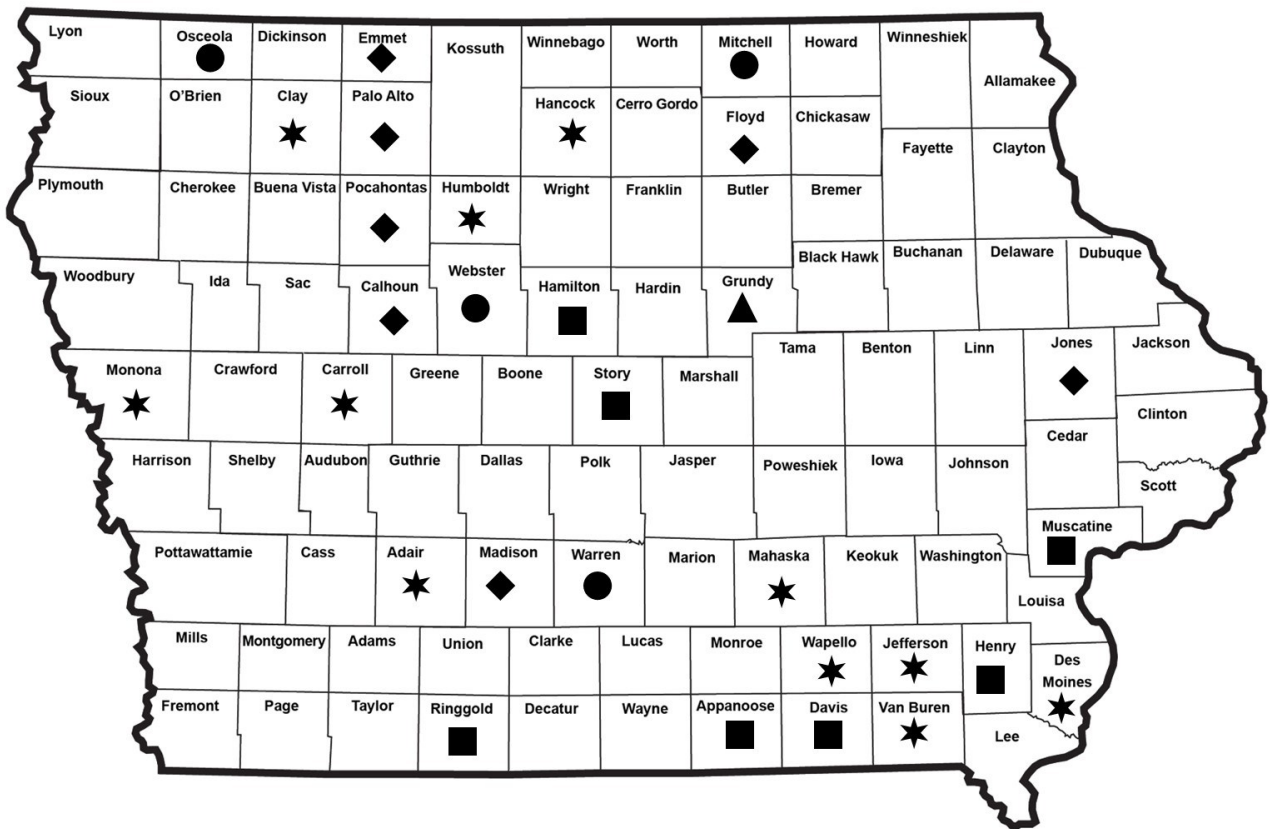


County Office Options

County Farm Bureaus have the option to own or rent office and meeting space. There are currently 29 County Farm Bureaus who do not own their building; most of those lease space from an agent or co-lease space with agents because of the value of the county/agent relationship. The map below provides information on the various arrangements they have entered. Decisions about building ownership are primarily driven by financial considerations and a desire to reprioritize time and energy. If your county needs to explore building options, it can be helpful to know what other counties have done, and to use the questions below to guide your discussion. Before entering into a new arrangement, have all potential leases reviewed by Mark Wickham, IFBF General Counsel, for proper legal representation. Mark Wickham should also represent the county in the sale of a building.



