

Cornell Cooperative Extension Association of Otsego County

Five-Year Business Plan
January 1, 2007 — December 31, 2011

Adopted by the Board of Directors January 18, 2007

Amended May 17, 2007 (amendments shown as strikethrough (deleted) and underline (addition))

Executive Summary

Through this Business Plan, the Board of Directors proposes to strengthen the Cornell Cooperative Extension Association of Otsego County so that it continues to provide outstanding programs in 4-H youth development, agriculture, and nutrition, and grows to become one of the best Associations in New York State.

Community trends continue to reveal a need for the types of programs delivered by the Association. While the Association has strengths and opportunities, it must address weaknesses and threats to remain viable in the 21st century.

The Association's five-year vision is to continue to be the premier, local organization facilitating the flow of research-based knowledge, local experience, and skills to Otsego County individuals, families, businesses, and communities who wish to improve themselves without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same. The Association will implement this vision through two strategies: Core Programs and Special Programs, each with its own funding strategy.

To reach its vision and establish a realistic 2007 budget according to expected revenue (\$857,034), the Association must reorganize. Initially, in Phase 1, Core Programs will be established with a foundation of ~~three~~ two Community Educators, working together under the supervision of the Executive Director, to provide programming in 4-H youth development, agriculture and nutrition. Core Programs also will include programming delivered by the Central New York Dairy and Field Crops Regional Team. Special Programs will continue with Eat Smart New York, Reality Check, EmPower NY, and the NYS Diabetes Prevention and Control Program. (see Organizational Chart, Appendix A). All positions will receive compensation at no less than the minimums established year-to-year by Cornell Cooperative Extension Administration.

Reorganization will require the elimination of four positions and the layoff of two more employees. Balanced with the creation of the above-mentioned Community Educator positions, reorganization will result in the reduction of the staff by four employees. ~~At this time, the Association has insufficient funding to remain in the Central New York Dairy and Field Crops Regional Team.~~

An integral part of the reorganization will be the design and implementation of improved management, financial, and operational procedures to create a more transparent organization.

Phase 2, starting in 2008 and continuing through 2011, will establish the Association's growth and development phase through the implementation of the Association's funding strategies. Program Directors for Outreach and Research will be added, as well as a Community Educator with livestock experience and a Community Educator with nutrition experience, ~~and the Association will join a regional agriculture team.~~ New Special Programs will be added as specific community needs are identified. As more program educators and projects are added, additional administrative staff will be necessary, too.

A six to nine month transition period will be required to reorganize. Employees leaving the Association due to the elimination of their position or due to layoff will be given *Leave with Pay* status and access to career counseling. ~~Based on notice requirements, the Association will remain in the Central New York Dairy and Field Crops Team until the middle of July, 2007.~~ Open positions resulting from the reorganization will be advertised and filled (salaries are in the 2007 budget). Costs associated with the transition are not included in the 2007 budget, and will be paid out of reserves (approximately \$40,000).

Five-Year Business Plan

- Introduction

The Board of Directors of Cornell Cooperative Extension is committed to serving the residents of Otsego County. Through this Business Plan, we propose to strengthen the Association so that it continues to provide outstanding programs and grows to become one of the best Associations in New York State.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Otsego County is at a crossroads. Two major events took place during the summer of 2006: (1) the Association's New York State *ACT for Youth* grant ended, leaving the Association with approximately \$100,000 less of annual revenue, and (2) the Association hired a new executive director. At this time, the Association finds itself at a critical juncture requiring careful program and management planning. How do we live within our budget, ensure the best youth, agriculture and nutrition programming that our limited funds will buy, and grow the Association to meet the needs of Otsego County in the 21st Century? This Business Plan answers that question.

Currently, the mission of the Association is:

The Cornell Cooperative Extension educational system enables people to improve their lives and communities through partnerships that put experience and research knowledge to work. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Otsego County (CCE) is a community-based educational outreach agency with state and national networks. CCE conducts educational programs for individuals, youth, families, professionals, businesses, and local leaders.

