

# NIACOG NEWS

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NORTH IOWA AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Dec. 2016 - Jan. 2017

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## Annual Urban Renewal Report and TIF Certifica- tion Due December 1

Cities with active urban renewal areas are reminded to complete and file the Annual Urban Renewal Report (AURR) by December 1. Tax Increment Finance (TIF) Indebtedness Certification forms must also be turned in by December 1. The AURR must be filed with the Iowa Department of Management (IDOM) while TIF Certification forms must be sent to the county auditor.



The AURR requires cities to report data for each urban renewal area in the city. This includes information on each project or activity in the area, urban renewal related bonds or loans and associated interest expenses, maps

of the area, amendments and more. Documents must be uploaded in PDF format using the IDOM website. In addition, the report must be approved by the city council prior to submittal. There are no publication requirements for the AURR like there are for the Annual Financial Report. Cities that fail to submit the report by the December 1 deadline will be included in a report to the legislature for non-compliance, and IDOM will withhold certification of tax levies.

TIF Indebtedness Certification forms report the amount of any loans, advances, indebtedness or bonds that qualify for payment from TIF revenue from a TIF district. This report is due to the county auditor by December 1, whenever the council has made changes to the TIF activity within the community. Forms can be accessed from the IDOM website. Preparing the report requires coordination with the county auditor to obtain the county's assigned numbers for each obligation, which are then used on the report.



## Housing Rehabilitation Update - Radon Testing & Mitigation



Beginning with the 2016 CDBG Owner-Occupied Housing Rehab awards, the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) is requiring that all homes undergoing CDBG rehabilitation assistance be tested for radon.

To date, NIACOG has completed the initial inspections on 5 homes in its region that have been selected for rehabilitation under the 2016 CDBG program. Pre-rehabilitation testing was initialized for these 5 homes at the time of the initial inspections. For all five tests, an activated charcoal (short-term) measurement kit was used.

In regards to 4 of the 5 homes, the radon test results showed a reading below the “safe” level as determined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (4 picocuries per liter, abbreviated as 4.0pCi/L). However, these four homes will still undergo post rehabilitation radon testing as the rehabilitation specifications call for further sealing of the homes, which may increase radon concentration levels. If the second tests indicate a reading above 4.0pCi/L, radon mitigation will

be considered. At this time radon mitigation is not required by IEDA if there are other repairs needed that are considered to be more important to protect the health and safety of the occupants. However, if the budgets allow, IEDA highly suggests that radon mitigation be completed. In the case of all 4 of these homes, the total estimated rehabilitation costs for more critical health/safety repairs are at levels where the budgets will not allow for the cost of radon mitigation. However, all four homeowners have been thoroughly educated concerning the dangers of radon. Therefore, they have been informed that if their second tests come back above the safe level, they should strongly consider radon mitigation on their own in the near future.

For the 5<sup>th</sup> homeowner where the initial (pre-rehabilitation) test showed a reading above the safe level, NIACOG is happy to report that the estimated budget for this project is such that radon mitigation can be completed. Therefore, radon mitigation has been entered into the project specifications.

NIACOG appreciates the good cooperation of all 5 homeowners in the implementation of the radon testing protocol on their homes and looks forward to working with future assisted homeowners in addressing radon safety.

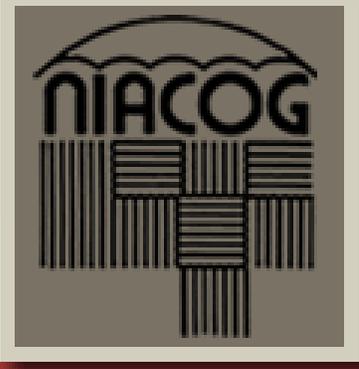
*SEASON'S GREETINGS*

*&*

*HAPPY HOLIDAYS*

*From all the NIACOG STAFF*





## Assistance to Firefighters Grant



# FEMA

The 2016 Assistance to Firefighters Grant application period ended on Nov. 18 of this year; however, your community's fire department can start planning now for the next round of funding (application period to be announced later by FEMA). Those who start developing and assembling a competitive grant application now will have an easier time dealing with the next application period.



The most important step is to ensure that your city or fire department has a valid DUNS number (<http://www.dnb.com/duns-number.html>) and SAM registration (<https://www.sam.gov/portal/SAM/#1>). SAM registration must be renewed annually. If this has not happened, your registration is not current. Additionally, all information in DUNS must match the information in SAM. This means that your organization's name, mailing address, and street address must be exactly the same for both registrations. If a grant application has been submitted under your organization's name and FEMA finds that the registrations do not

match, your application is automatically disqualified. FEMA will simply go to the next application with valid DUNS and SAM registrations without contacting you via phone calls or emails in order to make corrections.

Furthermore, it is important to figure out what exactly your fire department is going to apply for. Two of the most popular categories in AFG applications are personal protective equipment (PPE) and vehicles. FEMA will only consider funding replacement PPE that is a minimum of two NFPA cycles and 10 or more years old from the date they were manufactured. Also, when getting estimates for turnout gear, a complete set according to FEMA includes two hoods and two pairs of gloves. In order to help make your grant application competitive, it is very beneficial to describe how attempts at attracting donations and organizing fundraisers have not succeeded in covering the costs of necessary items for your fire department.

For vehicles, make sure enough local funds are available to cover the local match. A city/fire department cannot take out a loan to cover it under the AFG. Local match for the grant funding is 5% for jurisdictions of 20,000 residents or fewer and 10% for jurisdictions over 20,000 residents.

