

NIACOG NEWS

Vol. 27 No. 5

NORTH IOWA AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Aug - Sept 2016

IOWA GOVERNMENT FINANCE INITIATIVE

IGFI is an ISU-sponsored outreach initiative to provide local governments in the state of Iowa with a host of services primarily aimed at making communities fiscally stable and promoting overall community and economic development. The educational outreach program is designed to provide an alternate perspective about the financial health and performance of Iowa cities and counties as well as provide an educational component targeted at elected officials and public employees. Using local government finance data, IGFI analyzes trends and financial performance of selected indicators on critical topics relating to local government finance and community and economic development. The activities and services will include:

I. Base financial condition and trend analysis

This service is available to all cities and counties in the state of Iowa. Using select socio-economic and financial indicators, IGFI provides an annual report on the current finance condition and trends for the state of Iowa. Basic financial reports are available at no cost for individual communities. Communities may also request a customized report containing additional data and analysis for a fee.

II. Advanced financial planning

IGFI provides advanced levels of analysis using city and county financial data. Communities can request a customized report containing additional indicators. In addition, ISU professionals will work closely with a community to organize brainstorming sessions to develop a plan of action for better financial management and integration.

III. Workshops

To complement the financial condition reports as well as provide an educational outreach, IGFI will conduct workshops annually on a range of topics relating to public finance, community and economic development.

IV. Research and Educational Resources

Conduct research on topics related to local government finance to provide Iowans with a better understanding of their government's role, function and performance. IGFI is building a resource center to cater to the needs of elected and appointed officials on a wide range of issues.

Why local government finance outreach?

- Financially viable communities
- Increased awareness and understanding of city and county finances
- Increase in public trust of local governments
- Greater accountability of local government officials
- Better understanding of government role and functions
- Increase in productive and allocative efficiency in managing public money
- Improved budgeting
- Better financial planning

If your community or county is interested in the IGFI, please contact Biswa Das, Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist at 515-294-7003 or by email at bdas@iastate.edu or Cindy Kendall, Extension Program Specialist at 515-290-1811 or by email at ckendall@iastate.edu.

NIACOG STAFF

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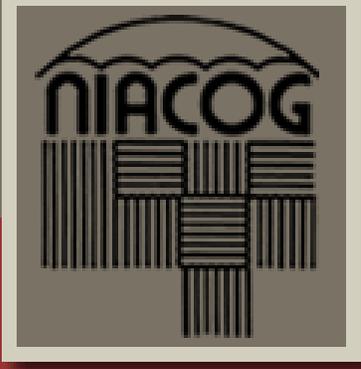
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WILDFIRE SUPPRESSION GRANTS AVAILABLE TO RURAL FIRE DEPARTMENTS



The Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant applications are due October 15, 2016.

The grant application package and the Wildland Fire Report form are available online at www.iowadnr.gov/fire.

For more information, contact Gail Kantak at gail.kantak@dnr.iowa.gov, 515-233-8067 or 515-233-1161.



EDA AWARDS PLANNING DOLLARS TO NIACOG



The U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) recently awarded NIACOG \$66,000 in planning funds. These funds will be utilized to implement an economic development scope of work including planning, transportation, community development and housing for the benefit of the agency's member cities and counties. Since many of the work programs are ongoing in nature, they have become part of the day to day operations of the agency. NIACOG remains a committed partner to the continued development of the economic well-being of the region by assisting cities, counties, chambers and economic development corporations increase economic opportunities and expand the region's economic base.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources forestry bureau, working in coordination with the US Forest Service has grant money available for Iowa's rural fire departments to help battle wildfires.

The grants offer funding assistance for wildfire suppression equipment, slide in units, hoses, nozzles, adapters, portable tanks and pumps, personal protective equipment and communications equipment. Additionally, if a fire department has a special need that can be tied directly to wildfire suppression, this grant allows for such special requests.

The grant provides 50 percent reimbursement for wildland fire equipment with a maximum reimbursement grant of \$3,500 per department.

Gail Kantak, DNR state wildland fire supervisor, reminds fire departments that they should send her a Wildland Fire Report whenever they respond to a wildland fire or provide assistance to a prescribed or controlled wildland fire. Departments actively returning these reports can receive priority points in the Volunteer Fire Assistance grant application scoring process.

"It is important for rural fire departments to return these reports so we can assess the actual demands on our rural fire departments as a result of wildfire activity," Kantak said. "The wildland fire reports are compiled locally and nationally and reported to Congress."

BUILDING EXPANSION UPDATE

The general contractor, King Construction, Inc., of Iowa Falls recently completed the parking lot relocation to the west side of the bus storage garage and has now begun demolishing the original employee parking lot. King Construction will be constructing a temporary wall to provide security to the building while the 6,500 s.f. building addition is being completed. Due to ongoing wet conditions in May and June, the project is approximately 2-weeks behind schedule, but will be completed for use before winter begins!





USDA-RURAL DEVELOPMENT'S COMMUNITY FACILITIES RE- LENDING PROGRAM

U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA-RD) is making funds available to community lending institutions that qualify as eligible lenders through a new program called the Community Facilities Relending Program. The program allows USDA-RD to make direct loans to community lending institutions who then re-loan the funds to eligible applicants to acquire, maintain, build, or renovate essential community facilities. The program targets community lending institutions working in high poverty and persistent poverty areas. Highlights of the Relending Program are:

- Up to \$500 million in fiscal year (FY) 2016 USDA Community Facilities funding is available
- Terms of up to 40 years
- Interest rate of approximately 2.75
- Re-lenders have up to 5 years to disburse funds obligated

Eligibility

- Legal authority to make and service community infrastructure and development loans
- Meet federal, state, and local requirements
- 30% of portfolio or 3 years of experience serving high poverty areas
- Agree to provide adequate collateral to support the loan request
- Provide Letter of Intent to obtain an Irrevocable Letter of Credit

Applications for the Community Facilities Relending Program must be submitted by **5:00 p.m. on Monday, August 8**. A letter of intent from a financial institution supporting the application must be submitted with the application. Bank of America is a participating guarantor in the USDA Community Facilities Program and can provide the letter of intent required. Decisions will be announced by September 30.

