directors had been established in their position prior to the new structure, and they had even taken a part in designing the restructuring plan (744.H). Their administrative and leadership responsibilities according to *OSU Extension Restructuring Model: A Plan for Continued Excellence* (OSU Extension, 2009b) included providing oversight of fiscal management of the region, ensuring equitable programming to each county based on its fiscal support, serving as a key contact for county commissioners and legislators, and serving as a member of County
Extension Directors’ and educators’ support teams. They also had responsibilities to serve on the Extension Administrative Cabinet, conduct performance evaluations, and supervise County Extension Directors, educators, and Area Leaders. Their regions were divided into three EERAs each (see Figure 2.1, p. 21). Regional Directors were also responsible for “coaching area leaders in effective management practices and working closely with them to leverage organizational resources to address opportunities or issues that arise at the local level” (OSU Extension, 2009b, p. 15).

The role of Regional Director was viewed as a supporter (139.L). It was described as an operational role, dealing with budgets and politics (79.D) and helping to solve local issues, which often involve competition and money (471.H). One Regional Director discussed that information concerning politics, budgets, and operations is also shared with EERA leaders so they know how the Regional Director operates within their areas, because Area Leaders complement these operational actions (79.D). Regional Directors can go to an Area Leader if they have concerns about programming and share feedback from clientele (149.L). Regional Directors also talked about meeting with Area Leaders in their region on a regular basis so Area Leaders followed the same pattern such as meeting with each group of program area staff on a quarterly basis (14.L) or brainstorming about involving educators or support staff, problem solving, and meeting planning (270.H).

**Area Leaders.** The position of Area Leader was a new position created as a part of the restructuring process. People were asked to become the Area Leader by their
Regional Director (399.K). Their appointment to the Area Leader position was for 50% time. These Area Leaders were to oversee shared administrative services and fiscal management of the area, ensure equitable programming to each county based on their fiscal support, serve as an additional county commissioner and legislative contact, serve as a team member on the county coordinators’ and educators’ support teams, and organize and oversee the EERA advisory committee (OSU Extension, 2009b, p. 8).

The remainder of the Area Leader’s time was to be devoted to the program position of Educator that they had been holding in a county office prior to restructuring (39.J). The duties of being responsible for an area and being an educator seemed to overlap for the Area Leaders (350.D).

Once they were appointed, Area Leaders worked with refining their role, developing their position, and managing their responsibilities. Leaders described the role of Area Leader as being that of a facilitator (49.K, 36.A), a catalyst (52.K), a mediator (203.B), a guide (31.L), and a connector (251.J, 431.C). The role was also about balancing programming throughout the EERA (27.E, 42.J, 431.C), making sure meetings and communication occurred (36.A, 52.K, 162.B), and providing support (400.I). It was pointed out that the job description said “help assure the program happens in all of the counties based on level of funding” (582.A) and make sure programs are being planned, organized, and presented (349.D), which also includes orchestrating a sense of program organization (58.D).

One leader shared that their role is to pull people together and represent educators or administration as well as they can (443.C). They work with County Extension Directors to share information and ideas with co-workers (36.A), make sure they have
positive relationships with stakeholders (411.I), and make phone calls to see what’s going on (47.I, 85.J). One Area Leader was still working in the role of County Extension Director, which made her aware of the personnel side of the position (29.F). County Extension Directors operate from an administrative perspective, which is not the same for Area Leaders, so it was important to keep communication open between the two (905.C). Area Leader duties included calling meetings, making agendas, asking for needs and conversation topics for the agenda (50.K), communicating through a lot of e-mails (85.J), setting up face-to-face or WebEx meetings and county commissioner meetings, and attending advisory committee meetings or legislative meetings if invited (162.B, 100.J).

One leader shared that she had done work to help county commissioners understand the EERA structure (137.F). In several interviews leaders discussed that making an effort to make programs happen in or close to counties without an educator for a program area was an important priority (29.E, 48.A), citing examples such as covering vacancies in a county agriculture program and deciding how to take care of Master Gardeners (43.A, 173.I). One Area Leader also shared that she planned to make two visits a year to every county to meet with every staff member (88.J). Meeting with county staff was evident as an action for many of the Area Leaders, as will be described more in Research Question 2.

Even though it was helpful to identify program leaders to assist with organizing program meetings, the time involved with communicating was identified as a constraint for an Area Leader (22.G). An Area Leader did not want to discipline anyone if they were being resistant (915.B). One Area Leader admitted that his duties became more
operational and not as programmatic (153.I). Area Leaders also shared that people came
to them to vent, complain, and ask questions (68.A, 70.A, 262.B), and the Area Leader
has to be willing to listen even though they cannot always fix things (70.A, 263.B.). One
Area Leader felt she had suffered some consequences from administration for sharing
some information compiled from a venting at a face-to-face area meeting. However, she
felt sharing this information was part of the Area Leader role (71.A).

Another Area Leader said that the position has no power, which can be a good
thing or a bad thing (308.J). Area Leaders were not responsible for handling funds as
part of their duties (217.F) or conducting performance appraisals (415.A), but being
involved in county budget discussions was a role one leader was willing to participate in
if asked (41.A). The Area Leader position was viewed as a different level, not really
administrative, and the non-threatening aspect helped to allow more open communication
(417.A, 988.C). The position was also described as a “mixture of things” even though
the focus was on developing area-wide educational programs (28.F). Consolidating the
position to only educational programming was seen as a good aspect (205.J).

Educators. The position of Extension Educator in the new structure appears to
be a major role discussed throughout the OSU Extension Restructuring Model. In the
section “Positions, Responsibilities, and Duties,” the roles of the four program area
educator positions are described, each beginning with “develops and conducts proactive
applied research and education programs…” (OSU Extension, 2009b, pp. 9-10). The
four program areas are 4-H Youth Development, Agriculture and Natural Resources,
Community Development, and Family and Consumer Sciences.
The role that educators play in the area structure was to participate in area programming, but there were several questions about what this really meant (91.E). This sentiment was echoed by other Area Leaders, who were concerned with the tendency that people resort back to doing what they did before when they do not know what they are supposed to do (416.B). This attitude challenged Area Leaders when they attempted to communicate what was coming from state program leaders to educators but they had difficulty understanding each other, which was partly attributed to Area Leaders being most familiar with their own program area (20.G). Educator duties were described by one leader as doing programming as a team, conducting service, teaching, and research – especially if they are faculty – and working in other roles such as County Extension Director (219-226.A). Another leader discussed their belief that the roles of educators and program support staff did not change with the new structure (197.D) and that the responsibilities were still detailed in each of the job descriptions. Therefore, it is the responsibility of each person to understand what is contained in the job descriptions (188.D). Another leader talked about how educators should be sharing their specialization up to 25% of their time across the area and the state (274.J).

Area Leaders encouraged educators to identify specializations they could use in their program area and noticed that people were stepping up to take on responsibility within the EERAs. Educators were asked to select their specialization, that is, to identify what they want to do and to “get rid of some of the stuff” they do not want to do (367-368.I). This was a challenge for some educators in an area when they realized they all
had a similar specialization. They then had to identify a secondary specialization in order to step up and deliver that expertise for the area (130.H).

One leader talked about all educators needing to take a leadership role in area-wide programming because there were so few of them, resulting in each educator being responsible for a few topics or subjects as a key contact (172.F). One leader felt that everyone “pitched in” to participate, knowing the situation could be for the short term (263.I). This included acting as program area coordinating educators, also referred to as lead educators, to help set the agenda and identify topics to be addressed at EERA program meetings (29.G) and taking on mentoring roles (421.B). A leader expressed how educator roles had changed in a way to make people more accountable for what they are doing (433.B). She also felt that 4-H educators could allow volunteers to do a lot of the coordination efforts that seem to bog them down, overshadowing the educators’ ability to become experts in a subject (93-98.B).

**Program support staff.** Program support staff are county-based personnel whose responsibilities are described in the *OSU Extension Restructuring Model: A Plan for Continued Excellence* (OSU Extension, 2009b) as “to provide educational programming at the county level under the direction and oversight of the appropriate Extension educator(s)” and “for delivery and operational organization of the program in question” (pp. 11-12). Program support staff are program coordinators or program assistants who may be working full or part time. One leader described working with program staff as “interesting” because they are county-funded, therefore permission is required of the County Extension Director for them to be involved in out-of-county
programs, with an expectation to receive a return for those county dollars if they worked outside the county (240.I). Educators were easier to work with than program staff because of this distinction in their source of funding (245.I). The advantage of having program staff in the area system was credited to giving educators more time to focus on an EERA-wide project or specialization, because the program staff took burdens off educators related to county activities (381.I). In other areas, leaders felt they were able to be in contact with program staff and invite them to meetings and found that program staff were willing to go beyond county boundaries despite the funding challenge (241.A, 246.A, 312.H). Even though one area had only a few program assistants besides the Family and Nutrition Program staff (80.F), the Area Leader made the decision early on that program staff were just as important in the EERA as educators. It was left to the educator overseeing that program staff person to decide what type of impact their participation in area activities would have and whether that individual should attend a given meeting (88-92.F). In another area program staff were considered peers and equals in planning and coordinating whatever was happening for those counties (312.H). One leader believed that most program support staff were working as equals with educators and each has a specialization they can bring to the table and utilize (214.L).

**Office support staff.** Office support staff respond to the calls coming in to the county offices but are not involved in planning programming. However, one leader questioned what office staff do with calls and how do they know where to channel those calls in the area structure because educator expertise is spread across multiple counties (96-99.E). Although one Area Leader believed office support staff were also committed
to the area concept (249.A), another spoke about how support staff sometimes felt left out (89.J). Support staff were caught up in the stress of changes especially because they heard things from educators that could be inaccurately interpreted or perceived (160.J). This leader brought support staff together and asked them what they would like training on and pointed them in directions where there may be resources to help them (162.J). She tried to team up support staff within the area who were strong in an office subject matter such as financials so they could benefit from sharing knowledge on office practices across the area (165.J). Two people shared responsibility for work on websites used within the area (284.J). For another EERA, office staff helped to coach and mentor office staff in other counties on general or specific business questions (252.A). For other areas, utilizing support staff across the EERA was not done (153.K). One leader proposed that the lack of shared office support staff specializations in finance and technology was due to concerns that county commissioners had expressed in communication to members of Extension’s Administrative Cabinet (231-235.L).

**Levels of staffing.** Many of the Area Leaders noted that the numbers of staff in areas differed. Many of them cited having at least one 4-H educator for each county but not all counties had an educator presence in other program areas (12.F, 12.G). For ANR and FCS program areas, the number of educators was often about half of the number of counties or even fewer (12.F, 23.K, 12.G, 165.C). This resulted in these smaller groups of educators looking at strengths among themselves and working through how they would pull things together to do multi-county programming, including utilizing each other as teachers (23.K). Community Development seemed to be a special case, with
only one to two educators or FTEs present in an area (22.J, 12.G, 67.C, 12.F). The Community Development program educators seemed to collaborate with each other across the state to provide services rather than just within an area.

In summary, Area Leaders and Regional Directors had to refine their respective roles for the area structure to create a working relationship between themselves and the county staff, including educators, program support staff, and office support staff. Extension educators were asked to develop specializations and be more accountable for area programming. Program and office support staff were not responsible or required to participate in area programming or functions, although in a few situations participation on the area level was evident by their attendance in area-wide meetings and their help with business activities. The number of staff within each area varied and many counties no longer had a fully staffed Extension office with an educator in each program area and support staff to assist with conducting educational programming.

Creating Structures for Communication

Establishing and maintaining communication is vital to a change process. The Extension leaders in this study described communication happening on an area level in several ways. This communication was both internal and external. The structures created for communication included meetings, utilizing technology for sharing information, and creating resources to share. Communication methods and purposes used by Area Leaders and Regional Directors during the 20 months of implementing the new structure are summarized in Tables 4.1 and 4.2.
Table 4.1: Communication used by Area Leaders and Regional Directors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type, Participants, Frequency</th>
<th>Purposes, Agenda Items, Subject Matter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>County Office Meetings</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Area Leaders to County office staff</td>
<td>Introductions, questions, concerns, thoughts about area structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Initial non-reoccurring meetings in early stages of implementation</td>
<td>Learning about skills and abilities of staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program Area Meetings</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4-H, FCS, ANR, CD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Organized by Area Leaders within each EERA, some with assistance by a voluntary lead educator in each program area</td>
<td>Identify resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Educators, program staff participate</td>
<td>Programming needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Face-to-face, virtual</td>
<td>Team building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Multiple times throughout the year, varied per program and EERA</td>
<td>Media opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Specialization identification and sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EERA All-Staff Meetings</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Organized by Regional Directors and Area Leaders with County Extension Directors</td>
<td>Bring people together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- All county staff members: office and program support staff, educators</td>
<td>Program sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Assistant Directors of programs often participated or invited</td>
<td>Learning opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Face-to-face</td>
<td>- Support staff dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Once a year</td>
<td>Training opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Technology, diversity, program organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interdisciplinary programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Program meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regional Director and Area Leader Meetings</strong></td>
<td>Share strategies, successes, ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Phone calls, virtual</td>
<td>Learn new role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- At least weekly, as needed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regional Director, Area Leader, and Administrative Staff Meetings</strong></td>
<td>Not able to be determined from study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Mentioned by some leaders, but not clear from interviews about frequency of meetings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.2: Internal and external communication methods used by Area Leaders and Regional Directors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal Communication</th>
<th>External Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal Communication</strong></td>
<td><strong>External Communication</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-Face Meetings</td>
<td>County Commissioner Meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Social interaction, planning, training</td>
<td>Extension Advisory Committee meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual Meetings</td>
<td>- Organized by Regional Directors, Area Leaders, and County Extension Directors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Planning, training</td>
<td>- Expectations, implementation of the restructuring plan, benefits of new structure, introductions of Area Leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basecamp (online project collaboration service)</td>
<td>Email, Blogs &amp; Social Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Useful for storing documents, not for public use</td>
<td>- Sharing information with clientele</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs &amp; Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Skype)</td>
<td>County Websites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Useful for communication with groups of educators and staff as</td>
<td>- Links to news and information for clientele</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EERA Websites</td>
<td>- Calendar of events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Posting calendars, specialization lists, newsletters</td>
<td>Print Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Posted through regional office websites</td>
<td>- Newsletters, fliers, brochures, information to share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Websites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Links to published and marketing materials for educational programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print Materials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Upcoming program announcements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Internal communication.** Meetings were the primary form of internal communication structures used within the EERAs. When the leaders talked about meetings they described two important types: all-staff and programmatic. Leaders also discussed a variety of communication technology used to facilitate sharing information.

**All-staff meetings.** All-staff meetings seemed to be an important part of sharing and developing cohesion among staff members during the restructuring process. The
primary leadership responsibility of the Area Leader was to organize the all-staff meetings in conjunction with County Extension Directors (26.L). These meetings included learning opportunities for everybody, as well as time for sharing, time for meeting by program area, and time for support staff to dialogue. Leaders shared that all-staff meetings happened once or twice a year and all staff members were invited to these meetings, including office support staff, program support staff, and educators within an EERA. One Area Leader said that the purpose of these meetings was to “bring everyone together,” and one strategy to foster this interaction was to make sure no one from the same office sat at the same table (784.I). Other leaders described the all-staff meetings as opportunities for interdisciplinary program development (32.F) and program sharing (26.L). Meetings also focused on training opportunities including technology, such as using Moodle and Camtasia, diversity in 4-H, and how ANR and FCS each organized to conduct area programming (48.F, 141.H, 372.J). These were face-to-face meetings at a location selected by the Area Leaders. In one region, all EERA leaders were invited to attend each other’s area meetings (44.D).

