



**IOWA ASSOCIATION**  
OF COUNCILS OF GOVERNMENTS

**In this quarterly newsletter edition:**

- COG Focus Area: **Technical Planning Services**
- Impact Map
- Award Recognitions
- Employment Opportunities
- MINK Four-State Conference
- Healthiest State Conference

View this newsletter and prior newsletters on the [ICOG website](#).

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**COG FOCUS AREA: Technical Planning Services**

Councils of Governments (COGs) exist to strengthen and support their member jurisdictions—particularly smaller communities that lack dedicated planning staff. Through technical planning services, COGs provide the specialized expertise local governments need to plan effectively, meet regulatory requirements, and access competitive funding. Key service areas include:

- **Land Use & Comprehensive Planning:** Most small communities cannot afford a full-time planner. COGs fill that gap by offering reliable, cost-effective expertise to guide zoning, growth management, and long-range planning efforts.
- **Transportation Planning:** COG-led transportation planning gives communities the data, analysis, and project development support they need to compete for state and federal transportation funding.

- **Geographic Information Systems (GIS) & Data Analysis:** Modern planning is data-driven. COGs provide mapping, analysis, and visualization tools that help communities meet grant requirements and make informed policy decisions.
- **Environmental, Hazard Mitigation & Resilience Planning:** COGs develop FEMA-compliant hazard mitigation and resilience plans, which are essential for unlocking federal disaster, infrastructure, and preparedness funding.
- **Housing & Community Development Planning:** Housing issues are deeply connected to transportation, workforce, and economic development. COGs help communities analyze housing needs and develop coordinated regional strategies.
- **Grant Writing & Project Implementation Support:** Many small jurisdictions struggle with complex federal compliance. COGs provide grant development, administration, and reporting support to ensure communities can secure and manage critical funding.

Below, you'll find projects that highlight COGs value in providing these technical planning services.

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## **Region XII Council of Governments**

### **Kids Benefit from Projects in Crawford County**

In Spring 2025, the Crawford County Sheriff's Department partnered with Region XII COG to pursue federal funding for **two School Resource Officers to serve schools across Crawford County**. Region XII provided technical assistance throughout the process, including development and submission of a highly competitive application to the U.S. Department of Justice COPS Hiring Program. Thanks to this collaboration, Crawford County secured \$250,000 to support the hiring of the new officers—an important investment in school safety that also helps build positive relationships between students and local law enforcement.

At the same time, community conversations in **Vail** were growing around the need to **modernize the city's aging park**. By 2025, those discussions evolved into a clear, community-driven vision: a fully accessible, ADA-compliant, farm-themed

playground designed for children and families of all abilities. When the City of Vail was ready to begin seeking funds to bring the project to life, they turned to Region XII COG for grant writing and planning support. With assistance from COG regional planners, the City successfully secured multiple early-stage grants—ranging from \$500 to \$10,000—providing crucial momentum and helping launch broader fundraising efforts for this much-needed community asset.

These projects highlight how Region XII COG’s technical planning and grant development services help local governments turn ideas into reality—**strengthening public safety, enhancing community amenities, and supporting long-term quality of life** across the region.

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## **Southwest Iowa Planning Council**

### **Harrison County Gets Updated Comprehensive Plan after 22 Years**

SWIPCO recently partnered with Harrison County officials and residents to complete a **full update of the County’s Comprehensive Plan**—replacing a document that had not been updated in more than 22 years. Funded through a \$20,000 allocation from the County budget, the project allowed **Harrison County** to take a proactive, community-driven approach to long-term planning.

Throughout the process, SWIPCO worked closely with local leaders and engaged residents across the county to **identify priorities for land use, housing, infrastructure, economic development, and overall quality of life**. Extensive public outreach ensured that the plan was shaped by the people who live and work in Harrison County, resulting in a shared vision for the community’s future.

The new Comprehensive Plan **provides a strategic roadmap to guide decision-making for years to come**. It also **lays the groundwork for upcoming updates to the County’s zoning ordinances**—an effort that SWIPCO will continue to support as Harrison County moves from planning to implementation.



Old Town Conservation Area | Credit: Lance Brisbois, Golden Hills RC&D

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## Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission

### Strategic Goalsetting Brings Clarity to Local Government Priorities

Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission (UERPC) continues to support the **City of Decorah** through its structured, **two-year strategic goalsetting process**. The effort begins with a survey of city council members and key staff, gathering input on recent accomplishments, emerging challenges, and opportunities to improve operations. UERPC compiles the responses into a summary that guides an in-person workshop where officials discuss priorities, draft goal statements, and refine them into a focused list. Council members then rank their top five goals, and UERPC prepares a final report documenting the full process and results.

