



GOVERNOR'S  
**EMPOWER RURAL IOWA**  
INITIATIVE

Governor's Empower Rural Iowa Initiative  
Executive Committee Meeting  
Conference Call  
Thursday October 24, 2019  
11:00 AM

**1. Roll Call**

Members Present:	Lt. Governor Gregg	Sandy Ehrig	Hollee McCormick
	Chris Ball	Dave Duncan	Emily Schmitt
	Jenae Jenison	David Barker	

**2. Approval of Minutes:**

Draft minutes of the August 30, 2019 meeting had been distributed for review. Sandy made a motion to approve, seconded by Dave. Carried unanimously.

**3. Grant Program Updates:**

Grant rules were before the IEDA Board at the Oct. 18 meeting and approved without question/comment. We now begin a six-month process for final approval and adoption. Will send link once available online. The broadband grant also closed on Friday. Have received some info from the OCIO on what was submitted. Applications received requested \$6.5 million. All should be online for comment by Friday, including a map of proposed service area. Will be open for comment for two weeks.

**4. Feedback on September & October Task Force Meetings**

Dave - Hawarden was great.

Chris – liked hospital tour, opened mind, like the extended services to school, can be replicated. Very beneficial.

Dave - Provided recap for those not there. He's been holding legislative roundtables across the state and he talks about the telemedicine applications at Iowa Specialty Hospital. Points mentioned include the doctor from Paris on the call, the portal in ER for mental evaluations going to an organization in Valley Junction in that then connects the hospital to a mental health specialist that could be located anywhere in the nation. Also, the connection with elementary school providing an office call in the nurse's office using the available technology. Saves time for parents, keeps kids in class.

Liesl: The tours have been beneficial, and she's noted that even though it calls for a full day, we are not losing task force members who are attending tours even though it makes it a full day.

Lt. Gov: Felt the October round of meetings especially had robust discussion.

Sandy: Agreed. Important that we connect with what goes on in rural. She attended one of Dave's recent roundtables and commends him for having EPI be a topic of discussion.

## **5. Discussion of Task Force Recommendations**

Recommendation drafts for each task force had been distributed. The Lt. Gov. will get feedback from committee members then he, Sandy and Liesl will meet with Governor to be sure they are on track. On November 6 there will be a conference call meeting with each task force to get final feedback, then Liesl and IEDA staff will finalize and put into form. The Exe. Committee will make the final recommendations to the Governor at the joint December 18 meeting. Now is the opportunity to provide feedback, and please make it a priority to attend the December meeting so we have quorum.

### Investing in Rural Iowa – Task Force Feedback:

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Recommendation – Adjust Nuisance Property and Abandoned Building Remediation Program:**

David - It might good to include something related to quantifying the number that we have. We don't have a sense and it would help with impact. Assessor data could help with this, then get refinement from local government. First identify those properties with lower than normal sq. foot assessment, then go to the city level to cross reference. If we can say we addressed 10% of the buildings in Iowa, etc. it would help show progress.

Lt. Gov. and Sandy – agree, it would help set a goal.

Liesl – would be looking at property levels? David – that was best way I could think of to identify.

Sandy – also the nuisance designation. Jim would have good ideas on quantifying.

Lt. Gov.- Thinks we can add this language without knowing exactly how the process will work, so would not require legislation.

David – Also determine more a more consistent definition of rural. Even at the IEDA meeting last week there were different levels.

Lt. Gov – We will have some opportunity during notice to refine, and Liesl sent out a questionnaire for task force members to provide input.

David – a sliding scale would be useful.

Liesl – James has been collecting survey results and indicated they are all over the place. Specific to the grant programs, it is influenced on intent of the program.

Liesl – Jim couldn't be on the call, but has comments: Is the cap on Cat Grants still on the table? Would also like to add language on loan program as a partnership with IFA.

David – On the loan guarantee, the 25% what does that mean? Liesl, that section came out of David's and Jim's comments in Hawarden.

Lt. Gov. – We don't go into that level of detail on other recommendations, maybe we need to make it more general to make it more flexible.

Liesl and David – makes sense

2<sup>nd</sup> Recommendation – Increase funding and rural set-asides for programs with demand.

Lt. Gov – The Community Catalyst program requires 40% set-aside for towns under 1,500, if more than that you compete with much larger towns. Looking at adding a level of 1,500 to 5,000, which helps smaller communities and puts in alignment with the DNR program, which caps at 5,000.

Sandy – likes it – we are trying to get to economic impact – hard to demonstrate in smaller towns.

3<sup>rd</sup> Recommendation – Expand IDOT RISE program to include rural housing developments.

Sandy – Helps the DOT gain an understanding that housing today is economic development.

Other: Should we also add to the recommendations that we continue supporting the existing programs, such as Workforce Housing Tax Credits, and the ERI grant programs? AGREED

#### Growing in Rural Iowa – Task Force Feedback

1<sup>st</sup> Recommendation – Develop leaders by encouraging community visioning through creation of a matching grant program.