*Program meetings.* Program meetings were scheduled and held quarterly for many of the EERAs. Program meetings had agenda items such as discussing media opportunities (99.D), creating specialization lists, planning of programs (34.E), or discussing ongoing issues (39.I). The creation of a media resource list was an outcome of program meetings (99.D) in at least one EERA; another leader explained that they created a media list early on (171.C). Program planning meetings were helpful in identifying resources, giving everyone an opportunity to participate in decision making, and listing
what programming needs were for the EERA (211.J). Another Area Leader said that program area meetings were intended to build a team, even if they were conducted via WebEx (496.A). WebEx was used as a means to conduct virtual, web-based meetings and decrease the amount of travel required to meet (33.E, 462.I). One leader spoke about how it would be nice to have webcams to create a more face-to-face feel for virtual meetings (559.J).

Some, but not all, Area Leaders shared that they asked for educators from each program area to step up by volunteering to serve in a coordinator type of role. The person in this role served as a lead contact to educators, scheduled meetings, coordinated, and set the agenda for these program meetings with the Area Leader (169.F, 29.G, 506.I). As one Area Leader stated, “It can’t always be me” (852.C) referring to not having enough time for taking care of all tasks. Another Area Leader chose to lead the program area that was her background (148.J). In one case a program area was led with two co-leaders (31.L).

The only exception to meeting in this organized way is the Community Development program. This smaller group of program educators met over the phone at scheduled times in addition to all-staff meetings (32.F, 115.I). Several leaders described having two or fewer Community Development (CD) educators working within their areas (12.F, 12.G, 9.J, 67.C, 27.K). One leader shared that they felt the CD educators organized rather quickly and were able to make decisions about EERA program planning faster than the other program areas. However, there was also an exception to this, as
there were a few CD educators who were very localized in their programming efforts (534.H).

**Communication technology.** The leaders used some technology to facilitate and support internal communication. Basecamp, an online project collaboration service, was a tool used to share information. One leader expressed that Basecamp was more desirable for storing documents compared with e-mail because it can be easy to miss someone in an e-mail communication but was not utilized by educators very much (60-64.A). Facebook, Twitter, Skype, blogs, and other social media were also used by educators to share program information with each other as well as clientele (86.E, 372.J, 227.F). One leader expressed that 4-H educators were more apt to be tech savvy because of their increased use of social media, Moodle, and Camtasia (222.J).

**External communication.** External audiences for Extension are clientele who participate in programs or use services, stakeholders including county commissioners and state legislators, and other organizations that Extension collaborates with to conduct programming, provide funding opportunities, or develop other working partnerships. Area Leaders worked with educators to encourage the development of resources for sharing information around the areas and made an effort to communicate the new structure to commissioners.

Creating resources and channels for communication with external audiences were prominent strategies throughout the areas and regions. EERA websites were created and seemed to be part of the regional website rather than a separate entity (94.K, 467.I). These websites housed county calendars, specialization lists, newsletters, and other
information that was deemed pertinent by the Area Leader. This did seem to be a challenge if clientele did not use the regional websites or had to find the new EERA website, as expressed by one Area Leader (374.J). Not all area websites were well-developed and were just at beginning stages (166.A). County websites seemed to be the main source of information at the county level for clientele. The expectation was to push links and materials to each other’s county websites (361.H, 107.K).

In addition to websites, fliers and brochures were sent to county offices to announce program information (359-361.H, 166.A, 107.K). For announcing events, e-mails were also shared with surrounding counties not in the EERA as well as all of the counties internal to the EERA lines (79.E). This type of marketing information was created for individual county programs and area-wide program information.

Specialization lists were shared with support staff who found them helpful for getting answers to clientele questions (37.I, 226.L, 103.E). A group of FCS educators developed their resource list with a go-to person in the area to answer specific questions and provided training for support staff to guide people to fact sheets (151.H).

Area Leaders also described experiences in meeting with county commissioners and county Extension advisory committees. One leader said that it was important early on in the restructuring to let stakeholders know what the expectations of the plan were and how the Area Leaders were going to follow through with implementing the plan (220.D). Another leader decided it was best to go county-by-county to deliver the message, to make sure she clearly communicated to commissioners about the restructuring plan (865.H). It was important to take time to listen to concerns from
Commissioners or legislators in order to develop relationships (230.C, 660.C). Commissioners expressed appreciation for visits and the opportunities for Extension staff members to work together under the new plan (577.C). County Extension advisory committees were also visited by an Area Leader to talk about the benefits of the restructuring (303.K).

In summary, leaders created structures for communication with internal and external audiences. Internal communication was accomplished primarily through planned meetings to develop educational programs area-wide and to provide opportunities for Extension staff to build relationships. Internal communication also included creating reference lists and resources that were used across the counties within each area. External communication was developed from the meetings with Extension staff and included marketing materials to share programs available to clientele within each EERA. There was also communication to stakeholders that leaders considered necessary in order to discuss what changes were happening in Extension during the restructuring process.

Creating Structures for Program Planning and Delivery

The EERA structure concept is essentially about working together in groups of counties to plan and deliver educational programs. Leaders talked about a variety of programs and decision-making processes for making programs available for clientele across the area. They also talked about locations of programs and the activities conducted throughout their areas. Leaders were asked about the types of evaluation that were known to be used in their EERAs.
**Program planning.** Planning and developing opportunities is an important step to delivering educational programming. Planning programs across multiple counties was not formally being conducted around Ohio, with a few exceptions. Leaders started work on developing area-wide program planning by making it the focus of program meetings with educators (17.L). The discussion included considering what issues have come up and what can be done area-wide that was not already being done (69.I). The question one leader proposed to his staff was: “How could [educators] more effectively and efficiently use the resources” already available? (17.L). Another leader encouraged educators to meet by program area or all together within an EERA to do some planning because she believed people would be most productive that way. She wanted people to think about themselves as one unit rather than individual counties when creating plans for area-wide programs (41-48.H). Examples of this joint planning included:

- Planning Food Animal Quality Assurance program activities and publicizing each other’s dates (84.H)
- Using the same certificate for all counties within the EERA so 4-H members could get it signed and return it to their home county to verify participation in Food Animal Quality Assurance Training (99.K)
- Using already-existing county contact lists to send out area-wide ANR newsletters which also announced current research being done (115.C, 146.C)
- Agreeing to write and share FCS news articles to cover subject matter gaps within the area and ensuring the authors would be identified so clientele
would recognize information was coming from other locations and experts (158.H)

- Hosting 4-H area-wide advisory committee dinners and exchanges to share with people, get acquainted, and start thinking of more ways to work together (19.K)

Grant funding provided an impetus for collaborations that brought people together to work on joint programming. In one area, most people seemed agreeable to working with the topic of local foods, so they met together to develop a plan with several different components that involved all program areas (200.J). The 4-H and FCS educators used the $25,000 given to the EERA from state administrator funds to design a food safety magnet to be used at farmers markets and worked with ANR educators to get banners and posters to put in counties (102.J). ANR educators also helped with creating a teaching outline, getting resource materials, and doing training with farmer’s markets (206.J).

Another example was a group of educators working with the Dining with Diabetes program, who used a grant to hire a professional video company to do a virtual tour of a grocery store as an educational component of the program (483.C, 155.D). Another group of FCS educators took turns to travel to counties without educators to do programming (54.J), as well as presenting the same topics across the EERA (56.J). A CD educator contributed to an EERA newsletter even though that program is structured differently and the educators have statewide responsibilities (27.K).

Multi-county program planning was already working as a strategy for a few specific groups before the area restructuring was implemented. These groups continued
to work in this way during the transition (31.K). ANR educators had already been working together to do cluster programming, especially for pesticide training, so it was more natural for that group to embrace the EERA program concept (170.L). Another leader shared that Pesticide Applicator Training programs continued to happen on their own without extra urging (53.A). Farmers were already used to travelling distances for Pesticide Applicator Training which was held in four locations around one EERA (190.F). A leader explained that 4-H camping programs in several counties had been working together prior to the area restructure, because the camps are organized by age groups and not by county (21.F). In another area, 4-H had been conducting multi-county Food Animal Quality Assurance training (98.F). This leader also believed that a lot of clientele were already used to seeing someone other than their own county educator at an event and no one thought anything about having youth from multiple counties at one event (185.F). It was not evident if the FCS program had been conducting any multi-county programming prior to the area restructuring.

**Cost recovery.** Discussions of program planning included the subject of cost recovery. One method of cost recovery is charging fees to participants. Cost recovery was generally maintained on a county basis (121.E, 441.I) and did not happen on an area level (303.A, 459.I). Leaders discussed fees, grants, travel, and reciprocity as subjects of funding. As one leader put it (423.H), “Almost everybody’s doing cost recovery in some way or another. Have we done it as an area? That’s a good question.” ANR relies on Pesticide Applicator Training for cost recovery (362.J, 106.G). Some counties were still working through the choice to charge for programs such as 4-H Food Animal Quality
Assurance training (108.G) and PAT (708.C). When some counties who had not charged for Pesticide Applicator Training in the past began to charge as an area-wide policy, the leader acknowledged that they did not get a lot of complaints (708.C). Fees are also charged for ServSafe and Dining with Diabetes (722.C). One leader believed that most ANR and FCS program costs are covered, but 4-H was not bringing in enough money except to plan the next program (207.L). It was believed that Extension has not charged enough for programs and the mindset is not recognizing the true value of programs (452.I). The agreement on sharing time and money varied across the areas.

**Program delivery.** During the interviews Area Leaders and Regional Directors discussed several examples of area-wide program events that had happened over the past two years. There were several programs that occurred across most or all EERAs.


The ANR educators did field days for pesticide applicators, Manure Science Review, and Agronomy Days (154.C, 57.E). They also worked together for conducting Pesticide Applicator Training and recertification, farm management programs, record-
keeping classes, and putting together resource guides, area newsletters, and blogs (33.K, 322.I, 60.E, 153.D, 126.B, 126.C, 132.C, 483.I). A virtual beef workshop was conducted from one site and delivered across the state via web casts. Over multiple nights clientele had access to specialists from all over the state who were able to converse with and get immediate feedback from participating producers (109.H, 62.G). They encountered some technology difficulties, but worked through them, learning how to be effective with the technology available and wondering what other type of technology would be effective to conduct a virtual educational program (117.H). ANR educators also agreed to take pictures of plant disease issues in the field using flip video cameras so they could share with other educators to help identify the problem (286-291.D, 481.I).

There was collaboration between CD and ANR educators on Marcellus Shale information, which was a hot topic in the area (49.G). This program also crossed over area lines, with the specialist responsible for the topic of gas and oil traveling to a more northern area to conduct programs (216.K). Another collaboration of FCS and ANR programs was a Field to Table program for venison, processing and preserving deer meat in conjunction with Hocking College and the local vocational school that was well received by program participants (40.G). Annie’s Project, a program to involve women in agriculture, was conducted by four to five counties in one area (25.K).

Other programs conducted in areas, but more specialized to certain areas, that were identified by leaders included prescription drug abuse through Sea Grant and FCS, parenting classes, Backyard Farmer classes, cheese classes, a 4-H Livestock Extravaganza, and I Move With 4-H (73.B, 121.B, 709.H, 322.I). In addition to Dining
With Diabetes, Signature Programs designated by the Administrative Cabinet that were conducted in areas included Real Money, Real World (322.I), Why Trees Matter (483.C), and Increasing Agronomic Yield (490.C). One EERA’s educators asked an out-of-area educator to come in to conduct Dining With Diabetes programs (490.C).

**Program location.** Another component of conducting area-wide programs is where to locate them so that it is done as a multi-county effort rather than county by county. The question was what programs could be done in a strategic location targeted towards particular populations (19.L) and meet counties’ needs (37.K). One strategy was to conduct an event on one side of the EERA and a similar event on the other side to accommodate for travel distance (93.I). How far is too far depends; as one leader said, an hour and a half is too far away (198.F). It was shared that 4-H and Master Gardener volunteers do not want to travel too far for training, which was a struggle for an area (191.F). A group of 4-H educators surveyed 4-H volunteers and found that people generally did not want to travel any more than 30 miles to an event (92.I). One leader questioned getting 4-H volunteers to travel 15 miles for a training event and considered that the economics of the times are keeping people from spending more time on the road. It should also be taken into consideration about asking teenagers to drive two counties away when planning a program location (699.H). The decision for coordinating locations for classes pulled residents in from other counties (173.H). Locations could be more central or near a border in a neighboring county for access. By doing this you could tell county commissioners you delivered programs in your county and also served those who need the program.
Program evaluation. Several examples of area-wide program evaluation were shared by leaders. However, Evaluation of Effective Extension Teaching documents, typically used by OSU Extension professionals to allow program participants to evaluate the quality of teaching, were used frequently as well (172.D, 70.E). A local foods program evaluated people’s interaction with materials and a poster and their connections to Extension (240.J). Educators who conducted a food preservation program all used the same evaluation materials created for the program (253.J). In other areas, evaluations were completed with Food Animal Quality Assurance and Pesticide Applicator Training (128.K), Small Farm College (372.H, 636.C), field days at the research farm, camping (154.F, 159.F), agronomy school (71.E), Field to Table venison program (393.H, 80.G), and ServSafe (636.C). The virtual beef workshop evaluation also collected information on economic impact for producers who attended (376.H).

In another area there was a plan to use an audience response system (i.e., “clickers”) to collect the evaluation data for an area-wide Workforce Prep program, and the project had been approved through an Institutional Review Board process (388.H). Sometimes results of programs came through unsolicited means, such as a resident in a southern Ohio county who viewed an online video that was posted on another county Extension website; he reported that he saved money because it influenced his agricultural practices (381.H).

Developing program evaluation was apparent for individual programs, but not set up for area-wide use (69.E). An exception was Signature Programs, which have evaluation tools built in (403.B). One leader was concerned that not everybody uses
evaluations, which limits data available to use and impact statements therefore are written differently (254.J). Other evaluation had been done for area meetings in order to get ideas about future training, not necessarily for impact (177.D, 246.J).

In summary, leaders developed structures for program planning and delivery across their areas. Meetings scheduled for the purpose of program planning also provided opportunities for collaboration on obtaining grant funding and developing agreements for cost recovery. Leaders gave examples of programs that were being offered on an area-wide basis and shared the importance of strategically locating program events for clientele to access. Evaluation of area programs was limited to using individual evaluation for teaching and some programs that had pre-existing evaluation materials.

**Research Question #2: Within areas, what worked well, or not so well, during the restructuring process?**

Leaders were asked to take a step back in time and think about when the restructuring plan was announced, when Area Leaders were put into their position, how EERAs developed, and Extension staff began working to implement the new structure. They reflected on what worked well and what did not work as well during the restructuring. Findings include strategies, goals, and philosophies used by leaders; what worked for this group of leaders in the early months of working in the area structure; challenges and barriers to implementing the restructuring plan; and other external issues relating to the work Area Leaders and Regional Directors dealt with.
Strategies, Goals, and Philosophies

Area Leaders were announced in spring 2009 (OSU Extension, 2009a). Approximately 20 months later, when they looked back to the beginning of their assignment, leaders shared having goals, strategies, or philosophies that guided them in the restructuring process. A couple of the leaders expressed this as “just making it work” (846.H) and “make it the area concept” (862.B).

Initial ideas and concepts. Pulling groups of people together was an important action as we talked about goals Area Leaders and Regional Directors had at the beginning of restructuring. Leaders felt a major priority was to bring together educators from the program areas and get everybody working together as a group (38.C, 256.E). The leaders described the effort to establish the area concept with everyone in a variety of ways: moving ahead as a team “so we know who we are and how we can function” (26-27.A), having everybody promoting and conducting things together (42.C), “getting everybody to work towards a common goal” (285-286.E), getting “something accomplished” (913.C), and working together more even on a regional scale (151.B, 6.D). A team approach through team building and sharing was considered the way to work in one region (49.D). This was further explained as maintaining cohesion, encouraging communications, encouraging teamwork, and promoting collaboration and openness (449.D).

Learning about skills and abilities of people and programs within their EERA (526.J, 537.J) was important as well. Putting cross-county programming as a priority was also evident (40.C) as well as encouraging creativity with “new ways to be useful to
An ongoing goal for the area concept was to have better sharing and use of specializations, not just duplicating services (862.B). Developing high quality programs was also a goal (258.E).

