

NIACOG NEWS

Vol. 28 No. 1

NORTH IOWA AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Mar. - Apr. 2017

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IOWA ASSOCIATION
OF COUNCILS OF GOVERNMENTS

We are pleased to announce the launch of our statewide association's new organization name and logo as part of a rebranding. The association name will now be known as the Iowa Association of Councils of Governments (ICOG) which represents the 17 council of governments across the State. This name more accurately reflects who the members of the association are – you will no longer need to say “we are the cogs” as you had to in the past when trying to explain who IARC (Iowa Association of Regional Councils) was.

With the new name, it was also time to create a new visual identity. The new ICOG logo is a visual representation of what ICOG does best – bring people together, create connections and solve problems. This is also reflected in the new mission statement: Building strong communities by bringing statewide leaders together to improve public sector services and solve regional issues.

The total impact of COG's has been significant statewide. In the last five years, Iowa COG's have created more than 2,600 jobs through small business loans; programmed more than \$453 million in federal transportation funds; rehabilitated over 2,900 homes, both renter and owner-occupied; financed more than 1,300 new homes; and secured more than \$226 million in funds for water and sewer infrastructure projects.

For more than forty years, COG's have been growing Iowa's communities, Iowa's businesses, Iowa's leaders, Iowa's regions and Iowa's future.

EMERGENCY FURNACE FUNDING AVAILABLE

Funding is now available for emergency furnace replacement projects in the NIACOG region for elderly and disabled households. As a secondary purpose, the program can also fund hot water heater replacement and handicapped ramps (\$2,200 maximum). The program is funded by the United Way of North Central Iowa.

Why did we create this program? NIACOG staff receive frequent calls from the elderly (especially widows) and disabled people who make desperate pleas for help saying that they are barely paying expenses. The elderly widows often explain their husband's pension dissolved when he died. Then they explain that an emergency has happened -their furnace quit working, their water heater quit working, or some other emergency (\$1,000 - \$2,500 repairs), and their life savings is already depleted. They are not eligible for a loan because their income is so low, and they desperately need help to resolve the emergency issue so that they can remain in their home. Although some of them consider selling their home, doing so would only pay for five to eight years' worth of rent. (Their homes are typically only worth \$30,000 to \$60,000, and fair market rents on the lower end are at \$600+ per month according to Elderbridge Agency On Aging). In addition, the elderly often want desperately to stay in their homes.

The frequency of the emergency repair requests in NIACOG's region is not surprising in light of the advanced age of housing in north central Iowa. In our region alone 21,009 homes (1 in 3) are over 77 years old, which means, that at least one-third of homes require a high degree of maintenance. When that figure is combined with a high level of elderly home owners (1 in 3) and a high level of elderly homeowners who also have low incomes (5,747), emergency repairs are more or less constantly needed by a group of people who simply cannot afford them. Additionally, 15,481 disabled homeowners

frequently struggle with low incomes as well; the median level of earnings for disabled individuals is only \$17,875. So, the need for these emergency repairs is great.

To be eligible for assistance the home must be located within the NIACOG region and be occupied by the owner (no rentals). The household's income must be no more than \$22,200 for a 1-person household, \$25,400 for a 2-person households, etc. The household must be elderly or disabled and be current on their mortgage (if they have a mortgage). Homeowner's insurance is also required.

The Home Repair Program pays for the full cost of the furnace. Repayment is not required unless the home is sold within 5 years.

The application for this program is available on-line at niacog.org/trustfund or by contacting the NIACOG office at 641-423-0491.

IOWA WALKING COLLEGE

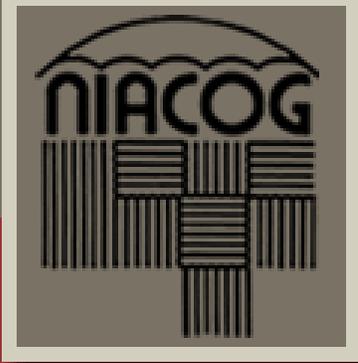
Are you looking for a way to make your community healthier, more vibrant or improve economic development? Consider attending the Iowa Walking College! This is an interactive in-person and online educational program for walkable community advocates.



The Iowa Walking College is modeled off of the national America Walks Walking College, and will take place in May-August 2017.

Fifteen fellowships will be awarded to Iowans to work as community change agents. Additional information about the Iowa Walking College and to complete an application is available at <http://www.iowahealthieststate.com/iowa-walking-college/>.

Applications will be accepted until March 10, 2017.



