

Solid Waste Environmental Management System Advisory Council

A Strategic Framework

September 2013

prepared by:

RDg...
PLANNING • DESIGN

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Introduction

The Solid Waste Environmental Management System Advisory Council (EMS Council), established in 2008 has spent its initial years developing the dynamic, growing, and high-impact Environmental Management System for the State of Iowa. The council initially focused on day-to-day program development and processes for the program as a whole – spending little time (by virtue of necessity) in charting its own course and developing its own policies and procedures.

As the work has progressed, the Council recognizes value in moving beyond the discreet field of waste management to the broader picture of natural resources management. The EMS Council has embarked on an initial visioning and strategy session to move beyond the discreet category of solid waste work, helping to take the EMS program and the Council's overall function to the “next level.”

This strategic framework intends to serve as an initial guiding document for a maturing Council, keenly interested in improving and growing the EMS program. At the same time, the Council desires improvement in its own practices, including increased responsiveness to participant needs and enhanced capacity to envision and shape the future of natural resources management in Iowa.

About the Solid Waste Environmental Management System Advisory Council

The Environmental Management System Program is a voluntary program established by House File 2570 in the 2008 Legislative Session. As established in Code 455J, The Solid Waste Alternatives Program Advisory (EMS) Council is a nine-member council appointed by the Director of Natural Resources. Serving staggered three year terms, the council consists of the following voting members representing these organizations: Department of Natural Resources, Iowa Society of Solid Waste Operations, Iowa Recycling Association, Iowa Chapter of the National Solid Waste Management Association, Iowa Waste Exchange, Iowa Department of Economic Development (now Iowa Economic Development Authority) Recycle Iowa program, and three members representing Solid Waste Planning Areas of various sizes.

The Council has the authority to recommend designation of a solid waste agency or service area as an environmental management system to the Environmental Protection Commission (EPC); review annual report submittals of all designated systems and ensure they remain in compliance with 455J.3; and recommend to the EPC a reasonable allocation of moneys for the EMS program and the participants. The Council is currently engaged in advising the Environmental Management System work of 11 Solid Waste Agencies or service areas covering 23 counties across Iowa.

The Role of the EMS

In addition to the specific functions developed through Iowa Code, the EMS Council intends its role to encompass:

- Overall advocacy on behalf of the EMS partner program needs,
- Education on the value of EMS, and
- Collaboration for continued partner success.

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Council members see this work as involving:

- Communications and consistent messaging,
- Responsiveness and intent listening,
- Resources research and innovation, and
- Program and reach growing over time.

They intend a shift in thinking of the Council and its EMS partners from one of management of a particular process or system to a broader-based view of natural resources management.

Guiding Principles

With this role in mind, the Council has developed the following Guiding Principles for its work:

- We are engaged in a fundamental shift to a framework of managing our resources
- We value collaboration, learning, integrity and mutual support in this endeavor
- We operate by consensus
- We respect dissent as we also encourage the consensus voice as our only “official” voice
- We want to facilitate and recognize the success of our partners and participants
- The success of our efforts depends on the full and continued commitment of our members

Vision

A State where resource users/consumers become resource stewards.

Mission

To lead Iowa in natural resources protection using the Environmental Management System.

Strategic Direction

In addition to advancement of policies and operations (See Strategic Direction D: Organize), with this document, the Council charts four powerful – but not divergent – strategic directions. These will assist in future policy, processes, and decision-making, rooted in the Council’s perception of its role and guiding principles. These broad-sweeping directions can be summarized as: Welcome, Advocate, Collaborate, and Organize.

These are outlined below.

Welcome . . .

Welcome current and future EMS participants/partners to the world of Natural Resources Management

Measure 1: Annual growth in solid waste agencies of 2-4 annually with minimum growth by 2015 of 15 agencies, reaching 26 of 44 solid waste agencies. Long term goal: 100% of solid waste agencies enrolled in EMS.

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1. Grow the EMS program through new participant recruitment
 - a. Establish regional workshops; recruit varied workshop participants to extend reach beyond solid waste agencies, including other government agencies, businesses, and NGO's'
 - b. Collect and share fundamental information and meaningful case studies

Associated Action Steps:

- IDNR draft talking points for review by October 2013
- IDNR/Leslie send e-mail with example/template requesting success story(ies) by October 1st 2013

2. Establish mechanisms for current participants to showcase successes
3. Institute on-site EMS meetings for current participants

Advocate . . .

