

July 2022

East Central Iowa Council of Governments

ecicog.org

News

[Homes for Iowa Webinar to Be Held August 11](#)

Does your community need affordable single-family homes? Join us from 11 a.m. to noon on August 11 to learn about Homes for Iowa – an innovative program which uses Iowa Prison Industries to produce moderately priced homes, which are then transported to vacant lots. The webinar will cover home design and pricing, lot requirements and additional costs, as well as the process to order a house. Homes for Iowa houses can be purchased by individual home buyers, for-profit developers or non-profit developers (including cities). In addition to ECICOG and Homes for Iowa staff, webinar participants will have an opportunity to hear from Steve Gordon, an Iowa City developer who has placed seven Homes for Iowa houses with three more scheduled to be delivered later this year.

To register for the webinar, click [here](#). For more information visit the Homes for Iowa website or contact ECICOG Housing Director Tracey Achenbach at tracey.achenbach@ecicog.org.

[Draft of Envision East Central Iowa Plan Released](#)

After months of creative collaboration among hundreds of East Central Iowa economic development stakeholders, the *Envision East Central Iowa* regional plan is ready for review and comments! Draft reports can be found on the *Envision East Central Iowa* project page at <https://www.talkto.ecicog.org/eeci>. Comments can be left on the same site.

The *Envision East Central Iowa* Strategy Committee is also seeking volunteers to serve on action teams for the plan's seven strategic pillars:

- Embracing an innovation focus to build regional competitiveness
- Fostering an entrepreneurial approach to create and capture new opportunities
- Protecting and sustaining our unique natural resources
- Reimagining the built environment
- Creating more vibrant communities
- Purposefully growing a thriving, diverse regional workforce
- Creating and expanding pathways for shared prosperity

The action teams will meet regularly to advance the vision outlined in the plan throughout our region. For more information on the plan or related action teams, contact Executive Director Karen Kurt at karen.kurt@ecicog.org.

[ECICOG Successfully Loans Out \\$4 Million from EDA CARES Act Grant](#)

In July of 2020, the ECICOG Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) program received a \$4 million CARES Act grant from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) to promote COVID recovery with special loan terms, including 0% interest for one to two years. The ECICOG Board approved the last two CARES Act loans on the grant deadline date of June 30, 2022.

Successfully loaning the grant funds within the two-year grant period ensures the funds will remain in our region and continue to revolve in the form of new loans as the original loans are repaid. Funds from the CARES Act grant went to 23 businesses and have created jobs in the technology, services and manufacturing industries. While special terms of the CARES Act funds have expired, ECICOG still has low interest loans available to help our region's businesses grow.

Contact Loan Specialist Robyn Jacobson at robyn.jacobson@ecicog.org or visit www.ecicogrlf.org for more information on ECICOG's loan programs.



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5210 Community Grant Promotes Healthy Choices in Jones County

ECICOG staff partnered with Jones County Public Health to land the region's first 5210 Community Grant. The 5210 public health program promotes positive health choices by youth in the form of five vegetable or fruit servings per day, two hours or less of screen time, 1 hour of exercise, and 0 sugary drinks. The grant will provide \$30,000 over three years to implement ideas to support the 5210 program in the communities of Anamosa and Olin. The 5210 program is a partnership between the Iowa Department of Public Health and the Healthiest State Initiative.

Contact Executive Director Karen Kurt at karen.kurt@ecicog.org for more information about the 5210 Community Grant.

Funding Secured for Playground in Ainsworth

The Iowa Economic Development Authority recently awarded a Community Development Block Grant-CV (CDBG-CV) to the City of Ainsworth to build a new playground at the city's municipal building. ECICOG wrote the grant application and will serve as administrator. The grant, which was funded through the CARES Act, will fund playground equipment that enables greater social distancing and is rated for children under five years of age. While this particular grant is no longer available, ECICOG is expecting new CDBG grant opportunities to be announced this fall.

For more information on CDBG grants, contact Community Development Specialist Tom Gruis at tom.gruis@ecicog.org.

Oxford Junction Begins Nuisance Enforcement

Oxford Junction has joined Central City and Springville in utilizing ECICOG for assistance with nuisance enforcement. ECICOG can help cities to enforce compliance with city code by managing inspections and sending letters to negligent property owners. Examples of prohibited nuisances are garbage, tires or other debris visible on the property; trees or bushes blocking sidewalks; and dangerous building conditions. Oxford Junction's program is beginning this month.

To learn more about how ECICOG can help you with nuisance enforcement, contact Housing Specialist Mark Culver at mark.culver@ecicog.org.

Public Meetings to Address Statewide Drought Plan

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) announced that it will cohost a series of public stakeholder meetings in July and a virtual meeting in August to gather ideas and input for a statewide drought plan.

Several state agencies will participate in developing such a plan for Iowa, including the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship and the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

Interested stakeholders in our region may attend an in-person meeting or the statewide virtual meeting:

Cedar Rapids: July 21, 9 a.m., Kirkwood Community College

[Register for Cedar Rapids Drought Planning Meeting](#)

Online-only meeting: August 3, 9 a.m., Virtual Meeting

[Register for Virtual Drought Planning Meeting](#)

Monthly reports on drought conditions in Iowa can be found in the [Water Summary Update](#).

ECICOG Welcomes New Communications Specialist

In June, ECICOG hired Joe Bauer for the position of communications specialist. Joe's work has included writing, editing and information design for newspapers, technical publications, education-industry proposals and telecommunications marketing. He combines textual skills with experience in graphic design, having worked as a production artist for two full-service print shops in Iowa City.