**Developing relationships.** Getting staff members together had another function in helping them understand the changes that were happening, such as giving clarity to why things should or could be done in a particular way (449.D), trying to ease concerns (273.E), finding out strengths and fears, and putting those fears to rest, which included the reassurance that their jobs were not coming to an end (468.J).

Getting to know people was also a high priority action taken by Area Leaders early on in order to make connections personally (468.J). By making visits to county offices one at a time, the Area Leaders were able to get to know staff members’ expectations and things they have heard (279.E) and to share their role with them (591.A). This was particularly important for one Area Leader who had not been working in the area before the assignment; she felt that it could be easily assumed that all counties are the same but they are not (875.B). In another area, visiting county offices gave the leader an opportunity to talk with commissioners and staff, to ask questions about how they saw the model working for them, and to let them know who they could contact if they felt it was not working (174.K). County visits took about six months to complete and felt like a good place to start since she had not worked with most counties in the area either (323.K).
Figuring out ways to move people to the next level of working in the area structure was a problem a leader proposed solving by answering the question of how she could motivate staff in the area to try something new (539-540.J). Another way to move to the next level was to recognize different strengths that everybody had (284.E). One leader shared that she had to work on relationships in the beginning and try make sure people understood that she was not above other educators as they were figuring out what they were doing (456-459.F).

In summary, leaders shared strategies, goals, and philosophies during interviews. The initial ideas and concepts that leaders talked about seemed to reflect a positive attitude towards working together as a team and ensuring that Extension program efficiency and offerings were a priority. Several leaders shared experiences about how important it was to develop relationships with people, which they did by taking time to meet Extension staff members in county offices or the local stakeholders. Learning about people’s skills and abilities also seemed to be a key element in developing relationships

**What Worked**

Leaders made several actions at the beginning of the restructuring process as they took on their roles and went about accomplishing their goals. Findings include how leaders decided to set the stage for communication with stakeholders and county office staff members, how they identified strengths of educators in each area, how they made decisions, and how they took actions in EERAs.

**Setting the stage for communication.** In one region, the Regional Director and Area Leaders decided to have meetings with all the commissioners to give them an
overview of the restructuring and its benefits (15-19.D). Area Leaders also let Regional Directors know that they wanted to have meetings together to share strategies and successes and ideas to help them learn their new role that was designed to only give leadership to programming (235.H). As reflected in their goals, many Area Leaders took time to visit county offices, meeting with educators and support staff in small groups or even individually if they did not know them (267.E, 42.F).

**Identifying and sharing strengths.** One area did a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis to figure out what was positive but also to identify things to work on, which resulted in the creation of a media contact list (362.F). Media contact lists were used to send out news releases and promote programs across the area (119.F), get word out if there was a cancellation in bad weather (59.F), and share the EERA name with the public because it needed to be communicated with them (147.F). Area calendars were put together with the help of the regional office creating a master list of programs being offered, which gave counties a resource to refer to if they were looking for a specific type of programming or training (115.F).

Educator expertise or specialization lists were also made to identify two or three topic areas to help support staff know whom to contact for knowledge about a particular subject (176.F, 351.H). Creating specialization lists started in one of the areas and then everyone seemed to decide they needed to do this (357.H). One leader thought that identification of specializations, who and what we are as an EERA, and what we can do to make each other’s lives easier, started in early autumn of 2009 (660.I). This was also described as “going piece by piece” and “program area by program area” (680-681.I).
Another leader described an effective team of 4-H educators in an area who started by identifying strengths and followed the instructions of the Assistant Director of the program to select a primary, secondary, and tertiary specialization. The group took it seriously to fit the needs of the EERA and was purposeful about filling gaps in specializations (51.L).

Another list that was created in an area was useful for answering garden questions. The list was for contacting counties with educators or Master Gardeners who were available to take these questions. It included the time that someone was expected to be available if contacted and was shared with office support staff across the EERA (116.K).

**Intentional decision making.** Other decisions at the beginning of the restructuring process included identifying lead educators, instituting cost recovery fees and reciprocation, sharing information, and holding discussions with county extension directors. Lead educators were identified within each EERA as coordinators for each program area; a leader shared that he asked County Extension Directors to be lead educators so that there could be a sense of less threats to them by the Area Leader (653.I).

Discussion in one area of what was fair for reciprocation between educators for conducting educational programs across county lines became a basis for deciding to charge $50.00; this amount was conceived of as covering mileage, but not staff time, to conduct the program (146.J). Another leader shared that the decision to make sure authors were identified when publishing articles from another county was so residents would realize they were getting resources from somewhere else (166.H).
Areas also planned to promote programs via websites, pushing information to other county websites, and sending fliers to counties to include in newsletters (174.J, 189.C, 178.A). A web page was designed and posted to the regional website for each area to post calendars and share with people (345.H). One area used an office support staff member to develop the area website, but there was a question about that person’s use of time since they were funded by county commissioners (177.C). One leader felt that a group of 4-H educators within their area accomplished program promotion the best by pulling their advisory committees together across the EERA including hosting a meal and talking about marketing of the EERA (178.J).

The availability of funding for programs, supplies, and education was an aspect of the restructuring that facilitated programming in the EERAs. Early in implementation of the area structure, Administrative Cabinet provided each EERA with the opportunity to apply for grants totaling $25,000 per area to initiate some effort or program (183.H). In one region all three areas bundled the opportunity and worked as a team to apply their grant money towards technology (10.D, 331.A). The grant money was used to get people comfortable with technology, specifically for signature programs. The hope was that the equipment would also be used for something else beyond its initial use (344.A, 499.C). Counties each got a microphone and flip video camera and also conducted training on using Camtasia, Moodle, and Facebook (337.A). Besides the in-services conducted at the beginning of the grant period, they also had in-services at the end to show what they did with the technology resources (341.A). In another region, each area chose its own projects to spend the state money on (189.H). Funds were also used for technology, for
instance, by purchasing flip video cameras, wireless microphones, and laptops (117.G, 193.H). Training for using Camtasia software was also conducted and one area required educators to record two video segments (193.H). In another area, decisions were made by educators in a program area on how to spend money on resources and equipment that were needed (213.J). It was shared that grant funding accounts for almost 15% of Extension funding and other grant resources have been used besides the one-time state funds (426.H). Other leaders also commented on other grants that were being received by FCS (248.C) and 4-H educators (248.D). One leader thought that the ability to receive grants was due to a lot of senior team members in the area (229.D).

**Concept to action.** Leaders shared many other thoughts about what worked during the restructuring process. The area concept was a subject that took time in 2009 to discuss what it meant, figuring out how the concept would work for a group of counties defined as an area (53.E), and “pulling people back” to see the bigger picture of how it can be most effective and avoid duplication of efforts (60.H). This was also about wanting people to have a better understanding of what neighbors are doing and getting to know one another again (63.I).

Another approach was trying to see what other people thought about what an “area” meant using other people’s feelings as a basis for a discussion, because their lack of knowledge of where a leader was coming from made it difficult to persuade them to go along with ideas (815.B). Staff in the agriculture program said they have always done things this way (119.L), that is, using statewide teams operating as another layer on top of the areas, which was part of the plan (546.H). Several counties who camped at one of the
4-H camps had already camped together by age levels instead of each county educator being in charge of a camp, so it was an easier transition to do programming together (322.H).

The need or ability to come together in this way could be attributed to counties within the region having lower budgets and less people; working together was natural and people saw value in it compared to counties with larger staffs and budgets. This leader felt that it seemed previously larger staffed county offices and budgets were affected by diminished budgets and loss of staff in such a way that it was difficult to try to accommodate so much change and keep a county presence (501.H) in the way these once well-off counties had known.

One leader expressed that he wanted people to realize we can get through a county fair this way then determine what worked and what did not (204.I). Another expressed that if the area concept was going to be successful it has to be done with a team approach (283.E). Another leader told staff in her EERA “this is where we are and this is where we’re going to need to go” and we have all moved forward (598-600.A). A leader stated that “sometimes you just got to jump in with both feet and not know what you’re doing…none of us really knew what we were doing” (809.B).

In summary, leaders reflected on the decision and actions they considered to have worked in accomplishing the implementation of the restructuring plan and their initial strategies, goals, and philosophies. Setting the stage for communication was the initial set of agreements tied to identifying who leaders needed to speak to and what needed to be said in those meetings. Leaders used a variety of ways to identify and share strengths,
which was primarily creating resources that could be useful in providing information such as media lists or Extension educator specialization lists.

Leaders talked about the decisions they made such as identifying lead educators for program areas, instituting cost recovery fees and reciprocation agreements, sharing information via websites, and having discussions with County Extension Directors. The results of these types of decisions and actions did not seem to be consistent across all areas. All EERAs received grant funds from the Administrative Cabinet, which created a series of decisions within each EERA about how to spend those funds that leaders had to supervise; areas differed in how these funds were spent. Leaders also seemed to take some time with staff members in their respective EERAs to refine the meaning of what area programming was pertaining to the restructuring plan and how to put it into effect in the counties.

**Challenges and Barriers to Implementing the Restructuring Plan**

Leaders were asked to share thoughts on what did not work during restructuring. These challenges included different sources and levels of funding, different levels of staffing, resistance from staff, managing work load in the area, programming issues, and other challenges they had early on.

**Different sources and levels of funding.** Funding was stated as the biggest challenge for counties according to one Area Leader (954.C) and was apparent in other discussions (65.D). Getting “wiped out” of county funds caused a lot of frustration within the county but affected county staff in terms of how much they were able to participate in area activities and programming, but they were able to work out an
agreement to do what was needed (954.C). Because of severe county cut-backs, counties were not to be able to afford the cost share for the county, even though it is far below the total cost of an educator (71.C). Many counties in the area had 100% budget reductions over the previous few years, one county being completely privately funded for about four or five years (81.C). Another leader expressed concern for a county “on the fringe” without funding and another county that was solely grant funded; these funding situations were causing issues for educators to go outside of county borders to do Extension work (611.A). Another leader stated that there were more levy counties within her region than any other (441.H). In levy counties, the county appropriation for Extension services is raised through a tax levy rather than allocated from the commissioners’ general funds.

**Different levels of staffing.** Some county Extension offices were in situations with smaller budgets and less staff, but EERA Area Leaders and Regional Directors were responsible to find ways to make sure programming that was promised to citizens continued to be offered without being an undue burden to other counties (65.D). One leader shared that economically depressed counties are a real challenge (47.J) because they are limited to an educator and a support staff person. The idea of reciprocity for area work is to be able to share educational programming by travelling to each other’s counties to teach educational programs using specialization or areas of expertise.

Counties at a staffing level of one educator and one support staff person seem to be less able to participate in reciprocity because the educator is stretched by taking care of everything within the county where they are housed (62.J). This concern was also expressed by another leader who considered that cost share can go against the strategy of
the area system, giving the example of when county commissioners understand the
county will get all four program areas for the cost share of $25,000 when they used to pay
$200,000 (263.C). In this situation, Extension ended up with too many “1 FTE counties,”
where the one person left will never be able “to come close to fractionally deliver what
was delivered before” (272-280.C). In such a situation, “the county is not going to be
able to reciprocate because they don’t have anybody to do that, it’s... a terrible situation”
(288-289.C), and staff members in counties still try to answer calls as best as they can
(100.E).

A leader also believed that support staff members were struggling to “stay alive”
in their own county (291.J). One Area Leader dealt with changes early on because her
county office closed at the same time that restructuring was implemented, putting her in a
“real adjustment period” (811.B). Because she did not have any support staff, she had to
rely on others to help her do things such as set up an area web site (178.B).
Implementing a new website platform in 2009 challenged everyone who lost support staff
with this technical knowledge, making it difficult to keep up with the new websites all
county offices had to develop (183.C).

A leader considered implementation as an ongoing process; the Area Leaders got
through year one of implementation knowing there were going to be more cuts, and the
leaders had to work together more (484.F) to accomplish their job. The low numbers of
staff versus the number of counties to serve in the southern-most area was a concern by
two leaders (125.H, 8.F). One leader believed their area was better off than some other
areas because they did not have the “big holes” that others did (9.G). Two other leaders
shared that they had been pretty well staffed in 2009 but not as well in 2011 (18.A, 27.I). The variety of staffing levels – educators, program staff, and office staff - in an area was a challenge for one Area Leader (50.J).

**Resistance from staff.** When asked about challenges and barriers to implementing the restructuring plan, many leaders talked about the resistance to the plan by Extension staff members around the state. One leader said, “I think every group had what you call a problem child or slow adapter,” but he did not feel he had as many problems as some other Area Leaders did (944.C). Other Area Leaders shared similar experiences of having a few staff members who were not excited or willing to accept something new, but despite this they still participated in area meetings (103.C, 471.D). It was also described that some educators seemed to think there was an “iron curtain” (194.G) or “wall” (298.E) surrounding their county that staff members could not cross. In an area where a few people seemed resistant to changes and were not on the band wagon, leaders thought these people were trying to resist long enough so that they would not have to change (34-36.B) or the resisting staff were feeling so secure where they were that nobody was going to bother them if they did not get involved (314.J).

Leaders had some ideas about how to work through resistant staff members. They worked to find a place or people who had similar interests and needs where that person could fit, or build a smaller group where that person could stand out as an expert or leader (951.C, 80.J). One leader questioned during our discussion about what the repercussions would be for those who would not get on board and commented that people who are allowed to be resistors will undermine the morale of others (749.L). He also felt that
waiting until everyone is on board with the concept means it would not get going and eventually die (756.L).

Area Leaders described other barriers regarding resistance from particular groups or staff members. This included not being able to invite Family and Nutrition Program staff to area meetings because the subject matter of these meetings was not specific to them. Family and Nutrition Program staff could attend the area meetings if they took vacation time to do so (385.F). Some County Extension Directors seemed to put pressure on program assistants and coordinators to not participate in area-wide activities (247.A); the leader wished she had more direct contact with support staff in counties (240.A) to avert miscommunication. In another situation County Extension Directors made claims about budget shortages limiting travel and participation in area activities, but sometimes the claims came from other employees (72.L). Discussions included about how FCS and ANR programs had been doing some amount of programs over county lines before the area concept was implemented and some people were not cooperative in making it more formal as per the 2009 plan (28.B).

Although personnel issues are within the scope of the Regional Directors’ job description, there were times when the lines blurred (156.I). One Regional Director discussed that there was feedback from Area Leaders that they did not want to be involved in resolving human resources or personnel issues (147.L). Although Area Leaders were not in charge of personnel, they were still viewed as a leader, which may have appeared to educators as if they had two supervisors. It was important to develop
who was accountable for various tasks between the Area Leaders and Regional Directors (143.L).

**Challenges related to program areas.** Leaders talked about experiences within program areas to adapt to the new structure. Challenges within the 4-H program included being very “county-centric” (946.C), which was credited to being closely associated with the county fair (327.C). Every county has its own county fair where 4-H projects are exhibited. A big part of putting on the fair is the 4-H youth involvement (330.C) through project exhibits and representation on Junior Fair Boards. Some county Extension offices are totally in charge of the fair, meaning it would not operate without them, whereas others made a transition to hiring a Junior Fair Coordinator (337.C). This involvement was described as 4-H educators having a lot of details to work with, running from one to the next resulting in the difficulty to focus on anything and being able to specialize in a subject (365.C). One leader observed that there was a struggle for one area that did not typically camp together taking a little longer to get to know each other and become a team (85.L). Another leader believed the restructuring was “toughest” for 4-H educators working across county lines compared to the other program areas (55.G). The reason for this difficulty could be the perception by 4-H educators that the area system was going to “stretch” them out and make them “thinner” than they were before (948.C).

