



# Unified Task Force Report

To the Rebuild Iowa Advisory Commission

October 2008





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## Preface

Immediately following the 2008 disasters, Iowans went to work to take care of their families and communities, demonstrating the classic Iowa values of hard work and caring for one another. Significantly, these values have been brought to bear in the work of the Rebuild Iowa Task Forces. Volunteering to come together under the guidance of the Governor, the nine Task Forces provided perspective and experienced voices in what was required to meet immediate needs of Iowans as response shifted into recovery from the widespread damage.

Now the nine Task Forces have again met and offered their insights and hopes for the longer term rebuilding efforts. From the separate meetings to discuss the issues, this single report to the Rebuild Iowa Advisory Commission was developed. Rather than nine separate reports, this Unified Report most emphatically reflects the themes, common goals, and priorities that span the various Task Forces. With a sense of vision for Iowa, this report carries the challenges and the expectations that the state boldly position itself for successes greater than those imagined prior to the events of 2008.

For more information about the Rebuild Iowa efforts and to read the notes from each of the nine Task Force meetings, go to [www.rio.iowa.gov](http://www.rio.iowa.gov).



## Introduction

2008 will be remembered across Iowa for the devastating tornadoes, storms, and flooding that left a total of 85 Iowa counties declared Presidential Disaster Areas for Individual Assistance, Public Assistance, or both. In the aftermath of the disasters, Iowans are faced with the greatest losses ever experienced from a disaster in the state. This Unified Task Force Report reflects the discussions of the nine Governor-appointed Task Forces as they met for a second time to review and provide input for Iowa's vision and strategies to achieve long term recovery.

Within weeks of the disasters, Governor Chet Culver issued Executive Order Seven, creating the Rebuild Iowa Office (RIO), the Rebuild Iowa Advisory Commission (RIAC), and nine Task Forces charged with providing topic-area input to the Rebuild Iowa Advisory Commission. Initially, the Commission and Task Forces addressed immediate needs in a series of Task Force Reports and a 45-Day Report from the Rebuild Iowa Advisory Commission to the Governor, Lt. Governor, and the Iowa General Assembly. Subsequently, the Commission and Task Forces reconvened in preparation for development and issuance of the Commission's 120-Day Report, which will focus on a vision for long-term recovery and strategies the state might implement to move toward that vision over the years of recovery and growth.

This Report signifies a shift from addressing immediate disaster recovery needs into a more strategic view of recovery that may extend for ten years or more, bring significant changes to the state, and leverage the damages into opportunity to position Iowans, their communities, business, education, nonprofits, the workforce, and the economy for ongoing growth and success.

Identifying the vision was not a simple exercise for the Task Forces. However, in their discussions of what they wanted to achieve in rebuilding infrastructure, the environment, business and industry, our cultural treasures, homes, and in taking care of each Iowan in need, Task Forces talked about the future. They discussed how it should be better than before, and the irony of the opportunities that came from the disasters. Without fail, Iowans seek to rebuild Iowa to meet head-on the challenges of Iowa's future, anticipating and acting through recovery efforts to secure that future.

As learned in the first set of Task Force discussions, most recovery issues are not found or addressed in isolation. Rather, the needs and concerns as well as the vision span the recovery spectrum. For example, whether the topic is economic development, public health, housing, or agriculture, Iowans see a need for helping individuals through the recovery process to put their lives back together. This Report, then, does not give information by Task Force topic area, but it blends the various perspectives and inputs to provide the Rebuild Iowa Advisory Commission feedback on the key issues identified by the Commission in its 45-Day Report.



The following pages reflect the synthesis of the comments offered by the many Task Force and Resource Group members who participated in some way in this second convening of the Task Forces. Intended for use by the Rebuild Iowa Advisory Commission in establishing its recommendations for a vision for recovery and strategies to help the state achieve that vision, this Report builds from the RIAC's 45-Day Report and its subsequent recommendations, adding perspective and suggestions for growth and long-term recovery.



## Vision for Long-Term Recovery

*Beautiful Land* is hardly a description of much of Iowa in late May, June, and July 2008. Yet, even through the torn trees, the muck, and the ruin, Iowans did continue to see Iowa, the Beautiful Land. That optimism and determination symbolizes the vision for Iowa's recovery in the hearts of Iowans. We cannot describe it, but we know it is something more than we had before the disasters.

Even now, though many communities and areas of the state are returning to "near normal" in appearance, they are far from recovered. Asked, "What is your vision for Iowa's long-term recovery?" few are able to give a succinct response. Many are able to say what the vision is not. The Task Force and Resource Group members resoundingly assert that the vision is NOT simply putting things back the way they were. Through days of discussion by the nine different groups, there were expectations for greater goals and for the emerging state to be resilient and robust in its recovery. The state should lead an aggressive recovery effort to ensure Iowa does not lose ground in its quality of life, economy, workforce, competitiveness, and in its people.

For purposes of discussion, the following vision is offered for consideration by the RIAC as a summation of the Task Forces' views in response to Executive Order Seven's call for a long-term vision for rebuilding a safer, stronger, and better Iowa.

***Iowans will thrive in a state that values, safeguards, and invests in its sustainable future, resilient communities, welcoming environment, vital economy, treasured lands and natural resources, rich cultural history, global role, and all of its people.***

Throughout the Task Force meetings, during discussions of the ideas and priorities in the various areas, participants used terms and phrases that, taken together, framed the vision stated here. Examples follow of some of the comments expressing elements of vision.

- We care about people
- Quality of life
- Leverage the opportunities
- Iowa is open for business
- Energy efficient and sustainable is a given
- Build green
- Think differently about placement of affordable housing – put it on high ground
- Make communities liveable and walkable



- The population is changing; we are getting older
- New neighborhood living
- Water quality and sedimentation problems
- Be prepared for the next time
- Don't forget the image of the disaster
- Don't let this happen again
- Tackle the hard problems
- Shift development of land to outside of the floodplain
- Vision comes from information provided by new floodplain maps
- Take a regional approach statewide
- Plan based on watersheds and work together so we don't make problems downstream
- Climate change impacts Iowa and will in the future
- Re-imagine Iowa, don't just rebuild Iowa

The vision for recovery is inextricably linked to who Iowans are as a people, with a rich tradition and loyal bond with the land. Shaped by the experiences of the disasters of the last 15 years and most recently jolted again by the severity of 2008 events, Iowans demand that they and the state come back ready for opportunities and successes of the future.





## Issues Discussions

Each of the Task Forces sought consistency in the framework of its discussion to allow for integration of the ideas and themes from the ten different meetings. (Cultural Heritage and Records Retention again met as separate Task Forces.) This common agenda used the RIAC's 45-Day Report as its basis. Included in each Task Force discussion were a brief review of the immediate recommendations, a focus on the RIAC's subsequent recommendations, and identification of issues that had not previously been discussed. Considerable discussion in these areas allowed each group to develop additional ideas and suggestions for actions to support solutions to the newly-identified needs and those stated in the RIAC's first report.

Clearly, the discussions and ideas were well-informed by the experiences of participants in the recovery to date. Many set out ideas and strong messages that communities, families, and the state cannot afford to face future disasters without pre-arranged support services and programs in place. Many complimented the state and local governments on the response to the disasters. The recovery has been made more challenging by its magnitude, and the extraordinary demands have illustrated the need for pre-planning and institutionalizing some of the community and state practices and programs of support so they can be "switched on" anywhere in the state next time they are needed. A strong theme was, "Don't reinvent the wheel."

This section will review the issues related to the ten subsequent recommendations of the RIAC to communicate the tone and intent of the Task Forces as well as the content of their conversations. In addition to those ten recommendations, this section will include additional information related to infrastructure, planning and response, and some thoughts on the ongoing role of the Rebuild Iowa Office during the recovery phase.

### Issue 1: Case Management

Case management, however it is defined by various Task Forces, remains a top priority throughout the recovery phase. Participants in various Task Forces emphasized that individuals needing assistance are still being found and that the process of navigating these systems of support and assistance may require years to complete. In one example from the Housing Task Force, it was reported that elderly people had recently been found in their homes who did not know their basements were filled with water, and had no support system to assist them.