Following recent **media coverage of Decorah's success with the model**, interest in UERPC's facilitation services has grown. This year, the organization has already led goalsetting sessions for the **City of Waukon** and the **Winneshiek County Board of Supervisors**. Communities consistently find the process—typically around \$3,000—to be a valuable investment that **builds consensus, strengthens communication, and helps local leaders set shared priorities to guide their work** over the next two years.

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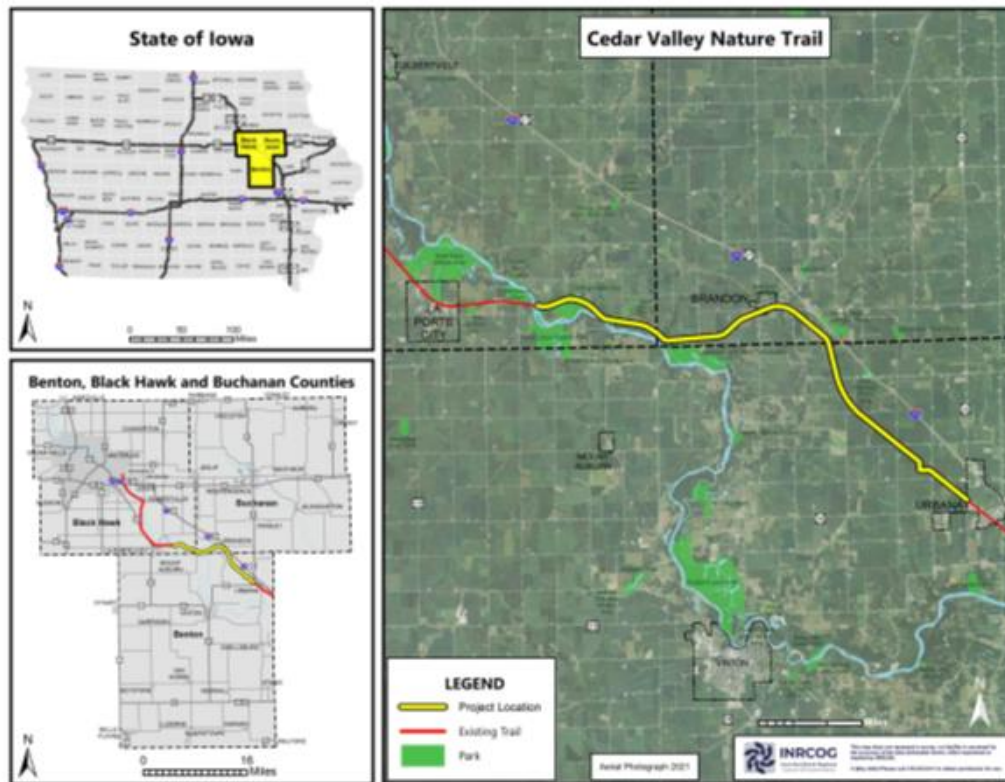
## **Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments**

### **Strengthening Regional Connectivity Through Transportation Planning**

The Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments continues to expand its role in supporting communities through comprehensive transportation planning services—work that often pairs seamlessly with our grant writing expertise. A standout example of this collaboration is the **\$3.5 million Destination Iowa Grant** awarded in 2022.

This joint award to **Black Hawk and Linn Counties** funded the paving of 16 additional miles of the Cedar Valley Nature Trail. With this investment, the entire **52-mile trail corridor** is now fully paved, creating a continuous, high-quality route from the Waterloo/Cedar Falls metro to the Cedar Rapids metro.

The benefits extend well beyond improved trail conditions. Rural and urban communities along the corridor are now positioned to leverage the Cedar Valley Nature Trail as a catalyst for **tourism growth, economic development, outdoor recreation, and community pride**. This project demonstrates how strategic planning and strong regional partnerships can deliver long-lasting value for residents and visitors alike.