Although this mission statement is long and difficult to remember, several key concepts are important to our core identity:

- CCE empowers people to improve their lives and communities.
- CCE is an educational and research organization.
- CCE delivers educational programs in many settings and in many ways.
- CCE depends on collaboration to succeed.

This Business Plan sets forth a strategy for the Association to effectively and efficiently accomplish its mission during the next five years.

As with other extension associations in Upstate New York, this Association delivers core programming in the areas of youth development, agriculture and nutrition. The community turns to the Association for resources relating to these areas. To ensure that the residents of Otsego County continue to receive the best programming in these areas, the Association must attract the most talented educators that its funding will allow. This Business Plan describes how the Association will structure and grow its staff during the next five years to ensure that the residents of Otsego County are served.

To accomplish its mission for the people of Otsego County, the Association must attract more funding. Funders must see alignment between their objectives and our mission and our programs. This Business Plan describes a strategy for securing public and private funds to support the Association's mission.

- Community Trends Relating to the Association's Work

Otsego County is typical of rural, Upstate New York counties:

- Youth have many activities from which to choose, but they crave quality, research-based programming activities lead by caring adults.
- Youth seeking an agricultural lifestyle or career have few opportunities to nurture that interest.
- Dairy farming, while a smaller sector than in the past, remains the largest agricultural sector, generating one of the largest revenue streams in the county.
- Agriculture is diversifying, with many full time and part time farmers engaging in the production of many different crops and livestock. This diversity includes beef, swine, sheep, goats, horses, poultry, field crops, vegetables, fruit, nursery and green house crops, maple, honey, and Christmas trees. Some farms focus on organic production while others do not.
- Amish families are attracted to Upstate New York and are establishing communities here.
- Agri-tourism is a growing and important economic and cultural sector.
- Food safety, dietary quality, and personal interest are leading more and more individuals to raise crops and livestock for their own consumption.
- The population is aging as baby boomers reach retirement age.
- Rising real estate values, neighbor conflicts, lower commodity prices, increased production costs and changing weather patterns are pressuring some farmers to exit agriculture and sell their farms to developers.
- Family financial security is threatened as personal saving decreases and debt increases.
- Home and transportation energy costs are fluctuating, and remain at historically high levels.
- Rates of obesity and chronic disease, including diabetes, heart disease, and cancer, are rising. Dietary quality is decreasing as more people, especially the young, are eating out at fast-food restaurants and buying processed foods.
- Forest land continues to increase as farmers abandon less productive fields, but little forest management is practiced by non-industrial forest landowners.
- While predominately rural in nature, a significant portion of the population lives or works in an urban setting.
- A significant portion of the non-agricultural rural population has financial challenges.

These trends and characteristics, and others, create opportunities for individuals, families, businesses, and communities to make choices that will improve their lives without compromising the ability of future generations to also enjoy healthy, fulfilling lives. The key requirement for them is having reliable information on which to base their decisions.

- The Association's Current Situation

- *Strengths*

- The Association is connected to one of the premier research institutions in the world, Cornell University.
 - The Association is connected with a state-wide, national and international system of extension organizations and institutions.
 - The Board of Directors is comprised of individuals with community connections and organizational skills.
 - The 4-H Club Program, the Master Gardener Program, and the Eat Smart New York Program are particularly well received in the County.
 - The Association enjoys a good public image.
 - Core funding, although less than funding to comparable extension associations, has remained stable or grown during the recent past.

- *Weaknesses*

- The current funding structure exposes most Association employees to lay-off, as a significant portion of many employees' salary is tied to grant funds. Essentially, the Association does not distinguish between Core Programs and Special Programs.
 - By emphasizing grant funded Special Programs, in some cases the Association has shifted its programming mix away from Core Programs.
 - The Association's programs lack significant applied research projects in Otsego County.
 - General adherence to the typical Cornell Cooperative Extension "program silo" organizational structure limits the effectiveness of Educators to deliver an efficient, effective program to address community needs that touch more than one program area.
 - The Association never addressed the 25% reduction in County funds in 2003; instead it relied on *ACT for Youth* grant funds to cover expenses. That grant ended in 2006.
 - Eleven of fourteen employees are paid less than CCE's current salary minimums, with some employees paid significantly below. Expense accounts for employees are under funded, too, limiting their effectiveness.
 - Management and accounting systems and controls are weak, and, therefore, the Association's operations are not transparent.
 - Documenting and evaluating program effectiveness, efficiency, and impact is weak or non-existent, leaving the Association exposed as more and more funders expect such information. Similarly, the Association has not identified and marketed its *Extension* competitive advantages in relation to relevant community needs.

