



# NIACOG NEWS

Vol. 30 No. 1 NORTH IOWA AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Jan. - Feb. 2019

## NIACOG STAFF

641.423.0491

Email— first letter of first name followed  
by last name @niacog.org (i.e.  
jmyhre@niacog.org)

**Joe Myhre — Ext. 11**  
Executive Director  
**Jodi Wyborny — Ext. 10**  
Administrative Assistant  
**Kris Urdahl — Ext. 12**  
Fiscal Officer

**Chris Diggins — Ext. 15**  
Local Assistance Director  
**Myrtle Nelson — Ext. 16**  
Senior Planner  
**Matt O'Brien — Ext. 14**  
Regional Planner  
**Steve Wendt — Ext. 13**  
Housing Planner  
**Caraline Eggena—Ext. 27**  
Comm. Dev. Planner

**Kevin Kramer — Ext. 17**  
Transit Administrator  
**Teresa Collins — Ext. 22**  
Operations Manager  
**Todd Hull — Ext. 24**  
Maintenance Supervisor

## NEW NIACOG PLANNER



Caraline Eggena joined NIACOG as a community development planner in November. She graduated from the University of Northern Iowa in May with a Bachelor's in Public Administration and a Bachelor's in History. Caraline has been handling tasks with the Housing Trust Fund and also helping with many other projects.

Caraline hails from Rockford, Iowa and spent a lot of time on her grandparent's farm while growing up. She is excited to be able to work in the area she grew up in and to provide assistance to communities she is familiar with. In her spare time, Caraline likes to spend time with her family. She can be contacted at: ceggena@niacog.org or 641-423-0491 ext. 27.

## NEW VEHICLE PURCHASE APPROVAL

On Dec.11, 2018 the Iowa Transportation Commission approved \$7 million in funding for 91 new rural public transit vehicles that will replace vehicles past their useful life. Funds are granted through the Federal Transit Administration's Bus and Bus Facilities Formula and Discretionary Programs. These vehicles were part of the Iowa Public Transit Vehicle Replacement Project. Vehicle replacement projects were approved for 18 different public transit systems.

Locally, the Region 2 Transit System will replace seven units and the Mason City Transit System will replace three units.

Public transit is vital to enhancing the mobility of Iowans, getting them where they need to go. Iowa has public transit in all 99 counties.





## LABOR AVAILABLE THROUGH VISA PROGRAM



With unemployment at around 2% in Iowa, we are all aware that employers are finding it difficult to find workers. These difficulties are further compounded for jobs that are seasonal, require very long hours, and are in the agricultural industry.

To address this problem, a non-traditional source of employment is being used by area agricultural employers. These agricultural employers are not just local family farm operators, but also include operations such as: a commercial plant growth site, a honey producer, and a concrete sub-contractor specializing in the agricultural industry to name just a few.

This alternative source of labor is made possible through the H-2A program administered by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service. To take advantage of this program, a U.S. employer or agent must file Form I-129, Petition for Nonimmigrant Worker, on a prospective worker's behalf.

To qualify, the petitioner must:

- Offer a job that is of a temporary or seasonal nature.
- Demonstrate that there are not enough U.S. workers who are

able, willing, qualified, and available to do the temporary work.

- Show that employing H-2A workers will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of similarly employed U.S. workers.

Submit *a single* valid temporary labor certification from the U.S. Department of Labor with the H-2A petition.

NIACOG was recently made aware of this program when Iowa Workforce Development indirectly contracted with our agency to inspect the housing for these workers. After 7 inspections, we have seen that the workers generally come from Eastern European countries and Africa, but workers from 80 plus countries are eligible to participate. Their housing is most often in the form of existing homes in a community, and the properties must be well kept for the employers to be able to keep their visas.

Many of the workers have their own seasonal work in their home country (in opposite season) and some make strong connections to their employer and invite them as guests to their home country.

The H-2A visa program has grown dramatically in Iowa. In fact, the number in the program has doubled in recent years and helps to overcome the labor shortage. More information about the program is available at: <https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/temporary-workers/h-2a-temporary-agricultural-workers>.