Advocate on behalf of EMS participants for their program needs

Measure: Grow perception of council as partner/resource (see associated action step below).

- A. Develop consistent message(s)
 - a. Involve Council in creating top-level messaging – gaining the benefit of Council cohesion through greater mutual understanding
 - Associated Action Step: Interview current members for input and develop benchmark to assess perception of EMS Council. Ask for assessment of council on a continuum of “holding members accountable” on one end to “serving as partner/resource” on the other. Set specific, measurable goal following establishment of baseline benchmark. Council members conclude interviews by October 15, 2013. Prepare recommendations based on interviews by November 15, 2013.

Board calling subcommittee: Bob, George, Tom, Mary, Julie, Bob F (2–3 calls per person); Boddy draft possible discussion guide (Done. See Appendix)

- b. Craft talking points to enhance Council and public understanding of EMS vision, goals, and strategies
- B. Reach out to priority audiences
- C. Establish advocacy goals and messages suited to priority audiences
 - a. Environmental Protection Commission – seek to inform
 - b. Legislature – seek to secure resources
 - Associated Action Step: Produce biennial “white paper” or similar report/presentation for Environmental Protection Commission and Legislature
 - Council chair present to EPC before end of 2013 calendar year
 - c. Participants/users – promote best management practices, overall partnership, and shift in thinking to natural resources management

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Collaborate . . .

Collaborate for the continued success of EMS participants, partners, and program as a whole

- A. Connect EMS experts to “knowledge seekers” – those within and external to the EMS system who want to know more about how best to develop and execute programs and initiatives.
- B. Construct Council evaluations of participant work as learning and partnering opportunities – moving out of a perceived “judge and jury” framework
- C. Improve technology to exchange information, hold meetings, and overall promote partnership and continuous improvement

Organize . . .

Organize for improved Council effectiveness in achieving mission and vision

Output Measure 1: Incorporate at least two “on–the–road” council meetings annually including a listening session for members

- A. Establish ongoing listening and response loop with participants (see Advocate, Part A above)
 - Associated Action Step: Take council meetings “on-the-road,” making a purposeful attempt to listen to what participants have to say about Council/EMS, potential improvements and needs
- B. Establish accountability mechanisms/rules
 - a. Develop attendance/participation guidance for board members
 - b. Use workgroups strategically, sparingly (a bias in favor of the Council membership working as a whole), but do not fail to assess their potential strategic value in specific situations
- C. Establish the role of Council in determining if a participant shall continue with the EMS designation if a participant becomes non–compliant. Further define what non–compliant means and when a participant should be defined as such and when Council should present to the Commission requesting to revoke a designation.
- D. Pursue resources in support of council initiatives
- E. Establish metrics to assess board performance

APPENDIX

DRAFT Questions/Script for Council to Interview EMS Members

The EMS Council has been trying to better understand the role the council has played in the development of EMS in the past, and the role or roles it could and should embrace for the future. We know we want to improve in the area of providing partnership, assistance, and resources to you, the EMS members. I would like you to be as straightforward and honest with me as you possibly can– I promise not to argue points. I am here to listen. I would like to ask you a few questions and work to thoroughly understand how we can improve our service to you.

1. What do you see as the EMS program's greatest strengths?
2. Where is the program weak, lacking, or challenged in some way?
3. If you could make 1–3 changes in the EMS program, what would you do to improve it?
 - *I'd now like to ask you a couple of questions about the EMS Council itself and again, I'm asking for the purpose of improving our performance, so please be frank.*
4. The Council needs to find a balance between providing some level of accountability– so that this program can be measured in a way that shows its worth to legislators and other funders and it also needs to be your program partner– providing meaningful resources and support.
5. On a scale of 1–10, with one being “EMS Council Holds Participants Accountable” and 10 being “EMS Council is a Partner or Resource” – where on that continuum do you see the EMS Council landing today? Are we more about accountability, or more about partnering and serving as a resource? [Try to secure a number]. Where on that scale SHOULD we be and why do you think so?
6. What would you like to see the council do to achieve an appropriate balance between accountability and partnering?
7. Finally, since my goal is to try and improve the role and effectiveness of the EMS Council, what would you like to tell me that we haven't talked about or that you'd like to emphasize?