- While the Association’s image is good among audiences that know it, the percentage of people in Otsego County who know about the Association and what it does is small.
 - *Opportunities*
 - Common Upstate New York trends mean that Cornell University Faculty and CCE Educators in other associations are interested in developing collaborative programs and research projects relating to such trends, and the community should be receptive to such programs and projects.
 - Properly designed, effective programs and projects that relate to relevant community needs will attract both Core and Special funding.
 - Other local agencies and organizations are interested in partnerships that address community needs.
 - The County Board of Representatives is showing renewed interest in the Association’s programming potential.
 - The community is yearning for information about how to deal with the trends mentioned on page 4, especially information they can trust.
 - *Threats*
 - The community has many sources of current information, including books, magazines, television, radio, the internet, and non-profit organizations.
 - Other institutions located in and around Otsego County also conduct basic and applied research relating to youth, agriculture, and nutrition.
 - Funders, including governments, agencies, and organizations, are moving away from providing general, core funds and, instead, are more focused on providing targeted, special project funds.
 - Competition for funding is intensifying for all agencies and non-profits.
- Association Vision

With these trends in mind, in five years the Association will continue to be the premier, local organization facilitating the flow of research-based knowledge, local experience, and skills to Otsego County individuals, families, businesses, and communities who wish to improve themselves without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same. The Association will implement this vision through two strategies: Core Programs and Special Programs.

- **Core Programs** are made up of education, facilitation, and applied research relating to youth development, agriculture, and nutrition. Core Programs will be fully funded by government appropriations, enrollment, rent, interest income, and other stable revenue sources. Core Programs encompass the enduring, fundamental programs for which the Association is known. Core Programs allow the Association to be responsive to the broad community as issues arise.
- **Special Programs** are made up of unique education, facilitation, and research opportunities that deal with timely community needs and are supplemental to

Core Programs. Special Programs address both short term and long term community needs. Special Programs may relate to youth development, agriculture, and nutrition topics, but they also may relate to other unique opportunities on which Cornell University and the Association are well positioned to make an impact. Special Programs will be funded by grants, contributions, fundraising and other focused revenue sources. Special Programs allow the Association to be deeply focused on specific community needs.

- Funding Strategy

- **Core Programs:** As described in the previous section, Core Programs relate to subject matter areas (1) for which the Association has subject-matter expertise, and (2) that relate to on-going community needs. Core Programs allow the Association to respond to broad community needs as such needs arise on a daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly basis, as the case may be. A key funder of Core Programs is Otsego County, especially since Core funding from the Federal government and New York State are tied to the level of County funding. Success in growing Core Program funding depends on gaining alignment of Core Programs with the needs that concern County Leaders. Therefore, the Association’s strategy for securing and growing funding from the County is to (1) re-establish a “pact” with the County setting forth Core Program subject-matter areas, including the realistic cost of supporting such areas, and (2) establish an ongoing dialog with County Leaders to confirm or adjust which areas will be included. Through this strategy, the Association will be able to focus on and deliver only the quality Core Programs that County Leaders expect.
- **Special Programs:** Basically, Special Programs are grant programs directed at specific educational or research challenges facing Otsego County residents. Long-term success in gaining such grant funds depends on identifying real needs, staff passion toward the project, integrity, and delivering results. Organizational reputation for these qualities attracts grant funders. Equally important is to collaborate on such projects with other organizations and agencies interested in dealing with the identified community need. Therefore, the Association’s strategy for securing and growing Special Program funding is (1) to collaboratively address project design and development aimed at real community need before seeking funding, (2) then to identify funders interested in funding such projects, and (3) to deliver timely, high quality results to the funder. Through this strategy, the Association will be able to become a premier grantee sought by grant funders.