Cedar Valley Nature Trail

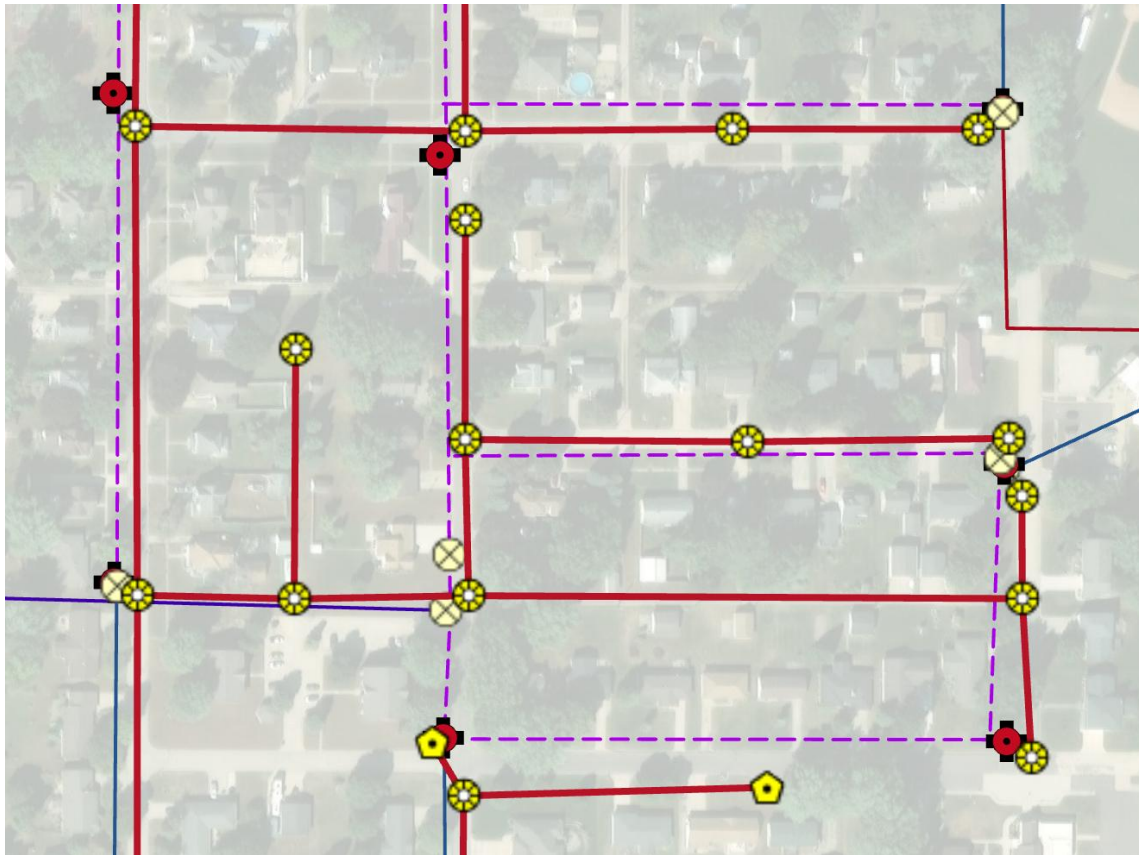
## Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Council

### Enhancing Infrastructure Management Through GIS Innovation in Ida County

The Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Council (SIMPCO) recently partnered with several Ida County communities to strengthen local infrastructure management through its GIS & Data Analysis services. Using high-accuracy GPS equipment, SIMPCO's GIS team mapped essential utility assets—including manholes, water and sewer mains, water valves, and other critical features.

After collecting precise field data, the team transformed the information into an interactive online mapping platform. Communities can now easily view, manage, and toggle individual infrastructure layers, giving staff immediate access to accurate, up-to-date spatial information.

This modernized tool supports more efficient utility management, improves maintenance planning, and enhances emergency response capabilities. The project was made possible through collaboration with participating Ida County communities and local public works departments, with services supported by SIMPCO membership and GIS program resources.



Mapping of Key Infrastructure Assets

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### **East Central Iowa Council of Governments**