Sandy – Liked that you pulled in Iowa Profile tool, it crosses over with other task forces.

Emily – supports increasing technology to do so. Could we have some virtual options for our meetins and look at how to encourage use in leadership and community visioning.

LG – thinks we can work something – will add language.

2<sup>nd</sup> Recommendation - Rural set-aside in quality of life programs.

Lt. Gov – We have several programs, but we've seen good success in programs like WHTC that have a set-aside, so it should work with other programs as well.

Jenae – suggests in opening sentence that we strike the word individual, to read 'community member's passions'. LG – good point.

3<sup>rd</sup> Recommendation – Support existing leadership programs and provide resources for new.

Jenae – like it, it is a need in our state.

Dave – likes the dual purpose, can look at visioning or developing a leadership program.

## Connecting in Rural Iowa – Task Force Feedback

Recommendation – Optimize existing grant program with additional funding and higher state match for projects with higher speed and service. Continue to improve maps.

Lt. Gov: The Governor originally asked for \$20 million over two years and received \$5 million for one. Suggests asking for \$15 million in FY2021 which would hit the \$20 million level. Agreed.

On the current grant rules, Dave suggests some clarifications. In next to last paragraph, these are most difficult areas to serve, so suggest changing to read “to incentivize providers to build future-proof networks to reach....”.

Chris – Population density, clarification could be useful.

Lt. Gov: Regarding future proof – are we boxing out certain types of providers?

Dave – Good thought – judgement call for you. What we have seen on FCC side is that they did the broadband grant 2015, it wasn’t seen as future proof (10/1), and the already had to come out with new speed levels.

Lt. Gov: The competing difference is platform neutrality. We are already recommending giving more marks for higher speeds, which goes in that direction. Going deeper might start messing up platform neutrality.

Emily – for rural platforms we need to keep that neutral mindset.

Dave – Offered another suggested edit in the in last paragraph. In the first sentence “OCIO should continue to improve and update the...”. Second paragraph, “...based on FCC’s data as of June 2018 a validation process...”, so validation instead of appeals.

Lt. Gov: We will work on the language of the recommendations, get feedback from the Governor and then discuss with task force members on the 6<sup>th</sup>.

### **6. Discussion of Upcoming Task Force Calls & Combined December Meeting**

Liesl reminded that the task forces will meet via conference call the afternoon of November 6<sup>th</sup>. December 18<sup>th</sup> we’ll be in Perry for a joint meeting with the IRDC. She, Bill Menner and Sandy will be headed there for a planning meeting. Plan for a full day as it is a joint meeting and if you can only come to part of the day, aim for the afternoon as the Governor will be there from 2:00 – 3:00 and that is when the final recommendation will be shared and voted on.

### **7. Discussion on Task Force Membership & Attendance**

Liesl had distributed attendance reports of task force members from beginning through current meetings. Is curious for thoughts on if we should be setting some expectations. There has been interest in call-in options, but there is value in in-person meetings. Some member, though not at meetings, have still be involved, some not communicating at all.

Emily – Would like to hear what others say. She likes transparency so put the attendance out for all to see, and then set expectations for attendance.

Dave – It appears some people haven't attended any of the meetings, and if that is true it might be good for a co-chair or someone to reach out to them and touch base. Many are legislators, were they self-selected? We can't really require them to be there, but the other accepted the position and there should be some accountability.

Lt. Gov – We had three times the number of applicants than we had slots. Thinks there does need to be some accountability.

Dave – Realized that things come up, but there could be some that are not plugged in.

Sandy – need to review and let them know. Get a message back to people to remember that they applied, and others are not able to participate.

Chris – He received as a one-year appointment. Have some not requested re-appointment?

Liesl – Yes there were one and two-year appointments. Two TF members did not renew and have been replaced. There will be another round next year and may have some vetting then.

Emily – Requests that we have the option for a call-in or webinar. Still people should provide and email if they cannot attend.

Jenae – Yes, agree.

Lt. Gov - Regarding calling in – some location wouldn't work. The fear is that we are not going to have anyone there – part of this is to get people to rural Iowa. Were just visiting about how enriching the tours well. Will the teleconference kill the meetings?

Emily – Fair point. We must have minimums. Maybe a summary video – have a requirement for towns that are hosting that they must do a FaceBook live video summarizing what they have done and successes they've had so people outside the task force can see. She had heard many good things about Bellevue but wasn't able to attend.

David – Agree we don't want a bunch of people calling in and not attending the meetings.

Liesl – Another idea, have a call-in option but it wouldn't count for attendance. Would anyone do that if it wouldn't count?

Lt. Gov - We will keep thinking about it and on next Exe. Committee call we can maybe have more idea on an attendance policy. Difficult balance to strike so wants to be thoughtful. Now that we are outside central Iowa, the commutes can be tough for some.

## **8. Miscellaneous Updates**

None

## **9. Questions and Comments from Executive Committee**

None

## **10. Adjourn**