- ◆ Sold building to an agent and lease back space.
- ★ Sold building and lease from agent who built/purchased new building.
- Sold building and co-lease space with agents.
- Sold building and lease space separate from agents.
- ▲ Rent out building and co-lease different space with agents.

Questions to Consider

1. How important is our building to the identity of the County Farm Bureau?
2. In terms of an asset, how does the value of the building perform?
3. What are the projected maintenance costs for the next five years?
4. How much meeting time is dedicated to issues about the building?
5. What is the current market for commercial buildings in our county?
6. What are the population and membership trends in our county?
7. Are we located in the right community?
8. Is there rental space or properties for sale in the right community?
9. Would our agent(s) prefer to own a building rather than rent?
10. If the agent(s) are interested in owning the building, would we want to lease space back from the agent(s)?
11. Should we build a new building? Would it be with or without agents?
12. Can we afford to build a new building? What would our expenses be?
13. How much space does the County Farm Bureau and/or agent(s) need?
14. What amount of rent would we have to charge if we built a new building?
15. What would it be worth to never have these conversations again?

Asset Management

As a “tax exempt” organization, the county Farm Bureau is allowed to acquire and grow assets to provide programs and services as needed. Management of assets contributes to the long term viability of the County Farm Bureau and its programs.

Investment Discussion

One part of the fiduciary responsibility of the Board of Directors is managing the assets and investments of the County Farm Bureau to insure its sustainability. Regardless of the amount of resources a County Farm Bureau has, it is important for the Board of Directors to review their financial situation and discuss their investment philosophy and financial position. Consider the following questions to help guide this discussion:

- Do we currently have investments? If so, what type and what amount?
- Do we have access to a financial advisor? A financial advisor should have a discussion with the board about its goals and offer a strategy to help meet those goals, while investing at a tolerable risk level.
- In the absence of a financial advisor to assist in the process, consider the following:
 - ◊ Do we need to form a committee to handle this task?
 - ◊ Do we review our investments to see how they are performing? If so, how often? Who reviews the investments? What benchmarks are we using? How was the allocation of our investments determined? Have we considered rebalancing our portfolio to realign with these allocations? How liquid are these investments?
 - ◊ Do we have excess money in our checking and/or savings accounts that could be moved into an investment? If so, how much? If not, what is the amount we would need to have in before we felt comfortable moving the excess to an investment?
 - ◊ What is the goal of our investment(s) (e.g., philanthropy, generate income, fund a specific program)? Do investment goals align with the goals and mission of the County Farm Bureau?
 - ◊ Fiduciary responsibility and the county Farm Bureau’s tolerance for risk should be considered when discussing the goal of an investment portfolio. What is our philosophy regarding investment risk? Have you discussed your fiduciary responsibility when considering risk? Are we protecting the assets and interests of the organization and its members? Are we ensuring that the organization will remain viable?

Better Board Meetings

County board meetings are important for many reasons: decisions are made, work gets done, information is shared and networks are developed. The best way to ensure a successful meeting is to prepare. Careful preparation of the meeting agenda helps determine which business is most important to cover, how much time to allocate to each item, and how to handle the routine business more efficiently. The County President and Regional Manager should meet before the board meeting to develop the agenda. Organized and well-run meetings keep board members coming back. Every board member contributes to productive meetings by adhering to these tips, and encouraging others to do so, too.

Productive Meetings

- Start and end on time.
- Follow the agenda. Provide and adhere to time limits for discussion.
- Address the most important agenda items first. Start with an important issue that gets board members engaged in discussion.
- List information-only items (e.g., meeting dates) on the agenda and don't spend unnecessary time in discussion.
- Use Roberts Rules of Order or Parliamentary Procedure to stay focused. A motion and second are required before discussion begins. Consider only one motion at a time. Vote on amendments, then go back to the motion.
- Refer to minutes of previous meetings if the same topics get brought up repeatedly.
- The executive committee can deal with routine business and provide a report or recommendation to the full board. Leave the details about running the county office to the staff.
- Draw out the quiet members. Keep dominators, ramblers and side conversations in check with a polite reminder to stay focused on the group discussion.
- Issues or decisions that arise annually (e.g., donation requests, scholarship amounts) should be placed in a policy manual.
- Details of planning an event or activity should be delegated to a committee or task force. A small group of people who are interested in a priority can focus on the project, discuss options, work out details, and bring recommendations to the board. Committees are also a great way to involve non-board members .

