

15.272 Statewide welcome center program — objectives and agency responsibilities — pilot projects.

The state agencies, as indicated in this section, shall undertake certain specific functions to implement the goals of a statewide program, including the pilot projects, for welcome centers.

1. *a.* The department of economic development and the state department of transportation shall jointly establish a statewide long-range plan for developing and operating welcome centers throughout the state. The plan shall be submitted to the general assembly by January 15, 1988. The plan shall address, but not be limited to, the following:

(1) Integrating state, regional, and local tourism and recreation marketing and promotion plans.

(2) Recommending a wide range of centers, including state-developed and state-operated to privately managed facilities.

(3) Establishing design, service, and maintenance quality standards which all welcome centers will maintain. Included in the standards shall be a provision requiring that space or facilities be available for purposes of displaying and offering for sale Iowa-made products, crafts, and arts. The space or facilities may be operated by the department of economic development or leased to and operated by other persons.

(4) Making projections of increased tourist spending, indirect economic benefits, and direct revenue production which are estimated to occur as a result of implementing a statewide welcome center program.

(5) Projecting estimated acquisition, construction, exhibit, staffing, and maintenance costs.

(6) Integrating electronic data telecommunications systems.

(7) Identifying sites for maintaining existing centers as well as locations for new centers.

b. The departments may enter into contracts for the preparation of the long-range plan. The departments shall involve the department of natural resources and the department of cultural affairs in the preparation of the plan. The recommendations and comments of organizations representing hospitality and tourism services, including but not limited to, the regional tourism councils, convention and visitors bureaus, and the Iowa travel council, and others with interests in this program will be considered for incorporation in the plan. Prior to submission of the plan to the general assembly, the plan shall be submitted to the regional tourism councils, the convention and visitors bureaus, and the Iowa travel council for their comments and criticisms which shall be submitted by the department of economic development along with the plan to the general assembly.

2. The responsibilities of the authority include the following:

a. Seeing to the acquisition of property and the construction of all new welcome centers including the pilot projects selected by the department of economic development pursuant to paragraph "e". In carrying out this responsibility the authority may but is not limited to the following:

(1) Arrange for the state department of transportation to acquire title to land and buildings for use as and undertake construction of state-owned welcome centers. In acquiring property and constructing the welcome centers, including any pilot projects, the state department of transportation may use any funds available to it, including but not limited to, the RISE fund, matching funds from local units of government or organizations, the primary road fund, federal grants, and moneys specifically appropriated for these purposes.

(2) Contract with other state agencies, local units of government, or private groups, organizations, or entities for the use of land, buildings, or facilities as state welcome centers or in connection with state welcome centers, whether or not the property is actually owned by the state. If the local match required for pilot projects or which may be required for other welcome centers is met by providing land, buildings, or facilities, the entity providing the local match shall enter into an agreement with the authority to either transfer title of the property to the state or to dedicate the use of the property under the conditions and period of time set by the authority.

b. Providing for the operations, management, and maintenance of the state-owned and state-operated welcome centers, including the collection and distribution of tourism

literature, telecommunication services, and other travel-related services, and the display and offering for sale of Iowa-made products, crafts, and arts.

c. Providing, at the discretion of the authority, financial assistance in the form of loans and grants to privately operated information centers to the extent the centers are consistent with the long-range plan.

d. Developing a common theme or graphic logo which will be identified with all welcome centers which meet the standards of operations established for those centers.

e. Selecting the sites for the pilot projects. In selecting the pilot project sites, the following apply:

(1) Up to three sites may be located in proximity to the interstates and up to three sites may be located in proximity to the other primary roads. The department of economic development shall select at least one site which is in proximity to a primary road which is not an interstate.

(2) Proposals for the sites must be submitted prior to September 1, 1987, and shall contain a commitment of at least a one-dollar-per-dollar match of state financial assistance. The local match may be in terms of land, buildings, or other noncash items which are acceptable by the department of economic development.

(3) Priority shall be given to proposals that have the best local match, that are to be located where there is a very high number of travelers passing, and for which the department of economic development, after consultation with the departments of transportation, natural resources, and cultural affairs, considers the chances of success to be nearly perfect.

(4) The department of economic development shall select the sites by September 15, 1987. 87 Acts, ch 178, §2; 2008 Acts, ch 1032, §201; 2011 Acts, ch 118, §87, 89; 2012 Acts, ch 1021, §8

[P] RISE fund, see chapter 315

[P] Duties of former department of economic development were assumed by economic development authority beginning July 1, 2011, pursuant to 2011 Acts, ch 118