- Reorganization Strategy to Achieve the Association’s Vision

Objectives: The Association needs to be reorganized to meet the following organizational objectives:

1. Ensure the continuation of youth, agriculture, and nutrition programs, while enhancing the Association’s flexibility, adaptability, and breadth of education and applied research programs to better serve the residents of Otsego County.
2. Employ the highest caliber staff that funding, at any given time, will support.
3. Excel at customer service and responsiveness at all organizational levels.

4. Be transparent in the way it operates and manages its resources.

Phase 1 – 2007 Reorganization:

To position the Association to take advantage of its strengths and opportunities while minimizing its weaknesses and threats, and in line with the stated objectives, the Association will implement the following actions upon the adoption of this Business Plan:

- Acknowledge that overall Core Program funding is limited, even with an increase in the County appropriation for 2007, due to the reduction of the 2003 County appropriation and the loss of the *ACT for Youth* grant in 2006.
- Explicitly recognize and support the Association’s **Core Program** areas of (1) 4-H Youth Development (especially programming directed at 4-H Clubs and Volunteer 4-H Club Leaders), (2) Master Gardener Consumer Horticulture, (3) Commercial Agriculture, and (4) Family & Consumer Sciences.
- Recognize and support the Association’s continued involvement in the following grant funded **Special Programs**: (1) East Smart New York!, (2) Reality Check, (3) the Diabetes Prevention and Control Program, and (4) EmPower NY. Other, smaller, grant funded projects will be evaluated and supported on a case-by-case basis.
- To improve service to County residents, abandon the “program silo” organizational model for a “consulting firm” model, in which a team of Core Program Educators works together, rather than separately, to deliver the entire Core Program. Each Core Program Educator still will have unique education, skills and experience in one of the four Core Program areas.
- To institutionalize the “consulting firm” model, adopt the Organizational Chart set forth in Appendix A, and, during this first phase, based on identified funding and the stated position priority, employ the Educators and Administrative Staff designated in the bold boxes. Eliminate any positions no longer fitting the model.
- As soon as practical, but no later than September 30, 2007, identify Organizational Chart position vacancies for which the Association has identified funding, and hire persons to fill such vacancies.
- ~~Withdraw from the Central New York Dairy and Field Crops Regional Team, effective on or about July 19, 2007 (six months after giving notice), until such time as community need and funding for Core Programs is sufficient to warrant joining a regional agriculture team.~~
- Beginning January 1, 2007, compensate employees at no less than the minimum amount annually established by Cornell Cooperative Extension Administration.
- Adopt the Proposed 2007 Budget attached to this Business Plan.
- As soon as practical in 2007, but no later than March 31, 2007, structurally separate funding for Core Programs from funding for Special Programs.

- As soon as practical, but no later than March 31, 2007, streamline and improve bookkeeping, accounting, and operational practices to increase staff and Association accountability and transparency.
- *2007 Program, Management and Funding Goals*
 - Program Goals: (1) focus on Core Program staff hiring, training, and relationship building, (2) deliver a basic Core Program; (3) continue current major Special Program grants (ESNY, Reality Check, EmPower NY, and Diabetes Prevention and Control), and (4) evaluate the Association's ability to fulfill other Special Program grants.
 - Management Goals: (1) investigate and implement operational, bookkeeping, and other procedures to make the Association more transparent, (2) amend the Association's Constitution to bring it into compliance with mandatory requirements.
 - Funding Goals: (1) operate within the approved 2007 budget, (2) increase revenue from the Fall Celebrity Chef event to \$5,000, (3) begin an exploration with the Otsego County Board of Representatives to reestablish the Association's Core Program role and Core funding needs, including the funding in 2008 of a Program Director of Outreach and a Community Educator— Nutrition & Health.