Facilitating Discussion at Meetings

Good board meetings include lively discussion about important issues. Make sure this happens *during* the board meeting rather than *afterwards* in the parking lot! To ensure a high level of participation:

- Include the topic or question on the agenda that is sent out before the meeting so everyone comes to the meeting ready to share their ideas or opinions. Before the meeting, ask the members most passionate about the issue to start the discussion.
- Encourage a variety of opinions or perspectives. After one or two people speak, ask “Are there any other thoughts about this issue?” or “Do any of you have a different opinion on this issue?” Call on individuals by name and ask them to join the discussion. The discussion leader should hold back their own ideas until group members have contributed.
- Criticism of ideas will stifle discussion. Allow a variety of opinions to come out early in the discussion so there will be more information on the table. After most people have shared their ideas, the discussion can become focused toward a solution.
- When the discussion stalls or you sense a common theme emerging, summarize the discussion to check for consensus. If action is needed, ask for a motion.

Outside Speakers

Including outside speakers in your board meeting brings timely information to discussions. Consider including county supervisors, school superintendents, economic development officials, county officials (e.g., roads, planning and zoning) and IFBF staff working on issues relevant to your county.

Clear communication will help ensure the speaker fits the focus and timeframe of your meeting. Be very specific what you want them to focus on, how much time they will have to make their presentation and how much additional time for discussion. Repeat this information when you greet the speaker when they arrive at your meeting.

Introducing the Speaker

Introductions should be approximately one minute. The purpose is to interest the audience in what the speaker has to say and establish the speaker’s credibility. A well-known person requires a shorter introduction because you do not need to spend as much time building credibility with the audience.

A good introduction includes the following information about the speaker:

- Name
- Position/role
- Topic to be addressed
- Qualifications for the topic
- Specific expectations of the audience (e.g., questions, discussion)
- Name repeated (e.g., Please welcome....)

Tips for Nominating Committees

- 1. Determine what the Board needs (quantity and quality)** Determine which seats are open, which are up for re-election, and which areas of the county, types of farming, and types of farmers (e.g., age, gender) need to be represented.
- 2. Determine who is a “regular” member that can serve on the board.** Each county Farm Bureau decides if a “regular member” is someone who has farming as their primary source of income or if it also includes someone employed in ag business.
- 3. Create a list of potential nominees.** Ask current board members, agents, OAs, extension agents, ag instructors, ag businesses and other ag leaders for names. Don’t discount a prospect for fear they might turn you down.
- 4. Pick your best nominating committee.** You need three people who know what the Board needs, know lots of people, will do the work, and aren’t afraid to ask!
- 5. Provide information needed for a strong invitation.** Prepare the basic information needed by potential board members.

Recruiting Tips

- 1. Be confident, think positive. Aim for the county’s best farmers.**
- 2. Prepare an effective invitation**
 - Purpose of Farm Bureau, recent accomplishments
 - Role of the board, time commitment
 - Why you’re asking them, what they will gain
- 3. Meet with prospects in person** It’s much harder to turn you down, and the conversation will help you...
- 4. Find their “hot button”** Ask questions to determine what issues, needs or interests are most important to them?
- 5. Focus your invitation on their hot button** Talk about their interests and how it can be met by being involved.
- 6. ASK!** Remember to seal the deal!
- 7. Follow-up** (within a week)

When you are successful....Welcome new board members!

- Invite to first board meeting or Annual Meeting
- Provide orientation and/or use a Buddy System (pair with a veteran board member)
- Put them to work in an area related to their “hot button”