

NIACOG NEWS

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NORTH IOWA AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Jan.—Feb. 2020

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ITAP FUNDING UPDATE

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 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 Diggins 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 Diggins 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 or by calling Chris Diggins. **Applications for Tap funds are due in the NIACOG office, Friday, March 6, 2020 by 12:00 pm (Noon).** Complete applications including all attachments and resolution can be submitted by e-mail, but two (2) hard copies will need to be submitted to the NIACOG office by the review meeting on **March 26, 2020.**



FREE COMMUNITY DATA & TOOLS

Understanding our communities better can help us to prepare for development and better serve our residents. A FREE on-line data tool, called StatsAmerica is available with the original purpose of providing actionable data for economic developers to use in site requests, developing metrics, grant writing and strategic planning. The site is located at www.statsamerica.org.

One of the nice attributes with this data is that it also includes smaller community data.

Data/Tools are available in 21 apps that come in a variety of forms including: calculations, graphs, comparisons of time or geography, time series, a guide for long term growth, and maps. Much of the data can be customized to areas that you want to analyze.



Apps specific to economic development feature: cluster mapping by industry, labor market information and commuting data (including customized regions), and workforce indicators.

Additionally, Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS), adopted throughout the country, can be accessed on this site and can be mined as a treasure trove of ideas for improving communities. The CEDS for the NIACOG region can be accessed at this site as well.

The coordinator of the site (Indiana Business Research Center) obtains thousands of data items from hundreds of data sets from dozens of federal and state sources, along with some commercial, and private source data. These items can be provided for free to us because of the financial support provided to the IBRC by the U.S. Economic Development Administration.

IOWA FOUNDATION FOR PARKS & RECREATION GRANT



The Iowa Foundation for Parks & Recreation Mini Grants are to provide funding for leisure facilities, activities, events, or programs to promote and improve leisure opportunities and amenities for citizens in small Iowa communities with a population of 10,000 or less. Applications must be received by 5 p.m. on January 31, 2020.

Applicants may apply for up to \$1,000. A match of a minimum of 50% of the requested grant amount is required. Match may be cash, donated items or donated labor. Grant money must be the last money in and must be used for hard assets only (i.e. equipment, supplies, brick/mortar or a recreation program or event).

The grant application including instructions can be found at: https://iapra.org/assets/ws0005/pdf/foundation_mini_grant_application_2020.pdf
Any questions should be directed to: dedwards@Waukee.org.



100th Anniversary of Iowa State Parks

Iowa state parks will launch the New Year, which also is the start of the state park centennial year, with outdoor hikes across Iowa. First Day Hikes are being organized at 49 parks, the most to participate since the statewide event began nine years ago. Last year, more than 1,400 people participated in hikes on New Year's Day across Iowa, hiking more than 1,100 total miles at dozens of state parks. Hikers can expect to be surrounded by the quiet beauty of nature in winter, and experience spectacular views, beautiful settings and the cultural treasures offered by Iowa's state parks. Many parks will also provide hot beverages and snacks after the hike. Participants should dress for the weather, including warm, sturdy boots for winter conditions. For a complete listing of First Day Hikes, visit www.iowadnr.gov/firstdayhikes.



The DNR is planning numerous special events to celebrate the 100th anniversary of state parks throughout 2020 with the goal of celebrating, connecting and inspiring Iowans to visit and care for parks. Look for more information on centennial celebration opportunities at

<https://www.iowadnr.gov/Places-to-Go/Parks-2020>



HIGHWAY 18 CORRIDOR STUDY MOVES FORWARD

Approximately two years ago, a coalition of elected officials, economic development professionals and business and industry representatives located in a reasonable proximity of US Hwy. 18 between Mason City and Spencer met in Algona to develop a strategy to go to the Iowa DOT Commission to lobby for enhancements to the Hwy 18 corridor. As a result of the efforts of the Hwy 18 Coalition, the Iowa DOT and Commission have started a Planning and Environmental Linkages Study, or a PEL. The goal of a PEL is not to make a recommendation for a single project, but to come up with improvements that will be incorporated into future projects in an area. IDOT staff have begun gathering data on the corridor from Spencer to Garner. This corridor is 81 miles, but a project may be considerably shorter for constructability, such as 10 - 15 miles in length.