## Calendar of Events

### January

|      |                            |                            |
|------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1st  | Holiday                    | NIACOG Closed              |
| 9th  | Hazmat                     | 1:00 pm @ NIACOG           |
| 9th  | Trans. Policy Brd          | 2:30 pm @ NIACOG           |
| 14th | NIACOG Brd. Of Directors   | 7:00 pm @ Bennigan's in CL |
| 16th | Transportation Tech. Cmte. | 10:30 am @ NIACOG          |
| 18th | City Clerks' Mtg.          | 9:30 am @ NIACOG           |

### February

|      |                            |                        |
|------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 7th  | ICOG Legislative Breakfast | 7:30 am @ Iowa Capitol |
| 11th | NIACOG Exec. Committee     | Noon @ NIACOG          |

## IOWA TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM

The Regional Planning Affiliation 2 (RPA 2), which is made up of the same counties as NIACOG will soon be accepting applications for SWAP/Surface Transportation Block Grant (SWAP/STBG) and Iowa Transportation Alternative Program (ITAP) funds for the Federal Fiscal years 2020-2023. SWAP/STBG and ITAP funds are federal funds through the State of Iowa and may include the Federal transportation program, Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) funds.

Iowa Transportation Alternative Program funds or ITAP Funds include the former Enhancement, Safe Routes to School and Scenic Byway and TAP Programs. If you have a SRTS question, feel free to contact Chris at the NIACOG office to further discuss potential projects. In RPA 2, the focus is on adding mileage to the area trail systems. Under ITAP 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](http://www.niacog.org) or by calling Chris. Applications are due in the NIACOG office by 12 o'clock (noon) on Friday, March 1, 2019. 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, March 21, 2019. Applications submitted to NIACOG by the deadline will then be forwarded to Systems Planning at the IDOT for comment, review of eligibility and other information. These comments will be considered by the TAP Committee when reviewing the project application for funding recommendations. Questions about a potential project should also be addressed to Chris at (641) 423-0491 or by e-mail at [cdiggins@niacog.org](mailto:cdiggins@niacog.org).



## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT

Congratulations to the City of Floyd for its successful CDBG Water and Sewer Fund (W/S) application. NIACOG Local Assistance Director, Chris Diggins, was very happy to be involved with this project as it is the City of Floyd's 4<sup>th</sup> CDBG Water/Sewer application funded with NIACOG staff assistance. The latest successful application is for \$300,000 to complete the final phase of water main replacement.

The City of Floyd has been undertaking a multi-phased project to replace aged and failing water system components for years. These improvements have included a new 100,000 gallon water tower, a new water treatment system and many thousands of feet of water main replacement.





## NIACOG RLF ASSISTS FAMILY TRADITIONS MEAT COMPANY



NIACOG's Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) recently completed a working capital loan to Family Traditions Meat Company in partnership with Greenfield Bank and Trust and the Ackley Development Corporation as part of a larger asset purchase of Triple T Specialty Meats in Ackley, Iowa. Although the City of Ackley is technically not in the NIACOG region, the project location is in Franklin County.

NIACOG's loan will help support Family Traditions Meat Company to become a federally inspected facility allowing them to diversify their product line and enter new markets. With expanded distribution into these new markets, Family Traditions Meat Company anticipates increased volume and need for additional workforce over the next 1-3 years. NIACOG was glad to assist Family Traditions Meat Company in their expansion efforts and wish them all the best as they continue to grow and diversify their customer base.

NIACOG's RLF currently has \$253,000 available in its revolving loan fund. The fund provides loans to industrial/business commercial borrowers throughout the NIACOG region at the lower of 4% or 75% of prime rate. The funds may be used for land and/or building acquisitions, building expansions, equipment, inventory and working capital. The business must leverage other financing first as the RLF program is intended to be used for gap financing. The program aims to create or retain jobs, therefore all applicants must include information on jobs to be created or retained by the proposed project. For more information on the RLF program or to apply for funding, please contact Joe at the NIACOG office.

## GOV. REYNOLDS ANNOUNCES BROADBAND GRANT INFO

Gov. Kim Reynolds announced on Friday that \$1.3 million for broadband grants are now available through the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) to improve broadband access for Iowans and eliminate underserved areas (targeted service areas) across the state.

The grant program allows communication service providers, including telecommunication companies, cities and towns, to apply for up to 15 percent of their broadband project costs in targeted service areas. Communications service providers are encouraged to apply for a grant to install broadband infrastructure in these underserved areas.



