

# January 2021

## East Central Iowa Council of Governments

[ecicog.org](http://ecicog.org)

### Newsletter

#### [ECICOG Partners with Other Non-Profits to Help Homeowners Following Derecho](#)

ECICOG and Housing Fund for Linn County, along with area non-profits, are working to assist low to moderate income homeowners with needed repairs following the August derecho. A new program called Providing Assistance to Community Homeowners (PATCH) was launched in November, to provide financial assistance and construction management support. Thanks to funding from the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation and United Way of East Central Iowa, ECICOG has hired a full-time staff member to verify eligibility and provide case management services for the program. Other area non-profits involved in PATCH include Neighborhood Finance Corporation, Linn County, Matthew 25, City of Marion, City of Cedar Rapids, Cedar Valley Habitat for Humanity, Cedar Rapids Bank & Trust, Waypoint, and HACAP. In addition, 4,450 bundles of GAF shingles donated by Good360 were delivered to the ECICOG region. ECICOG was enlisted to help with storage and distribution, and partnered with long-time partner Matthew 25 to do so. Matthew 25 came to an agreement with Gazette Communications for reduced-cost use of their warehouse space. The first home received their shingles on December 16, 2020. The donated shingles will cover an estimated 100 homes. Pictured: Tracey Achenbach, Housing & Community Development Director and Paula Mitchell, Planner/Grant Specialist with the first homeowners to receive shingles. For more information about our recovery efforts, contact Housing Recovery Specialist Nicole Wise at [nicole.wise@ecicog.org](mailto:nicole.wise@ecicog.org).

#### [ECICOG Submits Application for first "Homes for Iowa" Project](#)

ECICOG assisted AM Management with the region's first application for a Homes for Iowa house. Through the Homes for Iowa program, inmates at the Newton Correction Facility are trained in construction trades while constructing affordable homes. Once sold, the homes are transported to locations throughout the state. AM Management's house will be located in Iowa City and is scheduled to arrive in May. AM Management anticipates applying for four additional homes this year. Iowa's Council of Governments helped to create the Homes for Iowa program and assists communities and developers with placing homes. Visit [homesforia.com](http://homesforia.com) to learn more about the program. Contact Housing and Community Development Director Tracey Achenbach at [tracey.achenbach@ecicog.org](mailto:tracey.achenbach@ecicog.org) for more information.

## Rural Recovery Challenge Funds Still Available

ECICOG is seeking proposals from communities and economic development organizations to support rural economic recovery and resilience following COVID-19. Up to \$5,000 is available to implement proposals from selected organizations. Interested parties are asked to include an overview of their project, goals of the project, how the project positively impacts our rural communities, and how the project ties back to economic recovery and resiliency in their proposal. Three challenge projects are already underway:

- Daycare study with partner Jones County Economic Development
- Web-based virtual tours with partner Jones County Economic Development
- Marketing and outreach to recruit immigrant farmers and identify product markets with partners Linn County and Feed Iowa First

Additional information about the challenge and submission instructions are provided on our website at [www.ecicog.org/economic-development](http://www.ecicog.org/economic-development). The \$25,000 challenge is being funded through the CARES Act and EDA. Applications will be evaluated on a rolling basis until all funds have been committed. Contact Economic Development Specialist Adam Bentley at [adam.bentley@ecicog.org](mailto:adam.bentley@ecicog.org) for more information.

## Introducing talkto.ECICOG.org - A New Way to Gather Public Input

Did you know that ECICOG now has a virtual platform for gathering feedback? [Talkto.ECICOG.org](http://Talkto.ECICOG.org) was launched in December of 2020 to allow stakeholders to provide input without attending a meeting in person. The web-based software will assist with ECICOG's planning efforts but is also available to local communities looking for new ways to engage the public. Features include idea boards, survey tools, and map-based information gathering. For more information, contact Communications Specialist Brittany Rempe at [brittany.rempe@ecicog.org](mailto:brittany.rempe@ecicog.org).