An online video with a power point explaining the PEL along with some basic information IDOT has to date can be found at www.iowadot.gov/pim. To view the meeting and related content, click on the **U.S. 18 Planning Study** from the list of public involvement events. The online meeting allows you to scroll through the information at your own pace and at any time. The Iowa DOT is asking interested parties to take a few minutes to view the information and offer any feedback. The website will be available for the duration of the entire study to refer to.

IDOT may plan in-person public meetings in the future when they have more details to share and gather input on. During the PEL, IDOT will rely on local input to understand how this corridor impacts North Iowa, driving experiences, maintenance and snow concerns, economic development needs, etc. The comment form online will be a great place to start with overall comments and concerns as IDOT

develops its improvement strategies.

For general information regarding the planning study or online public meeting, contact:

Krista Billhorn, transportation planner, Iowa DOT District 2 Office, 428 43rd St. SW, Mason City, Iowa 50401, phone 641-422-9447 or 800-477-4368, email krista.billhorn@iowadot.us.

DERELICT BUILDING REMOVAL

The Derelict Building Grant Program helps rural communities with populations of 5,000 or less deconstruct or renovate abandoned commercial and public structures. The program emphasizes reuse and recycling of building items, helps improve street appearance and commercial development, and alleviates the environmental concern these buildings can pose. Financial assistance includes asbestos removal, building deconstruction and renovation, and other environmental services.



The 2020 program is open for applications through **February 20, 2020**. If you require assistance on preparing an application, contact Matt O'Brien at the NIACOG office. More information on the program can be found here:

<https://www.iowadnr.gov/Environmental-Protection/Land-Quality/Waste-Planning-Recycling/Derelict-Building-Program>

Calendar of Events

January

1st	New Year's Day - NIACOG Office CLOSED	
8th	Hazmat Mtg.	NIACOG Office @ 1 pm
8th	Trans. Policy Brd. Mtg.	NIACOG Office @ 2:30 pm
13th	NIACOG Brd. Mtg.	Bennigan's in CL @ 7 pm
17th	City Clerks' Assoc. Mtg.	NIACOG Office @ 9:30 am
20th	MLK, Jr. Day - NIACOG Office OPEN	

February

10th	NIACOG Exec Cmte.	NIACOG Office @ 12 pm
19th	CDBG Application Workshop	9 am - 3 pm
14th	Valentine's Day	



ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS GRANTS

FEMA continues to offer their annual Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program, which allows the purchase of critically needed equipment, training, and other resources. Historically, eligible activities has included Operations and Safety; Vehicle Acquisition; and Regional Projects with a 5% - 10% local match, based on city size.



If you are desiring to submit an application in the near future, make sure that your city's or independent fire department's SAM.gov registration is active and matches the information under your DUNs number. Also, SAM.gov registration must be renewed every year. Incomplete or inactive SAM.gov registration will automatically disqualify your fire department from receiving AFG funding.



If your past application with a complete and active SAM.gov registration did not reach the peer review panel, your call volume and or age/mileage of equipment was likely less than each of the eventual award winners. Fire Departments with turnout gear that exceeds the National Fire Protection Association's "10-year retirement life" will not automatically be funded for the purchase of new gear. In previous

years, the average age of gear being funded for replacement by the AFG program far exceeded the 10 year life.

The FY 2019 application period has not yet been announced but we anticipate receiving notification soon. A training webinar is being offered on multiple dates and times. The schedule can be accessed at <https://www.fema.gov/afgp-workshop-schedule>

For additional information, visit the program's webpage at <https://www.fema.gov/welcome-assistance-firefighters-grant-program> or contact Matt O'Brien at the NIACOG Office.

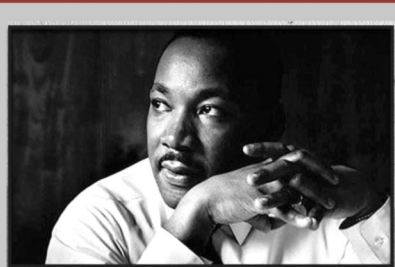
COMMUNITY ATTRACTION AND TOURISM



Enhance Iowa provides Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) funds to assist projects that provide recreational, cultural, entertainment, and educational attractions. The next application deadlines is April 15, 2020 due to all the FY 20 funds being fully committed. April grant submittals will be awarded in next fiscal year.

City, county, and private matching funding is required, and 65 percent of the project funds must be raised. More information can be found here:

<https://www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/>



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

- MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. -