



NIACOG NEWS

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NORTH IOWA AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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OUR NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Hello, North Central Iowa! I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new executive director for NIACOG. My name is Myrtle Nelson, and I have had the pleasure of serving as the Senior Planner at NIACOG for 13 years.



I am a native Iowan with a 30-year history in the planning profession including working as the Community Development Director for the City of Mason City, as a senior planner for the City of Fort Dodge, and a regional planner for the MIDAS Council of Governments. My degree is in mathematics and was obtained at the University of Northern Iowa along with a minor in economics and additional coursework in the business field.

I earned certification as a city planner in 2000 with the American Institute of Certified Planners and qualified as a Housing Development Finance Professional while at NIACOG.

Of all the places I have worked, I must admit that I have enjoyed my time at NIACOG the most because Joe Myhre (the previous director) has allowed me a great deal of freedom to develop programs, partnerships, and projects that impact the lives of North Iowans.

And, I am so glad that I will continue to work with a staff that is known statewide as being high performers. Their knowledge and commitment to quality work will help us to continue to grow the impact of the organization in improving the lives of North Iowans.

One new effort that we are undertaking involves our new economic recovery coordinator, Lauren Dietz, who started November 1st and will be working with many stakeholders to develop a plan to address pandemic issues and expand the use of our economic development revolving loan fund.

On a more personal side, my husband, Lonny, works at 3M and farms with his father. We have two teenage daughters who attend the North Iowa Christian School. My favorite hobbies include reading, preparing/eating tasty foods, playing sports, and volunteering.





NOVEMBER

9th	NIAOCG Brd. Mtg. @ 7 pm - Zoom
11th	Veterans Day— Office Closed
20th	City Clerk's Meeting - 9:30 a.m.
26th- 27th	Thanksgiving Holiday - Office Closed

DECEMBER

7th	Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
14th	NIACOG Exec. Brd. Mtg. @ Noon - NIACOG Office
25th	Christmas Day - Holiday - Office Closed

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

After 36 years in the planning profession, I will be retiring at the end of the year. The past 25 years, as NIACOG's Executive Director, has been very rewarding and I'm extremely appreciative of all the acquaintances and friendships I have developed over the years.

While I'm excited about the next chapter of my life, it is with great sadness that I say good-bye. It has been very gratifying assisting our member governments and seeing the positive results of our work.



I've enjoyed an amazing career and am grateful to staff and all the board members I have served under. NIACOG is truly a remarkable organization, and I couldn't be prouder to say I was part of it. I leave my position in Myrtle's very capable hands.

Thank you for all the positive memories from our work together.
Best wishes to all of you!

- Joe Myhre

NEW NIACOG HOUSING PLANNER



My name is Heidi Nielsen. I have spent the last 20 years as the Housing Director for the City of Charles City. We administered the Housing Choice Voucher Program, Public Housing Program, and were awarded and co-administered multiple CDBG Owner-Occupied Rehab grants with

NIACOG. I am looking forward to continuing to work in the rehab arena with NIACOG. I have always enjoyed working with the rehab program and seeing projects' impacts on families and overall community. I live in Charles City with my husband and grandson. We have three grown daughters and six grandchildren with one due in December.



0% INTEREST BUSINESS LOANS AVAILABLE

NIACOG has funding available for businesses needing access to capital. Any new or expanding business in the NIACOG region can apply for funds through the NIACOG Revolving Loan Fund Program. NIACOG's program has adopted policies designed to help local businesses during the pandemic, including new lower interest rates of 0%. Businesses can apply for up to \$115,000 and do not need a credit rejection letter. Eligible expenses include equipment or machinery, real estate, or working capital.

NIACOG BUSINESS RECOVERY INITIATIVE

NIACOG will be seeking proposals from communities, chambers, and economic development organizations to support rural economic recovery and resilience following COVID-19. Up to \$10,000 will be available to implement proposals from selected organizations. Interested parties will be 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. Information about the program and submission instructions will be provided in the coming weeks.

NEW NIACOG PLANNER



Lauren Dietz is joining NIACOG as an Economic Recovery Planner. She grew up in Waterloo, Iowa before going to college at the University of Wisconsin for a degree in History and European Studies. She returned home to attend graduate school at UNI, where she received her Master of Public Policy degree in 2014. Her public service career began with the City of Knoxville in Marion County—first as the City Management Intern and later as the Planning & Zoning Administrator. She left in 2016 to study for a Master of Community and Regional Planning degree at Iowa State, during which time she worked as a Planner at Snyder & Associates in Ankeny—specializing mainly in zoning codes, land use, economic development, and bicycle/pedestrian projects. She is now on track to complete her MBA from ISU in April 2021.

Lauren enjoys documenting her travels through photo and video, and is particularly interested in the role of visual marketing in economic development. She spends most weekends during the non-winter months camping, backpacking, and canoeing with friends she met working as a counselor at a rustic Girl Scout camp near Decorah, or hiking with her dog. She is also frequently seen riding her bike on trails around Iowa.

COMMUNITY CATALYST FUNDING

The Iowa Economic Development Authority invites you to attend a virtual application workshop on the Community Catalyst Building Remediation Program. The workshop (pre-recorded) includes a thorough description of the program, deadlines for pre-applications and an explanation of the formal application process.



The Community Catalyst Building Remediation Program assists communities with the redevelopment, rehabilitation or deconstruction of buildings to stimulate economic growth or reinvestment in the community.

- Funding based on annual availability
- Maximum grant: \$100,000
- 40% of funds will be awarded to cities with populations under 1,500
- Pre-applications must be submitted by January 29, 2021, to be considered eligible for this fiscal year's funding cycle

- Applications are by invitation ONLY

Application Deadline: April 16, 2021

To learn more about the program and to view the virtual workshop online visit iowaeda.com/downtown-resource-center/community-catalyst/

Contact Matt O'Brien in the NIACOG office if you need assistance in applying for this funding opportunity.

CONGRATS, NORTHWOOD!

The Northwood-Kensett Community School District and City of Northwood have been awarded \$453,000 in Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) Grant funds from the Enhance Iowa Board towards the Vikings Activity Center project. The project has an anticipated groundbreaking of Spring 2021. The successful grant application was prepared by NIACOG staff. The Activity Center has been a goal of the overall Northwood community since 2017.

The planned \$5.3 million fitness and activity center within Northwood was developed by a committee of local citizens working to provide an increased opportunity for health & wellness in a partnership between the School District and Community. The multigenerational Center will be available to the general public and students, as it is planned to be attached to the Northwood-Kensett Junior-Senior High School. The bottom level of the facility includes two full-sized wooden basketball/volleyball courts; baseball/softball pitching and hitting areas; a wrestling room capable of fitting two full-sized mats, which can also double as a cheerleading practice room; a multi-purpose room; a men's and women's locker room; two office spaces available for rental to offset operation expenses; and a receptionist desk. The upper level contains a walking/running track, space for cardio machines, and a separate space for weightlifting. With the growth of adult and youth recreational programs and activities in the region, space is limited and existing space is far from adequate to meet the needs of all age groups.

Enhance Iowa provides grant funds to assist projects that provide recreational, cultural, entertainment and educational attractions, as well as sports tourism. The funds help communities create transformational projects that enhance the vitality of a region and the state overall.

Funds must be primarily used for vertical infrastructure (land acquisition and construction, major renovation and major repair of buildings, all appurtenant structures, utilities, site development and recreational trails)

Enhance Iowa expects to accept applications in 2021. If your community has a potential project and assistance is needed in preparing an application, feel free to contact Chris Diggins or Matt O'Brien at the NIACOG office.

