

January 13, 2006

Dear Members of the Iowa Assembly:

IDED is pleased to report on the provision of on-going efforts to assist businesses through coordinating regulatory assistance on behalf of the State of Iowa. This report fulfills Iowa Code, Chapter 15E.19:

“By January 15 of each year, the Department of Economic Development shall submit a written report to the General Assembly regarding the provision of regulatory assistance by the state agencies, including the Department’s efforts, and its recommendations and proposed solutions to streamline the process of issuing permits to business.”

As approved in 2005, the “Iowa Values Fund” (House File 868) directs IDEED to coordinate regulatory assistance for the state of Iowa. IDEED provides a centralized and confidential, non-regulatory point of contact to assist citizens and industry in working with Iowa regulatory agencies. IDEED helps customers identify business licensing and compliance requirements, find the most relevant state contact or resource to assist with a particular need or issue, and acts as an advocate for stream-lined and timely regulatory policy and service.

House File 868 also requires that every state agency responsible for programs that regulate business to provide a contact for regulatory assistance. Regulatory agencies are to establish a “Business Assistance Coordinator” within the office of their director or administrative division to work with IDEED. Business assistance coordinators are directed to:

1. Serve as the regulatory agency's primary contact for regulatory affairs with IDEED,
2. Provide information on regulatory requirements to businesses and represent the regulatory agency to the private sector,
3. Monitor permit applications and provide timely permit status information to IDEED,
4. Require that regulatory agency staff participate in negotiations and discussions with businesses, and
5. Notify IDEED of proposed rulemaking activities and any changes to a regulatory program.

Iowa Regulatory Response Initiative

Anticipating these requirements Governor Vilsack established the “Iowa Regulatory Response Initiative.” Through this initiative the Governor has directed state agencies to reduce response time to specific inquiries, requests, and demands from businesses making an investment in job growth by using a coordinated system of communication and expediting of processes.

Business Assistance Coordinators designated in the Iowa departments of Natural Resources (IDNR), Public Safety (DDPS), Revenue (IR), Transportation (IDOT), Workforce Development (IWD) and the Iowa Utility Board (IUB) are now working with IDEED across departmental boundaries as a cohesive network. This collaboration has resulted in:

- Very quick turnaround time on citizen and business inquiries received because of designated contacts at specific agencies.
- Using technology to increase access to assistance by building a regulatory assistance web portal: http://www.iowa.gov/state/main/business_portal/regulatory_assis/reg_assis.html

- Developing an online administrative rules portal to help citizens and business access regulatory rules, and to identify and comment on proposed or modified regulations.
http://dev.iowai.org/iowa_regs/index.html
- Working with the Iowa Business Council to implement “lean” business process improvement efforts to streamline regulatory programs so business may move more quickly through regulatory processes without compromising regulatory protection.
- Responding with direct assistance to 300 hundred inquiries for assistance ranging from individuals desiring to start their own business, to mid-size firms considering expansion, to major corporations evaluating Iowa for a new manufacturing facility.

Coordination between IDED and regulatory agencies sends a positive message concerning Iowa’s business climate and the ability of Iowa state government to act as an effective business partner. Recent customer feedback supports these efforts.

In 2006 IDED will continue its regulatory assistance partnership with the state regulatory agencies and private sector organizations such as the Iowa Business Council. We will continue to look at opportunities to utilize technology to efficiently assist all types and sizes of business and ways to improve communication and coordination between all partners.

Sincerely,

Mary Lawyer
Director
Iowa Department of Economic Development