



GOVERNOR'S  
**EMPOWER RURAL IOWA**  
INITIATIVE

Governor's Empower Rural Iowa Initiative  
Executive Committee Meeting  
Open Door, 410 Washington Ave, Iowa Falls  
November 30, 2021  
12:00 – 1:30 AM

1. Roll Call:

Lt. Governor	Sandy Ehrig	Holley McCormick
Dave Duncan	Jenae Jenison	David Barker
James Hoelscher	Hunter Callanan	Mark Reinig
Absent:	Emily Schmitt	Jim Thompson

2. Approval of Minutes:

Minutes from the September 9, 2021 meeting had been distributed for review. Hunter motioned to approve, and Dave seconded. Passed unanimously.

3. 2022 Meeting Schedule:

Discussion was held on possible format and timing for 2022 meetings. Thoughts moving forward:

- Would like a meeting between now and July in addition to Day on the Hill if we have one.
- We may benefit from spreading out the ask throughout the year instead of being heavy on second half.
- We want to be sure members continue to be engaged and connected.
- Will we get back to providing legislative suggestions? Lt Gov: Comparing this initiative to some of the initiatives the Governor ran when she was Lt. Governor. They are still active, but not as much. Partnership with UNI may incorporate some policy and tax research, and outcome might be a legislative package – not for this year.

- Maybe look at holding quarterly meetings with some activity for task force members at the Rural Summit.
- Possible joint in-person meetings with the first half with the Lt. Governor then task force meetings following?
- Key is having the most effective meeting for the most participants – virtual still on the table.

#### 4. 2022 Task Force Themes:

- Grant programs are helping create reportable metrics. Looking forward, continue to look at through that lens for measurement.
- Another might be scaling up. Should we circle back to grant funded projects that could scale up and be replicable? This could provide accountability and could be used for a legislative package.
- Look back also at what hasn't worked so we can learn from those.
- We've discussed a review process of grants. Maybe have close-out in-person meetings with interested task force members attending.
- Finalizing of US Census data is not complete which will impact rural Iowa. Maybe we need to be the source as to what those numbers mean for communities. How do we get our task force members to know that info? CIRAS/League of Cities has a part-time person that would be a good fit. UNI IDM would also be interested in helping with this. Dave Barker would be happy to help connect to University staff. Not all rural areas are suffering due to losing population. Maybe have some info on this at December meeting
- May be able to track this year's EMS legislation later in the year. How many went ahead and accessed more funding, are more changes needed, etc.

#### 5. Budget:

- Current Status: \$700,000 which was more funding and more flexibility.
- Allocations: \$200,000 rural innovation, \$100,000 childcare, \$100,000 rural return, \$100,000 housing assessment, \$100,000 each for employee cooperative and leadership.
- Grants close tomorrow so Liesl will have a better idea. Thinks that all allocated funds will be utilized.
- The rural child care market study will be done in two rounds. First with Frist Children's Finance and in the spring and second round will be open to other providers to apply.
- Housing assessment: \$20,000 has been allocated to-date.
- Rural Innovation - 41 started with 10 submitted.
- Rural return, 18 started and 3 submitted (up to \$20,000 grant each).
- Child care assessments: 16 started, 2 submitted (\$10,000 grant same as housing).
- For rural innovation \$300,000 was allocated the last two rounds and only \$200,000 this year. Have had 17 projects in those two rounds.
- There will be funds left over from Leadership which could be reallocated. Have used \$12,000 in grants with minimal expenses.
- All funding is FY 22 with a one year roll-over so used by June 30, 2023.
- Employee-owned partnerships have a \$100,000 partnership with UNI. Not signed yet but goal is to have money out by end of January.

6. New Ideas:

- Will not likely see results of the Rural Return grant in initial year. We can monitor, but it might be a place to pause, which could put out the \$100,000 allocation plus \$75,000 remaining from Leadership Exchange available for potential reallocation.
- Assuming other grants remain, but excess allocation available, are there other things up for consideration, such as rural entrepreneur support? IRDC will be hosting the entrepreneurial roundtables, are there other things we can do?
- Look at concept of economic gardening for research to find new markets. Even \$50,000 at \$5,000 each could have impact. Challenge might be needed hands-on assistance, so support would need to be identified.
- Relaunch of a Dream Big Grow Here type program?
- We could further support Shop Iowa.
- Consider using funds to help rural communities identify scalable projects.
- Possibly assistance with the new Broadband and Telecommute certification programs.
- Look at possibility of extending funds for AmeriCorps staff

7. Open Floor Conversation:

- SWAT team for communities with IRDC POC grants is working well. Could this be part of the rural innovation grant, if a community wants a team?
- Trees Forever has money from ITC to fund a visioning process, we could look at that as a model.
- Do we need to get Liesl additional staff? She is working internally to get help with grant administration.
- Theme – scale up some of the grant projects for next year.
- Timing – transition to quarterly meeting, but be flexible leveraging economies of scale with other groups
- Budget: Continue down path with exception of \$175,000 funds that can be reallocated.
- Next: Economic Gardening, Shop Iowa, funding for grants for BB certification for communities, DBGH (would need a partner for this).

8. Public Comment

9. Adjourn