



IOWA NORTHLAND REGIONAL ECONOMIC RESILIENCY

An Overview

Local stakeholders, including local government officials, nonprofit agencies, and economic development organizations were brought together at the beginning of 2021 through surveys and focus groups to discuss economic resiliency in our six-county region following the Covid-19 pandemic. Regional stakeholders discussed how their communities have responded during the pandemic and explore what future regional needs are required to position our region to recover, withstand, and avoid future shocks to our economy.

Economic resilience is the ability to withstand and recover quickly from a disruption to the economic base. Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments serves as a source for information and support to address economic challenges and community growth.

The Situation

The Covid-19 pandemic exposed many weaknesses and vulnerabilities across the world. No region was left unaffected, and there are still many unknown consequences. INRCOG's six-county region was no different. The region's resiliency proved to be strong in the face of the pandemic. The dramatic increase in unemployment coupled with shutdowns and supply chain issues shook the economy to the core. The results will ultimately have consequences of our future economic growth. Despite this, there are still many positive signs about how resilient our community is. Future commitments to address issues in small business growth, healthcare recovery, broadband connectivity, regional workforce needs, housing, daycare, and nonprofit development will be needed. The following page will outline those recommendations.



INRCOG

Iowa Northland Regional
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Recommendations

1. Address Regional Workforce Needs

Businesses continue to see a strong need for a qualified workforce that can meet their needs and requirements. To do so, we must continue to attract the best talent while helping upskill and train our current workforce to meet the current workforce demands.

2. Promote Economic Growth

The pandemic has put a strain on businesses and there continues to be uncertainty about the future of our economy. We must continue to promote the growth and diversification of future industries and work to provide a solid foundation for future economic growth in these uncertain times.

3. Support Small Businesses

Small businesses were hit especially hard by the pandemic and many of those issues will continue to persist. Small businesses need technical training to help them pivot to the changing demands and new customer needs.

4. Improve Regional Industry Resilience

Manufacturing and agriculture are pillars in our region. We must continue to support them and ensure they continue to be resilient through the pandemic and beyond. This includes addressing supply chain issues and supporting Manufacturing 4.0 initiatives.

5. Boost Regional Attractiveness

Our region needs to continue to attract the best talent. We must continue to support our region's growth by growing and developing our region into a vibrant destination that individuals and families want to live and work in. This includes ensuring we have a strong broadband infrastructure and adequate housing combined with our low-cost of living, safe communities, and thriving schools.

6. Respond to Regional Housing Needs

Housing continues to remain an important issue. Many communities have existing housing needs assessments that point out our communities' vulnerabilities and needs. These should continue to be addressed and have a large impact on our ability to encourage resilient communities.

7. Improve Childcare in the Region

Childcare plays a key role in the ability of our region to be resilient. Available and affordable childcare continues to be a strong need in our communities. More options are needed to help serve working families.

8. Support Regional EMS Responders

The regional volunteer EMS responders are strained and serve a key role in helping maintain the safety, health, and ability to respond to disasters. The pandemic added further stress to the system. We need to continue to support our volunteer EMS through training, recruitment, and assistance.

9. Respond to Future Nonprofit Needs

The nonprofit agencies in our community were unable to fundraise and operate in their normal capacity during the pandemic. This has left many nonprofits vulnerable. We need to continue to identify ways to support them over the coming months and years as they bounce back.

10. Assist Our Local and City Governments

Local and city governments in the region proved to be resilient during the pandemic. However, updates to hazard mitigation plans and development of emergency response plans as well as addressing change caused by the pandemic will be needed.

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