Challenges with some educators in the ANR program were also shared by several leaders. Some educational programs had been conducted by educators in multiple counties before restructuring into the 2009 EERAs and these educators seemed to collaborate faster than those in other programs (155.E, 532.H). However, there were
situations with ANR educators not wanting to go into a county without an ANR educator to conduct programming, such as Master Gardener training, while other program educators were providing program support to other counties (127.F, 607.I) or tending to “do want they want to do anyway” (126.B), which caused some relationship friction with leaders. One leader let ANR educators know that they had to work with the Area Leader, because the requests to change their way of work were not personally about them but the change was supposed to be about all the counties coming together (471.F). In another area, the leader felt that there was not a lot of trust between the ANR educators, particularly in financial matters (78.J) causing some issues with sharing educational programs.

**Facilitating program planning across county lines.** Organizing program planning and delivery in EERAs had a variety of challenges for leaders. The question posed by one leader was how to map out the programs and work together to conduct them (676.I) in consideration of the demographics of the area. Size of an area presented challenges in terms of working together across the area (7.K). Some counties were used to working with counties that were outside of the new EERA lines (16.K, 15.C). Another leader shared that there was a natural affinity for some counties to work together that clientele were also used to, but the new EERA lines separated some of these groups of counties. The division challenged educators to work with clientele in the natural way as well as working with new groups within the EERA that did have as much of a tradition to work together (85-94.L). In one example, an ANR program educator went to area program meetings with educators in a different EERA because the ANR programming
was more similar to his expertise and knowledge giving him more of an opportunity to share (16.C).

Volunteers associate with how the local educator delivers a program, so educators had to work with volunteers in addition to other educators (51.H) to plan programming in counties. One leader was hopeful to prove that an educational program conducted by other educators within the area was worth the perceived value to clientele (435.I). Another leader talked about the pressure from 4-H clientele about not offering as many of a specific program and the importance of showing that quality programming can increase by doing a few less (405.C). Working across county lines was described as foreign for 4-H educators and clientele since the educational programs offered relate more to the specific county; hearing success stories from other EERA’s helped Extension educators see possibilities to collaborate across county lines, but the biggest challenge was letting go of conducting a variety of activities on their own within the county and eliminating duplication of efforts (172.L).

Leaders talked about examples of area-wide planned programs and challenges with getting educational programs and information delivered to clientele. One leader shared that several 4-H events had been planned for their area but there was not enough enrollment, so some were rescheduled (696.H). Another leader thought that the FCS educators were strategic in envisioning program planning and delivery, such as how to do a program such as canning classes in locations convenient to three or four counties instead of every county (180.L). A leader stated that the challenge for FCS was “how in the world are we ever going to have a presence and have people know what it is we do?”
(145.H). The concept of creating a horticulture hotline was considered a wonderful idea, but a leader did not think it was publicized very well in the area; it did not get a lot of calls, and area educators did not try it again. (65-81.H). There was also concern about support staff being able to identify the best person to respond to a question because some program staff tended to be better about getting questions answered than others. This leader hoped that program people would “close the loop” so support staff can check off that a clientele call was taken care of (237.L).

**Timing of programs.** Leaders also brought up an issue with the timing of program planning at the beginning of the restructuring process. One stated that it was hard to get a timeline figured out to plan and deliver a program in consideration to the area, giving an example of having a meeting to plan Food Animal Quality Assurance programming six months earlier because 4-H volunteers work with educators to put on that program (57.H). Implementation of restructuring happened in the middle of the year when people were already committed to their books or calendars (874.I). The challenge seemed to be trying to merge expectations of creating and conducting area-wide programs with previously planned events and activities.

**Initial reactions to restructuring.** Discussion with leaders included concerns about announcing the restructuring process and getting started. One leader thought the announcement of restructuring may have been oversold as a major change, which it might not have been for a lot of people, stating that this is “just pushing us down a path we were already on” and also posing questions about raising expectations too high or scaring people (732.L). Rolling out the concept so fast may have led to unclear messages being
communicated to the many different client groups related to Extension (860.H), mixed with rumors from educators about what they thought the changes were going to be (654.H). Internally the plan was left open-ended intentionally, which was hard for some people who wanted more exact parameters (850.H). Getting buy-in from staff was considered difficult (43.E) especially related to seasoned employees and educators with at least 20 years of service (593.I). The plan was a hard sell when the area structure first came out because it was compounded by the reduction-in-force that also took place (709.A). A leader shared that there was “a lot of apprehension to begin with” that could still be there, because “generally people do not like change” (218-220.E).

In summary, the internal challenges that leaders faced included different sources of funding, different levels of staffing, resistance from staff, challenges related to program areas, and facilitating program planning across county lines. Leaders expressed frustration with the fluctuation and variation of funding sources that seemed to have an effect on educator participation in area-wide activities. A similar frustration was expressed by leaders with the variation of staffing levels in the area, especially for counties with only one educator for all program areas. This staffing situation made participation on an area level more demanding for those individuals. Leaders talked about resistant staff members who did not seem to be willing to participate in the restructuring process and plan. Resistance from educators seemed to be evident through claimed limitations to travel outside of the county for area activities and budget constraints. Challenges in implementing the new structure appeared in specific program areas in two ways. Agriculture and natural resources educators in some counties had
established working relationships to conduct multi-county work and seemed to resist evolving the group work into the new structure. For 4-H, many educators seemed to find difficulty in conforming to the new structure because the program design is strongly localized. Questions related to how to facilitate programming across county lines surfaced, and leaders had to consider demographics of areas in organizing programs or hotlines for clientele to access.

Challenges related to implementing the structure also included the initial reaction and timing of the introduction of the restructuring plan. Leaders talked about how staff members seemed apprehensive and concerned about change that appeared rather ambiguous to some. A few leaders also talked about the timing of the restructuring and felt that the plan was rolled out in the middle of a year that already had a full set of scheduled programs. This was a challenge because educators had to reorganize the schedule they already had planned and add work to their schedule in order to get through a transition period.

External: Stakeholders, Clientele, and Other Issues

Leaders shared their experiences working with external stakeholders during restructuring including county commissioners, county advisory committees, and clientele. County commissioners are an important stakeholder in the Extension program because they provide funding from the county level to have programs in that county. Counties are traditionally and heavily supported by county commissioner dollars (167.K). Making sure commissioners understood the most about the changes to the organization seemed to be very important.
**Selling the change.** One leader described the restructuring plan as a “tough sell” to commissioners because they were used to Extension working within county borders and leaders recognized the importance of maintaining “good bridges” with them (54.C). Meetings with commissioners to explain the changes early on seemed to eliminate some assumed barriers to the change (395.D). Some commissioners were also members of county Extension advisory committees so they were already familiar with the changes created by restructuring (327.K) because the changes were probably discussed at advisory committee meetings. Leaders also talked about how county commissioners appeared to see the value of Extension services for what they pay to fund the service (414.H, 135.J). One leader said, “All they want to know is ‘at the end of the day, am I getting my money’s worth?’” (414.H). Another leader believed that in many cases Area Leaders were able to prove that there was more coming in to the county than being taken away (52-53.C).

County Extension advisory committee members and local clientele work with educators in their home county and may not have participated in Extension programs conducted for multiple counties. Getting beyond initial clientele perceptions was challenging. At an area-wide event inviting multiple counties, one leader experienced an advisory committee member who seemed very negative and uninterested in ideas outside of their county. After the event, the advisory committee member left smiling and decided they had something new to share in their home county (306.L). There were some plans to organize an EERA advisory committee, but those groups had not yet come together.
Getting people together to solicit ideas can open up new ideas that had not been considered before (444.K).

**Dealing with geographic boundaries.** According to the leaders, the physical lines of the restructuring process have created unique areas across the map. In a few words this is how leaders described their area: urban demographic, suburban element, and very rural (21.I); some very rural, a couple more urbanized, some economically deprived, some doing pretty well (9.J); largest (6.K); only thing in common is diversity (144.K); rural, distinctly urban, suburban, very broad mix (14.A); most agricultural-producing part of Ohio (19.B); most variety and structure (15.F); the urban counties are different from the rest of the more rural counties (10.C). Leaders identified their areas in rather unique, self-described ways even though the state as a whole is a blend of all these. This viewpoint of areas seemed to be reflected in the conversation, although it is not clear if this limited the scope of expectations and ability to implement the structure.

Identifying with geographic lines has also been a part of defining how program staff work together. When deciding about how to work together one leader told educators to look at counties adjacent to them and see how they can help to start growing a bigger picture (703.I). Other leaders also expressed this by working with those counties in close proximity to conduct and market programs (84.E) and by offering programs in a place that is acceptable to folks in “have-not counties” to drive to (155.K). Programs may also be offered in split halves of the area to allow folks in the East or the West to be able to travel to within acceptable distances (91.I).
In summary, selling the change to clientele and stakeholders and dealing with geographic boundaries were challenges leaders faced externally. Leaders used meetings to share the restructuring plan with commissioners and county advisory committees. The experience of “selling the change” was necessary to eliminate assumed barriers, familiarize the clientele with anticipated changes, and show how a county’s clientele and stakeholders would still be receiving their money’s worth from Extension services. Although all leaders attempted to communicate similar messages to external stakeholder groups, they described their areas in very different ways. No two leaders used the same description to talk about the style and structure of the geographic make-up of their respective EERA. Leaders talked about how geography and previous relationships affected the implementation of the area structure, which may explain why EERAs appeared to be at different levels of the change process in terms of conducting area programming and communication across counties.

**Research Question #3: Within areas, what worked well or not so well, as a result of the restructuring process?**

Leaders were asked questions about benefits and challenges they experienced over the time since the area structure was implemented to the time of the interview, approximately 20 months later. Findings include what continuing to work in the area system had become, benefits to employees, benefits to educational programs, challenges and barriers, and what worked.

**Continuing Work in the Area System**

Leaders spoke about how the EERA structure was working for areas after approximately 20 months of implementation. What seemed to have developed were
outcomes including achieving a level of commitment and realizing the attribute of being able to connect people as well as continued concerns for uncertainty about “area” work and the outlook for future opportunities and potential.

**Commitment to the area system.** Leaders gave a general sense that perseverance about working together resulted in buy-in and commitment to the area system. Perseverance was described as “getting there” (257.E), “banging away at it, working with it, keep trying to explain” (308.E), and finally finding what was needed to motivate (208-210.J). The challenges and issues such as not jumping on the bandwagon (208.J) that were apparent early on in the restructuring seemed to have diminished for the leaders. After the previous 20 months, leaders said that there were not so many people saying, “don’t worry, the system will go back to the way it used to be” (581.I) or “this will be the death of us” (651.H). What may not have been viewed as a good thing for some individuals in the Extension system seemed to turn out to be “a really good thing” (478.D).

Leaders gave several reasons for buy-in to the area system. It was attributed to leadership style and belief of Area Leaders to communicate to educators (516.H), as well as the changes in the organization pulling people together and thus creating a stronger system overall (134.G, 399.A). One leader believed that commitment and buy-in were evident, because people have not said an absolute no to participating in the area system (131.G) and people are still coming to meetings, and asking when they will be meeting again (804.C, 425.C).
Social connections. Several leaders shared a positive feeling that the area system helped to connect people, evident through intensified and increased communications between counties since implementation of the new structure (213.D, 448.L, 360.D, 411.A). This connection has helped people to build on strengths and commit to build a team (497.A, 401.A, 213.D). Talking about strengths or specializations encouraged more cooperation and less competition (594.B) among educators. A previous district structure had been eliminated, giving people a sense of isolation and being disconnected (251.F, 326.D). Being connected had been an attribute of the previous structure and was something that Extension employees seemed to want.

Staff members who had worked in the district structure seemed to realize the attribute of being socially connected in the new area structure, making it possible for them to change and adapt (419.D) and enhance relationships again (251.F). One leader talked about how pulling the three EERAs together within one of the regions created a regional concept, which helped to create more connection for her and other staff in these areas (220.B). Feeling like they are part of a system or program seemed to offer staff members an assurance of making a difference and being part of the group (495.I). Working together to put on a program throughout the state was described as fun (158.E). Working together also built relationships and trust between counties that had not necessarily worked together before (387.J), creating a sense of community within the EERA’s (364.D). One leader stated that the ability to get together and bounce ideas off each other was the biggest benefit of the area system (17.G). Another leader expressed that they now know what everybody is doing (41.E).
Uncertainty about the area system. While the work that is being done in an area system seemed to be coming together, there was some uncertainty from the leaders about whether what was happening at the time of our interviews should be called “area work.” Leaders talked generally about area programming or the area concept working, happening, and getting closer to how sharing works (508.D, 119.A, 277.B, 580.B). Their concerns were expressed in a variety of ways. One leader was unsure about whether staff in the EERA were expanding efforts or just being creative, especially due to a decrease in staff within the EERA (115.A). Another leader was unsure if area programming was happening the way it was envisioned, but considered the level of educational programming to be lower than it could be, giving a description of people doing things in multiple places but not really specializing (287.B). In one area it was estimated that approximately one quarter or one third of educational programs were being planned as an area-wide effort (201.L).

Leaders also talked about staff who were trying to let go of previous responsibilities, but shared the experiences of educators who had difficulty in managing the balance of area work to local work, continued to say yes to conducting all their local activities, and continued to overwork themselves. This happened even though leaders had encouraged staff members to allow themselves the opportunity to say no and be less of everything to everybody as an individual (761.B, 615.H, 487.A 138.G).

Accountability and quality. The level of accountability seemed to have increased and people were being “drug into an age of accountability” (478.L) thanks to the area system. Participants were more likely to pay a program cost or fee or travel a
longer distance; because of the extra expense for participants, educators planning programs sensed an expectation to have an increased quality of resources and information to share with program participants (719.C, 176.E).

Leaders also believed that the area system allowed for programs to be more developed than before (720.B, 163.C). The improved program development could be attributed to less time spent in coordinating all the programs that were previously on one’s agenda (61.B). This adjustment for time and responsibility also results in a greater teaching impact than just on a county level (543.I). An example shared was the Food Animal Quality Assurance Program. Educators do not have to feel as though they must create a special training for their county, they can offer fewer events available to all clientele across the area (268.F). Educators have also developed educational materials to use across the state that other educators are adding to (63.B).

**Opportunities and future potential.** Leaders had a generally positive outlook when asked about things they were excited about within their EERA. Some talked about how staff members have come around to realize that it is not a bad system (417.D). For those who have not bought in to the area system, one leader says his approach is to just move forward without them (233.E). It was also said that leaders are continuously trying to show educators how the area concept can work and the possibilities for participation it offers to them (646.H, 492.I). There was excitement about the potential to be more effective as an organization and to eliminate duplication of efforts (453.H), thereby giving people opportunities to work on new projects that were creative and innovative, and ultimately reached out to more people (480.H). It was admitted that in the past
people would have thought “you were crazy” if you had suggested conversations and
directions we are having now (402.J). Another leader thought that educators feel as
though they have been on the leading edge where they have not typically been looked at
in that regard (542.F).

Other things that excited the leaders included 4-H educators in an EERA figuring
out ways to send any kid to any 4-H camp (233.J); planning the next EERA meeting as a
fun, informal day bringing people together (107.A); participation in a new program on an
EERA level called “I Move” (557.B); and the younger, newer Extension staff members
getting to use their specializations they went to school for (606.B). Opportunities to do
programming on a regional or state level should also be less intimidating to youth,
helping them learn how to interact with other people, teaching them life lessons to help
them succeed later on (632.H). It was ultimately decided in conversation that there are
not as many disadvantages as there are advantages to the area system (774.B).

In summary, after 20 months of the restructuring process, the change process had
evolved and people were continuing to work in the area structure. Leaders sensed a
commitment by many educators and staff members to the area system and a continued
perseverance to continue working in the multi-county structure. Feedback from
educators about the restructuring plan that seemed negative had appeared to decrease,
while expressed interest in meeting and planning programs was continuing to be
apparent. Leaders shared experiences about how the area structure supported an increase
in social connection between staff members in their areas. Communication needed to
increase between educators in areas, which could have resulted in the opportunity to build relationships and identify strengths among staff members.