Depending on the Task Force or topic area, case management may be viewed differently. In all, there is an expectation that the Rebuild Iowa Office continue working to create and institutionalize case management so that individual needs are met and supports for individual program navigation are robust. An individual should be able to access mental health services and get advice on whether a repair contract is reasonable and fair by going to one location in a highly-accessible public space or by calling one phone number. Businesses and



nonprofits should be able to use the case management services as well as individuals and families. While at least one participant saw the case management effort thus far as “a dismal failure,” others recognize the significant progress that has been made and encourage efforts to continue and be strengthened. It was suggested there be two “tiers” of case management. For the vast majority of individuals, case management would serve as a referral and guidance service. For a small portion of people who for one reason or another require additional attention and support, case management might take on the hallmarks of a human services model.

Most agree case management must be available and easily accessible to those in need when they need it. Communication among services, e.g. housing, financial, application completion, mental health, business support, nonprofit resources, and others must be institutionalized. Even though these services and program experts may be co-located for case management services after a disaster, they may not always have developed the processes by which to share information freely. A “one-stop shop” concept of case management where an individual may go in person to access the full range of help is popular among participants in many of the Task Forces. Those locations should be in easily-accessed locations, potentially as part of an existing, trusted organization, and clearly marked so people can find them.

Two longstanding telephone access points should be maintained, strengthened, and promoted so more people know of them and can access a level of case management and information via phone. The 211 system is emerging as the primary and critical disaster resource in some parts of the state. 211 is the on-line community information and referral services staffed by trained professionals who provide information 24/7 statewide in non-disaster times as well as during disasters. The Iowa Concern Hotline is the second toll-free service that, during non-disaster times, provides support for stress, legal, and financial problems. The Rebuild Iowa Office also has a citizen response line, which helps channel callers to one of the case management providers.

For long-term recovery, the need for case management will continue. For future disasters, case management needs to be in place and able to be activated immediately when requested by the state. Task Force participants recognized the value and roles played by the Disaster Human Resource Council, housed within Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management, for continuity between disasters, but recognized that this does not extend into communities or have the resources for expansion or supporting communities to make their programs more robust. Long-Term Recovery Committees are building across the state, though many commented that the progress is slow and there is a great demand for these fledgling groups. The work of the Rebuild Iowa Office in dedicating a staff person to developing case management statewide for this disaster is an important development and will support the longer term sustainability and further maturing of case management after disasters and during recovery.

Comments and themes relative to case management included:

- Create a pre-existing system that is triggered into action by a Presidential disaster declaration



- Everyone, not just FEMA-eligible people, should be able to access the case management services
- This should be ready, universal case management with a trained and ready workforce
- Strategic outreach, including door-knocking in affected areas, is needed
- Include case management systems development as part of the regional planning efforts
- Services and support accessible within a case management site should include information, technical assistance, housing assistance, small business assistance, nonprofit assistance, individual and family support, continuity of operations advice, forms and application completion, accessing resources and information, information on scamming and unscrupulous contractors and contract terms, public health information and referral, mental health referral, and facilitation to access other services that may be needed
- Consider providing formal training in volunteer management for those working in this system; consider using a network of retired employees as volunteers

## **Issue 2: Housing**

The damage and destruction of housing across the disaster-affected areas will require years to repair, restore, and rebuild. Single family and multi-family homes, owner-occupied and rental, have incurred widespread damage so that the fabric of neighborhoods will necessarily change with rebuilding, if and where rebuilding occurs at all. The diversity of damage and ease of recovery is often dependent on whether the property was insured. The differences in ability to move ahead in rebuilding in areas where insurance was in place – certain flooded areas and the tornado-damaged areas - are stark in comparison to those flooded areas where the majority of residents were not insured.

The vision for housing for the future, and as part of Iowa's rebuilding from the disasters, is to incorporate green building practices, smart growth principles, energy efficiency measures, and universal design. Participants in the Cultural Heritage Task Force pointed out that the ultimate in green building is to not build new, but to reuse buildings that add cultural and historical value to communities. As neighborhoods and communities recover through redesign or repair, walkability and liveability features should be incorporated. Consideration of development designed to hold water where it falls and designing new growth and developments with mixed-use and mixed-income housing is recommended.

The Housing Task Force emphasizes to the RIAC that housing is of greatest significance for Iowans and the vision of a stronger recovery. But the group also cautions that other critical services such as energy, education, and municipal services must also be high on the priority list. For example, infill building may be constrained by old infrastructure, including combined sewer systems that have resulted in damage to buildings and need replacement before developers will undertake redevelopment of that area.



The Long-Term Recovery Task Force highlighted the wisdom of forecasting the population across the state as well as understanding what people expect from housing and communities to assist in better targeting resources in the most effective projects. This group also emphasized the importance of accurate information and personal responsibility for individual decisions. People should know the risks associated with decisions they make; many felt rebuilding in a floodplain should be prohibited. Some participants cautioned that there is good reason to not rush into rebuilding housing and to undertake the decision-making process deliberately.

Important housing issues in recovery include ensuring there is adequate affordable and mixed income housing available for people, and that individuals and families can afford to rent or purchase those homes. Again, mixed-use and mixed-income housing is seen by participants as one answer to these problems. One Task Force participant asked if it is possible to build affordable housing on land out of harm's way, noting most of the destroyed housing in many communities was located in the floodplain and occupied either by renters or individuals without adequate resources to afford flood insurance. The Housing Task Force also noted that the long term recommendations it made in its first report, which were included by the Commission in its 45-Day Report subsequent recommendation on housing, should be included as long term recovery strategies.

The affordable housing shortage continues to be a critical need for Iowa, particularly since the disasters damaged so much of the affordable housing available in affected cities and towns. A chronic problem for the state, long term recovery and the vision for the state must include strategies to overcome the affordable housing problem. Strategies suggested in the previous Task Force Report can help achieve that goal and include incentives for production of quality affordable homes and assistance for potential residents to rent or purchase that housing stock.

An issue that often goes hand in hand with affordable housing is the challenge of rebuilding and repairing single and multi-family rental housing. The Housing Task Force heard from the Landlords of Linn County about the gap in assistance for residential landlords for repairs. Many landlords are individuals who have several homes they rent out, and they lack the resources or ability to secure resources to allow them to return that housing to livable status.

Several participants in various Task Forces complimented those responsible for designing and administering the Jumpstart program, noting it is a critical resource to assist residents in bridging their costs until final resolution is reached in their person situations. Some expressed continued frustration at the pace of recovery in the housing arena. Though some state funds were made available with minimal constraints for three types of housing assistance, getting those funds into communities seemed to be taking a good bit of time as well. Many noted there would not be enough funding to meet the need statewide, either through state Jumpstart funds or the incoming Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funds. Following the meeting, the city of Cedar Rapids provided projections for the need for Jumpstart funds by program, based on the number of FEMA registrations and the applications received by the city to date. The city of Cedar Rapids alone estimates



Jumpstart housing needs for the city at \$20 million for mortgage assistance, \$45 million for down payment assistance, and \$46 million for rehabilitation.

The Long Term Recovery Planning Task Force noted that flood insurance is an essential tool for the future. They felt the insurance companies and the state government each need to assess their appropriate roles in ensuring appropriate flood insurance coverage. Mandating flood insurance coverage was often discussed by Task Forces as a means to help individuals and to reduce the public costs of recovery. Housing, Flood Plain Management and Hazard Mitigation, and Long Term Recovery Planning Task Force gave this topic the most attention. There was no clear consensus within a Task Force or across Task Forces about whether flood insurance should be required of homeowners. Participants readily agreed that they did not have a good understanding of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), its requirements, and the concepts of community participation. The Flood Plain Management and Hazard Mitigation Task Force heard useful presentations on floodplain mapping and the NFIP, which led to discussion of whether the state should engage in a public education effort to encourage people to purchase flood insurance. It was also suggested that the state identify ways it could provide some cost-share to make flood insurance affordable for those in need.

In matters of state policy, it was suggested there be consistent policy on smart growth principles. Some want the state to identify its role in determining land use on a statewide policy level. There was discussion of the value and concerns related to statewide building codes and zoning ordinances.

Housing and related comments offered by members of various Task Forces echoed common themes and points of information that can guide the rebuilding of housing across the state.

- The shortage of qualified contractors and inspectors may hamper the production of the housing Iowa needs
- Workforce housing should be considered in development and rebuilding plans
- New housing developments should consider “live where you work” principles
- Transportation modes and workforce commuting is linked to housing decisions
- Limit development in floodplains to housing that is floodproof
- Just because a structure is floodproof does not mean it represents a smart choice
- Residents in affected areas continue to experience frustration at the maze and slow, complicated processes involved to reach individual decisions on their housing future
- Consideration may be needed for expedited rules for emergency situations or disaster declarations allowing a faster foreclosure on abandoned homes



### **Issue 3: Small Business Assistance**

In the RIAC's recommendation on small business assistance, the issues in the 45-Day Report largely focused on ways to provide financial assistance to businesses, nonprofits, microenterprises, and entrepreneurs. In this second phase, discussion included more focus on what problems and constraints face small business and how those constraints may be addressed as part of a long term recovery effort.