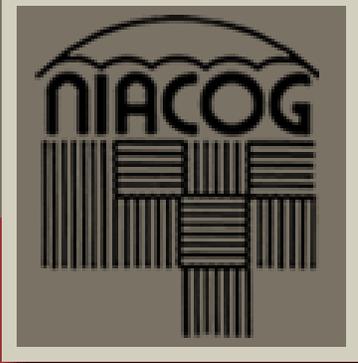
Calendar of Events

March

2nd/3rd 9th/10th	8:30 am	No RISC Safety Training @ NIACOG Office
12th	Daylight Savings Time Begins	
13th	7:00 pm	NIACOG Board Meeting @ Bennigan's in Clear Lake
20th	1st Day of Spring	
24th	9:30 am	City Clerk's Mtg, @ NIACOG Office
24th	10:00 am	Transportation Technical Committee @ NIACOG Office

April

10th	12:00 pm	NIACOG Exec- utive Board Meeting @ NI- ACOG Office
12th	1:00 pm	Haz-Mat Meet- ing @ NIACOG Office
12th	2:30 pm	Transportation Board Meeting @NIACOG Office
22nd	Earth Day	



FEDERAL HOME LOAN BANK - HIGHER FUNDING AVAILABLE

The Federal Home Loan Bank has increased its funding limit from \$500,000 to \$750,000 for the upcoming application round. In addition to that the program, as a whole, will have twice as much funding available in the coming round. The increase in funds causes a greater likelihood for any given project to receive funding. The program can fund both rental and owner-occupied projects for both new construction and rehabilitation. Because we are getting so many requests for rental housing assistance, the following details focus on the rental portion of the program.

Maximum Grant Amount: The maximum grant funds awarded per project by the program is \$750,000. The maximum subsidy per housing unit (apartment) is \$40,000; the lower the amount of FHLB funds per unit, the higher the project will score. Please note though that other funding sources can be used in conjunction with this program and do not affect scoring. In addition the debt coverage ratio is limited to no more than 1.40.

Non-profit Preference: Non-profit applicants are VERY much more likely to receive funding. It is somewhat unlikely that a for-profit owner will receive funding.

Renter Income Limits: At least 20% of units must have incomes below 50% of Area Median Income (AMI) and the percentage of additional persons under 50%, 60%, or 80% of median income improves scoring and the probability of receiving funds.

Retention Period: No repayment of the funds is required unless the housing unit

is sold or refinanced within 15 years; however, if the housing unit is sold, but continues to be subject to a deed restriction (under the new ownership) with the same rent limits and income limits, repayment is not required.

Point Boosters: The following is a list of ways to increase the likelihood that your project will be funded in the competitive application process.

1. Using land donated to the project by a 3rd party such as a city
2. Nonprofit or government entity ownership and governance of 51% or more of the project (almost a requirement)
3. Tenant association proposed with resident involvement in decision making
4. Percentage of units reserved for elderly or disabled tenants
5. Using vacant or abandoned properties

Market Study: A market study, completed within the past 18 months by an independent third party, is required to demonstrate that the project is likely to be financially successful. The study must determine: the absorption rate, capture rate, income targeting, rent levels, recommended vacancy rate, affordability, potential market demand (penetration and absorption), and impact on other housing. The study must be prepared at the applicant's cost prior to submitting the application.

Member Bank: The project must have the support of a member bank that will act as a sponsor for the project.

Not Federal Funding: Although the name suggests otherwise, the Federal Home Loan Bank is not a federal agency, and does not require environmental reviews.

Timing: Projects must be underway within 12 months of funding award. Applications are due June 30, 2017 with funding announcements made by December 2017. Inform Myrtle Nelson AS SOON AS POSSIBLE if you are interested in making application.



Advertising on the Region 2 Transit System is a great way for an organization to make sure it makes an impact within the community. By using transit advertising, the organization will be seen throughout the area and will be recognized.

Houck Transit Advertising is the exclusive advertising vendor for Region 2 in northern central Iowa. They are a 4th generation family owned business, that has been passionate about helping its clients grow by promoting their message with transit advertising for over 95 years. It is the mission of Houck Transit Advertising to work with organizations to increase awareness with high impact and effective transit advertising campaigns.

To learn more about advertising on the Region 2 Transit System, please call Dianna Samulson today at (651) 203 - 5068.

AVAILABLE TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

The Regional Planning Affiliation 2 (RPA 2), which is made up of the same counties as

NIACOG will soon be accepting applications for Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) and Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) funds for the Federal Fiscal years 2018-2021. STBG and TAP funds are federal funds through the Federal transportation program, **Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act)**.

