

NIACOG NEWS

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NORTH IOWA AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

October-November 2009

Iowa Housing Fund Activity

The year 2009 has been another busy time in the NIACOG region in regard to Iowa Housing Fund Activity. In fact, five existing Housing Fund Programs that are being given administrative assistance by NIACOG Staff have been completed or will be completed before the end of the year. The following is a description of these five programs.

Greater Bancroft Company L.C. (10 unit performance target)

This is a 2008 Housing Fund award. The program consists of the rehabilitation of two apartment buildings into ten Senior Independent living units in the community of Bancroft. Rehabilitation of both buildings was completed in July and rent-up of the 10 units is nearing completion. This project now completes the "continuum of care" at one location in Bancroft, as a Long Term Care Facility with a Senior Assisted Living Center located next door.

Sheffield Owner-Occupied Housing Rehabilitation Program (8 unit performance target)

This is a 2007 Housing Fund award. Eight projects have been completed and a 9th and final project, now underway, is scheduled to be completed in mid-November.

Stacyville Homeownership Assistance Program (4 unit performance target)

This is a 2008 Housing Fund award. Acquisition assistance and follow-up rehabilitation assistance has been completed for three first time homebuyers. Acquisition assistance has also been given to the 4th homebuyer and to one additional homebuyer (#5). The rehabilitation of projects #4 and #5 is now underway. Both are scheduled to be completed by mid-November.

Thompson Owner-Occupied Housing Rehabilitation Program (8 unit performance target)

This is a 2007 Housing Fund award. Rehabilitation projects on seven homes have been completed. Projects on an 8th home and on a 9th and final home are now underway. Project #8 is scheduled to be completed this month and Project #9 is scheduled to be completed in early December

Whittemore Owner-Occupied Housing Rehabilitation Program (8 unit performance target)

This is a 2007 Housing Fund award. The rehabilitation of all eight homes has now been completed.

Congratulations are in order to the above five Housing Fund recipients as they wind down their respective Housing Fund programs. As a result of these programs, 41 housing units in the NIACOG region are now more safe, sound, and affordable.

HMGP Program Extension

HSEMD is extending the deadline for receiving HMGP-DR1763 Notices of Interest (NOI) and Project Applications by an additional 6 months. All other details within this document remain the same as stated in the last Notice of Funds Availability dated November 21, 2008. Please read through this document carefully and be aware of the change to the NOI and Project Application deadline.

NOI Deadline: March 15, 2010 Application Deadline: May 1, 2010

Project Types

The State has opened up HMGP funds availability beyond property acquisition/demolition and planning projects. Projects may be of any type that will reduce or eliminate losses from future natural disasters, including but not limited to:

- Construction of tornado safe rooms (Multi-functional community or school safe room projects are highly encouraged)
- Acquisition, structural relocation or elevation of buildings located in a special flood hazard area
- Structural and non-structural retrofitting of existing public buildings, facilities, or utilities to protect against wind, ice, or flood hazards
- Minor structural hazard control or protection projects such as storm water management (e.g., culverts, floodgates, retention basins)
- Localized flood control projects, such as floodwall systems, that are designed specifically to protect critical facilities and do not constitute a section of a larger flood control system

The State will consider all HMGP project types except back-up power generation and warning systems at this time. The State will publish a notice if funding for back-up power generation and warning systems becomes available in the future.

Funds

The total estimated amount of HMGP funds available is \$318 million. There is not a funding limit on individual project applications. The estimated cost share for awarded HMGP project grants is:

- Federal (FEMA) – 75% maximum
- Non Federal – 25%
 - State of Iowa – 10% maximum
 - Local – 15%

For additional information or questions, feel free to contact the NIACOG office.



Director's Notes

I am happy to report that we were successful in securing a \$60,000 grant from the Iowa Department of Economic Development to match a \$400,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) to capitalize a multi-county business revolving loan fund (RLF) for the NIACOG region. IDED funding was provided through

the Grow Iowa Values Financial Assistance Program (GIVF). Without this financial assistance, NIACOG would have looked to its membership to support this important endeavor, which given the economic climate, may have been a difficult task.

The NIACOG Board of Directors recently established a loan review committee with one representative from each of the eight counties. Members include: Tom Jolas - Cerro Gordo County; Patrick Gebel - Floyd County; Karen Mitchell - Franklin County; Neil Fell - Hancock County; Linda Knecht - Kossuth County; Brenda Dryer - Mitchell County; Andy Stensrud - Winnebago County and Laurie Harris - Worth County. These individuals represent a broad cross section of business, banking, real estate and economic development. With this new program, NIACOG will be positioned to provide a new public financing tool to enhance business assistance programs and services to businesses and communities throughout the NIACOG region. Promotional information regarding the program is in process and will be distributed across the region in the near future.