The Economic and Workforce Development Task Force provided an informal review of the impacts of the disasters, which are instructional in pointing to some of the key problems facing small businesses. The Cultural Heritage Task Force made a strong case for including cultural and historic institutions alongside small business when considering how to strategically set forth long term recovery efforts. Cultural and historic institutions are often part of the economic vitality of communities, and they also may have special considerations with additional requirements to be included in repair, restoration, or rebuilding activities. These impact the overall process of planning for and implementing recovery efforts.

Despite the severity of damage and the widespread impacts of the disasters, Iowans rebounded early, kept many businesses open, and continue economic activity and business recruitment and retention efforts. Economic development leaders view the disasters as an additional challenge and opportunity to place Iowa positively in the minds of companies here and outside the state.

Some of the constraints noted are the domino effect of closure of some businesses on others in small towns. Out-of-state owners and landlords sometimes complicate and delay progress in getting a business back in operation. While some business tenants may be beginning to move back into their spaces, it is likely they will not be able to recover their costs. Many small businesses have not reopened, plant and job losses have occurred, and the future of many businesses is undetermined at this point in time.

As communities and the state look toward the future, a number of positive developments and implications are becoming clear. Jumpstart Small Business Assistance has been a great help to many. Iowa Department of Economic Development and the Councils of Government have been very supportive and helpful in getting Jumpstart into the communities, and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) has helped promote participation.

Some changes in Iowans' approach to solving the problems have been suggested. Creativity is called for, as is a shift from dependence on property taxes, at least for the near future. Attention should be given to crafting approaches to support those who were most affected by the disasters. Among the most fragile are the nonprofits that lack assets and reserve resources, yet provide vital services in the community.

Though not new approaches for Iowa, some reminded other participants that seeking and retaining small business is critical, as is seeking and retaining a quality workforce. Supporting entrepreneurship can be effective in many areas of the state. Businesses in partnership with community colleges can develop new 260E



and 260F programs targeting skills development. Iowa had a lack of trained workers prior to the disasters, which has been exacerbated by the business closings and other disaster impacts.

Maturing Iowans may be of growing importance in the workforce with the downturn in the economy and the impact of the disasters coupled with Iowa's worker shortages. Training and retraining for these Iowans should be considered. Another concept to retain workers in Iowa jobs is development of an employee pool in a way that allows for shared employees on a short or longer term agreements. This was suggested by the Cultural Heritage Task Force as a way for trained employees to stay in Iowa and employed in their area of expertise even though their original employer may have been damaged or closed by the disasters.

There are some indications that family businesses and those owned by new Iowans have a higher level of business failures in times of hardship. Because they may not be as closely tied to the state, they also have a higher likelihood of leaving the state. Strategies could be developed that focus on these subsets of small businesses for retention and in incorporation into community and neighborhood support systems.

Other economic burdens on families and workers have come from a variety of circumstances. Wage gaps result in pay inequity. There is a high school dropout problem in some areas, which is certainly an issue for the long term. Displaced families may now be living considerably farther from their job, with resulting increased transportation costs and distance from their old neighborhood and home. In a related issue, several Task Forces emphasized the link between economic development, workforce, and housing. Appropriate housing is a key element of small business success.

A priority recommendation stemming from the discussions of programs needed to assist small businesses is that of developing and identifying the specific policies and rules that need to be relaxed, waived, or otherwise adjusted when a Presidential Disaster Declaration is issued in an area. This would allow pre-planning for some of these emergency programs or allowances, ensure there would be timely implementation of them, and because they were developed in non-disaster times the thought and planning takes place in a less-pressured environment.

Among the suggestions for initiatives that could be activated during Presidential disasters in affected areas to assist small business, microenterprise, and nonprofits are the following:

- State policy and rule exceptions, waivers, and adjustments should be identified and established during non-disaster times, and become effective upon Presidential declarations, for affected areas, with a specific ending date
- Local governments should similarly identify local policy and rule exceptions, waivers, and adjustments that would also be activated according to local criteria





- A handbook or tool kit of these emergency-triggered state and local initiatives would be developed and maintained.
- Caps and rules for state historic preservation grants should be adjusted for times of disaster
- Create assignable tax credits for developers of infrastructure and commercial properties
- Provide interim operational costs assistance for human services and other nonprofits whose mission is to provide services to disaster victims
- Incent green building, energy efficiency, and smart growth measures
- Develop and provide assistance for larger businesses and industry
- Develop a disaster support contingency/emergency fund for small business
- Develop a plan and process to employ water and conservation practices including a cover crop initiative where bare ground is left behind by a disaster

#### **Issue 4: Floodplain Mapping**

There is universal agreement that the state must invest in updating the floodplain mapping and completing the additional steps to provide the tools necessary for Iowa's future protection from flood damage and for establishing appropriate local and state policy to safeguard Iowans. The Flood Plain Management and Hazard Mitigation Task Force early in its meeting determined to recommend to the RIAC that the state seek state and federal resources where possible, but to pursue the necessary steps to complete this process. Other Task Forces held similar conversations, emphasizing the importance of this step to planning and decision making for communities, individuals, and businesses. This process would include at least the following steps:

- Complete LiDAR flying statewide
- Complete the necessary photography statewide for creation of the maps
- Create floodplain maps
- Secure FEMA approval of maps
- Develop hydrological models statewide
- Install river gauges where needed statewide
- Create online and other public access to the information
- Conduct public education
- Conduct training on how local officials can use the data





- Inform policymakers and others of the use of floodplain maps

The level of universal support for floodplain mapping speaks for itself. A few additional comments were offered by participants in various task forces:

- This is critical for rebuilding our housing in the state
- Important records should be stored outside a floodplain; in this disaster many were not
- Begin to reduce jargon and use meaningful terms; for example, use 1% chance of a flood each year instead of 100-year flood
- All decisions are based on these maps
- With all land mapped, expect all communities to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program
- Educate the public about residential and commercial flood insurance, how to decide their level of need, impacts of not carrying flood insurance, and the NFIP program available to most homeowners
- Once the mapping is complete, there is an expectation that communities will take the next steps and individuals will also accept responsibility for action
- The state should develop a statewide policy on smart development, including policy on relocation and prohibition of development within a floodplain
- Prohibit any development that is not floodproof within a 0.02 percent annual flooding chance (500 year) floodplain

### **Issue 5: Flexible Funding Options for State and Local Governments**

As in the issue related to support for small business, this issue focuses on specific funding suggestions in the first phase of the Task Force work. In this phase, discussion centered on the problems that having flexibility in funding would solve. These options differ from those in Issue 3 in their focus on the public sector as the beneficiary of the flexibility, rather than the benefit flowing to a small business or nonprofit. It is expected these government options would allow greater responsiveness in addressing needs created by a serious disaster.

As a result of the disasters, property tax revenues, income tax revenues, and other fees and taxes will likely fall across the state, even outside communities directly impacted. Schools are forecasting reduced tax funds for their operations, and cities and counties are already bracing for lower collections of taxes. At the same time, demand for services and recovery challenges will continue to grow for at least another year. Many of the demands placed on public entities will be directed to repairing or rebuilding infrastructure. A separate section on infrastructure needs is included toward the end of this section of the report.



While the RIAC identified a number of options to provide flexible funding in its 45-Day Report, the various Task Forces underscored and had additional ideas to make more options available. In some cases separate legislative consideration would be necessary:

- Increase the bond caps for local government
- Develop a disaster contingency/emergency fund to be used to support disaster needs

In addition to the preceding items which would be available to communities as part of a set of policies and rules that would be triggered by a Presidential Disaster Declaration and ended on a specified date, several other waivers, adjustments, of special programs would be activated:

- State policy and rule exceptions, waivers, and adjustments should be identified and established during non-disaster times, and become effective upon Presidential declarations, for affected areas, with a specific ending date
- Local governments should similarly identify local policy and rule exceptions, waivers, and adjustments that would also be activated according to local criteria
- Expedite the design-bid-build process for repair or replacement of public infrastructure in any affected jurisdiction; this includes state, county, and municipal as well as education infrastructure
- Provide additional resources for air, water, and other necessary environmental testing and monitoring, as well as reporting to the public
- Provide regulatory flexibility related to scope of health care practice, and create programs to activate students in health and human services education programs to serve on recovery teams
- Adjust the education allowable growth formula to maintain revenue for affected school districts
- Allow access to the state “Rainy Day Fund” for disaster recovery funds
- Pre-qualify vendors to provide services as quickly as possible

To provide consistency and continuity across the state and from one disaster to another, it was suggested that a handbook or tool kit for the implementation of these “contingency policies and rules” be developed and maintained over time. Local governments and state agencies should be familiar with the programs outlined within the handbook.

