

Ask a Leader

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Karen Madden (NY SORH)

Karen Madden is the Director of the NY Office of Rural Health and the Bureau of Health Facility Planning within the New York State Department of Health. She is a Past President of NOSORH, and serves on the National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services (NACRHHS).

What's the best thing about being a SORH Director?

There's not just one thing.

1. The people with whom we work in rural communities who are so innovative, creative, and effective in providing high quality care.
2. Having the opportunity to work on a national policy level and with the folks at NOSORH.
3. Working with the ORH staff and others within the NYS DOH on rural issues and making a difference for rural communities in a state where urban interests so often dominate.

In addition to being a SORH Director, you run the NY Rural Health Network Development Program and serve on boards. What's your best advice for keeping things "in balance"?

Mostly, it comes down to planning, prioritizing, remaining flexible, and not taking yourself too seriously. It's also important to find the strengths of the people on your team and let them maximize their skills while not micromanaging.

Does your Office do strategic planning?

Strategic planning in our office, unfortunately, is done in my head and a little whiteboard in my office. We have simply not taken the time to do this formally. Fortunately, the NYS Department of Health has a renewed focus on strategic planning and we will be involved in that process, which will, hopefully, result in a plan that meets the ORH need while also remaining consistent with New York's health policy goals.

To our readers: Does your Office engage in strategic planning? If so: how, and how often? Or, what activities/tools do you use instead? Send your answers—and any other questions/suggestions for rural leaders—to bethb@nosorh.org.