
FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

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EMPOWER RURAL IOWA RURAL INNOVATION AND RURAL HOUSING ASSESSMENT GRANT PROGRAMS — FEBRUARY 2021

Program. On February 8, 2021, Governor Reynolds and the [Iowa Economic Development Authority](#) (IEDA) announced two competitive grant funding opportunities for rural communities of fewer than 20,000 in population. \$400,000 has been allocated to the following two programs:

- [Empower Rural Iowa Rural Innovation Grant Program](#) — Provides up to \$300,000 in grants supporting creative, non-traditional ideas that focus on current issues and challenges faced by rural communities associated with community investment, growth, and connection; and the
- Empower Rural Iowa [Rural Housing Assessment Grant Program](#) — Provides up to \$100,000 to support the use of publicly available online information through the “[Profile in Iowa](#)” tool and rural community efforts to interpret this hard data with supplemental information, as well as to implement changes through development codes, local ordinances, and housing incentives specific to their community needs in partnership with [Iowa State University Extension and Outreach](#).

Eligibility. The following are eligible for the Rural Innovation Grant Program:

- Iowa businesses, colleges and universities, city or county government, and private 501(c)3 nonprofit agencies and foundations.
- Applicants that are not a local government must include a letter of support from the mayor or a resolution from the city council.
- Projects/programs must exist in and benefit a community in Iowa with a population of 20,000 or fewer and not contiguous to a city with a population of 40,000 or greater.

The following are eligible for the Rural Housing Assessment Grant Program:

- Cities with a population of 20,000 or fewer and not contiguous to a city with a population of 40,000 or greater.
- Cities may submit an application that includes one or more partners and may apply on behalf of an entire county assessment if the county is one of the 88 least populous counties in Iowa.

Guidelines. Rural Innovation Grant Program proposals should align with the three focus areas of Empower Rural Iowa:

- **Growing Rural Iowa** — Supports community leaders as they think and act to inform and connect leaders to rural issues, grow community gathering places, and develop tools to train and educate leaders.
- **Investing in Rural Iowa** — Projects that develop creative development solutions, including but not limited to projects addressing rural housing solutions, infill and reuse strategies, and affordable, sustainable designs.
- **Connecting Rural Iowa** — Projects that improve and expand opportunities for Iowa's rural communities to utilize high-speed broadband service.

Rural Housing Assessment Grant Program proposals will allow communities to assess the current development environment and enact changes resulting in the creation of policies and procedures attractive to potential developers.

Funding. Rural Innovation Grant Program funding is based on annual availability. Grant amounts are a minimum of \$1,000 and a maximum of \$20,000. A minimum 1-to-1/2 cash match is required.

Rural Housing Assessment Grant Program funding is based on annual availability. Grant amounts are \$10,000 with a cash match of \$5,000.

Application Information. Applications are currently being accepted via iowagrants.gov and are due by April 16, 2021. Applications will be scored by a volunteer panel that will include the Governor's Empower Rural Iowa Initiative [Task Force](#) members and expert professionals. Successful applicants will be informed in June.

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