HOUSING Rehab Awards

In May of this year, the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) announced conditional awards through its CDBG Iowa Housing Fund for Program Year 2016. The CDBG Housing Fund, officially

known as the CDBG Residential Housing Sustainability Program, provides funding from the U.S. Department of HUD in orders to expand or retain the supply of decent and affordable housing for low and very low-income households in Iowa through single family owner-occupied rehabilitation programs.

Two cities in the NIACOG region were given conditional awards by the IEDA in order help fund such programs. The City of Fenton and the City of LuVerne both received conditional awards of \$234,790 for the rehabilitation of 6 homes in each city.



Late last month both the Cities of Fenton and LuVerne received their official award letters from the IEDA. NIACOG staff assisted both Cities in the preparation and submission of their 2016 Housing Fund applications, and continued to assist them in clearing CDBG contract conditions once their contingent awards were announced. This included completion of the environmental review process, as the request for release of funds was recently cleared for both Cities.

NIACOG will soon be starting technical services/onsite assistance for both Cities including the processing of applications, which are already on hand. As part of the application process last Fall, both Cities held full application intakes, in order to address the more stringent timeliness and readiness standards now required by HUD and the IEDA. All applications received in both Cities were processed/ranked by NIACOG at that time.

NIACOG will begin the updating process of the applications soon, and intends to start the contractor bid procurement process for the first 3 projects in each community before the end of the year. NIACOG looks forward to working with both Cities as they move forward in implementing their respective housing rehabilitation programs.

If your city is interested in pursuing a 2017 Grant, please contact Steve Wendt in the NIACOG Office. It is never too early to start planning for a successful application.

Calendar of Events

August

8th - NIACOG Executive Committee Mtg, NIACOG Office, 12:00 pm (Noon)

September

5th - Labor Day - Office Closed

12th - NIACOG Board Mtg., Benningan's Grill, Clear Lake, 7:00 pm

16th - City Clerk's Association Mtg., NIACOG Office, 9:30 am





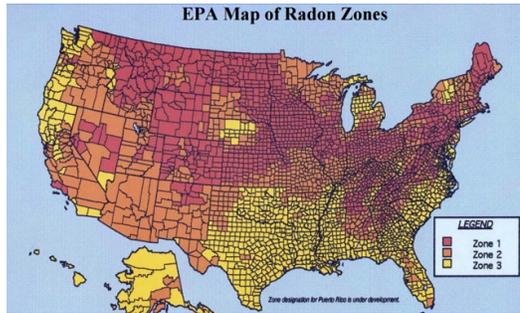
RADON Rn

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THE SILENT KILLER

Radon testing is now being required as part of federally funded housing rehabilitation projects in Iowa. And, in some future year HUD will likely begin requiring mitigation for homes with higher levels the gas. You may ask, “Why is HUD actively pursuing radon mitigation (reduction measures)?”

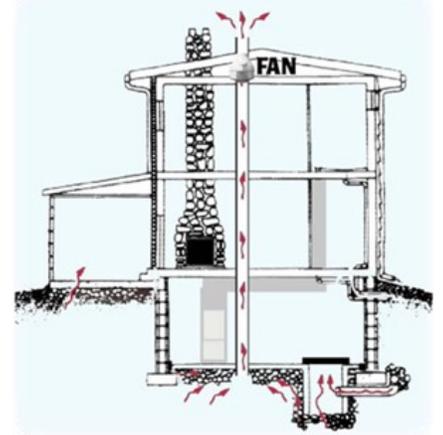
Radon gas has become an increasing health concern as EPA, which previously focused on exterior air quality, is now taking increasing interest in the quality of indoor air. Radon gas is the second most prevalent cause of lung cancer and is blamed for 22,000 lung cancer deaths that occurred nationwide last year.



EPA encourages every home to test for radon gas. Test kits are available in hardware stores, from some Public Health Departments, and from the American Lung Association.

Iowa has the largest concentration of radon gas in the country and is estimated to have had 400 deaths in 2015 due to radon gas. In other words, about 1 in 7,800 people are estimated to die in a given year from radon induced lung cancer. The number one cause of lung cancer deaths is smoking; deaths caused by smoking are about 1 in 400 deaths in Iowa (20 times more common than radon deaths). Lung cancer is the most deadly form of cancer.

As a colorless and odorless gas, radon is formed as a byproduct of the decay of radium (a rock found naturally in soils). The gas morphs into other chemical compounds that can be damaging to lungs. The radon gas enters homes generally through cracks in the basement floor/walls and naturally rises through the house.



Radon mitigation systems are designed to exhaust radon gas from below the foundation to some point above the roof line. The general concept is to create a cavity under the home of about 2-3 feet in diameter and then install a pipe that extends beyond the roof line; fans are often used to encourage faster flows and increase suction under the home to capture more of the gas. Mitigation systems are much cheaper if installed during new construction. Retrofitting systems into existing homes can cost up to \$3,500. Radon mitigation work requires the involvement of a firm that is licensed specifically to perform radon mitigation.

Fun Planning Facts

- *Hippodamus of Miletus, a Greek, is considered to be the formal inventor of city planning.*
- *The Greeks were the first to use solar architecture. They oriented their houses to make use of the sun during the winter, while obscuring its rays during the summer. Entire Greek cities were built this way.*

*Enjoy
Summertime!*