Staff continues to work diligently on the Jumpstart Disaster Assistance Program. To date, over 250 homeowners have received financial assistance totaling \$2,558,941 committed or under contract. The Business Rental Assistance Program is just getting off the ground with ten businesses poised to receive six months of rent reimbursement. The purpose of this program is to provide financial assistance to a business located in or planning to locate in a business rental space that was physically damaged by the 2008 disaster. An eligible business must enter into a minimum one-year, market rate lease and in return will receive up to six months of rental reimbursement in the form of a forgivable loan.

For cities and counties, November often means election time. For Cog's, November means Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application deadlines. Staff once again is preparing several CDBG funding applications for the November deadlines of the popular water/sewer, community facilities and housing fund. Staff has an excellent track record of getting applications funded, but as always, the CDBG program is extremely competitive. As with the elections, until the votes are counted or the applications scored, we do not know the winners or losers.

As always, if we can be of service to you, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Youth Retention and Young Adult Attraction

How do we reverse declining population or enhance increasing populations in rural Iowa? At a recent conference hosted by the Iowa Finance Authority, Craig Schroeder of the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship of Nebraska suggested that we look to our youth and alumni to help answer that question.

He stated that by focusing attention on attracting our youth to stay or our alumni to return we can get a greater return for our efforts because on average 3 people (young adult, spouse, children) move to our area for each alumni recruited to return and many of them would like to move back to the state.

His strategy for recruiting youth back to the Midwest focuses on three key components:

1. Survey all older youth regularly
 - a. The survey should include 8th thru 12th graders to gauge interest in and conditions for their staying in the area or returning after secondary education both as a tool for identifying effective attraction strategies and to assure that decision makers understand that youth do want to stay or return to their community. Another question is to ask about their interest in owning their own business to gauge whether entrepreneurship is an option.
2. Increase the positive engagement of youth in the community by:
 - a. Minimizing negative things **done to** youth such as skateboard zoning or focusing solely on star athletes and ignoring other youth.
 - b. Doing things **for** youth so that they feel valued by the community such as: offering teen center, offering college scholarships (tied to returning to the community), and telling youth the right way to do things.
 - c. Doing things with youth so that adults establish connections with youth in the community such as: coordinating youth events, involving youth and adults together in decision making, and listening/supporting youth discovery.
3. Complete Research / Crunch Numbers - Mr. Schroeder provided three sample scenarios. One involved a county of 9,500 people with a population loss of 2%; (with help from a statistical research firm) he found that only 7 additional alumni would need to be recruited back to the area to make up for the outmigration trend. (The loss is made up more quickly because each returning alumni adds an average 3 people into the population.) This information is proving to be quite valuable to decision makers.

Are you thinking, "That all sounds good, but don't youth need a good job to stay or return to the area?" The approach to answering that question can be multi-faceted in addressing both alumni who seek professional positions and more entrepreneurial alumni who prefer owning their own business.

For those seeking employment, we can work with local businesses to create linkages between our existing businesses and our youth. For example, this could be connecting alumni, who have completed engineering degrees, with local companies who have difficulty recruiting them. Other methods include internships, company tours, employer fairs, and professional mentorship programs.

In Mr. Schroeder's research he found that a fairly high percentage of students were interested in owning their own business (37% to 44% depending on school district surveyed). So, creating venues/programs to encourage entrepreneurship by area youth can also be a very effective tool for retaining/attracting youth.

The actual method to implement the youth attraction strategy should, however, be guided by a local planning process that involves the three key elements – a survey of area youth, a significant number of youth representatives who participate on the planning committee, and research / number crunching to serve as a basis for decisions.

NoRISC

NoRISC is a coalition of cities and counties who have come together in order to provide OSHA required safety training and written programs for their employees at minimal cost.

Who Needs Safety Training?

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires safety training for all employees. This safety training is needed by all employees to prevent injuries and accidents of all types: Public Works Employees; Secondary Road Crews; Water / Sewer Department Crews; Janitors; City Clerks; Administrators; and Courthouse office staff.

What does membership in NoRISC provide?

Safety training sessions for employees cover a variety of OSHA required topics including: Bloodborne Pathogens; Hazard Communication; Lockout / Tagout; Respiratory Protection; Confined Space Entry; and Hearing Conservation. Safety sessions are offered at a central location to reduce employee time away from the job. Most sessions are held at the North Iowa Area Council of Governments (NIACOG). Also provided is written program development of all written programs required by OSHA including: Bloodborne Pathogens; Hazard Communication; Lockout / Tagout; Respiratory Protection; Emergency Evacuation; and Hearing Conservation. Other safety services to improve workplace safety for employees: On -Site Safety Inspection; Noise Analysis; Personal Protective Equipment Analysis; Hearing Testing; and First Aid / Adult CPR training.

Who provides the safety training, written programs, and other safety services?

The Safety Consultant for **NoRISC** is Jeff Schlee, an employee of Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments (INRCOG), which contracts with NIACOG for professional services. The consultant conducts the safety training sessions, prepares written programs for each member, and conducts other safety services such as on-site safety inspections, noise analysis and personal protective equipment analysis.