## **Issue 6: Invest in Local Emergency Management Agencies**

Through discussion about immediate and long term disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation, it became evident to Task Forces that responsibilities for local effectiveness and coordination of emergency

activities fall to the local Emergency Management Agency (EMA). Task Forces discussed the responsibilities and scope of local emergency management as well as how it is organized.

State law requires each county to establish an Emergency Management Commission comprised of the mayors of each municipality in the county, a representative of the Board of Supervisors, and the Sheriff. The Emergency Management Commission is responsible for setting policy, hiring and supervising an Emergency Management Coordinator, and providing funding and oversight to the county program. Funding for the Commission's budget is determined by that body. Often the financial administrative services are provided by the county, though the county has no jurisdiction over the Commission's budget. Statutorily, each member entity of the Commission has a responsibility to help in funding the county's Emergency Management Agency through one or more of four options outlined in the Iowa Code.

Emergency Management Agencies receive no state funding for their operations or to provide emergency management services. Some federal funding has typically been available to qualifying counties through the Emergency Management Performance Grant. While Emergency Management Commissions are required to have a Coordinator, there are no minimum or maximum requirements for the hours or level of service.

The requirements placed upon local emergency management have increased exponentially since September 11, 2001. The maturation of emergency management as an effective practice and process has generated many additional mandates and opportunities. Plainly stated, resources are significantly inadequate to meet the needs of 2008's major disasters and to undertake the improvements and enhancements suggested in its aftermath.

The value of local emergency management is being recognized at a greater level in recent years. This year's events generated increased focus on this function, helping many on the Task Forces to see the need for additional resources to allow recommendations to be implemented. Emergency management plays a key role in developing cooperative and collaborative programs including disciplines ranging from fire, law enforcement, public health, animal health, communications, and a host of others.

Several Task Forces highlighted the need for local emergency management and recognized the challenges faced by underfunded agencies. With the state expecting more from these local agencies and no state resources going to support them, some suggest that it is time for the state to begin providing a level of funding for local emergency management agencies.

The Public Health and Health Care Task Force recommended mandating coordinated planning and exercise at the local level, which would fall under the purview of the local EMA. This group also asks that local plans include special needs sheltering. The Records Retention Task Force would like to see records officials as part of the local Emergency Operations Center during activation. The Economic Development Task Force expects to see a statewide disaster plan for economic support, which would have a significant local responsibility.



Schools have typically participated at a minimal level in emergency planning, little beyond fire, tornado, and school shootings plans and drills. The Education Task Force is strongly supporting every district becoming involved with the county EMA in disaster planning, including response and mitigation. Some express interest in a greater leadership stake in the Commission, but the accompanying responsibility to fund the county Emergency Management Commission would likely discourage districts from seeking changes in Iowa Code to provide them with a seat on the Commission. The Education Task Force also supports the opportunity to work through their county Emergency Management Coordinators in regional planning, coordinated with other local entities, resource management, and in joining the Iowa Mutual Aid Compact (IMAC).

The Long Term Recovery Task Force held the most in-depth discussion of the importance of local emergency management and the best way to ensure those agencies receive the funding necessary to provide the necessary services. The Task Force agreed that local emergency management should be regarded as an essential function at the local level. Given the many changes in expectations and responsibilities, coupled with additional responsibilities as part of long term recovery and creating a greater readiness for the next time disaster strikes, some expressed support for baseline funding for each county in support of the local EMA.

While expressing support for the function and the services provided, there was some dissent that the state needed to step in to help fund local emergency management. State law currently calls for the EMC to establish its budget and obtain that funding from the member governments. It was noted that some of those local governments choose not to fund local emergency management at an adequate level, but that does not then make it a state responsibility.

The inequities in level of service from county to county was acknowledged, with some regret, but the Long Term Recovery Task Force did not form a specific recommendation regarding state funding of local emergency management, but believes it is important for the Rebuild Iowa Advisory Commission to have this additional information about the status and requirements of local EMAs in consideration of the RIAC's related 45-Day Report recommendation.

Additional comments from participants from various Task Forces included the following about state and local emergency management roles and responsibilities:

- The Department of Public Health and Department of Natural Resources coordinate to recognize mutual issues and concerns in areas including water and sediment testing
- The state should provide coordinated guidance across disciplines and topic areas
- Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division (HSEMD) should have a cultural planner on staff who would participate in all local planning efforts



- Determine who should be included at the planning table for preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation
- In this disaster some schools were listed in disaster response plans to serve as shelters but the schools did not know it until people arrived to set up the shelter; better coordination and communication is often needed

### **Issue 7: Regional Planning**

From the perspective of every Task Force, regional planning is critical for Iowa's recovery and future. Those in Flood Plain Management and Hazard Mitigation, Agriculture and Environment, Long-Term Recovery Planning, and Economic and Workforce Development Task Forces particularly identified the need for jurisdictions to look not just within, but to their neighbors all around and up and down the watersheds when they undertake planning. Iowans chuckle about how communities sometimes will not work productively together because of a 42-year old high school football game grudge. Yet, there is always someone who says there is truth to that statement.

We have a new era ahead. 2008 will stand out in Iowa's history as the point when Iowans learned the lesson and overcame the history, competition, and fear of losing out if they forged plans together. This should be a goal and an expectation, according to many participants across the Task Forces.

Significant regional planning resources currently exist in the Councils of Governments, which for decades have served as a regional bridge and a central point around which counties and cities can focus on the issues important to them. There are economic development alliances formed around transportation and commercial corridors that share significant goals. Expansion of their efforts could yield additional benefits to those regions.

The disasters should provide a reminder that communities bonding together will be stronger and wiser for the effort. Task Forces encourage the state to assist through providing incentives to convene in a regional scope for planning initiatives, and to provide some higher level state guidance to help focus the work of the regional planning. The value found in both urban and rural areas and the roles each contributes will strengthen the region and, ultimately, the state.

With history and tradition across the state for certain entities to join in mutually beneficial efforts, extending those into planning will help transition Iowa to regional planning as the norm. Participants suggest that a key to success is to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each party and for everyone to be aware of those respective roles and responsibilities. Throughout the Task Force process, many expressed the need for greater communication, to put in place venues for community leaders to come together to find out what is happening, and to make decisions for their communities.



The specific need for a transportation plan was identified. An infrastructure plan is needed as well. Others called for a comprehensive smart development plan that could set out expectations for many of the principles discussed in the Housing, Flood Plain Management and Hazard Mitigation, Infrastructure and Transportation, and Cultural Heritage Task Forces.

Others noted that there should be a regional approach to mitigation planning, particularly so that development, mitigation measures, or other upstream community development projects do not negatively impact downstream communities. The Agriculture and Environment Task Force also emphasized the importance to plan for the opposite of flood – drought. Other types of disasters should be considered so that an all-hazards approach is taken to planning. Pandemic and tornadoes were two additional types of disasters mentioned in context of regional planning.

Task Force participants saw opportunity for regional planning to span a wide range of topics and purposes from economic development to pandemic planning. The expectation is clear, but the role of the state in supporting these efforts should be determined.

The state should play a significant, yet low key, role in continuing to foster regional planning across the state through providing technical assistance, transparent processes, and engaging additional stakeholders to work within their regions.

### **Issue 8: Communication and Outreach Initiatives**

The Task Forces underscored the importance of the RIAC's subsequent recommendation for public education around a number of issues. Nearly every Task Force had one or more suggestions for outreach to lowans with messages and information to help them recover, prepare for the inevitable next disaster, and make better choices in doing so. In addition to those strategies the RIAC outlined in its 45-Day Report, Task Force members reiterated many and suggested other areas of need. Incorporating ongoing outreach and public information will ultimately help in shifting attitudes and behaviors toward those required for a strong recovery and ensuring lowans suffer less next time a disaster occurs.

