



CENTER FOR RURAL REVITALIZATION

The Center for Rural Revitalization, housed within the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA), is an outcome of the Governor's Empower Rural Iowa Initiative, formed by Governor Kim Reynolds through the signing of Executive Order 3 on July 18, 2018. The order created a partnership with the Iowa Rural Development Council (IRDC) and tasked the Lt. Governor and a representative from the IRDC with co-chairing the initiative. The executive order created three task forces: Investing in Rural Iowa, Growing Rural Iowa, and Connecting Rural Iowa. Over the years, the task forces addressed the following topics:

- Investing: rural housing shortage, derelict and dilapidated buildings, online business presence, business transition planning, and entrepreneurship
- Growing: leadership development, creating welcoming communities, and attracting and retaining residents or workers
- Connecting: financing broadband connectivity, leveraging connectivity, and remote worker readiness

On October 19, 2023, Governor Reynolds signed Executive Order 11 aimed at updating the Empower Rural Iowa (ERI) initiative. The new Executive Order followed the natural development of ERI through strategic changes to purpose, organization, and operations. Changes included a new focus on functioning as a startup incubator for innovative rural policy, allowing ERI to work with multiple stakeholders across the state to launch an innovative concept, learn from participants, initiate scaling efforts, and if successful, pass to another agency or organization to continue forward. Organizational changes included reducing the three task forces to one committee.

The Center for Rural Revitalization is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the ERI initiative, implementing ERI task force recommendations, acting as a liaison to rural communities, and helping small communities access programs that support rural areas.

FUNDING RESOURCES

Iowa United First Aid Grant

The program aims to leverage technology and volunteers to address challenges in rural emergency response. The mission is to provide immediate medical intervention during the critical window between the onset of an emergency and the arrival of traditional ambulance assistance. The program's trained volunteers decrease the response time and stabilize emergencies, while coordinating with traditional emergency assistance.

- Grant Award: \$50,000
- Eligible Applicants: local, county, or federally recognized tribal governments, for profit corporation or business, federally tax-exempt nonprofit agencies and foundations

Rural Innovation Grant

The program seeks to support creative ideas that address current issues and challenges faced by rural communities associated with the themes of community investment, growth, and connection. Innovation means to improve or to replace something, such as a process, a product, or a service. It is the concept of bringing creativity into implementation with a definitive outcome. This grant is designed to support the implementation stage of projects. Current awards assist rural entrepreneurs in strategically growing their businesses.

- Grant Award: \$5,000 - \$25,000
- Eligible Applicants: Iowa businesses

Rural Housing Needs Assessment Grant

The program seeks to support the use of publicly available online information and rural community efforts to interpret hard data, along with supplemental information, to implement changes through development codes, local ordinances and housing incentives specific to community needs. In partnership with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach's Rural Housing Readiness Assessment workshops, funding empowers communities to assess the current development environment and enact changes resulting in the creation of policies and procedures attractive to potential developers.

- Grant Award: \$20,000
- Eligible Applicants: unit of local, city or county governments, or federally recognized tribal governments physically located in Iowa



Rural Child Care Planning Grant

The program supports the use of data and analysis by rural communities to determine the specific needs and solutions for child care in their area. Many factors are analyzed to determine the feasibility for development of a childcare center, expansion of an existing one or support for in-home providers. Through greater understanding of their geographic market, demographics, competition, financials, and other factors, communities can take proactive steps towards addressing child care challenges. Funding empowers communities to assess their current child care environment and develop strategies.

- Grant Award: \$20,000
- Eligible Applicants: Iowa businesses, colleges and universities, city or county governments, federally tax-exempt nonprofit agencies, and foundations

BOOST Grant

Building Ownership and Organization by Strengthening Teams (BOOST) provides a team of experts to assist passionate community and business leaders with intentional plans for next step growth. This technical assistance program will dispatch a team of experts to meet with a local committee to tour the community and discuss existing conditions, assets, and anticipated needs. The team's recommendations are captured in a report which grantees use to create an action plan. The program provides targeted financial support for implementation of next steps.

- Grant Award: \$10,000
- Eligible Applicants: unit of local, county or federally recognized tribal government, federally tax-exempt nonprofit agencies and foundations

ELIGIBILITY

Funded projects must exist in and benefit a community in Iowa with a population of 20,000 or fewer and not sharing a common border with a city of a population of 40,000 or greater. If it is a countywide initiative, the project must be in one of the 88 least populous counties in Iowa. All grants require a 1:1/2 cash match.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

In addition to providing funding assistance for projects and initiatives across the state, the Center for Rural Revitalization also provides technical assistance to rural communities in a variety of ways. Examples include community visits for discussion on projects, challenges, and opportunities or conversations with a team of partners focused on a specific initiative for a community. Contact rural@iowaeda.com for additional information.

CONNECTED INITIATIVES

Leadership Exchange

In partnership with the IRDC, the annual Iowa Leadership Exchange is an educational event held to bolster existing rural leadership programs, support a statewide network of program leaders, and empower communities to grow local leaders. Communities or organizations interested in starting their own programs or fostering leadership development learn from statewide experts. The program provides training, mentorship, and sponsorship to rural communities and regions initiating leadership programs.

Rural Iowa AmeriCorps

The Rural Iowa AmeriCorps Program partners with local nonprofit or government organizations to provide AmeriCorps member support for community development and capacity building projects that encourage people to live, work, play, and engage in vibrant rural places. Each community finds unique solutions to enhance the quality of life for their residents and visitors. The Rural Iowa AmeriCorps program provides person power to support solutions to improve community health, retain local talent, attract new residents, and build a sense of place.

Iowa Center for Employee Ownership - Drake University Law School

ERI and IEDA are founding members of the Iowa Center for Employee Ownership (IA-CEO) Advisory Council, organized and staffed by Advance Iowa at the University of Northern Iowa. IA-CEO's mission is to support local business prosperity in Iowa by advocating for employee ownership to promote local economies, employee wealth creation, strong workforce, and vibrant communities. As part of this initiative, ERI has partnered with Drake University Law School's Entrepreneurial/Transactional Law Clinic to develop informational materials, training opportunities, and policy recommendations in support of IA-CEO's mission.