Phase 2: Program, Management and Funding Goals – 2008 through 2011

- *2008*
 - Program Goals: (1) hire a Program Director for Outreach (Extension Issue Leader) to (a) expand the Association's ability to deliver Core Programs and (b) expand the Association's capability of seeking and implementing additional Special Programs, (2) ~~hire a Community Educator— Nutrition & Health to expand the Association's ability to provide broad nutrition and health programming as part of its Core Programs,~~ hire a Community Educator— Livestock to expand the Association's ability to provide broad animal agriculture programming as part of its Core Programs, (3) continue to grow the Core Programs and Special Programs delivered in 2007, (4) identify at least one new and unique major Special Program that (a) expands the effectiveness and reach of the Association in relation to a pressing need in the community, (b) has the potential for long-term stable funding.
 - Management Goals: (1) evaluate the operational, bookkeeping, and other policies and procedures implemented in 2007, and make necessary adjustments, (2) have an outside audit of the 2007 Financial Statements conducted by an independent certified public accounting firm, (3) perform a conferral of title evaluation of the Executive Director, (4) evaluate facility needs for the Association to effectively deliver extension programs.
 - Funding Goals: (1) work with the Otsego County Board of Representatives to fund, in 2009, (a) a new position of Program Director

for Research and (b) ~~the Association joining a Regional Specialist Team relating to Dairy agriculture, a new position of Community Educator—Nutrition & Health~~ (2) search for funding for any new Special Program(s) identified above, (3) increase revenue from the Fall Celebrity Chef event to \$7,500, (4) develop a Capital Campaign to implement the recommendations of the facility evaluation.

o 2009

- Program Goals: (1) working with the Board, staff, and community, establish one or more key indicators of Association impact/success and the procedure (Balanced Scorecard) for tracking and reporting progress, (2) hire a Program Director for Research (Extension Issue Leader) to increase the Association's capability of funding and conducting local applied research relating to pressing community needs, (3) ~~join a Regional Specialist Team relating to Dairy agriculture,~~ hire a Community Educator—Nutrition & Health, (4) begin implementation of the new, major Special Program(s) identified in 2008, (5) now that youth development, agriculture, and nutrition & health Core Program areas are reorganized and growing, evaluate other potential programs areas with the County Board of Representatives to add to Core Programs.
- Management Goals: (1) conduct a *Standards of Excellence* review of the Association, (2) have an outside audit of the 2008 Financial Statements conducted by an independent certified public accounting firm, establishing such audits as an annual practice, (3) update the facilities needs assessment conducted in 2008.
- Funding Goals: (1) kick off the facilities Capital Campaign developed in 2008, (2) seek stable increases in Core Funding to keep the full Core Program staff operating effectively, (3) increase revenue from the Fall Celebrity Chef event to \$10,000, and (4) continue developing funds for the new, major Special Program(s) identified in 2008.

o 2010

- Program Goals: (1) implement the tracking and reporting system for the indicators of success identified in 2009, (2) continue the strategy established in 2007 – 2009 of (a) developing and funding Core Programs in consultation with the County and (b) identifying and funding Special Programs in response to identified community needs.
- Management Goals: (1) draft a plan to address weaknesses identified by the *Standards of Excellence* review, and begin implementing them, (2) have an outside audit of the 2009 Financial Statements conducted by an independent certified public accounting firm, (3) update the facilities needs assessment.
- Funding Goals: (1) continue the facilities Capital Campaign developed in 2008, (2) seek stable increases in Core Funding to keep the full Core

Program staff operating effectively, (3) maintain revenue from the Fall Celebrity Chef event at \$10,000,

○ *2011*

- Program Goals: (1) evaluate the indicators of success identified in 2009, as well as the tracking and reporting system, and make any necessary changes to the procedure, (2) continue the strategy established in 2007 – 2010 of (a) developing and funding Core Programs in consultation with the County and (b) identifying and funding Special Programs in response to identified community needs.
- Management Goals: (1) continue implementing the *Standards of Excellence* plan, (2) have an outside audit of the 2010 Financial Statements, and (3) begin implementing the facilities improvement project based on the updated needs assessment.
- Funding Goals: (1) finish the facilities Capital Campaign, (2) seek stable increases in Core Funding to support Core Program staff, and (3) maintain revenue from the Fall Celebrity Chef event at \$10,000.