If you have any concerns or want a complete list of required information for a grant application, contact Matt O'Brien at the NIACOG office.

## Calendar of Events

### December

- 7th - Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, Flags fly at half staff
- 12th - NIACOG Executive Committee Meeting, NIACOG Office, 12:00 pm
- 26th - Christmas Day – Holiday NIACOG Office Closed

### January

- 2nd - New Year's Day - Holiday NIACOG Office Closed
- 9th - NIACOG Board of Director's Meeting Bennigan's Grill, Clear Lake, 7:00 pm
- 11th - Haz-Mat Meeting NIACOG Office, 1:00 pm
- 11th - Transportation Policy Board Meeting, NIACOG Office, 2:30 pm
- 20th - North Iowa City Clerk's Meeting, NIACOG Office, 9:30 am



## **Congratulations Nora Springs on Your CAT Award**

The City of Nora Springs and a very dedicated Park and Recreation Board had long sought a pedestrian bridge to connect two parks on either side of the Shell Rock River in Nora Springs. The project not only connects the parks and allows for obvious recreation benefits, but it also provides a much safer route for students to walk to school from the West and Southwest side of town.

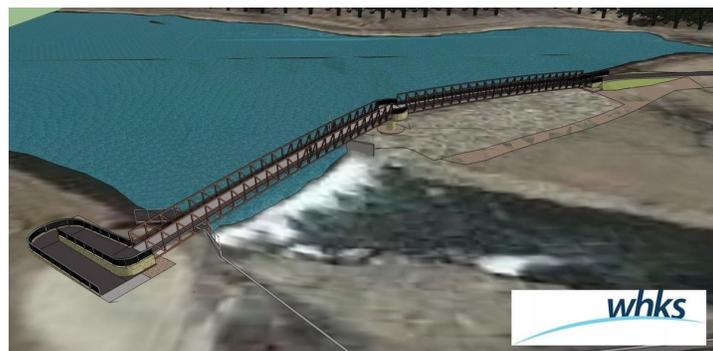
The Park and Rec Board approached the Adams Foundation about the possibility of the foundation providing some funding for the project. The Foundation Board did not say no, but directed the Park and Rec Board to begin raising funds before the Adams Foundation would make a contribution to determine the support, as well as feasibility of the project.

The Park and Rec Board applied for and received a Resource and Enhancement Program (REAP) grant award to start the fundraising process and were able to use some of those funds to develop concept plans, cost estimates and determine the feasibility of the project. Armed with this

information the Park and Rec Board continued fundraising and saw more success with other grant and local foundation awards as well as donations and gifts from the public, businesses and other groups in Nora Springs.

With this information, the Adams Family Foundation generously provided a very large gift to the project which was enough to push the application over the threshold to be able to apply for a Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) funding with assistance from NIACOG. During this time, a Wellmark Grant was also awarded to the project which lessened the needed funds from the CAT Committee. While the City applied for just over \$281,000, it was awarded just over \$192,000 which closed the fundraising gap completely and the project will now proceed to final design and bid letting.

Congratulation to the City of Nora Springs for financially supporting and sponsoring the application and the dedicated volunteers you have in the community, and especially the Adams Family Foundation without which this project would be much harder to undertake.



## **FUN FESTIVE FACTS**

- Each year more than 3 billion Christmas cards are sent in the U.S. alone.
- All the gifts in the Twelve Days of Christmas would equal 364 gifts.
- Christmas purchases account for 1/6 of all retail sales in the U.S.
- During the Christmas season, nearly 28 sets of LEGO are sold every second.
- Approximately 30-35 million real (living) Christmas trees are sold each year in the U.S.
- According to the Guinness world records, the tallest Christmas tree ever cut was a 221-foot Douglas fir that was displayed in 1950 at the Northgate Shopping Center in Seattle, Washington.
- Christmas trees usually grow for about 15 years before they are sold.



## USDA Community Facility Loan Program

The USDA Rural Development Community Facility program still has low-interest fixed rate loan funding available for fiscal year 2016. Last year, this program was underutilized across the nation and we want you and your organization aware of the substantial funding available in the program.

Through the Community Facility program, USDA can loan to public bodies or non-profit organizations in rural communities with less than 20,000 residents. Eligible projects include hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living, and clinics for example. Public service and public safety facilities and equipment are also eligible including educational facilities, pre-schools, childcare, fire stations, emergency buildings, community centers, fire trucks, rescue vehicles and jaws-of-life equipment.



USDA has worked with a newer concept recently, something they term acquisition financing, where a non-profit organization purchases the real estate from an existing or-

ganization. The new real estate non-profit would have an agreement with the existing organization to operate the facilities and the existing organization would guarantee the payments and pay the non-profit an amount to make the payments.

USDA has other housing and business programs that offer financing for additional types of projects. Two programs with significant funding are the Rural Energy for American guarantee loan program and the home repair and rehabilitation program to remove health and safety concerns in owner-occupied homes. Household income cannot exceed 50% of the MHI (approximately \$22,650 for a 2-person household) and the family must have repayment ability (could be about \$10 per month for a \$2,000 loan and reasonable credit history).

For more information about USDA programs, please visit the USDA website at [www.rd.usda.gov/ia](http://www.rd.usda.gov/ia) or call your USDA Rural Development office (<http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=ia>). USDA is an equal opportunity lender and provider.

*BEST WISHES  
FOR A  
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