



GOVERNOR'S
EMPOWER RURAL IOWA
INITIATIVE

Governor's Empower Rural Iowa Initiative
Growing Rural Iowa Task Force Meeting Agenda
Monday, October 26
1-4 PM

1. Roll Call:

Members:	Lt. Gov. Gregg	Sandy Ehrig	Lexi Marek (for Sec. Naig)
	Jennifer Crall	Stacy Besch	Whitney Bathke
	Ron Reischl	Emily Schmitt	Jenae Jenison
	Linc Kroeger	Rick Young	Phil Jones
	Jenna Ramsey	Jason Neises	Chad Huyser
	Tina Bakehouse	Caleb Knutson	James Hoelscher
	Rob Denson	Bethany Wilcoxon	Barb Baker
	Gary Taylor		

2. Approval of Minutes from October 6, 2020 meeting:

Minutes from the October 6, 2020 meeting had been distributed for review. Rob Denson moved to approve, and James Hoelscher seconded. Passed unanimously.

3. Welcoming Remarks from Lt .Gov. Gregg:

Last week's Leadership Exchange went very well with double the number of attendees as anticipated. Thanks for all the effort put forth by task force members to make it happen.

4. Remarks by Co-Chair Sandy Ehrig:

Echoed the Lt. Governor's comments. Leadership exchange had statewide impact.

5. Leadership Exchange Debrief:

Tina: Leaders are doers. Committee got together to come up with ways to encourage people to attend, and they did. First day the Lt. Governor gave a powerful opening. Transitioned into telling our stories. Power is in the ASK. Best practices – three times participants could choose a breakout session with great opportunities for learning. Shared info first, then time for questions. Second day we hosted a panel on how to discover hidden leaders. Invite different voices at the table. Also, 30 ideas in 30 minutes. Attendees shared ideas ahead of time so James could then call on them during that session. Ended with a powerful "why" with Stacy Besch. What is next? Hoping to find ways to continue to connect with attendees and have more discussion.

Lt Governor: Are all the sessions available online? James: The plenary sessions are. Liesl's follow up email provided a good summary. She received several emails that were positive.

James: There was no formal evaluation, as people seem to be moving away from that to more of a focus group setting to provide feedback. Lt. Governor: What worked well? Tina: Bookending with two keynotes to show how a community does this – how to start and what has happened. I think we don't want to structure more than three hours. If in person, we might still want to offer virtual option.

James: Agrees and thinks we need to keep our eye on where technology is for 2021. Tina: Would be helpful if everyone engaged does a practice run to be sure all works.

6. Discussion on Proposed Recommendations:

A draft of recommendations compiled from information heard in previous meetings had been distributed for review. The Lt. Governor read each of the recommendations then opened for discussion

Rural Innovation Grants:

This is a general recommendation offered up from all three of the task forces. They have been a success, so recommend going forward.

James: What was the interest level in the program? Liesl: First round opened in spring which was a challenging timeframe. They did receive a higher ask than what we had funding for, so a few applications were not funded. Given the pandemic, she was pleased with the response and has heard from several potential applicants interested in applying in future rounds.

Lt. Governor: He hopes as these go forward, we will continue to get better and more innovative ideas. Liesl: Flexibility of the program helps fill gaps as most programs have specific uses. Also, this is innovative, not to replicate projects that were just funded.

Staci: How many grants were awarded? Liesl: We gave out \$100,000 for each of the three programs with a \$20,000 max and a \$5,000 minimum. Information on awards is on website.

Jennifer: Are we asking for a set dollar amount going forward? Lt. Governor: We haven't assigned a set number as we don't want to limit ourselves. More so we want to support the program in general as a success.

James: Are other teams doing anything different related to the grants around promotion? Liesl: No, that has been left to IEDA and the Gov's office. They did a press release, and a few were highlighted by IEDA.

Growing Rural Iowa Specific Recommendations:

Rob: Do we have an analysis on why people are coming back to Iowa? Lt Governor: He doesn't know, but can guess it's quality of life, family connection, job connection, but no empirical evidence. James: Can't site any specific research that supports. Need to ask the question about rural and not just Iowa in general – family connection is strong for a rural community.

Ron: For rural communities like Manning, people are moving back for the quality of life they had growing up. For many young adults when their children reached school age, they wanted their kids to have what they experienced growing up.

Gary: No research – anecdotal. Assume it's family, raising kids. Would be interesting to look at folks moving back from out of state vs people moving back from an urban center in Iowa.

Rob: They come back for family but must have a job too. If we could come up with something that regularly pushed out jobs to expats, they can see that they can move back home.

Tina: Dakota Roots model might work for our rural communities. Lt Governor: Need to find a way to connect people to opportunities available. Dakota Roots is like Iowa Workforce Development's job board. Can we do something similar at a low cost, but pitch to have anyone come back? Ron: What struck me about Dakota Roots is that it is like This is Iowa initiative and even Travel Iowa – relates to quality of life. It's a matter of taking what we have and packaging how it works.

Lt Governor: This is Iowa is telling that story, so maybe this is a new element. Should we have a reframe of "This is Iowa" modeled off The Iowa Project and Dakota Roots? Whitney: Maybe a site ambassador that can help over months and years. Lt. Governor: Maybe having a relationship with alumni associations? If we have something that they could push out in their newsletters, former students might come back. Jennifer: Larger universities have groups – usually sports and personally she found value in networking with other returning Iowans – could be helpful with recruiting. Ambassador concept – matching someone from a town where someone is from. Emily: A personal touch not only coming from the company recruiting them is key but coming from someone else similarly situated. Maybe a tax incentive for newcomers.

