

NIACOG NEWS

Vol. 26 No. 4

NORTH IOWA AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

June - July 2015

NIACOG STAFF

641.423.0491

Email— first letter of first name followed
by last name @niacog.org (i.e.
jmyhre@niacog.org)

Joe Myhre — Ext. 11
Executive Director

Kevin Kramer — Ext. 17
Transit Administrator

Jodi Wyborny — Ext. 10
Administrative Assistant

Chris Diggins — Ext. 15
Local Assistance Director

Steve Wendt — Ext. 13
Community Dev. Planner

Todd Hull — Ext. 24
Maintenance Supervisor

Teresa Collins — Ext. 22
Operations Manager

Kris Urdahl — Ext. 12
Fiscal Officer

Myrtle Nelson — Ext. 16
Senior Planner

Matt O'Brien — Ext. 14
Regional Planner

Laurel Clement — Ext. 27
Planner

Jennifer Butler — Ext. 18
Planner

Dana Heimbuch — Ext. 28
Comm. Dev. Planner

ADVANTAGES OF MIDDLE-SKILL JOBS

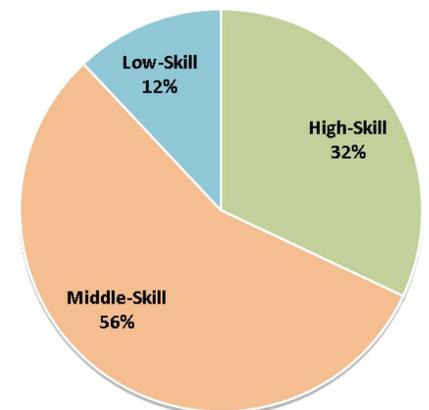
As Iowa's economy continues on a growth pattern, it is clear that there is a skills gap in our workforce. Recent statistics show that over 50 percent of Iowa's current job openings fall within the middle-skill range—jobs that require training beyond a high school education but not a four-year degree. However, only 33 percent of workers have the necessary skills to fill these jobs.

Consider this: for every *one* job that requires a master's or doctorate degree, there are *two* jobs that require a bachelor's degree, and *seven* jobs that require some type of short-term to two-year training or certification beyond the high school degree. Approximately two-thirds of high school graduates in this country will pursue a four-year degree right out of college. And yet half of college graduates are underemployed and burdened with student debt that they cannot afford to repay. The demand for workers in middle-skill jobs will continue to dominate our economy and the path to a post-high school credential is an option we need to present to more of our low-skill and emerging workforce.

In an effort to address this skills gap issue, Iowa launched a statewide initiative in 2012 called Skilled Iowa. A public/

private initiative between Iowa businesses, workforce, economic development and education, the program aims to shrink the gap, ensuring Iowa's workforce is aligned with the needs of employers.

Skilled Iowa utilizes the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC), a "real world" skills assessment that assists both job seekers and employers by analyzing an individual's problem-solving ability and critical thinking skills based on workplace scenarios. A bronze, silver, gold or platinum NCRC is issued by ACT depending on the participant's assessment scores. The NCRC helps employers make more informed decisions on new hires and reduce the impact of employee turnover and training time.





Iowa Workforce Development offers an online training program to help Iowans prepare for the assessments and improve skills after gaps are identified. Middle-skill training can also be gained through programs provided by apprenticeships, community colleges, career and technical education programs and employers. Apprenticeships offer a combination of classroom training and hands-on learning. The “earn while you learn” format benefits both the individual and the employer. A growing number of short-term training programs are offered through community colleges to help Iowans gain skills for in-demand occupations and quickly return to the workforce, such as welding, construction, machining and nursing assistant to name a few.

Iowa high schools are also integrating Skilled Iowa and NCRC with their career and college planning discussions



with students. The NCRC is being used to educate students on the type of employment opportunities in Iowa and the skill sets needed for those opportunities. The NCRC is an accompaniment to a high school diploma: the diploma a credential of academic preparation and the NCRC a credential of skill application. Together they prepare students to enter the world of work, continue their education/training or both.

To date, over 13,000 business locations across Iowa recognize and recommend this certificate for their current and prospective employees and almost 60,000 Iowans have earned the NCRC. There is no cost for veterans and Iowans to earn the credential, and the tool has proved to be beneficial for job seekers to demonstrate their potential to a prospective employer. For more information, visit www.skillediowa.org or contact IowaWORKS North Iowa at (641)422-1524 ext. 44529.

2015 IEDA/CDBG HOUSING REHABILITATION AWARDS

In April, the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) announced conditional awards



through its CDBG Iowa Housing Fund for Program Year 2015. 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. A single-family property occupied as the principal residence by a qualified homeowner is eligible for rehabilitation assistance. This includes single-family detached units, attached/townhouse (zero lot line) units, and condominium units. Manufactured homes are also eligible when the land and the home are both owned by the owner-occupant, when the home is installed on a permanent foundation, and when it is taxed as real property.

