



GOVERNOR'S  
**EMPOWER RURAL IOWA**  
INITIATIVE

Governor's Empower Rural Iowa Initiative  
Growing Rural Iowa Task Force Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, July 28, 2021  
1:00 – 2:00 PM

1. Roll Call:

Lt. Governor Gregg	Sandy Ehrig	Senator Sweeney	Ron Reischl
Linc Kroeger	Rick Young	Jenna Ramsey	Jason Neises
Ashley Moyer	Sharon Stroh	James Hoelscher	Rob Denson

2. Approval of Minutes from November 13, 2020 Meeting

Minutes from the November 13, 2020 meeting had been previously distributed for review. Rob Denson motioned to approve, and Ron Reischl seconded the motion. Passed unanimously.

3. Welcoming Remarks from Lt. Gov. Gregg

Lt. Governor thanked members for attending. 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, we will look at putting the existing ideas into practice. For task force members, it probably means a mix of onsite, Zoom and more work through a committee process. Thinks we are reaching a point where our own momentum is carrying us forward.

4. Remarks by Co-Chair Sandy Ehrig

Sandy provided members with an update on the Iowa Rural Summit which will be held August 18-20 at The Hotel at Kirkwood. Encouraged member to attend if possible.

5. Leadership Exchange Update – James:

The Exchange launched last year online. The committee has been meeting regularly in preparation, using comments from last year to build out and working on how to incorporate the bootcamp.

Structure: The Exchange is on Oct 26 from 10:00 – 4:00 at the Legacy Plaza in Newton. Will be a reception event bringing 5-6 Iowa leaders to tell stories about their leadership experience. Jim T. and Tina B. will be meeting with the presenters to get them prepared. Jessie McCreary with ABI will be a Keynote on Leadership Iowa. Will invite bootcamp attendees to attend the Exchange. Hoping day 1 discussion will help raise enthusiasm for camp. Will recruit mentors as table hosts for bootcamp.

The Bootcamp will be on Oct 27. Currently in the process of developing a guide of about eight different topics that attendees will be going through. Mentors and the committee will help. Kimberly T. has worked with ISU to get a business plan model to provide to attendees to build a working document when they leave.

Would ask that TF members help with the recruiting and promoting.

LG: There is a rural leadership grant tied directly to the Bootcamp (\$1,000 with a \$500 community match). Please share info. Application is on IowaGrants.gov. Appreciates work of the committee.

## 6. Reverse Scholarship Pilot Discussion

Liesl: This was talked about last year. Dubuque applied for a Rural Innovation Grant to do this, so there is a model.

Jason N.: Background – Leadership and growing communities is important. Networked with foundations across the county that are doing this type of program. Convened a diverse group from the region to get feedback on what this might look like. Talked about workforce and heard about many of the programs already in Iowa. Found one area not incentivized was teachers. Hard to get them to move into rural districts. Schools are a key driver of development, so good focus. Model is the Rural Teacher Corp (Foundation of the Ozarks).

They will work with teacher associations to educate college students about what it would be like to be a teacher in rural setting. Will use this to identify scholarship participants to help offset student costs (funds would go to institution, not student). The first step is building partnerships with associations. They have some donors already and the Rural Innovation Grant will help to lay foundation. Goal is to support, educate, and build a cohort of support for rural educators.

Model could be replicated in different regions but need to do research as to what is really needed, find gaps. Theirs was teachers, other regions may be different. What is the appropriate incentive?

Rob: How much money might each student get? Jason: Haven't determined yet – may be different depending on where they go to college.

LG: What portion is the Innovation Grant and what is use of funds? Jason: Two categories - they will hire a part-time staffer who can work well with educators and lay foundation and continue to work with school administrators. Most money from grant will go to that for research and groundwork for that person. Donor money will go toward scholarships.

James: Will there be claw backs? Jason: Still developing agreement, but as a condition of receiving funding, committing to live and work in X town and put down roots. There are clauses in some of the other models, but seldom used.

James: If I was a community interested in this path, how soon can they connect with students? What do those students need for their experiences? How long can we develop the relationship? Jason: Faculty are the key to be effective. Thinking education students that grew up in small towns and already familiar with rural. This might be the incentive that gets them back to home.

Rob: Can we find applicants that are already teachers somewhere else to keep the buzz going?  
Jason, that would be good – will be working with Juniors/seniors so will be a lag.

Jason: Need to also ensure messaging that community members are providing to students is positive.

Liesl: This incentive wouldn't just be for teachers. We might want to ask applicants who their target audience is. May want to include some kind of community involvement piece, which builds off of leadership. Goal is to launch in fall. Next step, have another small committee discussion which Jason will be leading so if interested let her know if you'd like to join.

LG: If interested in a subcommittee, some things to think on. We have \$100,000 for this so how can we use it, one award or several? What to prioritize? If tying this to a particular workforce need of a region/community, how can we tie in messaging with broader state initiatives?

7. Public Comment: None

8. Wrap up & Next Steps

There will be no task force meeting in August due to the Rural Summit.

9. Adjourn