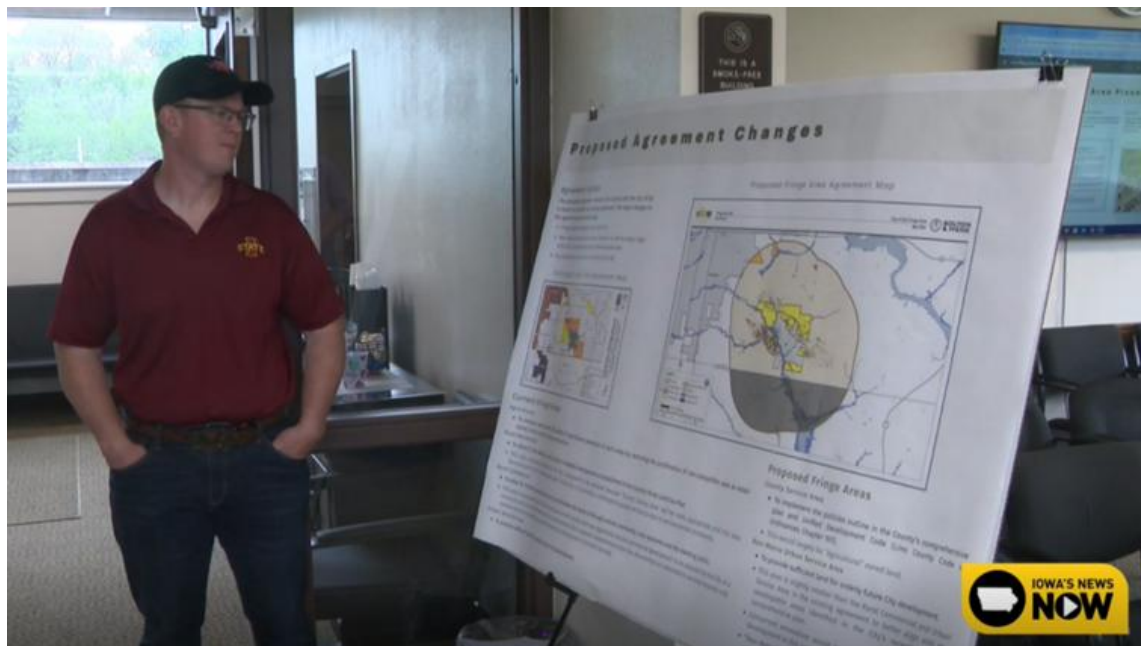
#### **ECICOG and Linn County Collaborate on New Fringe Area Plans**

The East Central Iowa Council of Governments (ECICOG) recently partnered with Linn County to develop two new fringe area plans that will guide future growth around the cities of Ely and Center Point. Fringe area plans and agreements help clarify development expectations in unincorporated areas surrounding partner

communities, ensuring that cities and counties share a coordinated approach to land use and infrastructure planning.

Serving as a liaison between Linn County planning staff and city administrators, ECICOG reviewed each jurisdiction's comprehensive plan, land use regulations, regional development trends, and local constraints. Using this information, the team prepared draft plan frameworks and facilitated public input forums to gather community perspectives.

The adopted fringe area plans will support more consistent land use decision-making, streamline the development review process, and help preserve valuable agricultural land. This collaborative effort strengthens long-term planning across jurisdictional boundaries and supports thoughtful, sustainable growth in the region.



Fringe Area Agreement Open House | Image Source KGAN

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## Bi-State Regional Commission

### Supporting Local Planning Through Customized Comprehensive Planning Services

The Bi-State Regional Commission (BSRC) conducts land use and comprehensive planning activities for its member governments under contract. Project costs vary based on the type of update, size of jurisdiction, and breadth of public outreach desired. Costs range from as low at \$5,000 for a goal setting session and land use map update to \$22,000 for the full development of a comprehensive plan with a number of public meetings and focus groups.

Key to a successful plan is the involvement the community and its stakeholders. In the past 6 years, plans for Aledo, Colona, East Moline, Milan, Muscatine County and Port Byron have been completed or are underway.

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## **East Central Intergovernmental Association (ECIA)**

### **ECIA Completes Housing Needs Assessment for Dubuque County**

The Greater Dubuque Development Corporation contracted with ECIA to complete a comprehensive housing needs assessment for Dubuque County in October 2025. Using a data-driven approach, ECIA evaluated current housing conditions and projected the number and types of homes needed over the next decade to support a balanced, sustainable housing market.

The assessment found that Dubuque County's housing market remains generally strong, supported by steady population growth, solid employment, and consistent construction activity. However, rising home prices, declining affordability, and increasing demand for diverse housing options—particularly workforce, senior, and middle-market owner-occupied homes—pose growing challenges.

To support continued economic and population growth, ECIA estimates that Dubuque County will need **1,900 to 2,500 additional housing units between 2026 and 2035**. The report also highlights the importance of ongoing investment in both new construction and housing rehabilitation to ensure residents have access to safe, attainable housing across all income levels.

Read the full assessment [here](#).

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## **Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission**

## **Brownfield Redevelopment in Keokuk, IA**

In Keokuk, regional technical services provided by Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission (SEIRPC) are helping transform a long-abandoned industrial site into a redevelopment-ready asset. The 79-acre Elkem-Carbide property, vacant since 2007, posed significant environmental and redevelopment challenges after decades of unregulated industrial use.

