



Iowa Coalition for Innovation & Growth
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News Release

Biomass, entrepreneurship, lean governmental and health care services: hot topics of Hot Teams

Des Moines, IA (July 26, 2005) – At the recent semi-annual meeting of the Iowa Coalition for Innovation and Growth at the Renaissance Savery Hotel in Des Moines, four “Hot Teams” reported on their progress during the first half of the year. The Hot Teams were formed to study and solve specific statewide business challenges.

The *Advanced Manufacturing Research & Collaboration Cluster (AMRCC) Hot Team* report was given by Scott Rempe from Vermeer Manufacturing. He focused on the Biomass Working Group’s activities, saying Iowa has the potential to be the leader in biomass materials. The group is working to establish the crops and infrastructure needed to provide products such as bio fiber mat, bio composite and bio lubrication sticks. Iowa bio-based products will be showcased at the Bio-Based Industrial Outlook Conference at Iowa State University in Ames, August 29-30. For more information on the Conference see www.valuechains.org. For more information on AMRCC go to www.amrcc.com.

The *Iowa Entrepreneurial Formation Hot Team* activities were presented by Kurt Heiar, CEO, Regena Corporation. The Team has established the Iowa Entrepreneur Network as the “go to” source for entrepreneurs by providing resources and contacts on their Web site, www.iowaentrepreneur.com. They recently developed a speakers’ bureau, continue to build the online Community of Practice, and will be offering online forums for Iowa entrepreneurs. The group is planning a joint entrepreneurs’ and venture capital conference with the Iowa Department of Economic Development to be held this fall.

The *Business Development and Processes Hot Team’s* goal is to support a lean approach to a major process that would benefit government and business. Rhonda Showman of Pella reported that last year the Hot Team worked with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to reduce the time it takes for air quality permitting by 50 percent, and currently is working with the Iowa
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Department of Economic Development to shorten the time it takes to process applications for financial assistance. They are also working with Iowa Workforce Development's Labor Services Division on the State Certification Process for elevators, lifts and dumb waiters. By applying Kaizen, the streamlining process brought to the U.S. by Toyota, they have reduced the number of steps required for elevator inspection by 70 percent, and the timeline for projects from 45 to 6 days.

Also using process improvement, the *Health Care-Lean Hot Team* has been applying lean concepts into the health care system across the state. Vince Newendorp of Vermeer Manufacturing, reported that the team is working closely with the Iowa Hospital Association to make information available on how it can be incorporated. They have developed a resource kit, "Going Lean in Health Care," and will be sharing best practices. So far, seven Iowa hospitals have implemented lean enterprises, four of them directly with the help of the Hot Team.

Raba said, "The goal of each of the Hot Teams is to take on a challenge, find a solution and eventually put themselves (the team) out of business." The audience was encouraged to bring forth suggestions for additional topics for hot teams and to volunteer to work on them.

The purpose of the Iowa Coalition for Innovation and Growth is to establish a collaborative structure for coordinating the identification of economic priorities and the process for moving those priorities to reality. This coalition, established in 2001 by the Iowa Business Council and co-administered by the Iowa Chamber Alliance, works to competitively position Iowa as a world leader in the new economy by encouraging entrepreneurial formation, research, technology, business innovation and growth throughout the state. For more information about the ICIG, go to www.iowabusinesscouncil.com.

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