

september 2023

ecia spotlight



**Iowa Arts Council
Awards Grants
to ECIA Partners**





Does your Community Need Housing?

ECIA is partnering with other Council of Governments in Iowa to put Iowans to work addressing the critical housing shortage.

Homes for Iowa, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization which exists to address Iowa's housing shortage, train offenders in skilled trades and reduce recidivism. Homes for Iowa plans to build 800+ moderately priced homes over the next 10 years in collaboration with Iowa Prison Industries. Beautiful 3-bedroom, 2-bath ranch style homes will be built for individuals and families and delivered all over Iowa.

Want to bring Homes for Iowa to your community? Contact ECIA's Kelley Deutmeyer, ECIA Executive Director, kdeutmeyer@ecia.org, to start the conversation. ECIA can help bring needed housing to your community.



ECIA Awarded 2023 Excellence in Transportation

ECIA has been awarded a 2023 Excellence in Regional Transportation Award from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) for their Rural County Transportation Program (RCTP).

NADO is a Washington, DC-based association that promotes programs and policies to strengthen local governments and communities. The Excellence in Regional Transportation Awards showcase organizations for noteworthy projects and practices in rural and small metropolitan transportation planning, program delivery, and special initiatives. Award winners will receive national recognition during the 2023 National Summit on Rural Road Safety in Oklahoma City, OK.

“The Excellence in Regional Transportation Awards program showcases effective and creative transportation initiatives that improve accessibility, mobility, safety, and quality of life in regions around the United States,” shared current NADO President and Northern Arizona Council of Governments Executive Director Chris Fetzer. “Programs and projects like the Rural County Transportation Program foster community and economic connections and promote effective transportation networks.”

The RCTP provides funding to small cities with less than 5,000 residents to help implement local transportation projects. These projects may include street repairs such as crack filling, resurfacing, and reconstruction; lighting and traffic control projects, and safety improvements including curb ramps, crosswalks, and signage. The program is a partnership between ECIA and Clinton, Delaware, Dubuque, and Jackson counties. Since 2019, the RCTP program has awarded \$1.68 million to 83 projects across the four-county area. “ECIA prides itself in working diligently to improve our smaller rural communities. We are fortunate to have a Board that values the same and understands the importance of spreading the funding throughout the region,” stated Kelley Deutmeyer, ECIA Executive Director. For more information about the award-winning program, contact ECIA at 563-556-4166 or visit the RCTP webpage at <https://www.eciatrans.org/rctp.php>.

City of Bellevue Court Street RCTP Project - Fiscal Year 2023

Before



After



Dubuque Designated Thriving Community

The Iowa Finance Authority (IFA) and Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) introduced the Iowa Thriving Communities designation to elevate best practices from communities that are going above and beyond to leverage innovative methods to attract housing opportunities for their workforce.

Dozens of Iowa communities completed an intensive application process to be designated as an Iowa Thriving Community. Eleven have been awarded the prestigious designation, and among them is the City of Dubuque. Iowa Thriving Communities will serve as models for other communities on both a state and national level in attracting housing development for all income levels.

Earlier this month, Dubuque and other designees presented to developers and other stakeholders at the HousingIowa Conference in Cedar Rapids. The designation comes with highly sought scoring points for the Federal Housing Tax Credit and/or Workforce Housing Tax Credit programs. The designation and scoring points are effective through 2024.

Iowa Arts Council Awards Grants to ECIA Partners



Gov. Kim Reynolds and the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) announced that more than \$1.4 million in grants were awarded to advance the arts, culture, and creative industries across Iowa through the Iowa Arts Council.

The Maquoketa Betterment Corporation/Hometown Pride Committee was awarded \$4,086 for their “Music on The Green” project application. The grant will support the Summer Concert Series which offers a mix of styles in country, blues, Latin and rock musicians; and musical entertainment during Maqtoberfest, an annual street festival. “We are thrilled and humbled by this tremendous show of support by the State for initiatives like ours that strive to make music and fun available and accessible to all in our local community, and in so doing, to further promote Jackson County as an attractive visitor destination”, Sarah Jones, Chair, Music on The Green & Maqtoberfest Planning Committee.