Even though the EERAs had been geographically assigned and staff members had been working in multi-county groups to conduct educational programs, several leaders questioned the concept of what area programming really is and how it works. In the area system, many educators seemed to be able to become “less of everything to everybody,” although leaders talked about the consciousness of local accountability that educators continued to be tied to. Some leaders spoke about an improvement in the quality of programs and that the necessity of working with multiple educators to plan programs increased educator accountability as well.

Despite some continuing challenges, leaders were fairly positive about the opportunity and potential that educators had by working in the area structure. The advantages included increased creativity and innovation, elimination of duplicated efforts, and reaching out to a new or bigger audience. One leader reflected on the disbelief about working in a multi-county structure such as this that would have existed if the conversation had come up in years prior to changes being made.

**Benefits to Employees**

Leaders expressed benefits that they thought employees gained from the restructuring process. Developing specializations and expertise seemed to be commonly shared as the most beneficial improvement to educator work in the Extension system as a result of the restructuring. Getting support staff involved was also seen as an important benefit that occurred as a result of the restructuring process.
Specialization and expertise development. One of the most prominent benefits to employees of the area system was the ability to develop a specialization or use their subject matter expertise (539.I, 409.A, 277.F, 418.J). Thoughts were shared about saved time by not having to research a subject to develop a program, giving people opportunities to do more of something they liked while freeing up others to do more of something else (277.F, 264.K). It was suggested that focusing on subject matter also makes people re-evaluate their role, giving them an opportunity to question whether they should be doing something (459.B). Focusing on a particular subject matter also makes people better at what they do (412.C). One leader felt that the push to specialization was a benefit to the organization that should continue (409.A, 444.A). As an organization, it was considered that there is now more knowledge to draw upon (705.B, 259.K, 552.I). One leader said, “It’s given us the go-ahead, the green light to say, ‘Yeah, I can go outside of my county. I can...teach...what I really know and enjoy beyond my county.’” (259.K). Expertise could be brought in to a county and gave people the opportunity to feel less like the person responsible for putting on a program they were not very knowledgeable about, which benefits clientele while making the organization more effective (423.A, 443.L). Opportunities to specialize were also available to staff working as program coordinators and program assistants, giving them opportunities to volunteer and share their knowledge across county lines (286.K).

Support staff involvement. Benefits were not only for educator expertise but for other staff members as well. Within counties there were benefits to being able to serve clientele. If educators with knowledge were not available, clientele could be helped by
another person or county (421.A). Counties with a smaller number of staff were pleased that they could still help clientele in this way (332.L). Counties with smaller staff were helped by assistance with up-to-date information, being able to share what was going on in the area if they did not have a county-based program (209.C). County support staff were also given opportunities to share with each other, which they never really had before, including them as a part of the whole organization (424.B, 366.D). As a result, support staff now rely on each other more than before (394.J).

In summary, the benefits to employees included specialization and expertise development and the involvement of support staff in area activities. Most leaders spoke about the beneficial effect on educators to have the ability to identify a subject matter specialization or expertise. By being able to develop themselves in one or a few specific subjects, educators could focus more on developing that knowledge and feel less pressure to teach a multitude of subjects that someone else could be more capable of doing. Some leaders talked about the benefits to support staff, who are a group of staff members who do not get many opportunities to share across county lines. Support staff were able to have more opportunities if they were offered, to share with each other as well as sharing information with clientele if a county did not have an educator staffed in a program area.

**Benefits to Programs**

Benefits to Extension programming were evident from the positive impacts on clientele that leaders shared. Leaders also expressed thoughts on how training and use of technology has improved program quality and availability.
**Impacts on clientele.** Leaders shared several benefits to clientele. Most of these were sharing knowledge and expertise especially in areas where educators are not filling a program area position by still being able to offer programs for clientele to participate in (172.E, 374.D). Even though information is still the researched, unbiased information that Extension can offer, clientele get a better product put together by better experts delivered to a more diverse audience (546.I, 742.B). Utilizing expertise can help meet a lot of needs in an EERA, such as asking someone with expertise on gas and oil drilling in Ohio, a subject not well-known by many other ANR educators, to travel to other counties to conduct programs (245.K, 254.K). The opportunity for clientele to travel together gives them opportunities to share with each other about topics they learned at programs (389.C). The Master Gardener program has also expanded thanks to a partnership that developed because of the area system (362.A).

**Technology knowledge and potential.** During restructuring, grants had been used to provide trainings and equipment to encourage technology use by educators within many areas. As a result, it was thought that a lot of people who had not used much technology before were now doing some interesting things (564.B). It was suggested that technology has been useful in making presentations better than before (161.E). Clientele are becoming more tech savvy and Extension staff are now better able to meet their needs with web pages or eXtension, both of which are accessible 24 hours a day (428.A). A new website platform introduced early in the area system also helped to share information with other county or state web pages (204.C). One leader noted that with fewer educators, the Internet can still meet needs of clientele; it has been tried and “we
know it works” (147.E). Even though many training opportunities in technology have been offered and have been helpful, more training in the area of technology would be useful (351.B).

In summary, after 20 months, leaders felt that area programs positively impacted clientele in several ways including being able to receive services when an educator position was not staffed in a county, improved knowledge of subject matter for programs, and expansion of collaboration. The use of technology to develop programs also increased as a result of the grants that were dispersed from Administrative Cabinet into EERAs. Many of the dollars were used to train educators and staff on using educational technology tools or provide the necessary equipment. Leaders felt that learning how to use technology was important because clientele are becoming more technologically savvy and are relying on the Internet to seek out information.

**Challenges and Barriers**

Challenges and barriers to working in the area system had evolved from the time that the new structure was put into place to the time when leaders were interviewed nearly two years later. Leaders talked about challenges in funding, managing resistance from staff, managing work load, staffing levels, and programming.

**Funding.** The challenge of funding county programs and positions was brought up in many of the interviews with leaders. One of the concerns had to do with charging fees for programs (725.B). One leader shared her thought that what had been done wrong is saying that Extension services are free, even though they are not truly free; not all costs are covered through government funding sources (501-503.B). The question was
proposed by another leader about what happens if the value of Extension’s educational programming does not meet the cost charged to participants, answering her own question by saying Extension is “in trouble” when that happens (737.C). Charging fees for 4-H was considered to be a move to a “pay to play” scenario, one that has not been endorsed as a state (776.C). Using money raised for 4-H to pay for staff when it was intended to pay for scholarships and programs to get kids involved “takes the icing off the cake” said one leader when speaking about paying for 4-H programming (292.C).

Charging for programs in counties funded by tax levies was difficult to do because the public perception is that those programs are already paid for by the taxes raised (93.G). An example was given of the county’s responsibility to pay for salary and travel, but then commissioners and clientele may think that travel dollars should not be spent on educators visiting neighboring counties to conduct educational programs (313-320.E), even though it was thought that most educators enjoy helping out in other counties when given the opportunity (184.E). There was also a perception by educators that if a county puts in the cost share to receive Extension programming, the county has first priority to be served, and commissioners may give the impression of having ownership for staff members (317.F). Trying to ease concerns from commissioners about getting what they are paying for “will always be a challenge of area programming” (340.E). This was echoed by another leader who was not sure how to fix the funding partnership base between county, state, and federal, but had the sentiment that as long as Extension services are county-based there is a sense of “obligation to your county” (328.B). When commissioners see that they do not have funds to keep Extension, they
find that the only requirement is to have “space to put a rack to display literature and a
desk and a phone” for an Extension staff person (272.A).

There was disagreement between leaders about seeking grant funding. Using
grant funding was encouraged (111.G), but there were reservations about sustaining
Extension services on grants or applying for grants just for the sake of bringing in money
to keep your job (513.B). Spending money on travel and technology were the most
of the issue of funding could be summed up in a statement made by one leader:

I think the funding, or lack of, and the variety of arrangements creates a lot of
tension, a lot of nervousness for our educators that when you’re spending time
dealing with those issues, we can’t spend as much time on programming, and
that’s a huge, huge issue, and I don’t know the answer. (323.F)

**Resistance and approach towards change.** Leaders talked about resistance and
attitude of educators. Even though they felt educators, at the time of the interviews, were
more likely to be participatory in the area structure, there were still challenges leaders
were working through. Fear of change was a sense discussed as a barrier to committing
to the area system. “Nobody likes change… and even good change is hard to accept,”
was stated by one leader who also considered “guilt” and “stress” to be part of the
resistance demonstrated by educators (456-458.A). The action of letting go of activities
or responsibilities that educators seemed to consider important to local stakeholders was
“a fear of being perceived…that they’re not as effective because they’re not doing
everything” (451-453.A), which was a difficulty for those working alone (404.A) without
support staff or other educators in the office. One leader questioned whether some
educators were doing activities that do not fall into what their job description really is
(309.J) as an example of educators’ dedicating themselves to county programming. The perception of the possibility of losing one’s job or needing to change jobs also added to the fear of change (465-467.A). Older, more experienced staff members seemed more resistant to change (482.H). Considering that some staff had been in jobs so long or had not held other positions outside of Extension made the change process more “frightening” and “radically different,” but they seemed to eventually realize this was not a bad system (413.D). Another leader thought some educators were hoping a day will come when leaders will see the error of their ways and return to the previous structure (294.K).

Leaders also shared experiences with rudeness and poor attitude. This included reactions to the area system and changes being “forced” upon educators (306.E), talking really “loud and hard and then overshadow[ing]” other people during meetings (559.B), and working with “strong personalities that are contrarians” (374-375.L). Other Area Leaders had experiences with encouraging a group of educators in one program area to do other kinds of programming and sharing, but the response back was just being ignored by the group (312.J, 315.B). Communication had to develop between Regional Directors and Area Leaders on how to resolve the issue of Area Leaders working with people being rude or unresponsive, so that the individual could be followed up with as a performance issue discussion and to consider how to resolve the situation (124.L). Another leader shared that it might not matter who the leader was or what he or she did, some people were just not going to try to work together in the area (519.H). There was also the opinion that the area structure would not be effective if there was someone being a “free radical” working individually while everyone else adheres to working within the structure
(510.F) or the “bad apple” who brushes off their negativity on others (621.B). It was also felt that it was a challenge to enforce these issues within a tenure system (700.L).

Extreme high performers would question others who “aren’t as wonderful,” so the leader would try to help them understand and find value in working with those people through mentoring, coaching, and encouraging them to help make a difference in the future (583-594.L).

Some counties, particularly those on the “fringe,” had not worked together before, thus they lacked a natural relationship with the new mix of counties that had different dynamics (636.A). It was shared that educators probably do not fully appreciate each other’s environment, which could have been remedied with trying to travel to other counties for meetings, even though technology and webcams would make it cost efficient to not travel (559.J, 562-569.J).

**Workload and work flow.** Working in the area system seemed to challenge staff members in re-balancing workload. This could be due to a culture barrier that was thought to be created by the employee themselves because county staff felt compelled to do work in the county they were stationed or hired in (497.L, 298-300.K) and less likely to work out of the county or bring other resources in to the county. This was despite the knowledge that clientele tend to listen to someone from a different county over the person in the county (550.I) and clientele being able to interact with people who are identified as specialized in a subject area and more knowledgeable (432.J).

Balancing workload was also identified as a barrier in a variety of ways. These included balancing commitment to peers and clientele (621.H), questioning how much
time to give (533.L), spending time trying to figure out what can and cannot be done (628.C), travelling more to do programs (179.E), and being told to do less when also being asked to do something else (595.C). There have been more meetings, but one leader would like to use those opportunities to take time to divide up responsibilities among educators (970.C). Having less staff means you probably still end up doing something you do not always enjoy but it is important to rotate responsibility (284.F). However, an example shared was about an area of 10 counties with only three educators to share the workload for one program area; the result was that these three staff members were being pulled in too many directions even though there was a desire to make it work, be cooperative, and be flexible (491.F). Leaders also discussed about how critical it is to get questions answered quickly, which can be improved by getting names of specialists to support staff to use (87.G, 149.I). Another suggestion for increasing efficiency was to have more interactive and user-friendly web pages and to conduct online classes to improve meeting clientele needs (141.E). Another perceived barrier was that Extension policies to support technology use are not being implemented as fast as technology is changing (404.D).

**Staffing.** Losing staff members was a major challenge issue. Leaders talked about a previous time when there was a full staff in every county, but with some counties changing office hours, closing the office for a day during the week (679.B), and having limited numbers of support staff, overall morale has dropped (294.J). The challenge of working with counties that are not well staffed might mean that an educator now has to stay in the office to operate it when an area or program meeting is held (439.B, 89.K, 108.C).
which limits their participation. One leader said educators and support staff struggle with the division of labor they are each responsible for (294.J). Another leader experienced seeing fewer support staff with more responsibilities, which makes it harder for them to direct clientele to information whether it is on the Internet or in another county (262.A). Trying to use a support staff person to work on an area web page was difficult because they are county funded and County Extension Directors do not embrace the idea of sharing the staff member on an area level (188.A).

Leaders varied in their opinions about educator staffing. One felt that counties that were more fully staffed than others probably did not see the benefit of area programming (326.E), while another viewed the challenges as not having enough people to do what he would like to do (612.E). In another situation, there was a lack of expertise and diversity, a situation created by having too many educators of one specialization in an area (574.I).

Programming. Although leaders were generally satisfied with area-wide programming, there were still some challenges they identified related to making area programming successful. One of those challenges was marketing and advertising programs across the area and for Extension (286.A, 377.B, 77.E). One leader said, “The general population has no idea what Extension is or does,” and we cannot assume that people in rural counties all know either (286.A). Leaders talked about needing to have a better plan to market and think about marketing differently (987.B, 737.H). Opinions about using technology to improve web pages were considered helpful for counties with reduced staff to assist clientele, but were seen as a difficulty for counties in geographic
areas with limited access to technology (386.A, 71.G). One leader expressed concern that Extension has competition from other sectors and people will go to what they feel is a good program (262.E). The 4-H program was considered by another leader to be the primary market for Extension (390.B). Leaders shared the opinion that marketing and promotion depends on the educators who are willing to take that responsibility (192.A, 78.E). One leader stated the questions she proposed to educators at meetings:

What programs do you have that you’re offering that we can advertise? How can we market the things that we have? What things can we put on the website? What do you have that you are willing to share? What can be offered as an EERA, and then [let’s] put together some kind of marketing piece and distribute it across the EERA (150.J).

Another issue for programming involved the concept of area programming and what it really meant even after working together for 20 months. While not directly asked, some Area Leaders talked about how to define area programming. One questioned whether educators could have a consensus as to what area programming meant (94.E) and thought that even staff in other EERAs would define the concept differently (48.E). Another leader also questioned the definition of area programming: “Is it [area programming] anything where there’s more than one county representative at an event…. or is it the results of a concerted planning effort on the part of the area educators”? She felt that as a system both kinds of work were being acknowledged as area programming (36-39.H).

The area concept was also defined as one person from each of the program areas sending information about educational program activities to contacts around the area to share (190.A). Two leaders also felt that areas within their regions were operating or
functioning at different levels, including within program areas (28.L, 35.H). Leaders were also concerned about promoting the planning of interdisciplinary programs as within EERAs but felt that there was not enough time available during meetings to do multi-disciplinary work (38.F), or trying to get people to pull together and see the values in sharing across program areas (420.K), and felt there was a need to do program development across all four program areas so they are not “silos” (762.I). One leader expressed their concern that the day people in Ohio Extension stop coming together is the day that area programming will diminish (837.C).

**What Is Working**

Leaders spoke about experiences they had about how their areas or regions were functioning and what they were excited about after working in the area system for approximately 20 months. Anecdotal feedback shared was that clientele who had participated in EERA-based programs had been satisfied and impressed with the depth of knowledge and quality of programming, making it worthwhile (301.L). From a regional perspective, leaders thought that the way each of the areas had organized was similar (13.L, 26.D). Leaders in two regions also believed that areas were functioning at different levels (13.L, 33.H).