"This is another step we are taking to provide access to residents, not only to internet connectivity, but also to opportunities in education, healthcare, employment and business," Gov. Reynolds said. "I appreciate the efforts by OCIO to advocate for the grant funding and the legislature's significant budgetary boost to improving connectivity for Iowa residents and businesses."

Citizens and service providers can check the targeted services area map to see if their area is eligible for grant funds under the program. Go to <https://ocio.iowa.gov/broadband> and click "Open Map in New Window."

Formal questions from prospective applicants must be submitted to [oci-grants@iowa.gov](mailto:oci-grants@iowa.gov) by January 11, 2018. Applications may be submitted online beginning February 18, 2019, and must be submitted no later than March 15, 2019.

Further information about the grant process for this funding opportunity is available on the OCIO website at <https://ocio.iowa.gov/broadband-grants>.

## IN OTHER CDBG NEWS

By the time you receive this newsletter, three more NIACOG cities will have submitted applications for water system improvements. The City of Stacyville is submitting an application for water main replacement. The Cities of Grafton and Thompson are both submitting applications for new or expanded water treatment equipment and facilities.

Good luck to the applicants.

NIACOG has been very successful in its CDBG assistance with cities and counties this year. The Floyd funding award is the 5<sup>th</sup> funded W/S applications since the State of Iowa went to a quarterly application system bringing in \$1,900,000 in awards.

The CDBG application process is very competitive, but NIACOG staff is very ready, willing and more importantly, ABLE, to help your community better prepare and package your proposed project and increase your chances of receiving funding. The sooner you get NIACOG staff involved the sooner we can guide your city and project to be in the best position for funding. There are many steps involved including procurement, preliminary engineering and having local financing in place, just to name a few. And this is before you even submit the application!



## KEEP IOWA BEAUTIFUL SEEKING NEW PARTNERS



Keep Iowa Beautiful (KIB) is excited to announce that it will be expanding its Hometown Pride program in the next five years beginning in 2019. The program, developed in 2012, walks alongside qualifying Iowa communities and coaches them to a more vibrant future. This effort enhances the community and its cultural and economic vitality – strengthening the community and increasing its chance for not simply survival, but growth with increased pride.

The Hometown Pride program offers leadership training, skill development, planning guidance, youth service learning and a variety of educational components, tools, and solutions for community development. Qualifying communities receive five years of long-term technical and professional coaching assistance. During that time, our trained coaches work to deliver a sense of stability and empowerment. The coaches don't play the game, but they provide the support and guidance that is required for the communities to succeed. When implemented, communities are rewarded with sustainable plans and programs through leadership and skill development as well as financial security.

### KIB Commitment

- \$40,000 per year / \$200,000 total financial match over five years;
- Community coach recruitment assistance, tool kit access, and an-

nual performance reviews with the steering committee;

- Sustainability concepts and leadership and skill development.

### Local Commitment

- Five-year commitment by county, communities and the economic development group;
- Establishment of a strongly motivated local steering committee;
- \$40,000 per year / \$200,000 total financial match over five years;

### Letter of Interest

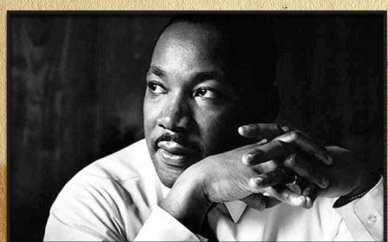
- Due by March 15, 2019;
- Identify list of committed communities and contacts within county or region;
- Include statement of financial commitment and identified source of funding;
- Indicate timeframe for program; i.e. how quickly the region, county and communities could initiate their commitments of leadership, dollars and structure.



Visit the KIB website at [www.KeepIowaBeautiful.com/hometown-pride](http://www.KeepIowaBeautiful.com/hometown-pride) to view our annual reports, explore a sampling of the documents involved in establishing the program, and find a listing of existing and past Hometown Pride communities and their community coaches.

Contact Gerald F. Schnepf, KIB Executive Director at 515-323-6507 or [gschnepf@keepiowabeautiful.com](mailto:gschnepf@keepiowabeautiful.com) with any questions.

Happy  
New Year  
2019



**LIFE'S MOST  
PERSISTENT AND  
URGENT QUESTION  
IS, 'WHAT ARE YOU  
DOING FOR  
OTHERS?'**

- MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. -