



GOVERNOR'S
EMPOWER RURAL IOWA
INITIATIVE

Governor's Empower Rural Iowa Initiative
Investing in Rural Iowa Task Force Meeting Agenda
Wednesday, September 8, 2021
10:00 – 11:00 AM

1. Roll Call

Lt. Governor Gregg	Sandy Ehrig	David Barker
Danna Larson	Hunter Callanan	Shannon Erb
Sarah Thompson	Kiana Johnson	Wayne Pantini
Nick Sorensen	Brian Lenzmeier	Carla Eysink
Jim Thompson	Jordan DeGree	Troy Weary
Tomisha Hammes		

2. Approval of Minutes from July 20, 2021 meeting

Minutes from the July 20, 2021 meeting had been distributed for review. Troy Weary motioned to approved, seconded by Hunter Callanan. Passes unanimously.

3. Welcoming Remarks from Lt. Governor Gregg

Lt. Governor Gregg thanked all for attending and welcomed new task force members. Provided an overview of the meeting agenda.

4. Remarks by Co-Chair Sandy Ehrig

Provided members a recap of the recent Iowa Rural Summit held in August and thanked the Lt. Governor for his participation. Next Summit will be held on April 12-13 at the Gateway Hotel in Ames.

5. Childcare Feasibility Study Grants

Liesl introduced Heidi Schlueter and Angie Duncan with First Children's Finance, who ERI is partnering with on the feasibility grants.

First Children's Finance is a national non-profit CDFI based in Minneapolis, with an office in Urbandale. Mission is to grow supply and quality of childcare to provide information and to help communities with market studies, financial modeling, strategic planning, and to work

directly to strengthen the business side of centers. They also provide small loans, training and coaching. Their work is funded through a contract with Iowa Dept. of Human Services, USDA, Wells Fargo and others.

Angie provided an example of a study they did for Marion County in 2019. They provided a child care market analysis, looked at data and demographics of what was available for child care in the county. Received input from employers, parents and providers. Found that many providers were not operating at full capacity. They took that data and developed key findings to identify what existing centers can do and what is still needed. Findings were presented to the community and then they shifted to strategic planning, looking at 3-5 year goals and action steps.

Liesl: We have drafted the grant guidelines and the application, and will be using the housing assessment as a model. Program will only be open to cities for now, and funds awarded will be up to \$10,000, with a \$5,000 cash match.

Questions/Comments:

Lt. Governor: Important place to start for rural communities. Many communities don't know where to go for next steps. There will be more streams of funding for implementation, and market analysis might be a preliminary requirement for funding. Child care is an important issue for rural Iowa so a good fit for ERI.

Carla: The assessment provided values for us, as smaller communities would not normally be able to take on this by themselves. When they started there wasn't any funding sources, so they had to take on themselves, but got a lot of partners with business and schools. Those partnerships grew into New Horizons and the Veemer project. Also looked at policy issues, child care cliff, etc. Finding a list of providers – the non-registered homes are difficult to identify, so we were able to bring them along with additional resources.

Liesl: We will likely have multiple rounds, with first round focusing on communities, but future rounds may look at larger regions.

Brian: What size population are we looking at? Liesl: 20,000 or less and not immediately adjacent to a community of 40,000 or more.

6. Employee-Owned Cooperative Partnership

Liesl: We had funding allocated and two weeks ago the subcommittee met (UNI, Drake Law, Inst. Of Cooperatives and the task force). Identified need for increased expertise and trainings for professionals – lawyers, CPA's etc., as well as marketing, and trying to find an example to model. UNI will be taking the lead on this as they have been working on succession planning. Also working with Drake Law to develop the legal training and hope their law clinic can work directly with the businesses as they start the process. Next step is determining deliverables and what formal partnership looks like.

7. Discussion on Expanded Support for Entrepreneurs

Last year talked about need to expand support for entrepreneurs and resource partners. Used to be an entrepreneurial roundtable. This might be a good opportunity to start them up again.

Sandy: When she started at IFB, there was a lot of resources but recognized a need to get providers together to network and learn from each other about what they are all doing. The roundtable was informal, and held quarterly. Now looking at IRDC as a conveyor. May start with Zoom at first to convene a couple times a year. Need help identifying all those resource providers we may not be aware of.

David Barker: Are we looking for a legislative package – such as angel investor tax credit. Cap is \$100,000, even providing education that it exists. Can we tie student debt to entrepreneurship? Maybe some for new ventures? Need more business education through K-12. Also entrepreneur centers where they can go for support and to meet successful business people.

Lt Governor: Might be value in getting together to talk about different models. Shannon: Should get SBDC involved as well. Sandy: Okoboji Institute is another example. Private citizens that presented that idea and it lives on because Regents understand the vision. Wayne: Would like to see Dream Big Grow Here come back again – lot of emphasis on marketing for rural businesses even if they didn't win. Jim: There is a lot of misunderstandings about services offered, so the roundtables were great at providing information. Sandy: Will help Liesl on next steps.

8. Grants Update

Liesl: In addition to the child care grants, the rural innovation, housing assessment and rural return pilot grants are all on same schedule. Applications open Oct 1 for each and are available at iowagrants.gov. Deadline for all is Dec. 1st. Review period will be about two weeks with decisions made by December 22nd.

9. Public Comment - none

10. Wrap up & Next Steps

Grow meeting next week and all are welcome to join in person or on Zoom. Connect is 27th via Zoom.