● Transition

To facilitate the transition to the organizational structure described in Appendix A, the Association will take the following actions:

- Publicly announce the adoption of this plan through media releases, a letter to volunteers and members, and communication to the Otsego County Board of Representatives and Cornell Cooperative Extension Administration.
- Meet with current staff and inform them of the status of their positions according to the following chart:

Position	Action
Executive Director	Position Continued
Youth and Family Team Coordinator	Position eliminated immediately; assess interest in taking the Community Educator—4-H Youth Development position; eligible for <i>Leave with Pay</i>
Agriculture Development Specialist	Position eliminated immediately; assess interest in taking the Community Educator—Fruits & Vegetables position; eligible for <i>Leave with Pay</i>
Nutrition Health and Safety Educator	Position renamed “Special Programs Leader;” CCE Classification remains the same; Position Description needs updating
Reality Check Coordinator	Position Continued
Community Educator—4-H Youth Development	New position; assess interest of both the Youth and Family Team Coordinator and 4-H/Youth Development Program Educator in filling this position
Community Educator—Fruits & Vegetables	New position; assess interest of both Agriculture Development Specialist and Horticulture Program Assistant in filling this position

Community Educator—Dairy & Livestock	New position; advertise and fill by summer
4-H/Youth Development Program Educator	Position continues until the filling of the Community Educator—4-H Youth Development position, then eliminated; assess interest in taking the Community Educator—4-H Youth Development position; eligible for <i>Leave with Pay</i>
Horticulture Program Assistant	Position continues until the filling of the Community Educator—Fruits & Vegetables position, then eliminated; assess interest in taking of the Community Educator—Fruits & Vegetables position; eligible for <i>Leave with Pay</i>
Nutrition Program Educators (3)	Positions Continued
Office Manager	Position Continued
Finance Administrator	Position Continued
Administrative Assistant	Position Continued but Layoff, pending funding; eligible for <i>Leave with Pay</i>
Custodian	Position Continued but Layoff, pending funding; eligible for <i>Leave with Pay</i>