Community Solutions of Eastern Iowa (CSEI), a nonprofit subsidiary of ECIA that addresses housing instability and homelessness, received \$9,590 towards the creation of the CSEI @HOME PhotoVoice, a technique used to create a narrative around a specific topic using photography. PhotoVoice puts cameras in the hands of people to explore and share their perspectives on a certain topic or subject.



PhotoVoice concept

When asked how the project originated, Jennifer Walker, Director of Special Programs ECIA/CSEI stated, “We have been looking for a way to bring awareness to the housing crisis in eastern Iowa, and to better share how CSEI serves our communities. When Ashley Noonan, our Regional Housing Coordinator, suggested using PhotoVoice as a meaningful and creative tool, I was very intrigued. We plan to have about 20 amateur photographers from our region participate in a photography exhibition. The response from partners and funders has been very positive. CSEI Board of Directors and staff are very excited to start working on this process.” CSEI will be in search of participants in the coming months for this unique event.

Funding for the grants is made possible by annual appropriations from the Iowa Legislature to the IEDA and through federal-state partnerships with the National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for the Humanities.

ECIA Awarded Grant to Support Communities

ECIA has been awarded a \$150,000 grant from the USDA to establish a three-year Rural Regeneration Training Institute (RRTI). The RRTI responds to the needs identified by low-income rural local government and economic development leaders in ECIA's region. The goal is to address these needs by developing group trainings, one-on-one trainings, and providing technical assistance to increase the capacity of City staff and elected officials within ECIA's region.



The Recipient's capacity will be expanded in the areas of quality-of-life projects and economic development related assistance; business retention and expansion; supporting a rural workforce; and technology and innovation. This technical assistance, in the form of training; both group and one on one, as well as professional development conferences will enable the recipients to gain skills to

carry out projects to become the communities they envision.

This is the 8th grant award from the USDA Rural Community Development Initiative program. This funding allows ECIA to offer free trainings and specialized technical assistance to recipient communities.

Miles Awarded \$67,000 Grant

The City of Miles has been awarded a \$67,000 Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Derelict Building grant to fund deconstruction of a deteriorating building located at 346 Ferry Road (constructed 1890).

The City acquired the property in 2022, through Chapter 657 A, due to the previous owner's inability to care for the property. The property has been abandoned and neglected for several years and is creating safety concerns. The City obtained ECIA Brownfields Assessment funding for a Phase I ESA and from the IA DNR Brownfields Program for an asbestos inspection to determine the level of environmental contamination on the site. Asbestos abatement was required prior to deconstruction.

With asbestos abatement completed in August, deconstruction will be complete by November. At least 71% of building materials will be diverted from the landfill, reused, or recycled. The site will be returned to grade ready for reuse. The City has been in communication with Miles Telephone Company, who are interested in purchasing the property with the intent of expanding their business.

Mayor Daniel Ernst commented, "This grant will allow the city to remove a building that is too far gone, no longer affordable to salvage or revitalize. This will allow for a clean slate for the future growth of opportunities."



ECIA Region Receives \$100K in DRA Grants

The Dubuque Racing Association (DRA) awarded an estimated \$1.08 million across three states and organizations in 15 cities. Four DRA Core grants went to organizations in the ECIA region:

Prosperity Eastern Iowa (PEI) – \$50,000 for implementing the Field of Opportunities initiative. DRA funds will create a regional marketing effort partnering with Travel Dubuque highlighting the local assets and tourist destinations in Dubuque, Delaware, Jackson, and Jones Counties. An interactive map of regional assets created with a prior DRA Core grant will now come alive on the Travel Dubuque website featuring key attractions in the region. Additionally, this Core grant will assist PEI with implementing a regional marketing campaign; regional selfie stands and scavenger hunts; and bike rental programs. The proposed project implements a regional marketing effort created around the excitement of the Field of Dreams expansion and will encourage tourists to remain in the region to visit the smaller communities and experience more of Eastern Iowa.