Investment in communication with the public begins with basic information to protect lowans. Primary among those needs are a few key points about floodplains. Particularly while the recovery process is still new, people will be more likely to pay attention to and incorporate this information into their thought and decision processes. What are a floodplain and a floodway? What are the risks for a business or home located in or near a floodplain? There is the beginning of a shift away from using the misleading terms "100-year flood" or "500-year flood" to language that reflects the actual annual percentage chance that floodwaters would reach a certain elevation. "There is a 1% chance each year that we will have a flood where the river reaches 18 feet, 3



inches above flood stage.” Bringing the scientific language to a level of practical knowledge for day-to-day application is the key to the public’s greater understanding.

Floodplain mapping and its importance to the average citizen is another area around which Task Force members held a good bit of conversation. All lowans should know whether their home or place of business is located in a floodplain or subject to some other risk so they can make wise decisions, plan relative to the risks, and make their decisions accordingly. People need to know how to find out whether their home is located in a high risk area, and where to go to get that information. Then they need to receive information about what that means for them. Do they need to purchase flood insurance? Will they be eligible to get help if they do have flooding – and are they really wanting to stand that level of risk? Providing this type of information to lowans is the first step toward better decision making.

Flood insurance is a significant issue around which there is too little discussion prior to experiencing damage. Few people understand flood insurance, for good reason. This is a complicated set of rules, which vary based on whether a community (city or unincorporated area of a county) has floodplain maps, has chosen to join the National Flood Insurance Program and comply with some basic requirements for the community, and has maintained that compliance. Then, depending on where a particular home or business is located, its level of risk determines the level of need for flood insurance and, of course, the rates. Basic information that would equip lowans to understand the concept of flood insurance and direct them to additional information provided in layperson’s terms is important to increasing the number of people covered by flood insurance. There are many venues where this information could be provided to lowans that is not currently the practice. Many on the Task Forces felt that there needs to be a much greater participation level in the flood insurance program, but the general attitude and understanding must first shift.

Beyond messages directly related to the floods and the basic informational items people need to make good decisions, there is an array of other outreach, information, and public awareness opportunities to enhance long term recovery. Those include:

- Knowledge about access to and services provided by case management as the recovery continues over the coming months and years
- Opportunities to participate in community long-term recovery planning in cities where processes are underway
- Opportunities to participate in long-term regional planning and watershed planning to forge the vision and future for a region
- Providing information about the various disaster assistance programs and projects that will be launched in Iowa as part of recovery; awareness is necessary to keep the sense of urgency before the public and policy leaders while the need for recovery funding continues





- The importance of individuals knowing how and where to store their important personal papers and family heirlooms to reduce the likelihood of loss or damage from disaster
- Understanding the basic public health risks that continue during the recovery phase and how to access assistance
- Reducing the stigma associated with seeking and receiving mental health services
- Expanding awareness and use of individual and commercial efforts for sustainable practices and energy efficiency
- Informing the public about agricultural practices to retain water where it falls, such as the use of cover crops and reducing soil compaction
- Promoting practices, buildings, and community design that ensure accessibility and livability for lowans of all ages and abilities
- Factual information about the status of Iowa's needs for housing and infrastructure replacement in light of the lessons learned from the 2008 disasters
- Re-imagine Iowa
- Help the public understand and embrace that it will be different in the future than it was before the disasters

This list is by no means exhaustive, but intended to provide the Rebuild Iowa Advisory Commission insight into the broad array of public education opportunities that should be part of long term recovery if lowans are to make the choices and support policies that get the state closer to its vision. The Task Forces also indicated in their discussions that there are many venues for reaching lowans that are not the usual marketing campaign. The recovery period and continued attention to rebuilding place the information and “teachable moments” in context of many lowans’ natural interests and activities.

### **Issue 9: State Leadership on Regional and Local Floodplain and Watershed Management**

In the aftermath of the floods of 1993 discussions surged with interest in regional planning, comprehensive statewide planning, floodplain mapping, and watershed management. Many of the same discussions were held, and participants noted some of the efforts in which they were involved at that time. Many useful mitigation and awareness efforts were successful in pockets of the state and paid off during this disaster. However, many of the larger policy questions went unanswered. They are difficult, they can be divisive, they are costly, and there are no clear answers.

Those questions remain, and floodplain and watershed management rise to the top of the list since so many other decisions rest on how these efforts and the direction set at the local level. Task Force participants noted the difficulty in convening and holding constructive discussions in some areas and around certain topics. It was





suggested that the term “land use” be softened to reduce the natural defensive posture it creates. Issues of local control and home rule were discussed in several Task Forces. Flood Plain Management and Hazard Mitigation Task Force comments made it evident that necessary changes in Iowa might require local governments to give up certain traditional authorities around placement of structures or guidelines for building schools and other structures. The group also noted the unlikely scenario where such significant policy changes might be successful.

Regional floodplain and watershed management will not occur consistently without state leadership. The state should set an expectation for local efforts that would be organized regionally around watersheds. Some Task Force participants commented that local stakeholders may not know how to approach these problems or have the capacity to do so. Councils of Government were recognized as already being involved in all areas of the state and could be given resources that would allow them to provide the capacity to convene and shepherd such regional efforts. It was specifically noted that these local and regional efforts must include public and private sector participation and active engagement. Related to an earlier section, keeping the public informed of the planning efforts and progress, as well as seeking public input at appropriate points, is also an important component of successful planning.

Task Force members across the spectrum agreed that planning based on watersheds must occur. The Flood Plain Management and Hazard Mitigation Task Force heard a presentation outlining an option for a watershed study for the Iowa and Cedar River Basins. Offered by the Army Corps of Engineers as an example of what a watershed study might entail and the benefits of such a study, the speaker described the study as an interagency study taking a holistic watershed approach. Obviously, studies would need to be completed for the other watersheds in the state as well, but this example was used to illustrate a successful model of a watershed study. This Task Force felt it was worth further exploration of a request for this type of study from the Corps, including its funding. It would involve an interagency effort including a variety of state agencies and federal departments, as well as local involvement.

With such studies for each watershed, regional planning could certainly be well informed for long term strategies for managing watersheds and mitigating damages from flooding. Of course, nobody proposed waiting until these types of studies are completed before launching serious regional watershed planning and building the cooperation and culture of working together across local jurisdictions toward agreed-upon goals. Again, the state will need to take a leadership position in incenting and supporting these activities and initiatives statewide.

As an additional consideration, regional floodplain management and watershed planning will not guarantee that planning process will have addressed all disaster planning needs. On the contrary, it must be remembered that future disasters will be of different types, impact different locations, and be of different scopes and magnitudes.



The Task Forces recognized that recovery planning and thinking about planning efforts must take an all-hazards approach and anticipate the needs in a variety of situations.

Among the issues that local and regional floodplain and watershed planning will need to address are these that were brought forward by the various Task Forces:

- Reducing soil compaction in rural and urban land
- Addressing the use and maintenance of dams, levees, and other structural protection
- Addressing conservation practices and the priority for the role of wetlands
- Siting of structures in floodplains
- Taking carefully planned and coordinated mitigation measures all along a river or stream to keep floodwater levels from causing severe and permanent damage
- Forging cultural and tourism, economic development, and workforce strategies based on watershed regions
- Engaging in multi-agency efforts for clean waterways, including mitigation measures for flooding, i.e. removing trees and other debris from the rivers and streams
- Determining common goals regarding such policies as building in floodplains that would be most effective and reduce the tension between jurisdictions if all adopted the same policy that equalized risk and competition
- Including jurisdictions from neighboring states when planning in regions along the borders of the state

One Task Force member commented that keeping a collaboration together is not as easy as everyone thinks. For real change and true progress toward Iowa's vision, the state will need to give a helping hand to regions so that their collaborative efforts can succeed for the benefit of all.

### **Issue 10: Community Identity, Quality of Life, and Cultural Heritage**

The fabric of Iowa will require significant attention of the coming years and decades as it restores and recovers the lost and damaged heritage of its communities, families, and institutions. A key part of rebuilding Iowa for a vision of prosperity and well-being is that of the less-noticed amenities of life in Iowa.

The Task Forces recognized that in the long term an investment in our identity and preservation of those cultural and arts elements are fundamental elements of our Iowa society. Whether the Ice House Museum in Cedar Falls, Hancher Auditorium in Iowa City, or the African American Museum in Cedar Rapids, portions of our lives were damaged at least temporarily. Czech Village's uniquely severe devastation has drawn



considerable attention. Its efforts are continuing to recover in ways that are possible and are continuing to attract support for Czech Village as a neighborhood and as a cultural attraction. The tornado that leveled parts of Parkersburg took out the heart of that small town and surrounding area – the high school. Such physical damage to a small town’s central locus of community identity can damage a town’s social infrastructure significantly as well. We heard about all of these through Task Force discussions.