Transportation Alternative Program funds or TAP Funds include the former Enhancement, Safe Routes to School and Scenic Byway Programs. If you have a SRTS question, feel free to contact Chris to further discuss potential projects.

In RPA 2, the focus is on adding mileage to the area trail systems. Under TAP funding, projects in the following categories are eligible.

- **Construction, planning, and design of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized forms of transportation**, including sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, pedestrian and bicycle signals, traffic calming techniques, lighting and other safety-related infrastructure, and transportation projects to achieve compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.
- **Construction, planning, and design of infrastructure-related projects and systems** that will provide safe routes for non-drivers, including children, older adults, and individuals with disabilities to access daily needs.

- **Conversion and use of abandoned railroad corridors** for trails for pedestrians, bicyclists, or other non-motorized transportation users.
- **Construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas.**
- **Inventory, control, or removal of outdoor advertising.**
- **Historic preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities.**

To see if a potential project may be eligible in the additional categories please contact Chris in the NIACOG office. The eligibility list is exclusive in that a project **MUST** fall into at least one of the categories, and **MUST** be transportation related. Projects must be sponsored by a local government entity, which will make a twenty-year commitment to maintain the project and provide, at least, the necessary 20% minimum local match for the project in addition to all engineering or architect costs. Projects must be constructed to federal specification. Approval of the project from RPA 2 is conditional upon approval from the Iowa Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration. In addition to the above, specific criteria to help determine application funding recommendations has also been developed. These criteria are important but are not the only factors in determining funding recommendations.

Applications will be available on the NIACOG website, www.niacog.org, or by calling Chris. **Applications are due in the NIACOG office by 12 o'clock (noon) on Thursday, March 30, 2017. E-mail applications are acceptable by the deadline. However, three (3), signed, full color copies of the full application must be submitted by the TAP Committee meeting at 10:30 AM, Thursday, April 6, 2017.** Questions about a potential project should also be addressed to Chris at (641) 423-0491 or by e-mail at cdiggins@niacog.org.



Happy
Spring!





HISTORIC PRESERVATION & CULTURAL & ENTERTAINMENT TAX CREDIT PROGRAM DISTRICT WORKSHOP

The Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA), in partnership with the Department of Cultural Affairs' (DCA) State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), administers the Historic Preservation and Cultural and Entertainment District (HPCED) Tax Credit program. The program provides state tax incentives for the sensitive rehabilitation of historic buildings. Through this program, underused or vacant schools, warehouses, factories, residences and other buildings throughout Iowa have been returned to useful life in a manner that maintains the historic character.

New administrative rules were enacted due to legislative changes, and the application and review process has been updated. IEDA will accept the next round of applications, referred to as a registration round, from April 10-24, 2017. Applicants can apply for registration online at <https://taxcredit.iowa.gov/> during these dates. An additional registration round is expected to be open in the fall of 2017.

An application workshop where interested parties can learn more about the HPCED program application process, review criteria and the new administrative rules has been scheduled for February 23, 2017, from 10 a.m. to noon at the State Historical Building Auditorium located at 600 E. Locust St. in Des Moines. The workshop will be jointly hosted by IEDA and DCA's SHPO.

To register, visit surveyMonkey.com/r/TaxCreditRegistrationWorkshop.

To learn more about the workshop, the HPCED program or the registration process, please contact Dan Hansen at IEDA at 515.725.3128 or daniel.hansen@iowaeda.com. Media inquiries should be directed to Tina Hoffman at 515.725.3150 or communications@iowaeda.com.

IOWA'S NEW WAY TO CONNECT

On Oct. 20, 2016 Iowans started to have a new online way to connect with other commuters who want to consolidate trips using a car pool or vanpool. IowaRideshare.org uses technology to connect people coming and going to the same location. Bicycle and walking buddies can also be matched using the secure website.



Iowa Rideshare is a service provided by the Iowa DOT and funded as part of the Federal Transit Administration's Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative.

Iowa Rideshare, designed by a company called RideShark, uses state-of-the-art mapping technology to search for possible commute matches. Matches are displayed on an interactive Google map, allowing you to email potential matches.

The database is searchable, and always changing as more users sign up. Because the service is new, finding a match might take a little time until more users are added to the database.

The selected driver is totally dependent upon the individual circumstances of those in your car pool. In some car pools, each car pool member takes turns driving their own vehicle, while in others there is only one driver.

For more information please contact Brent Paulsen at 515-239-1132 or brent.paulsen@dot.iowa.gov.