Community Solutions of Eastern Iowa (CSEI) – \$10,000 for creating a fundraising plan and for the creation of the CSEI @HOME PhotoVoice, in an effort to create a narrative around a specific topic using photography. (Please see center spread for more info)

City of Preston – \$15,000 to develop a pocket park at Main Street Square, enhancing the city's first impression.

City of Maquoketa – \$25,000 to kick start redevelopment of the downtown green space before official fundraising has begun. The City's application targeted finalizing the design and helping with green space site preparation, which are the major elements of the pre-construction phase of the project. City Manager Josh Boldt stated, "It's an honor, it's inspiring to know the DRA believes in our Maquoketa story and wants us to execute what we envision for the green space redevelopment."



Second from right: ECIA's Holly McPherson accepting PEI award from DRA Officials

HUD Wants to Hear from You

ECIA is hosting U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) officials for a round-table Listening Event. HUD officials will lead the discussions so they can evaluate the positive aspects of their program, and challenges that public officials and participants encounter.

Public officials, past and potential HUD program participants, the general public, and media representatives are all encouraged to attend and provide input.

Date: October 25, 2023
Time: 5:30 – 6:30 pm
Where: Community Center Meeting Room
Delaware County Fairgrounds
200 East Acers St, Manchester

The October 2023 Listening Event will be followed up later by a Build Event in May 2024.

EIRHA Receives Grant to Reduce Health Hazards



The Eastern Iowa Regional Housing Authority (EIRHA) was awarded \$377,800 in Housing Related Hazards Capital Fund grant dollars to address housing related hazards in the public housing units. Funds from this grant will evaluate and reduce residential health hazards in public housing including carbon monoxide, mold, and radon. Areas affected by the project include public housing units located in Clinton, Delaware, Dubuque, and Jackson Counties. Work to be completed includes the conversion of gas stoves to electric, remediating mold and moisture issues, and addressing radon concerns.

West Branch City Administrator Wins Award

The Iowa League of Cities created the Rhonda Wood Smith Award to recognize exemplary work of young city officials and those new to city government. The intent of the award is to encourage and affirm participation in local government by young people who may make greater sacrifice for public service due to significant career and family commitments. Rhonda Wood Smith was such a civic-minded young person. A single parent, working as a municipal consultant with Simmering-Cory, Inc., Smith was elected mayor of Garner in November 1993 and served in that capacity until January 1, 1997, when she resigned due to poor health. She died January 15, 1997, of cancer.

Adam Kofoed, West Branch City Administrator, was this year's winner. He has been in the position since 2021 and is originally from West Branch. In between, he served in South Korea with the U.S. Army, has lived in Wisconsin and other parts of Iowa, and before becoming his hometown's city administrator, was in that same position in Garner. When he humbly accepted the award, the first person he thanked the night he got the award was his wife and, he said that being a city administrator was harder than his time in South Korea.

Congratulations Adam!



Adam, holding his award, with League officials



Andrew is already keeping Iowa beautiful! The coach and council member encountered this local artist during an initial community walk-around

Andrew Joins KIB HP

The City of Andrew recently signed on to be a Keep Iowa Beautiful, Hometown Pride (HP) community. Andrew will form a committee to work side by side with an ECIA community coach, who will help them identify their hopes and dreams for the community and work toward achieving those ideas. ECIA staff have been coaching communities through the HP program since 2017 and since 2021, took on 30 additional communities in Cedar, Delaware, Dubuque, and Jackson Counties. Past and current projects include: dog parks, new playground equipment, park enhancements, holiday events, pickleball courts, decorative light poles, murals, green space development; to name a few.