Such elements of Iowa life were also clearly tied to economic development, attraction of a skilled workforce, availability of appropriate mixed-income housing, and a host of other parts of a community’s and region’s vitality. Recreational options, including trails and clean waterways were also connected with quality of life and attractive communities.

Among the challenges in addressing the issues of quality of life, cultural heritage, and the basic community identity and sense of belonging is the competition for attention amidst the more visible and championed needs of housing, infrastructure, agriculture, and economic development. In a balanced and strategic recovery effort, participants in the Task Forces recognize and support attention focused on Iowa’s community amenities and identity.

Among the issues that participants identified include the following:

- Immediate focus has been on food, clothing and shelter; an expansion of priorities is needed to include the cultural, community, and quality of life components
- In the case of many arts and nonprofit entities, there is a lack of awareness and capacity to participate effectively in larger recovery efforts; all of their resources are focused on surviving and meeting their mission of service to the community
- Funding for activities to support the sense of community, the arts and cultural attractions, and other quality of life options has always been lacking; the expected economic downturn and competition for available recovery funds compounds the challenges

From the Cultural Heritage Task Force came a comment that should be incorporated into the state’s long term recovery efforts: “Nonprofit does not mean nonessential.” Likewise, the intangible elements of quality of life, community identity, and sense of value are elements of Iowa’s core and must be supported through long term recovery efforts.

## Other Issues

In its first 45-Day Report, the Commission provided its first set of priorities for immediate action. Many of those focused on resources and freeing communities, businesses, and residents to move forward with their lives with some level of financial assistance. Certainly, itemized in the Damage Scope and Estimates section of that



report were other elements of need that were reflected in the recommendations for small business assistance and for flexibility to be granted to access funds and do business a little differently than in normal times.

This section of the Unified Task Force Report offers information on three additional areas for consideration by the Rebuild Iowa Advisory Commission. These received considerable attention from the Task Forces with a level of specificity that may be of value as the RIAC enters its deliberations. Following is a synopsis of conversations on infrastructure, planning for response, and the role of the Rebuild Iowa Office in long-term recovery, all focused on the vision for Iowa.

## **Infrastructure**

The discussions of Task Force members across the board included infrastructure in one way or another. There is a clear acceptance of the need for an almost-overwhelming degree of support and financial assistance over the coming decades for Iowa to recover and especially to recover in a way that better positions the state for the success of future generations of Iowans.

The term “personnel infrastructure” was offered as a very fundamental way of saying that it takes people to get any of Iowa’s recovery work done. It takes enough people and those trained or skilled in a vast array of abilities. Time and again Task Force members commented that a program had fallen behind or a project was not completed because of lack of personnel at the state. The DNR’s permitting function and infrastructure inspection functions are two examples in which recovery is hampered by personnel shortages. There is a contractor and inspector shortage for construction of housing, business, and other infrastructure. The Economic and Workforce Development Task Force presented a case for expanding the workforce and ensuring qualified and appropriately-trained workers are available for jobs statewide. Personnel infrastructure, whether state or local government or whether in the private sector, is a critical resource for Iowa’s recovery to continue.

In a similar vein, there is a “human needs infrastructure” that should be supplemented and placed into a system to call upon in times of need. For example, during flooding and other special circumstances, there is a need for stepped-up surveillance, monitoring, and reporting for water, sediment, disease, and other environmental and health indicators. Similarly, the Public Health and Health Care Task Force called for development of state and local public health standards that would require an organizational infrastructure for implementation. There is also a need for a readily-deployed mental health outreach and services system that is nimble and able to address needs in a diversity of situations. In the current disasters, the systems providing incident management functioned well. It is such needs that should be identified and developed through the recovery process. Perhaps the most-discussed human needs infrastructure is the disaster support case management need. While trained individuals are required, there is little yet in the way of a sustainable system that can be maintained in non-disaster times and activated with disasters. This system requires a state-led



structure with coordination statewide for local delivery by many types of agencies and organizations. This should be a priority, according to many participants on every Task Force.

Infrastructure in the form of transportation, vertical infrastructure, storm sewers, utilities, and others comprise an expansive range of flood recovery needs. Because of the scope and cost of the infrastructure, repair and rebuilding will necessarily require a number of years. Coupled with the pre-existing situation that some have described as “Iowa’s crumbling infrastructure,” the challenge is daunting.

One of the threads throughout the various Task Force discussions was the need for a statewide comprehensive infrastructure study. Whether implied or explicitly stated, the message was clear, that to move forward wisely to invest in Iowa’s infrastructure and achieve the best position for our future as a state, we need some assessment, establish priorities, and strategic direction to those greater efforts.

In whatever course is followed, Task Force members talked frequently about smart development, new design of neighborhoods and communities, allowing people to live near where they work, replacing infrastructure to meet future needs, and doing all with an eye to an improved infrastructure that can bear up to the demands of the state’s vision for recovery.

In addition to a comprehensive infrastructure plan, the Infrastructure and Transportation Task Force, among others, emphasized the importance of floodplain mapping and local policy decisions on development in a floodplain as key issues that are delaying development and recovery decisions. Many emphasized the critical elements of local and state policymakers reaching the point where they can make decisions that set in motion the reconstruction, rebuilding, and development options they seek.

There were dozens of suggestions around the state’s infrastructure. A few representative ideas and issues are listed here:

- To determine whether damage costs could be reduced, conduct a study of flood insurance, options for self-insurance, and whether flood insurance coverage should be mandatory and under what circumstances
- Ensure critical infrastructure and critical records are protected and include backup systems in another state
- Adopt state standards for greyfield and brownfield development
- Consider safe rooms and other mitigation measures as standard when constructing certain types of structures
- Incorporate energy efficiency and sustainable elements into all infrastructure initiatives
- Identify how state and local jurisdictions can approach and begin to solve the problems of condition and capacity of combined sewer systems and the storm sewer systems
- Consider rail investments for heavy rail that could carry both passenger and freight on the same lines



- Plan for adequate electric transmission into the grid
- Address landfill capacity in light of the extraordinary demand on space for debris removal across the state
- Consider multi-modal transportation planning
- Address water quality and quantity issues such as soil compaction and other land use practices that keep water from reaching the aquifers
- Emphasize regional planning and cooperation in establishing and implementing infrastructure initiatives

### **Planning for Response**

The awakening of Iowans, organizations, and agencies to the importance of disaster planning is a positive step, but came at great cost to Iowans in 2008. Though the Task Force efforts are targeted to recovery, the phases of emergency management are not distinct, and some discussions of preparedness, response, and mitigation were included in the conversations.

These comments likely fall outside the scope of the Rebuild Iowa Advisory Commission, though they may be informative and useful as context for the RIAC's deliberations. Planning was the most often noted activity that organizations and agencies had neglected. Among those planning needs reflected by Task Force members included:

- Early warning systems are needed statewide
- Organizations and agencies lack continuity of operations plans
- Communication with related organizations and joint planning is necessary
- Cultural response teams and records preservation efforts should be part of planning for response
- Consider mass transit infrastructure in planning for movement of people during an emergency
- Include critical incident stress management for first responders and ongoing disaster support staff

There was some mention of personal responsibility for one's property and possessions, as well as for health and safety within the Long Term Recovery Task Force and several others. Unfortunately, the recognition was that people "read it when they need it," a normal human behavior. Planning efforts should include means to promote and make personal planning and preparedness easy and non-threatening.



## **Rebuild Iowa Office Roles and Responsibilities**

The Rebuild Iowa Office was established by the Governor in the weeks following the first tornado, storms, and floods. The mission of the office is to lead the state's efforts to rebuild safer, stronger, and smarter in the wake of the 2008 severe storms and catastrophic flooding.

As the immediate needs are being addressed and the recovery shifts into its longer term phase, the Rebuild Iowa Office (RIO) is being recognized by some Task Force participants as a point of contact for information and coordination. The Infrastructure Task Force briefly discussed the role of the RIO, noting it is uniquely positioned to monitor and work to leverage federal funds to support recovery efforts. The Rebuild Iowa Office was instrumental in coordinating Iowa's efforts to monitor and work to ensure FEMA provided adequate housing for displaced Iowans. RIO is currently working alongside communities in their recovery planning efforts as part of the Emergency Support Function 14 activities provided by FEMA.

