

March 2022

East Central Iowa Council of Governments

ecicog.org

Newsletter

[VanPool Webinar to be Held Wednesday, March 16](#)

ECICOG is hosting a webinar on Wednesday March 16 at 1 pm about the CorridorRides VanPool program. Vehicles are provided through Commute with Enterprise, and commuters can ride together a reduced rate. With attracting and retaining workforce a common regional challenge, the VanPool program can help employers appeal to a wider workforce and ensure employees have reliable transportation to work. Webinar attendees will hear details about an opportunity for new groups to try two months of vanpooling for free! [Register for the webinar here](#). Contact Brock Grenis at brock.grenis@ecicog.org with questions about the webinar or VanPool program.

[0% Interest Rate for Business Loans Ends Soon - Apply Now!](#)

Are you starting a new business? Was your business negatively impacted by COVID-19? Are you looking to expand? The ECICOG's Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) is intended to support these exact situations. And for a limited time, ECICOG's RLF loans have a 0% interest rate for the first two years! Business owners in Benton, Iowa, Johnson, Jones, Linn, and Washington Counties should apply soon, before this opportunity runs out. Visit ecicogrlf.org or contact Robyn Jacobson at robyn.jacobson@ecicog.org to learn how to apply!

[Future Summit is a Success!](#)

The Envision East Central Iowa planning process is nearly complete! The Future Summit, the final public input event, was held on March 1. Thank you to the nearly 100 regional stakeholders who attended and contributed to the region's economic development strategy. They reviewed big picture data, regional demographics, and survey results, which led to a presentation of seven strategic pillars and associated action steps. Attendees performed an exercise to prioritize and take accountability for pillars and action steps. Over the next few weeks, we will be incorporating that data into the final plan, after which we will start to mobilize action teams! You can find the presentation from the Future Summit, as well as keep updated with Envision East Central, at talkto.ecicog.org/eeci. Contact Adam Bentley at adam.bentley@ecicog.org with questions or comments.

[First Annual ARPA Report Due April 30](#)

Cities that were allocated less than \$10 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds are required to submit their first annual Project and Expenditure Report online to the Department of Treasury by April 30, 2022. Reporting will include details on projects, obligations and expenditures, project status as well as information on any subawards, grants or transfers. City staff should be prepared to provide their signed award, signed assurance of compliance with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, and a copy of the budget documents submitted to the State as part of the request for funding. Visit the Department of the Treasury's [Recipient Compliance and Reporting Responsibilities](#) page for additional information. ECICOG staff can complete ARPA reports for communities as a fee-based service. Contact Community Development Specialist Tom Gruis at tom.gruis@ecicog.org for more information or with ARPA questions.

[\\$56 Million in CDBG Funds Allocated for Derecho Disaster Recovery](#)

The Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) is receiving \$56 million in Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Derecho Disaster Funds from the federal government. Because Linn County was determined to be the most impacted by the derecho, 80% of the funds are dedicated to its communities. Projects in Benton County are also possible to qualify, although for a smaller portion. As of this writing, ECICOG and the IEDA are scheduling meetings with communities in Linn County to gather input for the state's action plan. Once the action plan is approved, likely in August or September, grant opportunities using the funds will be announced. ECICOG anticipates that a significant portion of the funding will be dedicated to housing projects. Contact Housing & Community Development Director Tracey Achenbach at tracey.achenbach@ecicog.org for more information.

[Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill Guide](#)

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) was signed into law on November 15, 2021. It provides a nationwide investment of nearly \$1 trillion in transportation, water, broadband, and power infrastructure as well as resilience investments. BIL also provides for continuation of the FAST Act, which increases funding allocations to states for core transportation programs by about 30%. These increases will include the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) and Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), meaning more funds will be allocated for local projects through the Regional Planning Affiliation. BIL also provides for new transportation programs, including:

- **Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program:** grants to increase connectivity, improve safety and reliability, generate regional economic growth, and improve quality of life
- **Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation (PROTECT):** infrastructure resilience improvement projects that address vulnerability to extreme weather and natural disasters
- **Healthy Streets Program:** provide for the elimination of railroad crossings and development of environmentally sustainable infrastructure
- **National Electric Vehicle Formula Program:** provides funding for electric vehicle charging infrastructure

The White House has released an infrastructure law guidebook and a webinar series at www.build.gov to provide additional information. Over the coming months, the Iowa DOT will be discussing how to allocate the funds statewide. For additional questions, contact Mary Rump at mary.rump@ecicog.org.