Two cities in the NIACOG region were given conditional awards by the IEDA in order to assist in the funding of owner-occupied housing rehabilitation programs. The City of Bancroft received a conditional award of \$296,720 for the rehabilitation of 8 homes, and the City of Leland received a conditional award of \$222,790 for the rehabilitation of 6 homes. NIACOG staff assisted both Cities in the preparation and submission of their applications to the 2015 Iowa Housing Fund. The final award letters and contracts will not be issued until the IEDA receives an official funding agreement from HUD. NIACOG is providing administrative assistance to both Cities in carrying out their rehabilitation programs. NIACOG staff looks forward to working with them.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June

NIACOG Executive Board Mtg.

8th @ 12:00 pm (Noon)

NIACOG Office

FLAG DAY

14th

1ST DAY OF SUMMER

21st

July

HOLIDAY

3rd

NIACOG Office Closed

HAZ-MAT Mtg.

8th @ 1:00 pm

NIACOG Office

Transportation Policy Brd. Mtg.

8th @ 2:30 pm

NIACOG Office

NIACOG Exec. Brd. Mtg.

13th @ 12:00 pm (Noon)

NIACOG Office

REGION 2 TRANSIT SYSTEM QUICK FACTS

- A fully loaded Region 2 Transit bus gets 94 passenger miles per gallon and takes approximately 15 cars off the street.
- The accumulated mileage of the Region 2 Transit System’s bus fleet is 9,077,916 miles or enough miles to circle the earth almost 365 times.

LIVING ROADWAY TRUST FUND

The Living Roadway Trust Fund (LRTF) grants are available for eligible Integrated



Roadside Vegetation Management (IRVM) activities and equipment. Applicants applying for funding are required to submit a digital file in PDF format of their current IRVM plan to the Iowa DOT LRTF Administrator prior to June 1, 2015 to be eligible for FY 2016 funding. Recommendations for awards of LRTF grant funds for projects will be based on the final project applications submitted. LRTF grant applications are available on the Iowa Living Roadway Trust Fund website at <http://www.iowadot.gov/lrtf/grants.html>. Please follow the instructions for completing applications and submit them to LRTF program staff no later than 4:00 pm June 1, 2015 to be considered for funding.

REAP FUNDS AVAILABLE

REAP stands for Resource Enhancement and Protection. It is a program in the State of Iowa that invests in, as its name implies, the enhancement and protection of the state's natural and cultural resources. Iowa is blessed with a diverse array of natural and cultural resources, and REAP is likewise diverse and far reaching. Depending on the individual programs, REAP provides money for projects through state agency budgets or in the form of grants. Several aspects of REAP also encourage private contributions that help accomplish program objectives. Funds are available to counties and cities.

Funds are available to counties for land easements or acquisition, capital improvements, stabilization and protection of resources, repair and upgrading of facilities, environmental education, and equipment. Expenditures are not allowed for single or multipurpose athletic fields, baseball or softball diamonds, tennis courts, golf courses, and other organized sport facili-

ties. Swimming pools and playground equipment are also ineligible.

Funds are available to cities through competitive grants. Three (3) city size categories and grant amount ceilings have been established to assure grants are distributed to all sizes of cities. These grants are 100%, so local matching funds are not required. This grant program is very competitive. Parkland expansion and multipurpose recreation developments are typical projects funded under this REAP program. The DNR administers the city grant program. City officials representing the Iowa Park and Recreation Association and League of Cities select which projects receive funding.

Applications are accepted once a year on August 15th at 4:30 pm. More information can be found at the links below.

<http://www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/REAP/REAPFundingatWork/CountyConservation.aspx>

<http://www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/REAP/REAPFundingatWork/CityParksOpenSpaces.aspx>

BRANCHING OUT

Through *Branching Out*, your community can work together with Alliant Energy and Trees Forever to fund and implement tree-planting projects.

Celebrating more than two decades of plantings, *Branching Out* encourages energy efficiency, environmental awareness, and community stewardship in Iowa.

To apply for a *Branching Out* grant, complete an application form and submit a site plan and proposal letter that addresses ten key areas (see proposal letter guidelines on the application). The process is competitive and preference is given to applicants that meet all guidelines. Deadlines and further information can be found at the link below.

<http://www.alliantenergy.com/CommunityInvolvement/CommunityOutreach/BranchingOut/index.htm>



REGION 2 TRANSIT SYSTEM QUICK FACTS CONTINUED

- Average accumulated mileage per vehicle: 109,373 (Federal useful life=120,000 miles)
- Average age of vehicles: 7 years (Federal useful life = 4 years)
- Last year the fleet traveled over 1.2 million miles or, to the moon and back 6 1/2 times.
- Region 2's service area is 4,482 square miles.
- There are 133,820 people in the Region and we provided 387,775 rides in FY2014 or, 2.9 rides per capita.
- FY2014 Average Cost Per Ride: \$7.44
- < Region 2 Transit System has 94 vehicles that range from 33 passenger to 9 passenger buses.
- The 14 contract providers for the Region 2 Transit System employ nearly 350 drivers and support staff.
- The State of Iowa has 35 designated transit systems. 16 Regions and 19 Urbans. Iowa provided over 22 million rides. Iowa's public transit systems employ over 2,200 Iowans.