
BUDGET UNIT BRIEF – FY 2023

Fiscal Services Division

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Iowa Great Places Program

Purpose and History

Created in the 2005 Legislative Session by [HF 868](#) (Grow Iowa Values Fund Act), the Iowa Great Places Program in the Department of Cultural Affairs is designed to assist local communities in developing innovative and entrepreneurial cultural and tourism efforts. Communities (neighborhoods, cities, counties, regions, or any combination of these entities) engage in a strategic planning process to assess their strengths and areas of opportunity, create a vision for enhancing their unique attributes and quality of life, and design a plan to implement their vision. The projects in the Great Places Program are capital projects that must meet the definition of vertical infrastructure. State agency support is available to assist applicants in the planning process, and conferences are held throughout the year on topics such as grant writing and community development.

Once an applicant has engaged in this process and created a feasible and sustainable plan, the applicant can invite the State to formally designate it a Great Place through a proposal submission process.

Based on these submissions, a coalition of State agency partners and the Iowa Great Places Citizen Advisory Board choose the finalists. The Board then tours each finalist location, and designees are chosen and recommended to the Director of the Department of Cultural Affairs for final approval. The recommendations are based on the following criteria:

- A guiding vision plan and interrelated set of strategies.
- Broad-based support for projects that includes multiple local and regional partners and public-private partnerships.
- Strong organizational capacity demonstrated by financial and programmatic performance and service to constituents.

Once selected, each Great Places designee is asked to produce a work plan that outlines the major activities and associated costs (if applicable) for each project in the proposal. Approved Great Places designees enter a three-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the State and begin to implement plans with technical assistance from State agencies. The Great Places designation creates a partnership between the State of Iowa and each Great Place, with the following benefits:

- Technical assistance from all relevant State agencies for project implementation.
- Additional consideration for grant applications from all State agencies for projects specifically included in a Great Places proposal.
- Special consideration for applications to the State Historic Tax Credit Program (pending availability).
- Greater publicity.
- Iowa Great Places Grant Funds (pending availability).

Iowa Great Places Grant Funds

More Information

Iowa Great Places Program: iowaculture.gov/about-us/about/grants/iowa-great-places

Department of Cultural Affairs: iowaculture.gov

Issue Review: Iowa Great Places Program: www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/IR/21332.pdf

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[House File 2782](#) (FY 2007 Infrastructure Appropriations Act) created the Iowa Great Places Program Fund. Communities designated as a Great Place are allowed to apply for Iowa Great Places Infrastructure Grants. Pending available funds, a Great Places designee may submit one application for each project. Depending on the population of the Great Places designee, there is a minimum match requirement equal to a percentage of the grant request. The grant funds can be used only for physical infrastructure projects deemed beneficial to the public and included in the MOU. Physical infrastructure is defined as land acquisition and construction, major renovation and repair of buildings, all appurtenant structures, site development, parks and recreational trails, and permanent design exhibits that are expected to last and be maintained for at least 20 years. Physical infrastructure does not mean routine, recurring maintenance or operational expenses, ongoing utilities, or leasing of a building or appurtenant structure without a lease-purchase agreement.

Designated Great Places and Approved Projects

Approved grants include infrastructure projects that have allowed Great Places designees to make improvements to their communities, such as park creation and development, acquisition and renovation of historical buildings, renovation and expansion of museums, recreational trails design and construction, and streetscape and riverfront enhancements.

Funding — State General Fund

The General Fund appropriation in the Economic Development Appropriations Act funds the administration costs associated with the Program.

Other Sources of Revenue

Iowa Great Places Grant Funds have been provided from various sources. In FY 2007, \$3.0 million was appropriated from the Endowment for Iowa's Health Restricted Capitals Fund, and in FY 2008, \$3.0 million was appropriated from the Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund (RIIF). The Program subsequently received \$2.0 million in FY 2009, \$1.9 million in FY 2010, and \$1.0 million annually since FY 2012 from the RIIF. The Program also received \$2.0 million in FY 2011 from the Revenue Bonds Capitals Fund.

Related Statutes and Administrative Rules

Iowa Code sections [303.3C](#) and [303.3D](#)

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