



**Governor's Empower Rural Iowa Initiative**  
Connecting Rural Iowa Task Force Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, October 28, 2020  
1 – 4 PM

**1. Roll Call:**

Sandy Ehrig	Ryan Boone	Hollie McCormick	Dennis Fraise
Stacey Stewart	Chris Ball	Caleb Housh	Kevin Cabbage
Billi Hunt	Patty Manuel	Dave Duncan	Deb Lucht
Tom Petersen			

**2. Approval of Minutes:**

Minutes from the July 13 meeting had been previously distributed for review. Deb made a motion to approve, and Chris seconded. Approved unanimously.

**3. Welcoming Remarks from Lt. Gov. Gregg:**

The Lt. Governor was unable to attend but provided video comments summarizing past accomplishments and discussed potential funding from the CARES Act. Provided an update on the other task force activities. Reminded that the Governor's Economic Recovery Task Force has a subcommittee dedicated to broadband.

**4. Remarks by Co-Chair Sandy Ehrig:**

Her role as president of IRDC ties over to ERI. The IRDC held the annual Summit virtually with two half days in August with sessions now on the IowaRDC.org website. Have decided to plan on an in-person Summit August 18-20, 2021 at the Hotel at Kirkwood. Last year we held a joint IRDC/ERI meeting in Perry with thanks to Deb Lucht and the community for showcasing projects. We can't do that this year, but are planning a Dec. 16 1:30 -3:30 Zoom meeting. Spotlight has been on connectivity this year. We have a lot of results to celebrate.

**5. Updates from Connect Task Force Chair Dave Duncan:**

Dave provided an overview of accomplishments from the task force efforts for new task force members. Legislation has passed for the broadband grant program and now

working on improvements including increasing the grant match to 35% as a better incentive for participation. Also need to look at increasing funding from the state and gave examples of other state's program levels. OCIO office will be working on an improved coverage map to better target underserved areas.

**6. Presentation on StarLink efforts in Iowa from Senator Chris Cournoyer:**

Senator Cournoyer provided an overview of StarLink, Elon Musk's program to deploy thousands of satellites at low altitude to provide internet access. Hoping for public testing by end of the year, and she is one of 700,000 residents signed up as a beta tester. Program has rolled out to Native Americans in western US, and was also used by EMS for fighting fires in Washington. Program qualified for FCC rural allocation fund.

Some potential issues include light pollution, space debris from collisions, and how to handle when it is decommissioned. At low altitude has ability to burn up in earth's atmosphere. Other concerns are the cost (\$500 for 'Stick' and \$100/month for access). Limitations: Receiver must have wide view of sky so trees and buildings an issue. It is geo locked so a fixed location needed.

**7. Update from OCIO – Annette Dunn:**

ERI Broadband Grant Program

Provided an overview of the ERI Broadband Grant program which received \$1.3 million in 2018, another \$5 million allocation for 2019, and an additional \$5 million allocated for 2020, with applications open until the end of October. Gave a summary of where funds were allocated.

CARES Broadband Grants

Governor allocated \$50 million in CARES fund to OCIO for grant program. Didn't have to follow all the state requirements, so had some flexibility. Increased match to 35% for 25/3 service and 50% for 100/100 service. Gave a summary of awards and where funds were allocated.

Economic Recovery Advisory Board Recommendations:

Provided a high-level overview of the final recommendations made to the governor. Governor will be releasing these in the full report soon. Also discussed broadband mapping. Have created updated map that can be drilled down to address letter, types of service, and provider as well as other data including grant awards.

**8. Discussion on Proposed Recommendations:**

An outline of the Rural Innovation Grant program and the Broadband Grant program was provided for review. Both are recommendations supported by all three task forces.

Discussion was held on any suggested edits.

Under the Connecting Rural Iowa summary, Dave suggested changing the last sentence to “This program should receive additional funding from the state...”

Discussion was held on incorporating language in support of the Economic Recovery Advisory Board recommendations. Discussion also held on building in language to protect providers from issues stemming from county-level ROW decisions that can result in major expenses for providers.

Liesl is noting suggested changes and will be working on potential edits. Not all suggestions may be able to be incorporated. Once cleaned up a draft will be distributed for review and then there will be a second meeting mid or late November to discuss and finalize.

**9. Public Comment:**

None

**10. Wrap-up and Next Steps:**

After recommendations are approved by this group at the next meeting in November, they will be provided to the Executive Committee for review and approval at their December meeting. They will then be provided to the governor for review, with a formal presentation at the December 16 IRDC meeting.

**11. Adjourn:**