The engagement with local entities in planning and in sharing information via electronic and other means can become a resource for Iowans. RIO is also actively involved in convening and working with the various state agencies in determining how Iowa might best leverage and distribute the recovery and mitigation funds coming to the state. By providing a telephone touch point for individual flood recovery problems, the RIO is coordinating at the individual level and referring individuals to appropriate programs and entities for help. The RIO might be expected to serve as a clearinghouse for information for the public and other organizations and agencies at all levels.

All in all, RIO has been noted as natural point for supporting the coordination and regional approach to recovery. The Long Term Recovery Task Force suggested the RIO office be institutionalized and could be used as a venue to discuss a variety of related issues in a regional context.

A number of Task Forces set out the expectation that the state provide guidance, incentives, support, technical assistance, and in some case standards and directives around issue relate to disaster recovery. In many instances, the Rebuild Iowa Office emerges as the locus for many of those disaster-specific supports.

Some also feel it is the role of the RIO to listen to Iowans and reflect their input in recovery policy and practices. Task Forces credited the RIO and other state agencies with developing and implementing the Governor's Jumpstart program.

As the work of the Task Forces concludes and the RIAC's 120-Day Report is developed, there is agreement that recovery efforts for the state need continued guidance, the role for which the RIO was created.





## Strategies for Consideration

As Executive Order Seven calls upon the Task Forces to provide input to the Rebuild Iowa Advisory Commission, this report outlines a vision of recovery for Iowans from the Task Force perspective. As the Commission proceeds with its charge to recommend long term recovery strategies that will help achieve the vision, this Unified Task Force Report has compiled the key ideas, thoughts, and information for the Commission's consideration as it determines the vision for recovery and direction it feels the state should take.

This section of the report was developed after a review of all the Task Force inputs and offers the Commission a set of suggested strategies that align with the RIAC's Subsequent Recommendations from the 45-Day Report. These strategies for consideration were initially drafted by State Public Policy Group staff who worked directly with each Task Force and were reviewed by the RIO and state agency staff who provided support and subject matter expertise.

In its 45-Day Report to the Governor, the Rebuild Iowa Advisory Commission proposed ten recommendations for long term efforts to rebuild Iowa. The Task Forces discussed these recommendations and largely endorsed their validity and intent. As a starting point, it is suggested that the ten Subsequent Recommendations and their associated strategies be retained as part of the recommendations and strategies for long term recovery.

With this in mind, the Task Forces identified additional points from their discussions of the subsequent recommendations and included three additional sets of comments. This section will offer for consideration by the RIAC a number of new or expanded strategies derived from the amalgamation of October's Task Force discussions.

### **Suggested Strategies Related to Subsequent Recommendations**

1. Continue to provide advice and support to individuals seeking assistance in making their way through the challenges of rebuilding their lives in a "case management" framework while creating a lasting organizational capacity and process over time.
  - o Continue to provide case management services, expanding and transitioning to the types of services required by residents as they experience a prolonged recovery period.
  - o Develop and conduct a comprehensive evaluation of case management services provided throughout the disasters of 2008 and recovery period. Use those findings to adjust and enhance the system in use.
  - o Convene stakeholders in the many services and supports provided by case management to provide input and assistance to the RIO in its planning for a system and infrastructure to maintain and improve case management through disaster and non-disaster times.





- Identify options for ensuring continuity of training and procedures for case management, allowing for adequate trained staff and/or volunteers prepared for immediate activation of the system.
  - Review and adjust, if necessary, the trigger for activating the case management system in light of the experiences of 2008 and the program evaluation findings.
  - Engage 211 and the Iowa Concern Hotline as integral features of the case management system. Formalize agreements with these entities as needed.
  - Consider establishing human needs infrastructure in a system to supplement public health and health care capacity through activating students in health and human services education programs, including establishing disaster provisions for legal and regulatory flexibility related to scope of practice.
2. Ensure availability of adequate, affordable housing and the ability of individuals and families to rent or purchase those homes.
- Incorporate elements of energy efficiency, sustainable/green building, and smart growth in housing repair, redevelopment, and development. Promote energy efficiency rebates and other incentive programs.
  - Incent developers of new housing, homeowners, landlords, and others working with them to incorporate elements of universal design into the dwelling. Incorporate elements of livability and walkability when feasible for areas of new and rebuilt housing.
  - Track and monitor development and return of housing stock to affected areas. Provide regular updates on the housing status, including analysis of the types of housing, location relative to hazard risk areas (including floodplains), affordability, and other data relevant to decision making and priorities for housing production.
  - Review state and local policies that may expedite action in times of Presidential Disaster Declaration. Undertake efforts to create waivers, exceptions, or special conditions to benefit the response and recovery efforts for the next disaster.
3. Provide incentives for Iowa's struggling small business, microenterprises, and non-profits for restoration and rebuilding of their businesses.
- At the state level, develop a set of state contingency initiatives to provide support and assistance to small business, microenterprises, and non-profits that would be activated in affected areas upon receiving a Presidential Disaster Declaration and an order for activation from the Governor. Any policy and rule exceptions, waivers, and adjustments should be evaluated and established during non-disaster times so the assistance programs are ready to launch when activated.
  - At the state level, work with county and city leaders to develop a set of local contingency options to provide support and assistance to small business, microenterprises, and non-profits that would be



activated in affected areas upon receiving a Presidential Disaster Declaration and an order for activation from the Governor. Any state or local policy and rule exceptions, waivers, and adjustments should be evaluated and established during non-disaster times so the assistance programs are ready to launch when activated. These options would be consistent from local jurisdiction to local jurisdiction.

- Develop a handbook outlining the initiatives identified and eligible for activation according to established policy.
  - Adjust the caps and rules for state historic preservation grants during times of disaster to provide greater access by organizations in affected areas.
  - Provide assignable tax credits for developers of infrastructure and commercial properties.
  - Develop initiatives that integrate green building, smart growth measures, and energy efficiencies into the mainstream practices of rebuilding and in future construction.
  - Develop and implement contingency initiatives for water and conservation practices, including a cover crop program, to be activated in affected areas when a Presidential Disaster Declaration is granted and the Governor issues an activation order.
4. Complete floodplain mapping for the entire state as begun under immediate action items.
- The state should continue its expedited planning for completion of floodplain mapping.
  - Seek and leverage non-state funds for as much of the floodplain mapping process as possible.
  - Pursue and implement the mapping process and related activities as expeditiously as is reasonable and practical.
  - Develop a public education initiative around issues of floodplain mapping, what it means to individuals, flood insurance, and guidance on making wise choices.
  - Work with organizations to develop and offer training for public officials on floodplain mapping and application of the data.
  - Work with local communities and provide current information to assist them in making wise choices about participating in the National Flood Insurance Program.
  - Develop a statewide policy on smart development, including policy related to development within a floodplain.
5. Identify, create, and sustain funding options and provide flexibility for local and state governments to assist Iowa in rebuilding an even better Iowa.
- At the state level, develop a set of state contingency initiatives to provide flexibility for local and state governments that would be activated in affected areas upon receiving a Presidential Disaster



Declaration and an order for activation from the Governor. Any policy and rule exceptions, waivers, and adjustments should be evaluated and established during non-disaster times so the assistance programs are ready to launch when activated. A number of suggested elements are found in the previous section of this report and in the RIAC's 45-Day Report.

- At the state level, work with county and city leaders to develop a set of local contingency options to provide flexibility for local governments that would be activated in affected areas upon receiving a Presidential Disaster Declaration and an order for activation from the Governor. Any state or local policy and rule exceptions, waivers, and adjustments should be evaluated and established during non-disaster times so the assistance programs are ready to launch when activated. These options would be consistent from local jurisdiction to local jurisdiction. A number of suggested elements are found in the previous section of this report and in the RIAC's 45-Day Report.
6. Invest in local emergency management agencies for the central coordination function and work in all areas of emergency management – preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation.
- Work with the Iowa Emergency Management Association and/or other stakeholders to compile a summary of the required and expected responsibilities of the Emergency Management Coordinator position to include but not be limited to statutory requirements, and compile information that demonstrates the capacity level of each county to fulfill these requirements.
  - Work with the Iowa Emergency Management Association to evaluate and determine an appropriate strategy for ensuring local emergency management has the capacity to fulfill its responsibilities to the citizens of its jurisdiction and the entire state.
  - Work with the Iowa Emergency Management Association in a public education initiative to emphasize the critical role and value of local emergency management in and for every local jurisdiction in Iowa.
  - Work with stakeholder organizations to encourage and promote membership in the Iowa Mutual Aid Compact.
7. Support integrated, regional planning to address recovery and leverage multi-jurisdictional strengths for ongoing initiatives.
- Work with the Iowa Association of Regional Councils (IARC) to assess each Council of Government's (COG) capacity to support long term recovery and regional planning, seeking additional resources on behalf of the COGs to close gaps in capacity as an investment in regional planning.
  - In light of the increased focus on planning at the state, regional, and local levels, the state should consider establishing a state resource devoted to integrating program and planning functions.
8. Promote and support communications and outreach initiatives to educate and support Iowans as they recover and plan for future disasters.