**Communication in the new structure.** Communication appeared to be happening in the area structure after 20 months. One leader expressed that it varies by program area (61.K). In another area a leader shared that regular communication across multiple counties was not a result of the restructuring other than maybe communicating a little more. Counties in these areas had been working that way for years (95.F). There
was confidence that people were informed and working together as a unit in areas (94.D). Keeping communication and dialogue open was helpful in making the area system work (576.A). Using technology has helped get more educational resources developed and made available for clientele to use as well as connecting using social media, especially helpful for serving younger clientele (414.L). Educators seeing and hearing about programs being successful across the area helped to create further buy-in to the area concept (885.I). New relationships had been built that were not evident before (964.C). This also seemed to hold true for clientele who participated in area-wide programs and took the opportunity to learn beyond what was shared within the county.

Organization methods and processes. One leader believed that the area concept was working, but admitted it was not with “bumps” and was successful due to extra effort put forth by everyone involved (403.C). A few leaders shared that they were meticulous about taking notes about everything that was happening within their areas (488.A, 889.C, 872.B). Several leaders were also using experiences they learned by participating in the National Extension Leadership Development conferences (390.K, 171.G, 378.B, 535.A).

In summary, leaders spoke rather positively about what was happening with programs and educators in the area structure and system. The area structure provided for a more open system of communication that allowed staff to share ideas and information more than before. Leaders seemed happy about the relationships that had been built between educators, the commitment of educators to the area system, the improved knowledge of technology to produce educational programming and communication of clientele issues, and the sense that the resulting structure had produced a more cohesive
nature between counties that had been independent before. Several leaders talked about their organization methods and experiences that they used that they felt helped them to be successful in carrying out their duties as change agents in the restructuring plan.

**Summary**

In conclusion, the findings illustrate what Area Leaders and Regional Directors did to implement the *OSU Extension Restructuring Model* (OSU Extension, 2009b), including their perceptions of what worked and what did not work during implementation in 2009 through 2011, a time period of approximately 20 months. Organizational change is not known to be a simple, methodical process, and this idea was borne out by these leaders’ experiences in fulfilling their role in the restructuring process. This group of leaders worked hard and dedicated themselves to ensuring the continuity of educational programming conducted by Extension educators throughout the state of Ohio despite several challenges. Although they experienced some initial and continuing resistance to restructuring, the leaders also felt that there were many benefits to the area structure. While several challenges remained, they were mostly optimistic that the changes brought about by restructuring were positive ones.
Chapter 5 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to describe implementation of an area structure in the Ohio State University Extension organization, examining the processes used during restructuring and subsequent outcomes of that process. Objectives were to describe, from the viewpoint of Area Leaders and Regional Directors with the organization, (a) how the EERA structure had been implemented within the nine areas outlined in OSU Extension Restructuring Model: A Plan for Continued Excellence (2009b), (b) what worked or did not work well during the restructuring process, and (c) what was working or not working as a result of the restructuring process. This chapter discusses the findings of the study, suggests implications for theory and practice, and provides recommendations for future research.

Study Summary

There is pressure on Extension systems across the United States to restructure staffing and program delivery. Administrators must rely on the ability of professionals in the field to make change effective. It is known that several states have restructured in a variety of ways within the last decade. OSU Extension implemented a restructuring model in March 2009 (OSU Extension, 2009b). A key feature of this restructuring was multi-county areas called Extension and Education Research Areas (EERAs). Anecdotal information indicated there were differing actions and characteristics for how the area
structure was being implemented by Regional Directors, Area Leaders, and program educators (Kelbaugh, Smith, Martin, Earnest, & Marrison, 2010; Smith & Cochran, 2010). However, information had not been systematically collected with regards to how restructuring had been implemented in the field, including how the leaders in areas had approached working together, delivering programs, and planning future outcomes. Therefore, it was not known if the results were similar across the areas or if leaders approached implementation of restructuring in different ways that resulted in varying experiences.

As change continues in the Extension system it is important to understand the process and learn from it, especially because Extension considers itself to be a learning organization (Rowe, 2010). The ways that each leader may be organizing staff, marketing, and communicating is likely to be different. They each bring their own style, attitudes, and aspirations to their job duties. The infrastructure that is created within each of the multi-county areas has implications for the future as personnel change and questions continue about the best ways to deliver and promote programs to the public. It is important to know how different or similar these areas are operating, organizing themselves, and delivering programming, and to understand what actions leaders consider more or less successful for the future of the whole system.

The purpose of this study was to describe the implementation of an area structure in an Extension organization. It examined the process used during restructuring and subsequent outcomes of that process. Specific questions that were addressed included:
1. How has the EERA structure been implemented within the nine areas in *OSU Extension Restructuring Model: A Plan for Continued Excellence* (2009b)? This would include areas of staffing; structure; roles and responsibilities; and planning, delivering, and evaluating Extension programming.

2. Within areas, what worked well, or not so well, during the restructuring process? This would include issues both internal and external to the organization.

3. Within areas, what worked well, or not so well, as a result of the restructuring process? This would include benefits or outcomes and challenges or barriers.

Qualitative research methodology was used to create a case study to provide the description of the answers to these questions. Individual interviews were the means of collecting data. All three Regional Directors and nine Area Leaders were invited and agreed to participate in the study. Data analysis used constant comparative methods to identify codes and sort data into categories related to the research questions. Peer review and member checks were conducted to validate findings.

**Summary of Findings**

The findings of this study showed how Area Leaders and Regional Directors in the position of being organizational change agents initiated and implemented the EERA structure in the Ohio State University Extension system. They also described their insights about what worked or did not work in relation to their experiences.
Research Question 1: Implementing Ohio State University Extension’s 2009 Restructuring Model

The action of implementing the new structure was designated to the Area Leaders and Regional Directors. Three findings were evident from these leaders as to how the area structure was developed in their respective areas and regions: (a) developing staff roles, (b) creating structures for communication, and (c) creating structures for program planning and delivery.

Developing staff roles. The first finding of how leaders implemented the area structure encompassed the roles of staff in the areas. Area Leaders and Regional Directors had to refine their respective roles for the area structure to create a working relationship between themselves and the county staff, including educators, program support staff, and office support staff. Extension educators were asked to develop specializations and be more accountable for area programming. Program and office support staff were not responsible or required to participate in area programming or functions, although in a few situations participation on the area level was evident by their attendance in area-wide meetings and their help with business activities. The number of staff within each EERA varied and many counties no longer had a fully staffed Extension office with an educator in each program area and support staff to assist with conducting educational programming.

Creating structures for communication. The second finding of how leaders implemented the area structure was that leaders created structures for communication with internal and external audiences. Internal communication was accomplished primarily through planned meetings to develop area-wide educational programs and to
provide opportunities for Extension staff to build relationships. Internal communication also included creating reference lists and resources that were used across the counties within each area. External communication was developed from the meetings with Extension staff and included marketing materials to share programming available to clientele within each area. There was also communication to stakeholders that leaders considered necessary in order to discuss what changes were happening in Extension during the restructuring process.

Creating structures for program planning and delivery. The third finding of how leaders implemented the new area structure was the creation of structures for program planning and delivery. Meetings scheduled for the purpose of program planning also provided opportunities for collaboration on obtaining grant funding and developing agreements for cost recovery. Leaders gave examples of programs that were being offered on an area-wide basis and shared the importance of strategically locating program events for clientele to access. Evaluation of area programs was limited to using individual evaluation for teaching and some programs that had pre-existing evaluation materials.

Research Question 2: What Worked Well or Not So Well During Restructuring Process

Area Leaders and Regional Directors reflected on the initial months after the restructuring plan was announced and Area Leaders were put into position. Four findings were evident in relation to what worked well or not so well during the restructuring process: (a) leaders’ strategies, goals, and philosophies; (b), leaders’ decisions and
actions; (c) internal challenges and barriers faced by leaders; and (d) external challenges and barriers faced by leaders.

**Leader strategies, goals, and philosophies.** The first finding related to implementation of restructuring is a compilation of leaders’ strategies, goals, and philosophies shared during interviews. The initial ideas and concepts that leaders talked about seemed to reflect a positive attitude towards working together as a team and ensuring that Extension program efficiency and offerings were a priority. Several leaders shared experiences about how important it was to develop relationships with people, which they did by taking time to meet Extension staff members in county offices or the local stakeholders. Learning about people’s skills and abilities also seemed to be a key element in developing relationships.

**Leader decisions and actions.** The second finding related to the implementation of restructuring was the decisions and actions that leaders considered to have worked in accomplishing the implementation of the restructuring plan and their initial strategies, goals, and philosophies. Setting the stage for communication was the initial set of agreements tied to identifying who leaders needed to speak to and what needed to be said in those meetings. Leaders used a variety of ways to identify and share strengths, which was primarily creating resources that could be useful in providing information such as media lists or Extension educator specialization lists. Leaders talked about the decisions they made such as identifying lead educators for coordinating each program area within each EERA, instituting cost recovery fees and reciprocation agreements, sharing information via websites, and having discussions with County Extension Directors. The
results of these types of decisions and actions did not seem to be consistent across all areas. All EERAs received grant funds from the Administrative Cabinet, which created a series of decisions within each EERA about how to spend those funds that leaders had to supervise. Leaders also seemed to take some time with staff members in their respective EERAs to refine the meaning of what area programming was pertaining to the restructuring plan and how to put it into effect in the counties.

**Internal challenges.** The third finding related to the implementation of restructuring was the challenges and barriers leaders faced internally. These challenges included different sources of funding, different levels of staffing, resistance from staff, challenges related to program areas, and facilitating program planning across county lines. Leaders expressed frustration with the fluctuation and variation of funding sources that seemed to have an effect on educator participation in area-wide activities. A similar frustration was expressed by leaders with the variation of staffing levels in each EERA, especially where county offices were staffed by only one educator. This staffing situation made participation on an area level more demanding for those individuals. Leaders talked about resistant staff members who did not seem to be willing to participate in the restructuring process and plan. Resistance from educators seemed to be evident through claims to limitations to travel outside of the county for area activities and budget constraints. Challenges in implementing the new structure appeared in specific program areas in two ways. Agriculture and natural resources educators in some counties had established working relationships to conduct multi-county work and seemed to resist evolving the group work into the new structure. For 4-H, many educators seemed to find
difficulty in conforming to the new structure because the program design is strongly localized. Questions related to how to facilitate programming across county lines surfaced, and leaders had to consider demographics of areas in organizing programs or hotlines for clientele to access.

Challenges related to implementing the structure also included the initial reaction and timing of the introduction of the restructuring plan. Leaders talked about how staff members seemed apprehensive and concerned about change that appeared rather ambiguous to some. A few leaders also talked about the timing of the restructuring and felt that the plan was rolled out in the middle of a year that already had a full set of scheduled programs. This was a challenge because educators had to reorganize the schedule they already had planned and add work to their schedule in order to get through a transition period.

**External challenges.** The fourth findings related to the implementation of restructuring were the challenges and barriers leaders faced externally. This included selling the change to clientele and stakeholders and dealing with geographic boundaries. Leaders used meetings to share the restructuring plan with commissioners and county advisory committees. The experience of “selling the change” was necessary to eliminate assumed barriers, familiarize the clientele with anticipated changes, and show how a county’s clientele and stakeholders would still be receiving their money’s worth from Extension services. Although all leaders attempted to communicate similar messages to external stakeholder groups, they described their areas in very different ways. No two leaders used the same description to talk about the style and structure of the geographic
and demographic make-up of their respective EERA. Leaders also talked about how geography and previous relationships affected the implementation of the area structure, which may explain why EERAs were at different levels of the change process in terms of conducting area programming and communication across counties.

**Research Question 3: What Was Working or Not Working as a Result of Restructuring Process.**

Area Leaders and Regional Directors were asked to share their experiences and thoughts about what was working or not working related to the area structure approximately 20 months after the restructuring process had been announced and implemented. Findings included (a) a series of apparent outcomes from the change process, (b) benefits for employees as a result of restructuring, (c) benefits to programs as a result to restructuring, the more present challenges and barriers internally and externally, and (d) which of the operations and functions that had been implemented seemed to be working.

**Continuing work in the area system.** The first finding related to the restructuring process after 20 months was actually a series of outcomes resulting from the change process. Leaders sensed a commitment by many educators and staff members to the area system and a continued perseverance to continue working in the multi-county structure. Feedback from educators about the restructuring plan that seemed negative had appeared to decrease, while expressed interest in meeting and planning programs was continuing to be apparent. Leaders shared experiences about how the area structure supported an increase in social connection between staff members in their areas. Communication needed to increase between educators in areas, which could have
resulted in the opportunity to build relationships and identify strengths among staff members. Even though the EERAs had been geographically assigned and staff members had been working in multi-county groups to conduct educational programs, several leaders questioned the concept of what area programming really is and how it works. In the area system, many educators seemed to be able to become “less of everything to everybody,” although leaders talked about the consciousness of local accountability that educators continued to be tied to. Some leaders spoke about an improvement in the quality of programs and that the necessity of working with multiple educators to plan programs increased educator accountability as well. Despite some continuing challenges, leaders were fairly positive about the opportunity and potential that educators had by working in the area structure. The advantages included increased creativity and innovation, elimination of duplicated efforts, and reaching out to a new or bigger audience. One leader reflected on the disbelief about working in a multi-county structure such as this that would have existed if the conversation had come up in years prior to changes being made.

**Benefits to employees.** The second findings related to the restructuring process after 20 months were benefits to employees such as specialization and expertise development and the involvement of support staff. Most leaders spoke about the beneficial effect on educators to have the ability to identify a subject matter specialization or expertise. By being able to develop themselves in one or a few specific subjects, educators could focus more on developing that knowledge and feel less pressure to teach a multitude of subjects that someone else could be more capable of doing. Some leaders
talked about the benefits to support staff, who are a group of staff members that do not get many opportunities to share across county lines. Support staff were able to have more opportunities, if they were offered, to share with each other as well as sharing information with clientele if a county did not have an educator staffed in a program area.

**Benefits to Extension programs.** The third findings related to the restructuring process after 20 months were observed benefits to programs. Leaders felt that area programs positively impacted clientele in several ways including the following: being able to receive services when an educator was not staffed in a county, improved knowledge of subject matter for programs, and expansion of partnerships. The use of technology to develop programs also increased as a result of the grants that were dispersed from Administrative Cabinet into EERAs. Many of the dollars were used to train educators and staff on using educational technology tools or provide the necessary equipment. Leaders felt that learning how to use technology was important because clientele are becoming more technologically savvy and are relying on the Internet to seek out information.

**Observed challenges and barriers.** The fourth finding related to the restructuring process after 20 months was the observed challenges and barriers resulting from the area structure. Funding for educator and staff positions in counties was still a concern. Leaders shared frustrations about some educators who still exhibited resistance by not being able to let go of more county-only activities and through their perceptions of how their job is affected, pressured by reactions from the local stakeholders and clientele. In more specific situations, leaders shared experiences with educators who were being
difficult to work with, including a few who seemed to escape from participation in area activities because the tenure system lacked a way to enforce engagement.

Leaders talked about the work load and workflow of educators who were more participatory and the perceived difficulty in balancing activities in regular agendas even though the area system seemed to support opportunities for improved efficiency. Leaders gave some ideas and suggestions as to why the system has not achieved balance, including ensuring questions get answered quickly for clientele, using more interactive websites, and developing policies to support ever-changing technology. Staffing levels continued to be a challenge for leaders in managing the area operations. The difficulty for leaders appeared to be in balancing area activities while staff levels fluctuated due to funding pressures in the counties. Decreased support staff meant educators had to maintain a presence in the county more often and this situation made less time available to participate in area activities.

Challenges with area programming stemmed from leader frustrations with consistent marketing, Extension branding, and sharing of announcements across counties. Even though many leaders considered improving technology use for providing educational programming a priority, physical infrastructure seemed to be a limitation to publishing information online, particularly in southern Ohio areas. The definition and description of “area programming” continued to have varied meanings and ambiguity for leaders. A few leaders were also concerned with developing interdisciplinary programs within areas.
**What was working.** The fifth finding related to the restructuring process after 20 months was leaders’ observations about what was working. For all of the challenges and barriers leaders described, they spoke rather positively about what was happening with programs and educators in the area structure and system. The area structure provided for a more open system of communication that allowed staff to share ideas and information more than before. Leaders seemed happy about the relationships that had been built between educators, the commitment of educators to the area system, the improved knowledge of using technology to produce educational programming and communication of clientele issues, and the sense that the resulting structure had produced a more cohesive nature between counties that had been independent before. Several leaders talked about their organization methods and experiences that they used that they felt helped them to be successful in carrying out their duties as change agents in the restructuring plan.

