

CHAPTER 29
RURAL INNOVATION GRANT PROGRAM
[Prior to 02/22/23, see Economic Development Authority[261] Ch 221]

261—29.1(88GA,SF608) Purpose. The purpose of the rural innovation grant program is to support creative, nontraditional ideas that focus on current issues and challenges faced by rural communities associated with the themes of community investment, growth, and connection.
[ARC 5093C, IAB 7/15/20, effective 8/19/20; ARC 6892C, IAB 2/22/23, effective 3/29/23]

261—29.2(88GA,SF608) Definitions. For purposes of this chapter, unless the context otherwise requires:

“*Agreement*” means a contract for financial assistance under the program describing the terms on which financial assistance is to be provided.

“*Applicant*” means an Iowa business, college, university, city, county, council of governments organization established by Iowa Code chapter 28H, K-12 educational institution, or private nonprofit agency or foundation applying for financial assistance under the program. A business will be considered an Iowa business if the business is incorporated in the state of Iowa or authorized to do business in the state of Iowa.

“*Authority*” means the economic development authority created in Iowa Code section 15.105.

“*Director*” means the director of the authority.

“*Financial assistance*” means a grant made by the authority to an applicant approved for funding under the program.

“*Program*” means the rural innovation grant program established in this chapter.

“*Project*” means a program or activity undertaken in and for the benefit of a community in Iowa with a population of 20,000 or less and not contiguous to a city with a population of 40,000 or greater.
[ARC 5093C, IAB 7/15/20, effective 8/19/20; ARC 6319C, IAB 5/18/22, effective 6/22/22; ARC 6892C, IAB 2/22/23, effective 3/29/23]

261—29.3(88GA,SF608) Program description.

29.3(1) Amount, form, and timing of assistance. The amount of assistance awarded will be determined by the authority based on the total amount of funds available to the authority for the program and based on the project details. The authority will establish a maximum grant award per application and a minimum grant award per application for each fiscal year in which funding is available. The authority will provide financial assistance in the form of a grant. Funds will be disbursed on a reimbursement basis for expenses incurred by the applicant after approval of an award by the director.

29.3(2) Application.

a. Forms. All applications and other filings related to the program shall be on such forms and in accordance with such instructions as established by the authority. Information about the program, the application, and application instructions may be obtained by contacting the authority.

b. Application period. Each fiscal year during which funding is available, applications for financial assistance will only be accepted during the established application period, or periods, as identified by the authority on its website.

c. Frequency of application. An eligible applicant may only be named as the primary entity on one application per application period. However, an applicant who has applied as the primary entity for an application may also be named as a partner on additional applications.

d. Complete application required. An application shall not be considered submitted for review until the application is completed and all required supporting documentation and information are provided.

29.3(3) Use of funds.

a. An applicant shall use funds only for reimbursement of the costs directly related to the project. The authority may require documentation or other information establishing the actual costs incurred for a project. Failure to use the funds for reimbursement of the costs directly related to a project shall be grounds for default under the agreement required pursuant to this chapter.

b. For purposes of this subrule, “costs directly related” does not include ineligible expenses such as international travel, domestic travel outside the state of Iowa, insurance, training or professional development courses, and any other expenses specified as ineligible in the agreement required pursuant to this chapter.

[ARC 5093C, IAB 7/15/20, effective 8/19/20; ARC 6892C, IAB 2/22/23, effective 3/29/23]

261—29.4(88GA,SF608) Program eligibility, application scoring, and funding decisions.

29.4(1) Program eligibility. An applicant must meet the following eligibility criteria to qualify for financial assistance under this program:

- a. The applicant must meet the definition of “applicant” in rule 261—29.2(88GA,SF608).
- b. If the applicant is not a local government entity, the applicant must demonstrate support from the local government entity as evidenced by a letter of support.
- c. The applicant must serve a city that has a population of 20,000 or less and that is not contiguous to a city with a population of 40,000 or greater.
- d. The applicant must demonstrate the capacity for administering a grant.
- e. The applicant must provide a cash match of at least 50 cents for every dollar awarded as a grant under this program.
- f. The applicant must demonstrate that the project does not consist of ongoing expenses for existing projects or programs.

29.4(2) Application scoring criteria. All completed applications will be reviewed and scored. Each application will be scored using criteria set forth by the authority, which may include the following:

- a. Alignment with program purpose. The application should demonstrate that the project aligns with the program purpose by developing a nontraditional, concrete solution to increase rural community vibrancy.
- b. Innovation. The application should demonstrate that the project will address rural challenges through exceptional and creative solutions.
- c. Replicability. The application should demonstrate a clear opportunity for successful replication in rural communities across the state.
- d. Roles defined. The application should identify and describe the roles of all partners involved in the project.
- e. Project goals and timeline. The application should demonstrate clearly defined, measurable goals and a timeline for execution of the project.
- f. Project budget and financing. The application should include a complete budget that provides clear justification for all costs. The application should also demonstrate secured financing and that the cash match requirement has been met.
- g. Additional points. Extra consideration is provided to projects that have been endorsed by the Iowa great places citizens advisory board (additional five points added to score total), as well as those located in a community with a population of 5,000 or less.

29.4(3) Funding decisions. Funding decisions will be made using the following process:

- a. *Staff review.* Each application will be reviewed by staff for eligibility and completeness. Complete applications meeting all eligibility requirements will be sent to a grant committee.
- b. *Grant committee review and recommendation.* Following staff review, a grant committee will review and score applications using the criteria in subrule 29.4(2) and will make funding recommendations. The committee may utilize an outside technical panel if the committee determines additional expertise is necessary to review and score the application. The application and score will be referred to the director with a recommendation as to whether to fund the project and, if funding is recommended, a recommendation as to the amount of the grant.
- c. *Director’s decision.* The director will make the final funding decision on each application, taking into consideration the amount of available funding and the grant committee’s recommendation. The director may approve, deny, or defer funding for any application.

d. Notification. Each applicant will be notified in writing of the funding decision within 15 days of the director's decision.

[ARC 5093C, IAB 7/15/20, effective 8/19/20; ARC 6319C, IAB 5/18/22, effective 6/22/22; ARC 6892C, IAB 2/22/23, effective 3/29/23]

261—29.5(88GA,SF608) Agreement required.

29.5(1) Each applicant that is approved for financial assistance under the program shall enter into an agreement with the authority for the provision of such financial assistance. The agreement will establish the terms on which financial assistance is to be provided and may include any other terms reasonably necessary for the efficient administration of the program.

29.5(2) The authority and the applicant may amend the agreement at any time upon the mutual agreement of both the authority and the applicant.

29.5(3) The agreement may require an applicant that has been approved for financial assistance under the program to submit information reasonably required by the authority to make reports to the authority's board, the governor's office, or the general assembly.

[ARC 5093C, IAB 7/15/20, effective 8/19/20; ARC 6892C, IAB 2/22/23, effective 3/29/23]

These rules are intended to implement 2019 Iowa Acts, Senate File 608.

[Filed ARC 5093C (Notice ARC 4775C, IAB 11/20/19), IAB 7/15/20, effective 8/19/20]

[Filed ARC 6319C (Notice ARC 6202C, IAB 2/23/22), IAB 5/18/22, effective 6/22/22]

[Filed ARC 6892C (Notice ARC 6737C, IAB 12/14/22), IAB 2/22/23, effective 3/29/23]