



GOVERNOR'S
EMPOWER RURAL IOWA
INITIATIVE

Governor's Empower Rural Iowa Initiative
Connecting Rural Iowa Task Force Virtual Meeting Agenda
Wednesday, July 14
2:30-3:30 PM

1. Roll Call:

Lt. Governor Gregg	Steve Simons	Dennis Fraise	Dustin Blythe
Stacey Stewart	Chris Ball	Caleb Housh	Kevin Cabbage
Danna Larson	Billi Hunt	Katie LaBree	Dave Duncan
Brittany Morales	Deb Lucht	Tom Petersen	

2. Approval of Minutes from October 28, 2020 meeting

Minutes of the October 28, 2020 had been distributed for review. Dave Duncan motioned to approve, and Katie LaBree seconded. Passed unanimously.

3. Welcoming Remarks from Lt .Gov. Gregg:

Thanks to all who attended the joint IRDC/EPI meeting in Newton, with thanks to Jake Swenson from his office and Sandy Ehrig for filling in for him in his absence.

Had some great wins the 2021 legislative session with \$100 million being allocated for broadband expansion.

Task force focus this year will be to work on previous recommendations to get work done including continued rural innovation grants, rural entrepreneurship co-ops, rural leadership, and a pilot program for a rural return incentive to recruit Iowan's back. So rather than new ideas, let's put the existing ideas into practice. So, for the task force members, it probably means a brief meeting for an update, and more work through a committee process.

One new piece of legislation included the community broadband and telecommuter certification and he can see members of our Connected task force being part of structuring the program.

4. Remarks by Co-Chair Sandy Ehrig:

Provided an overview of the August Iowa Rural Development Summit.

5. Presentation on ARA (Agriculture and Rural Communities. Hongwei Zhangn (reference PPT)

Focus aligned on how to empower Iowan's on being the driving force of entrepreneurship.

Two aspects of rural broadband: Technology and role we play

ARA: Part of a national program for advanced wireless research. \$100M investment to help sustain the leadership of the U.S. Started 4 years ago focused on smart cities (urban) no discussion on rural. Focus has now shifted to rural broadband. Important for us to participate to help shape national conversation.

Two main focus – what are the missing technology for broadband that need to be filled.
Objective – how can we make rural connectivity costs more equal to urban?

Provided a visual of the backhaul for regions they are looking to pilot the program in, as well as access points. There will also be a mobile site. Backhaul will be terrestrial and satellite systems offering speeds up to 100 Mbps.

ARA will allow exploration of new frontiers of applications in rural ag, automated transportation, etc. Because of current lack of capacity many ideas and applications are conceptual.

Early stage customization will require co-design with ag innovators, wireless researchers, etc.

Great opportunity for Iowa to leverage this technology. Not only treat broadband as a service, but a new dimension of opportunity. Overall observation - we are now entering the third wave of the Internet of Things. Innovation is moving from Silicon Valley to other areas that have the innovation and research ability.

Why now? We could be leading the early exploration of wireless with huge applications in ag and aerial automation transportation

Questions:

Lt. Governor: With ISU leading research, who will own the technology? Prof. Zhangn: A lot of the technologies will be open source, so available to anyone. Hopes the technologies will be leveraged through companies in the Iowa Communications Alliance. There is need for new technology businesses to emerge.

For more info: <https://arawireless.org>. hongwei@iastate.edu

6. Presentation from Annette Dunn, Director OCIO (reference PPT)

Director Dunn provided an overview of the broadband grants and current legislation initiatives. The NOFA is open until July 28.

Questions:

Lt. Governor: What are you seeing from an application perspective as to activity? Dir. Dunn: anticipate close to 100, but a guess. They can see how many applications are active, thinks by next week that will give them a good idea.

Dave D.: Program is generating a lot of interest from members. A lot of questions on the map which might be saying areas are served so are ineligible. Dir Dunn: Areas served are self-reported, they won't know until they validate.

Lt. Governor: What does the supply chain look like for raw materials for build out? Kevin C: It is challenging to get access to materials and contractors to do the work. With their two projects for Reconnect, both projects have come in way over budget. Prices are escalating.

Kevin C: If we are relying on providers to report, how can residents report a speed test? Dir. Dunn: The public can appeal the map same as providers. They can access it from the map page. They do know there are providers offering higher speeds, but costs are very high and some can't afford. For example, she lives in a rural area and if she wanted speeds of 100/100 she would be paying \$200 while in Johnston it would be \$80.

They will be working with cities and counties to help identify opportunities and resources so they can be vendor agnostic.

7. Public Comment

None

8. Wrap up & Next Steps

There are two upcoming task force meetings. Investing will be in Atlantic on July 20 from 1:00 – 2:30 with a Zoom option and Growing is July 28 on Zoom. There will be no meetings in August as the Rural Summit will take place.

9. Adjourn