



GOVERNOR'S  
**EMPOWER RURAL IOWA**  
INITIATIVE

**Governor's Empower Rural Iowa Initiative**  
Connecting Rural Iowa Task Force Virtual Meeting Agenda  
Monday, October 11  
3:00 -4:00 PM

1. Roll Call

Lt. Governor Gregg	Sandy Ehrig	Dustin Blythe	Dave Duncan
Dennis Fraise	Bill Anderson	Caleb Housh	Steve Simons
Justin Wagner	Deb Lucht	Curtis Dean	Billi Hunt
Taylor Teepell			

2. Approval of Minutes from the September 27, 2021 meeting:

Billi Hunt motioned to approve the previous minutes, seconded by Dustin Blythe. Passed unanimously.

3. Welcoming Remarks from Lt .Gov. Gregg:

Lt. Governor Gregg welcomed members and thanked them for attending. Since the previous meeting, the four ERI grant applications have been opened, and he ask members to please help spread awareness.

4. Remarks by Co-Chair Sandy Ehrig

Sandy welcomed members and provided brief information on the Leadership Exchange and Bootcamp to be held on October 26-27.

5. OCIO Update - Matt Behrens, Chief Technology Officer (Ref. PPT)

A number of things changed on mapping on this application round. The new map includes three tiers based on level of speeds in those blocks. Tier 1 has very little to no coverage, Tier 2 has 25/3 but less than 50; Tier 3 has 50-80 mg coverage. There was also an appeal process where coverage could be challenged. Previously, if any one person was served in a

census block the block was considered served, so moving to 10% of the area is better, but still need improvements. He went over the application process and timeline. Scoring was based on legislative priorities. There is a potential for future funding utilizing federal ARPA dollars. Will be an announcement on this soon.

Questions:

Taylor: For scoring, certain elements had different points. How are those determined?

Matt: Starts with legislative requirements – have 100 points with eight or nine criteria and the top four are legislative. All criteria go to a weighting committee looking at top priorities and trying to balance the rest. Some compete – Efficiency vs Rural – rural may not be most efficient but is a top priority so need to find balance.

Kevin: Commented on the targeted service areas related to federal and state funds. In areas where they have received Reconnect funds – they still show up as eligible, however since they received federal funds it would be weighted against a state application. Matt: Different ways to look at it. For example, on the FCC Digital Opportunity Fund our interpretation is they bid a project which was a commitment to build out to levels provided so we believe those will be build. With Reconnect, in can be timing and in looking at Match applicant is looking at multiple funding sources. They don't eliminate areas as eligible just because they received federal funding, rather look at all applications and relative need between them. Kevin: With recent awards, will that take care of most of the 25/3 areas, leading to Tier 1 with a new definition? Matt: There are many T1 areas that remain. This round went to most hard-to-serve locations, but still many left.

Dave: When do you expect to publish a map that shows the awarded areas or a map that includes those? Matt, not sure yet. Hope to have something before session.

Curtis: If operators were awarded funds and didn't use them, do they roll into another round or go to new applications? Matt: Have not had that happen. Awards are limited by a 3-year timeframe. They find if someone pulls out after three years, they need to have some type of legislative action to be able to bundle residual NOFA funds for a larger amount. Always some money left over from awards.

LG: Can you talk about the rural metric? Matt: It helps target needed areas where economic models don't work. Map the entire state census blocks. They know the miles and homes, schools and businesses. Total the square mile and facilities then take the most rural area and it becomes the foundation. All other are based on that.

6. Manufacturing 4.0 Presentation • Jill Lippincott, Team Lead, Innovation & Apprenticeship, IEDA (Ref. PPT for additional details)

Working in partnership with the Iowa Innovation Corporation, did a Manufacturing 4.0 report to look at what new innovations in tech would bring to manufacturing. Adding tech improvements will help create and upscale current jobs, not lose them. Co

Works with IIC. Did 4.0 report in what tech would bring to mfg. Tech will create jobs, not lose them, such as using a cobot, a collaborative robot that can operate along side a human. Can take heavy labor and workers can be up trained to other jobs.

Manufacturing is the highest GDP for Iowa which is why they started with this. Also manufacturing in Iowa is very rural. Plan came out in February with five focus area.

Supply chain mapping will be launched next week so manufacturers can input information as well as startups. Working in collaboration with other resource providers, workforce and manufacturers.

Provided an overview of the grant program. Potential applicants are required to work with ISU CIRAS for an assessment. Application process is similar to the IEDA High Quality Job application. There are two parts, one for equipment needs and the other for software and hardware. Currently receiving and reviewing applications. Can only apply for \$75,000 for life of program. Have been getting a lot of support from industry partners.

LG: This emphasizes the connection with ERI initiatives. Manufacturing is rural and they are important employers. Connectivity is important for adoption of 4.0 and it is an important part of workforce strategy as well. Wanted to underscore why this is so important to our rural conversation.

7. Public Comment - None

8. Wrap up & Next Steps

Liesl shared some information on the four grant programs that have launched and asked members to please share information. Deadline to apply Dec. 1 Also share info on the upcoming Leadership Exchange

LG: Are there any topics TF members would like to discuss in future meetings?

Kevin: Question for Matt – How are we going to help the communities near us that are in the 5,000 to 10,000 population range but don't count as areas to be served. Regularly hears from them that they have reported speeds, but they can't verify they are receiving those speeds. Biggest question he receives. Would like to see a discussion on how to get the map corrected with actual vs reported speeds. Communities feel this series of money is going to go and they won't see any change with current speeds.

LG: Has also heard that and it is something that we are going to have to continue to discuss. Always a challenge with the maps. We talk about this on a national level as well. What are right incentives, how to measure and is it being met? How can we ensure accountability after a grant has been provided?

9. Adjourn