**Overall Summary of Findings**

Area Leaders and Regional Directors were the primary change agents in the *OSU Extension Restructuring Model: A Plan for Continued Excellence* (OSU Extension, 2009b). The plan itself did not describe specifics of what to do to accomplish the job of implementing the plan and ensuring programming in counties. These specifics may have been communicated to them in other ways. From their discussions, leaders seemed to take time to communicate with each other about what their experiences were, which may have led to some similarities across areas, even though leaders described the variation in the levels of operating as an EERA after 20 months of working in the area structure. As a
result, Area Leaders and Regional Directors created systems and processes to encourage educators and staff to work as a multi-county area to conduct educational programming. These channels for communication did not seem to exist previous to the new structure because the Area Leader position was a new layer within the OSU Extension organizational chart. Leaders worked to refine the conceptual model for area structure into the activities and events that actually occurred within the EERAs around the state of Ohio. They did this by planning meetings with agendas to improve communication both internally and externally, working with educators to plan and deliver programs across counties within EERAs, and identifying strategies or goals to prevent challenges and barriers they experienced from impeding on the progress of the changing structure. Overall, leaders revealed a positive outlook and hope for the future of Extension programming that uses multi-county structures.

**Discussion**

Several themes emerged from this study within the OSU Extension system throughout the restructuring that began in 2009 through the time this study began, 20 months later, in 2011.

**What Changed in OSU Extension**

Kotter (1996) said that “powerful macroeconomic forces are at work” (p. 3) and will be for decades to come, causing change in organizations in response to shifting economic conditions. In 2009, OSU Extension announced its restructuring plan in response to a shift in financial resources and a need to change staffing patterns (OSU Extension, 2009b). Change is not a linear process, neither are change solutions
prescriptive. Over the 20 months of changes led by Area Leaders and Regional Directors, some evolution of change was evident for educators and county structure as shown in Figure 5.1.

![Figure 5.1: Evolution of Ohio State University Extension restructuring model](image)

Leaders spoke about how educators adapted during the change process in three ways. First, they were required to choose a specialization or area of expertise to develop. By being able to embrace a specialization, educators seemed to have less pressure to be
an expert in a broad range of subject matter and were able to rely on each other for informational knowledge. Likewise, Ahmed & Morse (2010) noted that focus is one of the advantages of specialization. Second, educators moved from a sense of isolation to a sense of being connected with peers. Meetings and communication with other educators and clientele developed awareness of program development and community needs in other areas. Finally, educators had to rely on each other to accomplish area program objectives, increasing their accountability with peers. Working with each other to share programs and teach exposed skills, habits, and experiences that could be focused on developing quality educational programs. Such high quality programs are essential to demonstrating Extension’s public value (Kalambokidis, 2004) and gaining audience respect (Ahmed & Morse, 2010).

The collective groups of counties also evolved during the change process. Counties were more likely to be independent of each other before restructuring. The restructuring process seemed to increase the collaboration between counties and programs across an EERA in order to accomplish area programming or conduct regular services. Some counties had previous relationships with each other that had to adjust to new relationships based on the lines drawn on the map for each area. Counties were previously an independent structural unit that evolved into a multi-county cooperating unit to provide educational programming. Infrastructure was developed to communicate among counties; time was scheduled to meet and develop program objectives and events; and activities at area meetings were planned to help staff understand the new unit of counties as an area. These changes are illustrated in Figure 5.1.
Underlying Dynamics of the Change Process

Three major elements surfaced during the 20 months of the change process that had some effect on the changes that were happening. These three elements are funding, staffing, and programming. Consistent with literature on Extension reorganization trends across the United States, funding, staffing, and programming are driving forces of change processes in Extension (APLU, 2010; Iowa State University, 2009; Michigan State University Extension, 2010; Morse, 2006, 2009; OSU Extension, 2009; Schmiesing and Safrit, 2006; Tondl, 1991; University of Georgia Extension, 2010; University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service, 2002). The change agents had to deal with various aspects of these elements creating negative issues but struggled with the authority and resources needed to keep these elements from affecting the processes being developed. This is consistent with literature from Jick (1991) about challenges that change implementers have in their role.

**Funding.** The *OSU Extension Restructuring Model* (OSU Extension, 2009b) was designed to address the issue of diminished traditional funding by developing a system that sustained enough Extension educators to offer educational programs to the public that continued to provide impact on the issues of “economic stability, healthy lifestyles, and educational success” (p. 1). While this study does not prove whether the restructuring plan accomplished this goal, funding issues were still largely apparent within the new structure after twenty months. The variety of funding resources at the local level compounded with the instability of local economics seemed to add to the
challenge of providing educational programming in every county, which is what the Area Leaders were primarily accountable for ensuring.

There may be conflicting policies and philosophies restraining progress on conducting educational programming throughout multi-county areas. In Minnesota, Morse (2009) spoke of overlap in previous policies and standards that needed to be adjusted as restructuring progressed, maintaining that some policies, such as staff promotion, had to be implemented over time. Leaders in this study discussed two ideas about policies and philosophies that affect the area structure in reference to funding. One is the sense of priority an educator has to local constituents especially when funding is voted upon through a levy or raised through local action. Another idea is the staff resistance to providing the full array of Extension program services in a county that severely cut its budget to afford only the minimal staff.

**Staffing.** The restructuring plan addressed a goal for the county and community presence of OSU Extension services which was a “minimum of one Extension full-time equivalent (FTE) and one support staff FTE” (OSU Extension, 2009b, p. 2). Because of the variety of county funding, there was a variety of staffing levels in the field. In counties where the staff was at the minimum, leaders seemed to stress the existence of work overload for the educator who found difficulty in leaving county operations to work with developing area programming. The question of educator workload was suggested in *The Minnesota Response* (Morse, 2009), but research and evaluation discussed in that literature did not uncover the answer to this question and most of the literature was based on the Regional Extension Educator position in Minnesota.
Programming. Leaders developed the concept of area programming within each of their EERAs and regions. Leaders in one region seemed to make a more concerted effort to be consistent across its three areas. Questions about what is considered participation by educators or a product of area programming were evident after 20 months of restructuring processes. The definition of area programming could be a combination of the concepts developed by the leaders, but it is apparent that the definition needs some refinement.

When shifting from a county/cluster to a regional/county structural model, Minnesota Extension focused on developing program business plans (Morse, 2009). The only stipulations put on the educators for conducting programs were to write a business plan and organize a team for the program. Over a period of three years, Minnesota Extension was able to trim its program listing from 208 to 59, dissolving unnecessary programs and combining similar ones, based on the definition of programming created by Seevers, Graham, Gamon, and Conklin in 1997. In comparison with the Ohio model, Minnesota may have shown that this is a next step in the evolution of Extension programming to address concerns for creating a sustainable Extension organization.

Solutions Created by Leaders

To combat the dynamics of funding, staffing, and programming, many leaders encouraged decision-making for reciprocation of services and made time to speak with local stakeholders about what services could be provided. This reciprocation could be an agreement on time, travel, and supplies. The type and amount of reciprocation varied. It could be an exchange of programs because educators specialized and were expected to
rely on each other’s knowledge more than before. Reciprocation was also described as a general fee for any program offered within the EERA or a specific fee decided for an individual program. For counties that had minimal staffing, exceptions were made to minimize the stress put on a county staffed by one educator to conduct programming outside of the county as well as manage the in-county services. Planning locations for programs near county borders so people outside of the county could be welcomed to participate was a strategic idea that also developed from the issue of minimal funding and staffing.

**Guiding Change for a Successful Future**

A challenge with change processes is managing the transition while helping people adapt to “changed circumstances” (Green, 2007, p. 204). Green (2007) describes that resources and tools used in change transitions are the mechanics of change, part of developing capacity and capability for change. Minnesota used program business plans as a tool and resource developed within their change process to give direction to addressing program quality and increase revenue for sustainability (Morse, 2009). Other literature on restructuring Extension systems shares limited information about specific tools and resources used to manage the change process (Iowa State University Extension, 2009; Michigan State University Extension, 2010 Rockwell et al., 1993, Schmitt & Bartholomay, 2009; Tondl, 1991; University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service, 2002). Leaders in this study expressed various tones of frustration with uncertainty about expectations with the changes that happened in restructuring. They
seemed to develop ideas and strategies on their own to guide the transitions within their areas and regions. The most important tool they used was communication.

**Communication is vital.** Leaders seemed to spend an extensive amount of time developing internal and external communications, and several of them stated how critical it was to communicate with people. Communication was described across a broad spectrum of meetings, e-mails, phone calls, face-to-face discussions, flyers to publicize educational programs, websites, and much more. Using multiple forms and means of communication is consistent with what Kotter (1996) says about communicating the change vision in the process of creating major change. The design of communication to the public took into account media outlets and identity as an EERA rather than only the county represented. Leaders were communicating and orchestrating more than just the change vision. Meetings were planned with various groups of people with varying purposes including creating an identity with the area concept, developing a team atmosphere, and helping people get to know each other better. Ongoing communication internal to OSU Extension primarily used Internet to share information on programs, resource lists, and announcements. External communication to stakeholders used face-to-face meetings to share information about the new structure. This is illustrated in Chapter 4, Tables 4.1 and 4.2 (pp. 61-62).

It has been noted that “change agents really have only one tool for engaging others - communication” (J. Ford, personal communication, January 3, 2012). Furthermore, Green (2007) states that “the purpose of communication is to move people from one position to another in terms of their awareness, knowledge, support or
commitment to the change” (p. 181). The leaders in this study grasped the importance of communication to the change process, as they spent a considerable amount of their time engaged in a variety of communication forms with both internal and external audiences.

Mobilizing people seems to have been the greatest force that Area Leaders had in the change process of restructuring the OSU Extension system. At this middle management level leaders primarily engaged county staff members and some stakeholders in the change process. There appeared to be some difficulty for leaders to develop open communication and engagement of leadership levels above the Regional Director and Area Leader and as well as among staff members below at the county level. According to Jick (1991), this is a common result in change processes when all the change roles are not as involved as they should be in listening and responding to have a better understanding of the change process at each level.

Even after 20 months of many challenges and some positive outcomes, Area Leaders and Regional Directors continued to show a positive attitude and outlook for the area structure. There are a few lessons to be learned from the experiences and knowledge shared:

- Extension change agents must be able to communicate across multiple organizational levels while allowing each level to engage themselves in the process to generate additional communication about action and vision.

- Change agents must understand what and where the most effective means of communication are in order to be efficient especially when resources are limited or diminished.
A change agent must act in a way that is effective and productive but must also prepare for phasing themselves out of being the change communicator.

Leaders also shared the importance and necessity for communication in the change process and many explicitly stated the need for communication as a recommendation for others preparing to make organizational changes. This recommendation was defined as giving more clear directions or expectations or providing a “road map” for anticipated events and action. Leaders encouraged getting more input and feedback from a variety of people, including those who might not typically be asked for input because they might have a motivating idea. One leader cautioned that too much input could slow the decision-making process and hamper the change process. Another recommended the importance of controlling the messages that are disseminated into the public and staff, ensuring that the right message is given at the appropriate time.

**Preparing for organizational change in Extension.** The Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) Leadership Advisory Council met in 2010 to discuss the theme “thinking about and assessing the brutal facts for Cooperative Extension” (APLU, 2010). In preparation for this meeting, participants were asked to read Collins’s *Good to Great* (2001). Part of the discussion at this meeting was the idea of dealing with change in Extension. This resulted in an identification of priorities that reflect a more flexible organization, multi-level leadership knowledge for managing change, and improved reaction to change. The need to have an organization prepared for change is greater than ever.
The leaders in this case study did not give any indication of being formally trained or prepared for change management specific to expectations of the restructuring and change process for OSU Extension. However, many of them had or were participating in the National Extension Leadership Development program. They spoke about relying on the experiences they had by participating in the program. Most were reading various books on leadership or change. None of them stated that they were referencing models or strategies by John Kotter (1996), Jim Collins (2001), or any other authors reviewed in this study when asked what tools or resources they referenced.

With thousands of leadership and management resources available in the world today, there might be an advantage to consider a specific selection of strategies and philosophies on organizational change and management for reference. By putting the focus on a few strategies and conceptual ideas, staff members within the organization could be more consistent in their methods, overcome challenges and barriers faster by learning what is more likely to work or not, and be more able to identify where they are, personally, in terms of change within the organization. For the Extension system, this could even be transferred to the mission and purpose of creating change in the public arena.

**Implications**

Several implications for theory, research, and practice in Extension systems are suggested from this study. Implications also include recommendations specific to OSU Extension.
Implications for Theory

Theories on organizational culture circulate with theories on organizational change (Green, 2007; Latta, 2009). Culture tends to be blamed for the resistance and other behaviors that staff members tend to exhibit during organizational change processes. OSU Extension’s organizational culture has been described as a “clan culture” (Berrio, 2003). Recent research also showed gaps between what OSU Extension staff members value in the organization and how evident the value was throughout the organization (Argabright, 2012). In the current study, Area Leaders and Regional Directors talked about how the county culture affected the implementation of the restructuring model because of localized program efforts and some resistance to the changes in structure and programming. Developing the connection between these two concepts could lead to a better balance of culture and change particularly for a networked organization such as the Extension system.

Implications for Research

This study revealed implications for research for those interested in delving into the nature of organizational change and Extension system operations. First, leaders had some conflicting views on staffing within the multi-county areas. Two views about how staffing affected participation in area activities and program planning were evident from discussions with Area Leaders and Regional Directors. One was that a more fully staffed county Extension office resulted in less interest in participation because there was not a great need for area-wide program development and educators could continue to operate in the county as they were. On the contrary, having a county Extension office staffed with
one or two Extension professionals resulted in less participation by those staff members because they were pulled back into the county to manage day-to-day operations. Given this disproportion of staffing, how do administrators and leaders work towards determining a balance of staff and work to meet the needs of educational programming and research across a state or multi-county area? How do leaders encourage or allow educators and staff members to conduct work across multiple counties efficiently and effectively? Gaining a better understanding of the balance of staff and conduct of work across multi-county areas can help the future Extension system be more responsive in making changes that consolidate staff while maintaining the reach of the Extension mission into local communities.

Second, the effect of educator specialization on the Extension system is not well researched. Research conducted on specialization within the Extension system over several decades has shown varying perceptions of staff attitudes towards specialization (Ahmed & Morse, 2010; Rockwell et al., 1993; Schmitt & Bartholomay, 2009; Slocum, 1969). Morse (2011) has proposed a research agenda on a national scale regarding specialization in Extension systems. Questions raised for future research include: How does specialization affect an Extension staff member’s career? When does interest in staff specialization surge? Does specialization of Extension staff members have an effect on program quality, individual performance, or body of knowledge? How does specialization define the comparative advantage of the Extension system? New knowledge about the changing specialization needs for both the individual and the organization could help Extension professionals improve upon the staff perceptions and
efficiency of creating specialists during times of change. Conducting research on how specialization affects the operational and economic values of the Extension system could help administrators in refining change strategy that continues to meet Extension mission and vision.

Third, Area Leaders uniquely described the demographics of their respective areas. They also described pre-established relationships in certain groups of counties or programs that did not change during the restructuring even though those counties were assigned in separate areas. Extension staff within the EERA could identify with this unique description and build working relationships between each other, which begs the question as to how working relationships change in a restructuring process. What is the effect on clientele when these working relationships in Extension change? How does this affect the Extension professionals straddling programs and multi-county work areas?