Joe succeeds Brittany Rempe, whose public relations acumen and design flair helped to improve ECICOG's branding and outreach efforts. ECICOG wishes Brittany continued success with her new assignment at strategic-planning consulting firm Future iQ, and we welcome Joe and his passion for helping the people of the region to improve their communities.

Grants

ECICOG staff are available to help with a wide variety of grants. Visit [the Contact Us page](#) on our website to see our staff list or contact Communications Specialist Joe Bauer at joe.bauer@ecicog.org.

National Endowment for the Arts: Our Town

Due August 4

Our Town is the National Endowment for the Arts' creative placemaking grants program. Through project-based funding, we support projects that integrate arts, culture and design activities with efforts that strengthen communities by advancing local economic, physical or social outcomes. For more information, visit the [NEA website](#).

REAP City Parks and Open Spaces

Due August 15

The intent of this program is to protect open spaces, in turn enhancing Iowa residents' quality of life, supporting economic development efforts and taking precautions to care for the environment. The Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) City Parks and Open Spaces funds are typically used for parkland expansion and multipurpose recreation. For more information, visit the [REAP website](#).

Traffic Safety Improvement Program

Due August 15

The Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT)'s Traffic Safety Improvement Program (TSIP) provides funds for roadway safety improvements, traffic control devices, research studies or public information initiatives. Cities and counties can submit applications for up to \$500,000 per project. Learn more on the [DOT's website](#) or contact Mary Rump at mary.rump@ecicog.org.

Theisen's More for You Community Grants

Due August 31

The Theisen's More For You grant program is intended to serve directly the basic needs of families and children. Programs that assist basic health needs, children's needs, educational programming, food security or youth services will be prioritized. To date, Theisen's has awarded over \$3 million to their communities. Any community within 60 miles of a Theisen's store is eligible to apply. [Click here](#) to find applications and more details about the program.

Empower Rural Iowa Grants

Due September 1

The Iowa Economic Development Authority announced this month the opening of six competitive grants available for rural communities with a population under 20,000 for Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) through FY24:

Rural Innovation Grant Program – Provides up to \$50,000 per grant for supporting creative, non-traditional ideas that focus on current issues and challenges faced by rural communities associated with community investment, growth and connection.

Rural Scale-Up Grant Program – Provides up to \$20,000 per grant to support the replication and spread of creative solutions that are addressing current issues and challenges faced by rural communities.

Rural Enrichment Program – Provides up to \$20,000 per grant to support small quality-of-life projects that will create meaningful results in rural communities. Developing quality spaces for people to want to live, work, play and engage will support the vibrancy of Iowa's rural places. Eligible projects must be open to the public and contribute to the vitality and engagement of the community.

Rural Housing Assessment Grant Program – Provides \$10,000 per grant to support the use of publicly available online information through the "Profile of Iowa" tool and rural community efforts to interpret this hard data with supplemental information. The grants are also intended to implement changes to development codes, local ordinances and housing incentives specific to their community needs, in partnership with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach.

Rural Child Care Market Study Grant Program – Provides \$10,000 to support the use of data and analysis by rural communities to determine the specific needs and solutions for their area. Funding from the program will empower communities to assess their current child care market environment and to develop strategies.

Rural Leadership Bootcamp Grant – Provides training, mentorship and \$1,000 in funding to rural communities and regions initiating leadership programs. This program targets rural communities who want to start a local leadership program and work to engage participants in community leadership roles. Grantees are required to participate in a two-day bootcamp, resulting in a work plan and a one-year mentorship.

Guidelines, scoring rubrics and informational webinars for all programs are available on the [Empower Rural Iowa website](#). Applications are accepted via [iowagrants.gov](#) and are due by September 1, 2022. Successful applicants will be informed in early October.

[Iowa's Living Roadways Community Visioning](#)

Due September 15

The Community Visioning Program assists Iowa communities of 10,000 or fewer with surface transportation improvements, such as providing pedestrian or bicycle facilities, beautifying routes, preserving historic sites or converting unused rail corridors to trails. The program takes communities from identifying their surface transportation needs and developing a community vision to initiating project development. Communities that lack planning resources within the city government are prioritized. Learn more at the [Community Visioning website](#).

[Safe Streets and Roads for All \(SS4A\) Grant Program](#)

Due September 15

The *Bipartisan Infrastructure Law* (BIL) established the new Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) discretionary program with \$5 billion in appropriated funds over the next five years. In fiscal year 2022 (FY22), up to \$1 billion is available. The SS4A program funds regional, local and tribal initiatives through grants to prevent roadway deaths and serious injuries.

The SS4A program supports the DOT's National Roadway Safety Strategy and the department's goal of zero deaths and serious injuries on our nation's roadways. For more information, visit the [DOT website](#).

[Wellmark Access to Healthy Foods Match Grant](#)

Due September 21

The Wellmark Foundation is currently accepting Matching Assets to Community Health (MATCH) Grant Applications for projects that make it easy to eat healthy and engage in everyday physical activity. Grants are up to \$50,000 and require a 50% match. To learn more, please visit the [Wellmark Foundation website](#).

[Destination Iowa](#)

Applications accepted until funds expended

Iowa saw record use of outdoor amenities such as state and county parks over the last two years but also experienced a decrease in visitor spending and hospitality employment. The Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA)'s program Destination Iowa is a \$100 million investment in attracting visitors and new residents to the state. Intended to bolster quality of life in Iowa's communities, the new effort will provide grants for shovel-ready attraction projects. Cities, counties, nonprofits and other organizations can apply, and applications will be accepted through the calendar year or until the funds are expended. Learn more at the [IEDA website](#).

Planning Further Ahead?

[CDBG Water & Sewer](#)

Next quarterly due date October 1

[FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program](#)

Due December 23

[Solid Waste Alternative Program](#)

Due January 2

[Derelict Building Grant Program](#)

Due February 24