Since 2014, SEIRPC staff have partnered with the City of Keokuk to deliver comprehensive environmental assessment, hazard mitigation, resilience planning, and grant writing support. Through sustained technical assistance and EPA grant administration, the site has undergone multiple Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments, resulting in a clear understanding of contamination conditions and cleanup needs.

To strategically access Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding, the site was subdivided into three parcels, securing more than \$8 million in EPA Brownfields Cleanup grants between 2023 and 2025. In parallel, SEIRPC staff supported redevelopment planning and public engagement, advancing a sustainable, community-informed vision for the site's future.



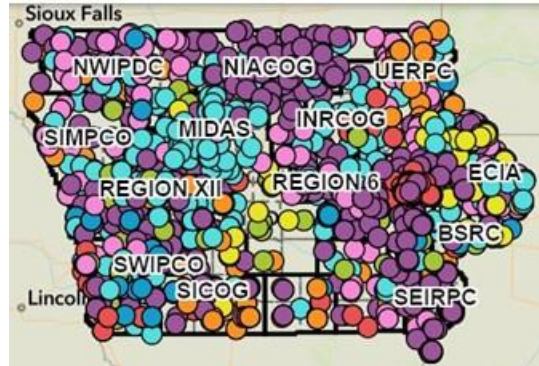
Elkem-Carbide Site

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## IMPACT MAP

### Check out our impressive impact map!

This map illustrates the significant influence of COGs across Iowa, showcasing the diverse range of projects in which we actively participate.



*Due to the condensed size of the image, not all COGs are shown.*

These initiatives not only enhance the well-being of residents but also contribute to economic growth.

Our efforts hold particular importance for Iowa's rural regions, where the shortage of personnel for economic and community development is a prevalent challenge.

[LEARN MORE](#)

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## AWARD RECOGNITION

### Bi-State Region Commission Earns Three Awards

The Bi-State Regional Commission earned three notable honors in fall 2025, recognizing its leadership and long-standing regional impact.

- **NADO Impact Award** – Acknowledging Bi-State's role in forming and sustaining the Rock Island County Waste Management Agency and its contributions to regional environmental stewardship.
- **AMPO Honorable Mention: Excellence in MPO Coordination** – Recognizing more than two decades of collaborative planning and support for the transformative Interstate 74 Bridge project.

- **Visit Quad Cities Destination Impact Award** – Presented to Executive Director Denise Bulat for her leadership and the lasting community benefits of the Interstate 74 project.

These awards highlight Bi-State’s continued commitment to regional collaboration and meaningful community progress.



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## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

COGs are hiring!

Check out the new employment opportunities:

- **Housing Coordinator - Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission (UERPC)**
- **Internship - Region XII Council of Governments**
- **Regional Planner - Region XII Council of Governments**



COGs offer dynamic roles where professionals engage in hands-on planning, make meaningful community impacts, and collaborate directly with city and county leaders.

**Want to post an employment opportunity with us? Contact us [here](#).**

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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### SAVE THE DATE: MINK 4-STATE CONFERENCE



Mark your calendar for the MINK 4-State Conference, taking place **August 31 – September 2** at the Mid-America Center in **Council Bluffs, Iowa!**

We're excited to introduce something new this year—bringing together Councils of Government from Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, and Missouri for two full days of engaging content, collaboration, and connection.

More details—including the full agenda, sponsorship and exhibitor opportunities, and registration information—will be coming soon. Stay tuned!

We look forward to seeing you there.

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### HEALTHIEST STATE CONFERENCE



# Healthiest State CONFERENCE

presented by **wellabe**

## WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22

FFA ENRICHMENT CENTER | ANKENY

As supporters of the **5-2-1-0 Healthy Choice Count**<sup>®</sup> program, we're sharing details about the upcoming **2026 Healthiest State Conference**, presented by Wellabe. The event will be held **April 22 in Ankeny** and brings together HR leaders, wellness professionals, and organizational decision-makers to explore workplace well-being, burnout prevention, and mental health strategies.

Learn more and register: [www.iowahealthieststate.com/conference](http://www.iowahealthieststate.com/conference)

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### PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEMBERS

We greatly appreciate our Partnership Program members for their essential support. Their commitment strengthens our collaborations across a wide range of agencies, helping us build a vibrant network that drives progress and innovation.

Together, we're creating meaningful impact in Iowa communities.



[LEARN MORE](#)

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April 2026

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