Getting a better understanding of the effect demographics has in planning and delivering educational programs and the effect on work life for professionals could help administrators in planning future organizational structures that minimize hardships on staff members and the educational programs they conduct.

Finally, change models are a conceptual framework that can be useful in guiding a change process. This study reviewed three change models, including two that have been cited by Extension professionals and organizations (see APLU, 2010; Bloir & King, 2010; Schmiesing & Safrit, 2006). There are many resources for strategies and processes to help guide leaders and members of organizations. It may depend on how they are used that results in whether change is integrated within an organization. Using a particular
model or strategy could help an organization such as Extension identify with where it is going and where it is at in order to address some of the issues that have been presented. It is important to consider the effects of all the players in an organization when implementing a change vision or process and how they will carry out the directions given to them. If an organization establishes a change model as a foundation for change processes within the organization, how does the organization manage the actions and decisions of leaders and change agents to know if the change model was the guide or if it was based on the independent behaviors of leaders and change agents?

**Implications for Practice**

Several implications for practice are revealed in this study for developing change processes in organizations such as the Extension system. Because this study is focused on the OSU Extension system, a few specific implications for practice for OSU Extension are also recommended. First, communication is necessary at every level of the organization and is key to a successful change process (Green, 2007; Kotter, 1996). Communicating change can be passed along through channels of the organization. Change agents and members within the organization should be clear on what expectations are, even if those expectations are to give authority to develop and interpret plans that are initiated. Listening is also a function of communication and developing the open lines of communication for feedback which is necessary to make adjustments and new plans.

Therefore a communication plan should be developed within OSU Extension to help guide information sharing and ensure the correct messages are being sent to the receiving parties. Agreements between parties could be adjusted in a more direct manner with less
hassle or conflict. Gaps in communication could also be addressed. A communication gap was evident in research conducted by Argabright (2012) which found that 94% of OSU Extension personnel valued or extremely valued the flow of communication throughout the organization, yet only 39% of personnel rated this construct item as evident or extremely evident. Taking this communication gap into consideration and discussions with leaders in the current study about inclusion of all levels of personnel in the development of the area system, a communication plan for OSU Extension should be sure to include how and what information is shared across all levels of personnel.

Information is no longer consolidated to print or radio. Technology expands the options for sharing information across a much broader spectrum of style, locations, and audience. Communication plans should also take into consideration the most ideal technological methods of sharing information and specify how internal and external information should be shared within and from the organization.

Second, marketing is a form of communication. Many leaders expressed the need to identify practices for sharing Extension information in a modern world including more than just newsprint and radio waves. Marketing is not a typical coursework requirement for majors preferred in hiring for Extension educator positions. Some support staff may have more knowledge and experience in this subject than educators. Decreased levels of support staff can make it more important for educators to know how to market their programs and make the public aware of Extension services. OSU Extension should consider offering professional development for all levels of personnel to build on
marketing knowledge, strategies, and monitoring. Marketing strategies should be current with technology infrastructure, cost efficiency, and demographics of communities.

Finally, change is inevitable and there should be an expectation for changes to what was implemented in Ohio to occur. What is evident now can be expected to fade and be replaced with more mature challenges or new barriers to carrying out the Extension mission. All staff members should consider what knowledge and skills are necessary to be flexible and adaptive to change especially when reactions in favor of tradition become a burden to organizational survival. This implication is supported by research on trends affecting OSU Extension in the 21st century (Cochran, Ferrari, & Chen, 2012). The organization as a whole can provide guidance for the knowledge and skills that are the basis for creating an adaptive environment so staff are not acting in a renegade fashion, but minding the terms of meeting mission and vision. This implication also relates to Collins’s (2001) concepts of disciplined people, disciplined thought, and disciplined action.

Conclusion

This qualitative study was an opportunity to capture the experiences and observations of change agents within the Extension organization at a time when change is becoming the way to operate and conduct organizational business. The intent was that others who review the information provided by this study will be encouraged to further develop a sustainable Extension system, prepare Extension staff members to be internal change agents, and integrate into strategic and reorganizational plans more concrete initiatives to support conceptual ideas.
The Area Leaders and Regional Directors acting as change agents in the restructuring of Ohio State University Extension interpreted the plan, organized and initiated strategies, and worked to engage the educators in their areas in the new structure. Developing and maintaining various means of communication was essential to the change process. Use of technology and the Internet were beneficial in communication. Educators and the county system seemed to evolve throughout the change process from a more isolated and independent way of working to a more social, integrated system. Educators were given the opportunity to develop and identify specializations and offer their expertise across a broader territory. The challenging dynamics of funding, staffing, and programming were still present after 20 months of the change process.

There is much to be learned from the implementation of a change process. The perspective of an organizational change agent should help administrators and executives better understand the needs and challenges for future change agents. When an organizational change agent position is new, this knowledge can be used to help develop support and resources to help move the organization to its intended state. Knowing how people can affect change within their organization could make a drastic difference in how they react both personally and professionally. The Extension system of the future is one that has yet to be dreamed of, but that missing vision of what is to be should not hold today’s organization back from developing the system that can affect the needs of the public and from sharing the best research-based information that can be provided.
References


Argabright, K.J. (2012). *Assessing organizational values within the Ohio State University Extension system.* (Unpublished master’s thesis). Ohio State University, Columbus, OH.


This interview will be a discussion between a researcher and each Area Leader, guided by these general questions. A list of topics or issues to explore as needed with probes is listed after each question.

Opening: Thank you for your time today. As a reminder, I will be recording our interview so that I can focus on our discussion. I’ll use transcriptions of the interview for analysis and share any analysis with you for feedback before I finish writing up my findings. Also, before using direct quotations from you in my thesis, I will give you an opportunity to review and approve their use. My goal is to gather your insights related to your EERA and your experiences working with the EERA. I have a few broad questions to ask today to help guide our conversation. I want this to be a conversation, so please share what comes to mind.

1. You are into your second year working as an Area Leader. The first thing I would like to do is get a good picture of your EERA now. Tell me about how your EERA is organized and functioning.

   Probes:
   - Your work
   - Communication among educators and program staff (e.g., f2f meetings; virtual collaboration)
   - Program planning and delivery (e.g., marketing, programming)
   - Evaluation
   - Roles and responsibilities of educators; program support staff; support staff
   - Relationships with stakeholders; satisfaction of stakeholders
   - Cost recovery plans or strategies at the area level
   - Technology
   - Things you are particularly excited about with the way your EERA is functioning

2. Again, thinking about where your area is now, into year two of implementation.

   - Tell me about benefits you have seen. (For clientele? The organization? Employees?)
   - Tell me about challenges or barriers you or Extension professionals in your area have faced working in the area structure.
3. Now, let’s take a step back. Think about the time between when the restructuring plan was announced and you were hired as an Area Leader and now. Tell me, in detail, about the kinds of things you have done or things that have happened in your EERA to get from then to now.

**Probes:**
- What knowledge or skills helped you the most in preparing for the role of Area Leader?
- What resources or tools did you reference?
- Plans or goals when you first took responsibility?
- What worked well during the implementation process?
- What didn’t work so well?
- Challenges or barriers during implementation?
- What kinds of recommendations would you give others who are getting ready to implement a similar restructuring plan?

4. What else would you like to share about your experiences with the EERA structure?
Appendix B: Regional Director Interview Guide

This interview will be a discussion between a researcher and each Regional Director, guided by these general questions. A list of topics or issues to explore as needed with probes is listed after each question.

Opening: Thank you for your time today. As a reminder, I will be recording our interview so that I can focus on our discussion. I’ll use transcriptions of the interview for analysis and share my analysis with you for feedback before I finish writing up my findings. Also, before using direct quotations from you in my thesis, I will give you an opportunity to review and approve their use. My goal is to gather your insights related to your work as a Regional Director in implementing and supporting the area structure in OSU Extension. I have a few broad questions to ask today to help guide our conversation. I want this to be a conversation, so please share what comes to mind.

1. The Ohio Extension system is in its second year of restructuring. You have maintained the region throughout that time. The first thing I would like to do is get a good picture of EERA’s in your region as they operate now. Tell me about how these EERA’s are organized and functioning.

Probes: Can you give an example of…
- Your work with the EERAs
- Communication among educators and program staff (e.g., f2f meetings; virtual collaboration)
- Program planning and delivery (e.g., marketing programming)
- Evaluation
- Roles and responsibilities of educators; program support staff; support staff
- Relationships with stakeholders; satisfaction of stakeholders
- Cost recovery plans or strategies at the area level
- Technology
- Things you are particularly excited about the way the EERA’s have been functioning
- Observed similarities or differences of EERAs

2. Again, thinking about what is happening now in your region’s EERAs, into year two of implementation:
➢ Tell me about benefits you have seen. (For clientele? The organization? Employees?)
➢ Tell me about challenges or barriers you or Extension professionals in your region have faced working in the area structure.

3. Now, let’s take a step back. Think about the time between when the restructuring plan was announced and now. Tell me, in detail, about the kinds of things you have done or things that have happened in your region’s EERAs to get from then to now.

   **Probes:**
   ➢ What knowledge or skills helped you the most in preparing Area Leaders?
   ➢ What resources or tools did you reference?
   ➢ Plans or goals when you first took responsibility?
   ➢ What worked well during the implementation process?
   ➢ What didn’t work so well?
   ➢ Challenges or barriers during implementation?
   ➢ What kinds of recommendations would you give others who are getting ready to implement a similar restructuring plan?

4. What else would you like to share about your experiences with the EERA structure?
Appendix C: E-mail to Members of Administrative Cabinet for Peer Review of Interview Guides

Dear Member of Administrative Cabinet,

I am a graduate student working on my thesis and research in Extension Education under the direction of Graham Cochran and Theresa Ferrari. As I prepare to launch my data collection on the EERA restructuring process that has happened in Ohio’s Extension system, I am looking for some feedback on my interview guides for Area Leaders and Regional Directors in Extension. Since there has been an announcement about another restructuring process that appears to affect the positions of all the members I am interviewing for feedback on the current structure, I would appreciate your expert feedback on how to approach the questions and probes about the future of the implementation of this current structure. There are two categories of suggestions I need:

1. General feedback and suggestions you have on how to approach questions and probes in the interview guides so that I am able to gather information to answer my research questions listed below.
2. Given what you (and my interviewees) know about the potential changes to the organizational structure, which questions might be difficult for them to answer? What suggestions do you have to change them considering the research objectives?

If you have any questions for me, please don’t hesitate to e-mail or call with questions. Graham is also available to answer questions. I am including my research objectives for you to review and consider as you read through the interview guides.
attached. You probably have very busy schedules, but your feedback is appreciated by Friday, April 22nd to move forward with this project. Thank you for your help!!

**Purpose and Research Objectives**

The purpose of this study is to describe implementation of an area structure in an Extension organization. It will examine the process used during restructuring and subsequent outcomes of that process.

Specific questions to be addressed include:

1. How has the EERA structure been implemented within the nine areas in OSU Extension’s 2009 Restructuring Plan? This would include areas of staffing; structure; roles and responsibilities; and planning, delivering, and evaluating Extension programming.
2. Within areas, what worked well, or not so well, during the restructuring process? This would include both internal/external issues to the organization.
3. Within areas, what worked well, or not so well, as a result of the restructuring process? This would include benefits or outcomes and challenges or barriers.
4. What needs to happen next for continued implementation of an area structure?
5. What is needed to support continued implementation of an area structure? This might include organizational needs or developmental needs for those in leadership positions.

Frances Harker

Attachments:

Area Leader Interview Guide

Regional Director Interview Guide
Appendix D: E-mail to Area Leaders and Regional Directors to Introduce Study

Dear Area Leader/Regional Director,

I am a graduate student conducting research in Extension Education at Ohio State University. I would like you to participate in my research because you are in a key position to provide information on area systems and restructuring in Extension organizations. Your knowledge and experiences will aid in a greater understanding of what is involved in the restructuring process.

The purpose of this study is to describe implementation of an area structure in an Extension organization. During a face-to-face interview with you, we will discuss the following topics:

1. Your responsibilities within the area structure
2. Initial challenges, barriers, and benefits of the area structure during implementation
3. Things that are working or not working within the area structure
4. Observations about functions in Ohio’s area structure

I would like your participation in the form of a face-to-face interview with me or my advisor, Graham Cochran. Interviews will last approximately two hours at a site convenient to you. Digital recording will be used for data collection. I will contact you to schedule the time and location. It is intended that all interviews for this study be conducted by May 31, 2011. Data will be maintained in a confidential manner and coded
for analysis and use. An analysis of your interview will be sent to you for a member check. I am asking that you return the analysis with any corrections within 14 days of receiving it. Also, before using direct quotations from you in my thesis, I will give you an opportunity to review and approve their use.

This project has been approved by Keith Smith and Administrative Cabinet to be conducted with employees of OSU Extension. My proposal was also reviewed by a protocol analyst at the Office of Responsible Research Practices. Because I am studying institutional processes, this not considered human subjects research by definitions used by the Office of Responsible Research Practices. Therefore, you will not need to complete a written informed consent. However, I will follow accepted ethical principles of research.

I look forward to talking with you for this research project. I will contact you within the week to schedule the interview with you. If you have any questions before that time, please don’t hesitate to contact me at harker.10@osu.edu or 440-320-5032 (my cell). Thank you for your participation!

Sincerely,

Frances M. Harker

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Appendix E: Phone Script for Confirming Interview Time and Location

Hello Area Leader/Regional Director Name. This is Frances Harker calling to schedule a time and location for us to meet to conduct the interview for my research study.

Would we be able to meet on date and time at your office or other location?

What date would work best for you to meet?

OK. I (and/or a member of the research team) will be meeting with you on date and time at location. If you need to change the interview date, please call me at 440-320-5032 (my cell) or 440-326-5851 (the office) as soon as you can so we can rearrange the interview.

Thank you very much for your participation. Do you have any further questions for me?

Have a great day! Good-bye.
Appendix F: E-mail Confirmation for Interview to Regional Directors and Area Leaders

Dear Regional Director/Area Leader,

Thank you for your participation. I look forward to speaking with you on **DAY/DATE** at **TIME** meeting you at **LOCATION**. I will be travelling from Cleveland, Ohio to you. If you have any emergency schedule changes, please contact me at 440-320-5032.

Sincerely,

**Frances Harker**

440-320-5032 (cell)

Harker.10@osu.edu
Appendix G: Member Check Request E-mail

Dear Regional Director/Area Leader,

Thank you for participating in my research of the Ohio Extension System restructuring process. I have prepared a draft of the analysis and attached a copy for you to review. I realize you are likely to be very busy at this time of the year, but I would appreciate your feedback by the end of the day on March 9th. Throughout the document you will find a number and letter code within parenthesis such as this: (113.Z). This code is a reference to the general line number of discussion in the interview transcript and your randomly assigned letter code. I have also attached a copy of the interview transcript for you to reference. Please respond back via e-mail at harker.10@osu.edu or my cell phone at 440-320-5032 with any questions you have. Here are my questions for you as you review the document:

1. Have I captured the context of your comments? Please use track changes in the document and save a new version to return in a response e-mail.

2. I am creating a table of resources created in areas as a result of the restructuring. Help me make sure by answering yes or no the following:

   a. Did your area use volunteer educators in your area to lead program meetings and activities?

   b. Did your area create a calendar of activities for area-wide events?
c. Did your area create an educator specialization list to use?

d. Did your area use any office support staff for any area-wide business functions such as being the main contact for website postings, financial expertise, or other functions?

e. Did your area use basecamp to share internal information or some other form of sharing such as a website?

f. Did your area use technology training, personality training (i.e. Real Colors), or other training (briefly what was the subject matter) for all-staff meetings?

3. When the area structure was introduced and Area Leaders put into place, how did you know what to implement related to the new structure? Was there other communication besides the restructuring plan to help you decide what to do?

Your review of this draft document serves as a member check to help validate the findings. I sincerely appreciate your assistance with this during this busy time of year. If you really feel that you cannot find the time to do this review, please just send me a brief message to let me know. I look forward to sharing the final document with you very soon. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Frances Harker