

July 2020

East Central Iowa Council of Governments

ecicog.org

Newsletter

[ECICOG Awarded \\$4.675 Million for Revolving Loan Program](#)

ECICOG was awarded \$4.675 for the revolving business loan fund as part of the Economic Development Administration's (EDA) CARES Act Recovery Assistance. This award will effectively double the size of the revolving loan program and allow ECICOG to provide more financing assistance to businesses as they navigate the unique challenges and opportunities presented by COVID-19. Additional details will announced after new lending guidelines are approved. [Contact Robyn Jacobson for more information about any of ECICOG's loan programs.](#)

[University Heights Serves as Pilot for New Goal Setting Program](#)

ECICOG was excited to facilitate a city council goal-setting session for the city of University Heights in June. While originally planned as an in-person event, the session was adapted to a virtual environment. During the 3-hour session, council members discussed community assets, opportunities and threats, as well as current projects and future goals. We want to thank University Heights for helping us to test-drive this new program!

[Contact Executive Director Karen Kurt for more information about goal setting.](#)

"While what you provided is such a simple idea/process, the clarity is phenomenal. Thank you so much for your expertise inspiring this." -University Heights Council Member

[ECICOG Delivers Virtual Summer Reading Program](#)

The first week of July marked the kick off of ECICOG's Virtual Summer Reading Program. We've made this big change to our program in light of COVID-19 to prevent further community spread. Starting July 9th, we'll be posting a new virtual reading program each Thursday in July. All the programs will be available indefinitely so you can watch multiple times, share with friends, or view at a more convenient time. These videos are a great summer educational tool for school age children! This program is part of the environmental education outreach ECICOG provides for Benton County Landfill, Iowa County Landfill, Jones County Transfer Station and Tama County Landfill. [More information about the Summer Reading Program.](#)

[Watershed Planning Work Expands](#)

ECICOG is a leader in the state of Iowa when it comes to watershed planning and securing grant funding for watershed improvement projects. This summer our work is expanding to the Lower Cedar River watershed, which includes the counties of Linn, Jones, Johnson, Cedar, Muscatine, Scott and Louisa. ECICOG is partnering with FYRA Engineering to complete the Lower Cedar Watershed Management Plan. Once the plan is completed, the Lower Cedar Watershed Management Authority will be eligible for state and federal grants to improve water quality and mitigate flood risk. Watch for more news on conservation projects being built in the Middle Cedar, English River and Clear Creek watersheds in future newsletters! [Contact Environmental Services Director Jen Fencil for more on watershed planning.](#)

[Transportation Funding Impacted by COVID-19](#)

In mid-June, cities and counties received their monthly allocation of Road Use Tax Funds (RUTF). These allocations were smaller than those received in previous months. Although a portion of the variation in allocations was not related to COVID-19, Iowa Department of Transportation has estimated that approximately 20 percent of the decrease is COVID-19 related. RUTF revenues are derived from state fuel tax receipts, vehicles registration renewals, and new car registrations. Iowa DOT has projected that between June-October, allocations will continue to be about 20 percent lower than normal. They are estimating about a 10 percent reduction between November 2020 and June 2021.

There continues to be a lot of discussion in Washington, D.C. of federal backfill for lost state transportation revenues; however, it does not appear to be a priority for immediate action. There is also discussion about significantly increasing highway funding through the federal surface transportation program. If enacted, the additional funds might help to offset reductions in state revenues. Federal stimulus funding, if approved, could also provide additional funding for transportation projects. [Contact Transportation Director Mary Rump for more information on transportation funding.](#)

Funding Opportunities

[REAP - City Parks & Open Spaces](#)

Due: August 15

These grants are 100%, so local matching funds are not required. This grant program is very competitive. Funds are not available for single or multipurpose athletic fields, baseball or softball diamonds, tennis courts, golf courses, and other organized sport facilities. Swimming pools and playground equipment are also ineligible. Parkland expansion and multi-purpose recreation developments are typical projects funded under this REAP program. The DNR administers the city grant program. [Click here for more information.](#)

[REAP - Conservation Education Program](#)

Due: August 20

The conservation education program shall serve Iowa citizens by providing effective curricula, program materials and educator stipends to increase environmental awareness and understanding of stewardship, and enhance natural resources. Applications may be submitted by institutions of higher learning, government agencies, including local school districts, nonpublic schools, area education agencies, organizations, and individuals with an Iowa residence. [Click here for more information.](#)

[Traffic Safety Improvement Program](#)

Due: August 15

This program is to distribute funds for roadway safety improvements, traffic control devices, research, studies or public information initiatives. Applications are reviewed by an internal/external committee of representatives from cities, counties and the Iowa DOT. Recommendations are then made to the Iowa Transportation Commission, which then approves funding of specific projects. [Click here for more information.](#)

[More Funding Opportunities](#)

[Iowa's Downtown Rebound Webinar Series](#)

IEDA is sponsoring the webinar series Iowa's Downtown Rebound July 28th-29th. With five breakout sessions and a keynote on COVID recovery, the series is hosted live on Teams, there is no need to pre-register for the sessions you plan to attend. [More about the series.](#)

[Iowa Virtual Rural Development Summit](#)

The Iowa Rural Development Council is hosting their Rural Development Summit virtually this year on August 21st and 22nd. The Summit will feature several breakout sessions and the keynote *Visualize or Fossilize Your Community! A New Decade to Make Good Happen.* [More about the summit.](#)