Who are the current members of NoRISC?

Cities: City of Britt; City of Garner; City of Manly; City of Nora Springs; City of Northwood;
Counties: Franklin County; Hancock County; Winnebago County; Worth County

Where can I get more information?

For more information on the services provided by **NoRISC** and how to become a member, contact Kevin Kramer at the North Iowa Area Council of Governments @ (641) 423-0491.

FIRE PREVENTION AND SAFETY GRANTS PROGRAM

The Department of Homeland Security has announced they are now taking applications for the FY2009 Fire Prevention and Safety (FP&S) Grants Program. The application period is open until 5:00 pm est. on October 23, 2009.

FP&S grants support projects that enhance the safety of the public and firefighters from fire and fire-related hazards. The grants are competitive, and their primary goal is to target high-risk populations. Grant awards are made in order to mitigate high

incidences of death and injury and to carry out research for improving firefighter safety. Examples of the types of fire prevention projects that are supported by FP&S include smoke alarm installation, fire prevention and public safety education campaigns, juvenile fire setter interventions, media campaigns, and arson prevention and awareness programs. Organizations that are eligible to apply under the research activity should consult the Program Guidance for detailed information on priorities and areas of emphasis.

An applicant tutorial for the fire prevention activity will be available through the www.firegrantsupport.com Website. The tutorial provides you with valuable grant information and will walk you through the preparation and submittal of competitive applications. In addition, the applicant tutorial will provide an overview of the fire prevention funding priorities and evaluation criteria. Applicants who have questions regarding the Fire Prevention and Safety Grants opportunity should contact the help desk as soon as possible at 1-866-274-0960 or at firegrants@dhs.gov. During the application period, the help desk will operate Monday to Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (EST), but is prepared to revise hours of operation based on volume, demand, holidays and urgency to complete the FP&S Grants application period and processing for FY09.

The AFG Program is administered by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Grant Programs Directorate in coordination with the U.S. Fire Administration. If you have a project or would like to start an application please contact the NIACOG offices.

RAIL REVOLVING LOAN AND GRANT PROGRAM

The Rail Revolving Loan and Grant Program (RRLG) provides financial assistance to improve rail facilities that will create jobs, spur economic activity and improve the rail transportation system in Iowa. The program is funded through appropriations from the state legislature and repayments and from loans for rail development projects funded in the past. For state fiscal year (FY) 2010, the program has approximately \$2.4 M in funding available for eligible projects.

Applications may be submitted at any time. All applications submitted by October 14, 2009 will be acted upon by the Iowa Transportation Commission at the December 8, 2009 meeting. The RRLG program has two funding categories under which eligible applicant s may apply:

- 1) Targeted Job Creation. These rail projects are those that provide immediate, direct job opportunities. Funding is contingent on job creation and retention commitments by the applicant. Both grants and loans are available. Grant requests require of 50% local contribution to the overall rail project cost. Loan requests require a 20% local contribution.
- 2) Rail Network Improvement. These rail projects are those that support existing rail lines and service. No direct job creation is required. Only loans are available in this category. Loans will be offered at 0% for a ten year term. Loan requests require a 20% local contribution.

Industries, railroads, local governments or economic development agencies are eligible to apply. If interested please contact the NIACOG Office for more information.



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NIACOG CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Oct. 1 Transportation Technical Meeting @ NIACOG 10:30 am
- Oct. 12 Executive Board Meeting @ NIACOG 12:00 pm
- Oct. 14 HAZMAT Meeting @ NIACOG 1:30 pm
- Oct. 14 Transportation Policy Board Meeting @ NIACOG 2:30 pm
- Nov. 3 Municipal Elections
- Nov. 9 NIACOG Board Meeting 6:00 pm Dinner – 7:00 pm Meeting
- Nov. 11 Veteran’s Day- NIACOG offices closed
- Nov. 20 City Clerks Meeting 9:30 am – 12:00 pm
- Nov. 26-27 Thanksgiving-NIACOG offices closed

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Joe Myhre	Executive Director	Ext. 11
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Myrtle Nelson	Senior Planner	Ext. 16
Dan Schroeder	Regional Planner	Ext. 14
laurel Clement	Disaster Recovery Coordinator	Ext. 27
Dana Heimbuch	Community Development Planner	Ext. 28
Email – first letter of first name followed by last name @niacog.org (i.e. jmyhre@niacog.org)		

OSHA 300 Form Training Scheduled

The North Iowa City Clerks Association has scheduled a training session on the proper reporting of the mandatory OSHA 300 Forms which is the employee injury/illness records for all employee work activity including full-time, part-time, seasonal and volunteer works. Anne Jackson from Iowa OSHA, Division of Labor Services, will be presenting a program on the required recordkeeping at the NIACOG office on Friday, November 20, 2009, @ 9:30 a.m. If you are not completing these forms, or simply want a refresher to make sure your completing the forms correctly, please attend this workshop. County representatives are welcome, as well.