## Take the Regional Passenger Transportation Survey!

ECICOG is starting work on the region's five-year Passenger Transportation Plan. Passenger transportation can include public transit, taxi/transportation network (Uber & Lyft), volunteer driving programs, and non-emergency medical transportation. ECICOG is seeking input from residents of our region, whether they are currently using passenger transportation or not. Input from regional transportation agencies and providers is also needed. Surveys are available at ECICOG's new public engagement online platform, <https://talkto.ecicog.org/ptp> until Feb. 1, 2021. Responses are fully confidential and appreciated. We are also grateful for shares on social media. For more information, contact Transit Administrator/Planner Brock Grenis at [brock.grenis@ecicog.org](mailto:brock.grenis@ecicog.org). A shareable post can be found on our [Facebook page](#).

## Can ECICOG Help with Your 2021 Goals?

Our organization was jointly created by Benton, Johnson Jones, Iowa, Linn, and Washington counties to assist rural communities with technical planning expertise. Need some help with goal setting for the new year? We can help. Are you looking at long term land use planning? We love doing comprehensive planning in our region. The more we know about your community, the better prepared we are to identify grant opportunities for you! Speaking of grants, are there grants you want to pursue but you aren't sure how to go about it? Our staff specializes in writing and administering grants. Is your city code out of date? We can help with drafting ordinances or codification. Are you simply short-staffed relative what you want to accomplish? You may want to consider ECICOG for contract planning, building inspection or code enforcement services. Tell us how we can help! Contact Housing and Community Development Director Tracey Achenbach at [tracey.achenbach@ecicog.org](mailto:tracey.achenbach@ecicog.org) for more information.

# Funding Opportunities

## Rural Heritage Revitalization Grant

*Due: February 1*

Properties on the historical register or listed as a national historic landmark may be eligible for Iowa's Rural Heritage Grants. Grant awards will be between \$75,000 and \$125,000. Local governments or non-profits with 501(c)3 status are eligible to apply. Properties must be located in an area of 50,000 or fewer residents. The deadline to apply is February 1, 2021. [More information can be found here](#). Contact Economic Development Specialist Adam Bentley at [adam.bentley@ecicog.org](mailto:adam.bentley@ecicog.org) for assistance.

## Wellmark MATCH Grant

*Due: February 17*

The Wellmark Foundation offers two competitive Matching Assets to Community Health (MATCH) grant opportunities in 2021. The MATCH grants are designed to support projects that provide access to healthy foods or create or enhance a safe environment to be physically active in. These grants also require a matching component in the form of cash or in-kind support. The 2021 Large MATCH grant application is now available. Large MATCH grant awards are up to a maximum request amount of \$100,000 for projects that will be successfully completed by December 2023. To view the MATCH Grant Request for Applications and to view previous Wellmark Foundation MATCH grant recipients, visit [Wellmark.com/Foundation](http://Wellmark.com/Foundation). Contact Transportation Director Mary Rump at [mary.rump@ecicog.org](mailto:mary.rump@ecicog.org) for assistance.

## Derelict Building Grant Program

*Due February 26*

The Derelict Building Program through the Iowa DNR is available for Iowa towns of 5,000 or fewer residents. The program will address neglected commercial or public structures that have sat vacant for at least six months. The Program has two primary focuses: landfill diversion through the recycling and reuse of building materials, and the elimination of hazards posed by empty structures. The application deadline is Friday, February 26, 2021 for applicants seeking: funding assistance with asbestos inspections, asbestos abatement, structural engineering analysis, site assessments, building deconstruction, and building renovation expenses. [Learn more here](#). Contact Environmental Services Director Jennifer Fencil at [jennifer.fencil@ecicog.org](mailto:jennifer.fencil@ecicog.org) for assistance.

## Paint Iowa Beautiful Grant

*Due February 15*

Keep Iowa Beautiful and Diamond Vogel Paint are announcing the 2021 Paint Iowa Beautiful program. The program provides free paint to a wide variety of community projects throughout Iowa. The online grant application is now open to Iowans and can be completed and submitted by February 15, 2021. Learn more at the [Keep Iowa Beautiful website](#).

## Assistance to Firefighters Grant

*Due February 12*

The AFG program provides competitive grants to fire departments and nonaffiliated EMS organizations to improve the effectiveness of firefighting operations, firefighter health and safety programs, and to establish or expand fire prevention programs throughout the U.S. More than \$319 million has been designated for the AFG program during this current funding cycle. Visit the [FEMA website](#) for more information.