[Thank you ECICOG Board!](#)

ECICOG is governed by a Board of Directors with representatives from each county of our region. Comprised of elected officials and other stakeholders, the board keeps us true to our mission of serving our communities and bettering our region. We are grateful for the contributions of the following Board members who stepped down in 2021:

- Bethany Sarazin (City of Alburnett)
- Brent Hinson (City of Washington)
- Louise From (City of University Heights)
- Lauren Whitehead (City of Solon)

We would like to welcome the following new board members:

- Eric Van Kerckhove (City of Palo)
- Deanna McCusker (City of Washington)
- Dave Wageman (City of Lone Tree)
- Laura Bergus (City of Iowa City)

Funding Opportunities

T-Mobile Hometown Grants

Opens in January, applications due March 31

T-Mobile is committing up to \$25 million over the next 5 years to support small towns across America by funding community projects. The T-Mobile Hometown Grants program will help fund projects to build, rebuild, or refresh community spaces that help foster local connections in your town. For example, this might include the town square pavilion, a historic building, an outdoor park, a ball field, or a library-- every town has places where friends and neighbors connect. Visit the [T-Mobile website](#) to learn more.

CDBG - Water and Sewer

Due April 1

The goal of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) is to provide economic opportunities for people, especially those of low- and moderate income. The annual Water & Sewer program assists cities and counties with projects such as improvements to sanitary sewer systems and water systems, water and wastewater treatment facility projects, storm sewer projects, and rural water connections. Visit [the Iowa Economic Development Authority \(IEDA\)](#) website for more details on fund amounts and qualifications, or contact Environmental Services Director Jennifer Fencl at jennifer.fencl@ecicog.org.

Iowa Great Places

Due May 2

The Iowa Great Places grant seeks to cultivate Iowa neighborhoods' local character and authentic qualities. At its core, the program embraces "creative placemaking" – building upon local assets to build more vibrant public spaces. The program provides a ten-year designation as an Iowa Great Place and additional resources. Nonprofits and communities are eligible to apply, with more detail on the [Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs website](#).

Art Project Grant

Due May 2

Apply for funding to support the creation and presentation of new artwork, development of an arts experience or formation of an arts education program. Art Project Grants support arts activities that are accessible to Iowans and positively impact the vitality of the arts in Iowa. Funding can be used to create and/or present new artwork, develop an arts experience, or form an arts education program. Iowa artists, nonprofits, and local governments are eligible to apply for up to \$10,000! Visit the [Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs website](#) for more information.

Creative Places Project Grant

Due May 2

The Creative Places Project Grant funds arts and cultural projects. The goal is to advance creative placemaking as a workforce or tourism strategy. Iowa nonprofits and communities are eligible to apply for up to \$2,500 for small projects that engage artists, creative workers, or cultural organizations. Learn how to apply on the [Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs website](#).

[REAP - Conservation and Education](#)

Due May 16

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) aims to inspire people to connect with their natural resources. The Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) Conservation Education Program is the funding mechanism for the IDNR to support educational programs. Visit [the REAP website](#) for more information or contact Environmental Services Director Jennifer Fencil at jennifer.fencil@ecicog.org.

[Iowa Living Roadway Trust Fund](#)

Due June 1

Working through many partners in Iowa, the Living Roadway Trust Fund supports integrated roadside vegetation management and educates the public on the benefits, use, and care of roadside vegetation, including native plants. Counties and cities are eligible. Learn more about the application process at [the Iowa Living Roadway Trust Fund website](#).

[Enhance Iowa Sports Tourism](#)

Due June 1

The new Enhance Iowa Sports Tourism program will provide financial assistance for projects that market or promote sporting events in Iowa. The sporting events can be at professional, collegiate, and amateur levels, and the promotional or marketing activities can occur for up to two years. Cities, counties, economic development organizations, and other not-for-profit organizations can apply. The program will cover up to 50% of eligible promotion costs, including advertising, payment to vendors, equipment rentals, and more. Visit the IEDA website for more details about the program and how to apply.

[Hazard Mitigation Grant Program](#)

Due December 23

As part of the Presidential disaster declaration from December 2021's severe storms, the State of Iowa will receive FEMA disaster funding under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). The State is accepting Notice of Interests (NOIs) for projects that will reduce or eliminate losses from future natural disasters. These include but are not limited to:

- Property acquisition/elevation, electric utility hardening, detention basins, warning sirens
- Elevate/protect wastewater lift stations, backup generators
- Tornado safe rooms, small flood barriers

Projects must be included in a FEMA-approved hazard mitigation plan. Full grant applications are due by December 23, 2022. Contact Alicia Presto at alicia.presto@ecicog.org for information about the NOI process.