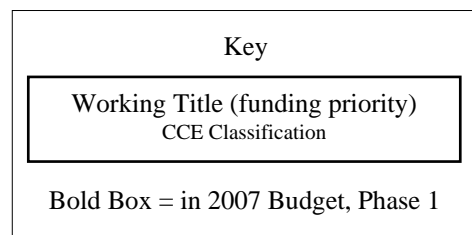
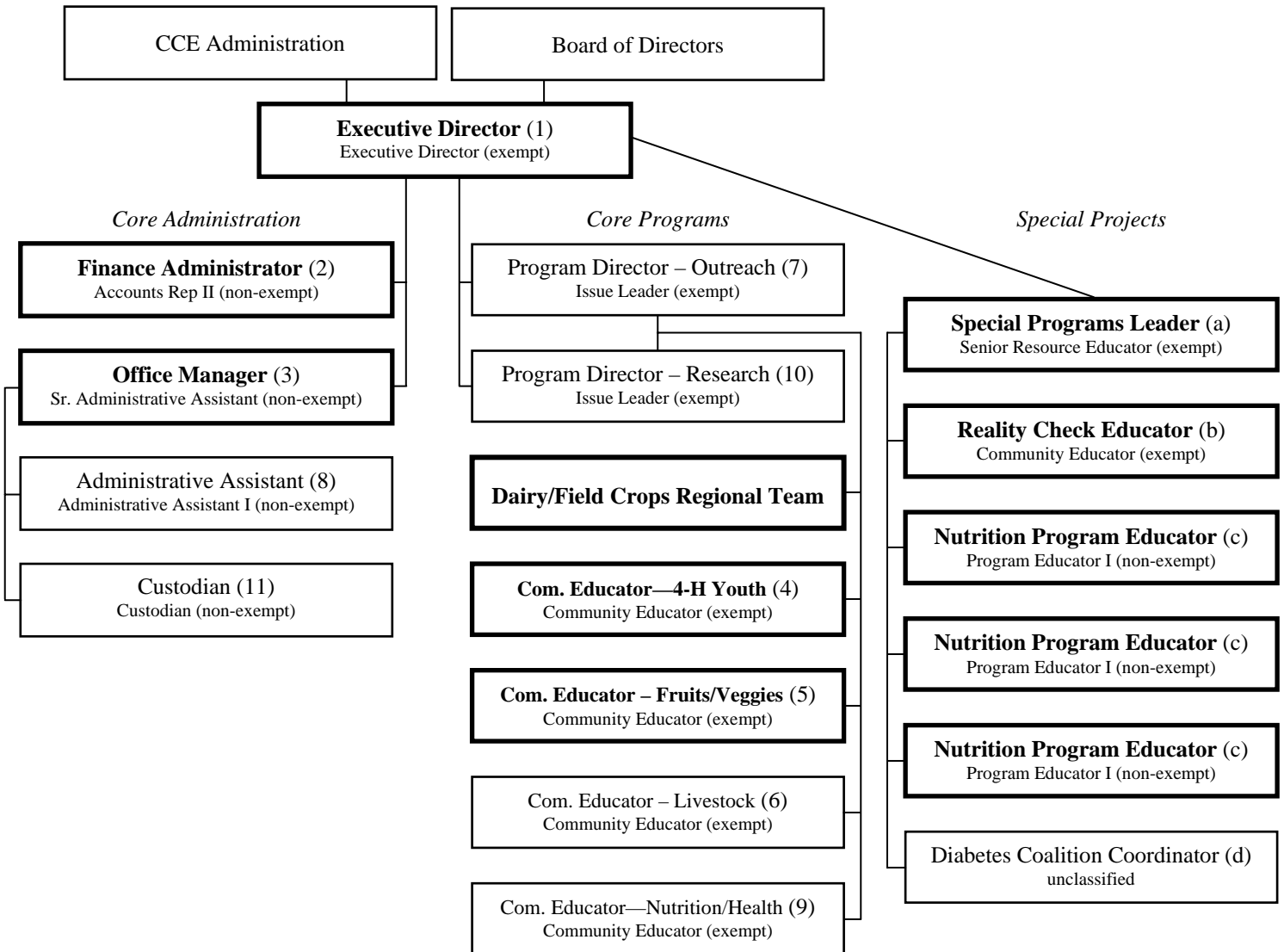
- On the day the Executive Director informs staff about the implementation of this Business Plan, he will assess whether educators holding eliminated positions are interested in filling the new Community Educator positions. Such educators will be given three business days to inform him in writing of their decision. Should more than one educator express interest in the position, the Executive Director will evaluate and determine which one is most qualified to fulfill the requirements of the position. The evaluation will consider each person’s knowledge, skills, education and past performance. Should no educator express interest in a new position, the position will be advertised and filled as soon as practical.
- For staff (1)(a) whose position is eliminated, and (b) who stay in their position up to and including the day the position is eliminated, and (c) who thereafter do not continue in the employment of the Association, or (2) who are laid off, the Association will provide them with (i) career counseling through the Department of Labor, and (ii) *Leave with Pay* status to support them in their job search, based on the day his or her position is eliminated. *Leave with Pay* will be calculated according to the following chart:

Employment Term	Length of <i>Leave with Pay</i>
Exempt, more than 20 years	4 months
Exempt, more than 10 years	3 months
Exempt, more than 5 years	2 months
Exempt, less than 5 years	1 month
Non-exempt, more than 20 years	15 weeks
Non-exempt, more than 10 years	10 weeks
Non-exempt, more than 5 years	6 weeks
Non-exempt, less than 5 years	4 weeks

All remaining Vacation and Personal leave must be used during the *Leave with Pay* period. If during the *Leave with Pay* period an employee is recalled or otherwise employed in an active position with the Association, the *Leave with Pay* period will immediately end, and from then on the employee will be compensated according to such position's salary or wage.

- ~~No later than January 31, 2007, notify the Central New York Dairy and Field Crops Team of the Association's intention to withdraw from the Team no later than July 31, 2007, based on the six-month notice requirement for leaving the team.~~
- In order to fill any position vacancies created by this reorganization in a strategic and orderly fashion, establish a hiring plan no later than February 28, 2007.

Appendix A
Organizational Chart after Reorganization



Appendix A (continued)
Organizational Chart before Reorganization

