



RURAL INNOVATION GRANT PROGRAM

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Rural Innovation Grant program supports creative, non-traditional ideas that focus on current issues and challenges faced by rural communities associated with the themes of community investment, growth and connection. This program is a result of the Governor's Empower Rural Iowa Initiative's 2018 Recommendations.

FOCUS AREAS

- **Growing Rural Iowa** - Supports community leaders as they think holistically and act collaboratively to inform and connect leaders to rural issues; grow vibrant community gathering places; and develop tools to train and educate the next generation of leaders
- **Investing in Rural Iowa** - Projects that develop creative, scalable development solutions, including but not limited to projects addressing rural housing solutions; infill and reuse strategies; and affordable, sustainable designs
- **Connecting Rural Iowa** - Projects that improve and expand opportunities for diverse members of Iowa's rural communities to utilize high-speed broadband service

The program is administered by the Iowa Economic Development Authority's Center for Rural Revitalization in consultation with the Governor's Empower Rural Iowa Initiative Task Forces.



PROGRAM DETAILS

- Funding based on annual availability
- Minimum request: \$1,000
- Maximum request: \$20,000
- Minimum 1:1/2 cash match requirement
- Disbursements made on a reimbursement basis
- Iowa businesses, colleges and universities; city or county government; and private 501(c)3 nonprofit agencies and foundations are eligible to apply
- Applicants that are not a local government must include a letter of support from the mayor or resolution from the city council
- Projects/programs must exist in and benefit a community in Iowa with a population of 20,000 or fewer and not contiguous to a city with a population of 40,000 or greater
- Applications shall describe how the project will be a replicable model across rural Iowa
- Applications reviewed by a panel including: Governor's Empower Rural Iowa Initiative Task Force members; Iowa Economic Development Authority staff; and expert professionals
- Extra consideration is provided to projects endorsed by the Iowa Great Places Citizen's Advisory Board, as well as those located in a community of 5,000 or fewer

ELIGIBLE PROJECT EXAMPLES

The program supports innovative ideas that address challenges faced by rural communities associated with the themes of community investment, growth and connection and can serve as a model for other rural communities across Iowa. The following are examples of eligible projects. (Please note: this list is not exhaustive but reflects the variety of ways the funding can be utilized.)

Focus: Growing Rural Iowa

- Entrepreneurship Leadership Program – funding to support the development and implementation of a leadership program within a small town focused on facilitating new business relationships for entrepreneurs, encourage cross-collaboration opportunities and provide business training for local entrepreneurs
- Community Welcome Wagon – funding to implement a community program targeting new residents or recruiting potential residents through community activities and informational resources

Focus: Investing in Rural Iowa

- Neighborhood Façade Beautification Program – funding to improve a curb appeal initiative along a downtown community street with costs that might include paint, landscaping, new fence, shutters, etc.
- Community Clean-Up – funding for the purchase of equipment and logistical costs for organizing a community-wide volunteer clean-up event

Focus: Connecting Rural Iowa

- Main Street Wi-Fi – funding for a feasibility study and implementation of Wi-Fi within the downtown corridor of a community, ideally where there is a combination of outside seating and indoor coffee shop or restaurant as a free amenity
- School Bus Hotspot Project – funding to install the technology necessary to outfit a school bus as a hotspot for students

SCORING CRITERIA

- Innovation and replication
- Implementation
- Evaluation and public value
- Partnerships
- Budget/local support



CONTACT

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