Lt. Governor: This might be an outgrowth of "This is Iowa", which isn't just rural. He's ok with that instead of having mixed messages. Phil: It might be good to show all of what Iowa has to offer. James: What if rural ED's and Chambers had a link off This is Iowa that would be more tailored to their sites? Ron: The "Make your move section" could be built for rural Iowa

Reverse Scholarships:

Lt. Governor: We could have one of our innovation grants be an opportunity to test. We might want to ask for an additional amount just for this idea. On last call there were mixed discussions, tax implications, etc.

Jason: Iowa Council of Foundations has done some research, and other states have explored. Getting caught up with Kari at the ICoF would be the smartest thing we can do. This would likely live with community foundations if it came to be. Lt. Governor: Lets assume there is a way to do it after Kari's feedback, is this something we want to be a recommendation?

Linc: Add stay as well as return. are we keeping people here or bringing people back? Stacy: Wonders if we could tie into recruitment, how can we start reverse scholarships to stay or give money when they come back. Jennifer: If someone is leaving Algona, but there isn't an industry they want to come back to can they go to a different rural community? Stacy: What if one was statewide just for rural, and one was specific to community? Lexi: Is there a timeline for reverse scholarship, or within a set number of years after leaving? Lt Governor: Michigan program didn't have a timeline, but it was a competitive application. Ron: Two different initiatives – one state funded. A lot of money is awarded each year by Rotary, and other groups for scholarships. What we need to do is instill a cultural change. Much can be done at the local level if we have support from above. Lt. Governor: Makes the argument for a specially aimed rural innovation grant that might provide matching funds. Depending on how much we have in resources we could test a couple of options. Linc: Suggests not a scholarship, but sponsorship to avoid taxable issues. Also, on the grant, give points for distressed or low-income rural communities. Staci: Communities can all learn from each other, could we do an exchange?

Jenae – look at HS and post HS students which could be a good tie into Future Ready Iowa. Tina: If you did have FRI and reverse scholarships go together there would be more communication among all parties. Lt. Governor: Likes connection to FRI and to This is Iowa. If this is an outgrowth of that, it won't necessarily rural focused so does this need to be its own program? Linc: Also need to have rural and high paying job somewhere.

Lt Governor: We call this a reverse scholarship, but it's not really a scholarship. Are there other views? Ron: Was hoping to work with local utilities to have some of those costs covered. Anything that helps them financially. Even housing down payments assistance. Lt. Governor: Do we need to make explicit recommendations for a rural innovation grant which may or may not have its own funding? James: Return and stay – clarification – will they have to have left to receive funding? Phil: What about someone in Des Moines, would they qualify if they come back to rural Iowa. Gary: Thinks they would have had to be out of state. Ron: Thinks it needs both – if they need a nurse in Manning, they don't care whether they come from out of state or Des Moines. Liesl: Don't really need to get into all of the details of the program, just need to be on board with the concept. Lt. Governor: Loves the concept – can be a game changing idea that is easy to understand.

Future Ready Iowa:

Lt. Governor: Maybe this doesn't need to be separate, maybe we work in the collaboration with FRI with the reverse scholarship recommendation. Thoughts?

Phil: One is retention, one is bringing people back. Two sides of the same coin. James: Messaging of parents will benefit both parents and bring attraction back. Phil: Likes the idea of the innovation grant for the scholarship.

Medical Professionals: Basically, keep doing what we are doing and keep supporting them.

Sandy: We need to communicate about the programs that exist. Tina: Bringing in the story telling aspect can be beneficial, having a rural dentist talk about their experience. Have we marketed to all medical/dentist schools in country? Lt. Governor: We've marketed through programs in Iowa. Need to clarify with IADG on how this is marketed. This is a program of UI, Regents and DMU. As part of this funding you must have rural residency. Tina: It would be nice to have this info go to border institutions. There are likely Iowan's at Creighton who would like to practice in Iowa.

Jennifer: Regarding our homework, making sure we serve underserved populations hasn't really been addressed. Should this be in Leadership Exchange or some of these programs? Lt. Governor: It could fit under leadership, also under recruitment but is open to ideas. Caleb: When you are recruiting, communities must be welcoming. We need a structural conversation on that. Jennifer: Agree, the leadership group should include, but should be a thread in all of recommendations. Lt Governor: That is part of the opportunity to grow, not just expats, but new Iowan's. Caleb: No communities in Iowa that he knows of do a good job of welcoming immigrants. Denver CO is an example that does a good job embracing those populations. By encouraging they are appreciated, it is important. James: We can work on putting that in the Leadership Exchange, but also in the thread throughout the TF recommendations.

Continuing Leadership Exchange:

Staci: Hoping we can do an incubator conference. Maybe we do a spring one for new programs and the Leadership Exchange for existing. Thinks we need to split.

Lt Governor: We'll take today's comments back and update these recommendations and come back next month with a refined version that we can hopefully approve. Reminder that the task force makes recommendations to the executive committee, and they vote to take them to the Governor.

7. **Public Comment:** None

8. **Wrap up & Next Steps:**

Next meeting date will be sent to task force members.

9. **Adjourn:**