- Conduct outreach using methods and venues familiar to and frequented by impacted Iowans to promote the case management services to assist them in their recovery.
  - Provide information in cooperation with local public health agencies about potential continuing health risks, including mental health issues emerging as recovery continues.
  - Conduct outreach and information dissemination efforts to inform and promote participation in assistance programs such as Jumpstart, education assistance, and other specific state initiatives.
  - Provide information to the public on a regular basis about the status and progress of recovery in the areas of housing, business and industry, and infrastructure in light of the lessons learned from the 2008 disasters.
  - Provide public education to promote citizen and commercial incorporation of energy efficiency and smart development principles.
  - Educate the public and stakeholders about practices, buildings, and community design that ensure accessibility and livability for people of all ages and abilities.
  - Provide public information and education about practices to retain water where it falls and other conservation and agriculture practices.
9. The state should move state policy forward and lead the discussion with regional and local interests on floodplain and watershed management.
- The state should form a multi-agency work group including representatives from regional watersheds and other key stakeholders to advise the state's initiatives in floodplain and watershed management.
  - The state should seek opportunities to complete watershed studies for the primary watersheds across the state, leveraging federal funding, and providing data and information by which strategic and planning decisions can be based.
10. Sustain community identity, quality of life, and cultural heritage.
- Undertake a marketing initiative to show that Iowa continues to share its cultural heritage, conduct business, educate residents, and enjoy Iowa's quality of life.
  - Develop a strategy for technical assistance and support of Iowa's cultural and historic institutions throughout recovery.



## **Suggested Strategies Related to Other Issues Discussed by the Task Forces**

### Infrastructure

- The state should complete a comprehensive infrastructure plan, including transportation, to provide strategic direction for infrastructure investments.
- Provide “personnel infrastructure” to fulfill gaps in state capacity that are negatively impacting recovery at the state and local levels, e.g., DNR permitting, dam inspections, and public health surveillance.
- Develop state policy regarding incorporation of smart development principles, green building practices, energy efficiency measures, universal design, and livability appropriately into infrastructure initiatives.
- Develop state guidance for incorporating safe rooms and other mitigation measures when constructing certain types of structures.
- Support local assessment of landfill capacity and projected future requirements in light of the demand created by exceptional amounts of damage debris.

### Planning for Response

- Work with local and regional organizations to promote and support their coordinated planning initiatives.

### Rebuild Iowa Office Roles and Responsibilities

- Affirm the role of the Rebuild Office to provide leadership in Iowa’s recovery from the tornadoes, storms, and floods of 2008.
- Ensure transparency in the recovery process.
- Develop strategic policy for recovery in cooperation with state agency partners.
- Coordinate state policy activities of recovery and rebuilding.
- Provide a link and clearinghouse function for information about recovery efforts.
- Provide state leadership in recovery relationships, activities, and initiatives with local governments.



## Task Force Process, Schedule and Leadership

The 120-Day Unified Task Force Report to the Rebuild Iowa Commission represents the work of the nine Task Forces and Resource Groups. Task Force and Resource Group members were drawn from an all-volunteer pool of Iowans who expressed interest in serving the state during the disaster response and recovery efforts. Response was tremendous, with many more individuals volunteering than could be accommodated in the body of a Task Force. In an effort to utilize the experience and capacity of all volunteers, the Resource Groups were created to provide additional subject matter expertise, presentations and additional input for consideration by the Task Forces.

Each of the nine Task Forces and Resource Groups convened for a day-long facilitated work session in Des Moines. These Task Force meetings were held October 7, 2008 through October 24, 2008. The focus of the Task Force meetings was to think about a vision of Iowa's future within the scope of each Task Force's issues; determine what needs to be done to recover from the disasters of 2008; determine what needs to be done to experience long term recovery and success in the next 10 – 20 years; and develop specific strategies to achieve those goals.

The strategies provided in this report represent the work accomplished by each Task Force during its day-long facilitated work session. Due to the short time constraints of the 120-Day Unified Task Force Report development, Task Forces and Resource Groups were not provided the luxury of reconvening or introducing new strategies upon the conclusion of each Task Force meeting. Meeting notes from each Task Force work session are available at [www.rio.iowa.gov](http://www.rio.iowa.gov).

Each Task Force was chaired or co-chaired by one or more members of the Rebuild Iowa Advisory Commission and supported by Rebuild Iowa Office staff. Task Force facilitation, staffing and report development services were provided by State Public Policy Group (SPPG), Des Moines.

### **Agriculture and Environment Task Force – October 9**

- Brent Halling, Chair, Farmer, Perry
- Rebuild Iowa Office Staff: Lyle Assell, Harold Hommes
- SPPG Staff: Amelia Colwell, Paritosh Kasotia, Tom Slater

### **Cultural Heritage and Records Retention Task Force – October 20**

- Karris Golden, Chair, Generation Iowa Commission, Waterloo
- Rebuild Iowa Office Staff: Aaron Todd
- SPPG Staff: Brooke Findley, Ben Banowetz, Michelle Rich



### **Economic and Workforce Development Task Force – October 8**

- J. Michael Early, Co-Chair, Bankers Trust, Des Moines
- Bill Gerhard, Co-Chair, Iowa State Building and Construction Trades Council, Iowa City
- Rebuild Iowa Office Staff: Laura Stein, Joe Mowers
- SPPG Staff: Paritosh Kasotia, Jon Rosmann, Tom Slater

### **Education Task Force – October 15**

- Jim Fausett, Co-Chair, Mayor of Coralville, Coralville
- Tim Hurley, Co-Chair, Mayor of Waterloo, Waterloo
- Bev Wharton, Co-Chair, Briar Cliff University, Sioux City
- Rebuild Iowa Office Staff: Gary Schwartz
- SPPG Staff: Erin Drinnin, Brooke Findley, Jon Rosmann

### **Flood Plain Management and Hazard Mitigation Task Force – October 22**

- Bill Bywater, Chair, Economy Advertising/TruArt Color Graphics, Iowa City
- Rebuild Iowa Office Staff: Barbara Lynch
- SPPG Staff: Brooke Findley, Paritosh Kasotia, Arlinda McKeen

### **Housing Task Force – October 14**

- Nitza Lopez-Castillo, Co-Chair, Community Development Center, Columbus Junction
- Jim Davis, Co-Chair, Iowa Title and Realty Co., Charles City
- Rebuild Iowa Office Staff: Joe O'Hern, Julie Lunn
- SPPG Staff: Ben Banowetz, Arlinda McKeen, Michelle Rich

### **Infrastructure and Transportation Task Force – October 7**

- Mike King, Co-Chair, Iowa State Association of Counties, Creston
- Mark Wandro, Co-Chair, Snyder and Associates, Ankeny
- Rebuild Iowa Office Staff: Larry Jesse, Hank Manning
- SPPG Staff: Ben Banowetz, Amelia Colwell, Jennifer Furler

### **Long Term Recovery Planning Task Force – October 24**

- Carroll Reasoner, Co-Chair, Cedar Rapids
- Amy Truax, Co-Chair, Parkersburg
- Rebuild Iowa Office Staff: Susan Dixon



- SPPG Staff: Ben Banowetz, Brooke Findley, Arlinda McKeen, Tom Slater

**Public Health and Health Care Task Force – October 13**

- Linda Larkin, Chair, Agemark Assisted Living, Fort Madison
- Rebuild Iowa Office Staff: Sandra Lyles, Jon Neiderbach
- SPPG Staff: Erin Drinnin, Jennifer Furler, Amelia Colwell

A complete list of the nearly 500 Rebuild Iowa Task Force and Resource Group members can be found at [www.rio.iowa.gov](http://www.rio.iowa.gov).







**Rebuild Iowa Office**  
Wallace Building • 502 E. Ninth St., 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Des Moines, Iowa 50309  
[www.rio.iowa.gov](http://www.rio.iowa.gov)