



IOWA ASSOCIATION OF COUNCILS OF GOVERNMENTS

October 2026

In this quarterly newsletter edition:

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

COG FOCUS AREA: Preparing Communities for the Future

Across Iowa, Councils of Governments (COGs) are helping communities navigate growth, address emerging challenges, and plan for long-term success. By bringing together local governments, businesses, and community leaders, COGs provide strategic planning, grant assistance, infrastructure support, and regional collaboration opportunities that strengthen communities of all sizes.

The following examples highlight how Iowa's COGs are investing in infrastructure, main street visions, comprehensive planning, safe action planning and career education training to ensure communities are prepared for future opportunities and challenges.

Learn how regional partnerships are shaping a stronger, more sustainable future for Iowa residents and businesses alike.

Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments (INRCOG)

Waterloo Air and Rail Park Infrastructure Project - Waterloo, IA

Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments (INRCOG) is helping the City of Waterloo prepare for future economic growth while responding to recent disruptions in the local economy.

Following significant layoffs at John Deere's Waterloo operations, the community has placed renewed emphasis on economic diversification, business attraction, and creating opportunities for future employment. One key effort is a \$3.4 million infrastructure project serving the Waterloo Air and Rail Park, supported by a \$2 million U.S. Economic Development Administration investment.

The project will improve storm sewer, sanitary sewer, and roadway infrastructure near West Airline Highway and Leversee Road, expanding capacity for future industrial development. INRCOG assisted Waterloo with the EDA application, coordinated with EDA throughout the award process, and will help administer the project.

By investing in development-ready infrastructure, Waterloo is positioning itself to attract new employers, strengthen its industrial base, and build greater economic resilience for the future.

Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission (UERPC)

Lansing Main Street Vision - Lansing, IA

Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission (UERPC) partnered with the City of Lansing, Main Street Lansing, local businesses, residents, and other community stakeholders to develop the Lansing Main Street/IA-9 Corridor Vision Plan.

Through public engagement, surveys, interactive mapping, and visual design concepts, the project turned community priorities into a clear, forward-looking vision for Lansing's historic downtown and Mississippi River gateway. The plan identified opportunities to improve pedestrian and traffic safety, streetscape amenities, lighting, community gateways, historic character, and key intersections.

Importantly, because Iowa DOT owns the highway right-of-way through downtown, the plan gives Lansing a tangible tool for working collaboratively with the DOT—providing documented community priorities and visual concepts that can help guide future discussions, investment decisions, project development, and funding opportunities.

Lansing Main Street Vision Plan | Photo Credit: Main Street Lansing

Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission (SEIRPC)

City of Keokuk's Updated Comprehensive Plan - Keokuk, IA

In 2018, the Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission (SEIRPC) assisted the City of Keokuk in preparing its first Comprehensive Plan in 2 decades. Each year since the plan's adoption, SEIRPC has remained actively involved in helping the City implement its vision. Working collaboratively, the City and SEIRPC have successfully advanced a number of key goals identified in the Comprehensive plan, including:

- Rehabilitation and reoccupation of several vacant downtown buildings for businesses and housing
- Creation of public art murals on several blank building walls downtown
- Construction of 1-mile multi-use trail along the Mississippi River
- Clean-up and redevelopment of a long-abandoned brownfield site
- Major update of the City Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances

Once a major hub of industry and river transportation, Keokuk suffered from years of sustained job and population loss in the late 1900s. After previous planning efforts aimed at major new development prospects – often highly speculative, the most recent plan saw a sustained focus on ‘right-sizing’ the city, and taking better advantage of its existing assets, including tourism, historic buildings, and natural resources.

A mural in downtown Keokuk. | Photo Credit: Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission (SEIRPC)

Bi-State Regional Commission

Muscatine County Comprehensive Plan - Muscatine, IA

Interest in comprehensive planning in the Bi-State Region has been on the rise. The 2024 Muscatine County Comprehensive Plan prompted discussions on uses that would take prime farmland out of production.

The plan resurrected the use of the Land Evaluation Site Assessment (LESA) process for ag land conversions to other uses as a method to protect contiguous farmland from development. A LESA assesses proximity to services, environmental conditions and soil productivity as review elements to help retain prime tracts of farmland.

The 2025 Buffalo, Iowa Comprehensive Plan resulted in a new city logo, and emphasized plans for streetscaping along Iowa 22 to enhance the city's Mississippi River gateway and beach access.

Walcott, famous for the "World's Largest Truck Stop" on I-80 is planning to update their plan as a whole but requested Bi-State staff to assist with changes to their future land use map to address differences between agricultural, industrial and heavy industrial designations.

Map 4.2: Future Land Use - Muscatine County

Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Council (SIMPCO)

Comprehensive Plan Update - Sergeant Bluff, IA

As part of the City of Sergeant Bluff's comprehensive plan update, SIMPCO created an interactive land use map to guide conversations about revisions to the future land use map.

The map brings critical community data together in one place with layers such as parcels, transportation network, zoning, current land use, utilities, floodplain boundaries, and public facilities. What began as a tool to guide future land use conversations resulted in a comprehensive city map that can be referenced for everyday planning and maintenance, zoning decisions, and the planning of infrastructure investments for new development.

After the success of this mapping exercise, SIMPCO is now offering interactive land use mapping as a stand-alone service available to member communities.

These maps can be tailored for each community to include layers most relevant for their planning needs.

Land Use Map | Photo credit: SIMPCO

Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA)

Comprehensive Safety Action Plan (CSAP) - Atlantic, Clarinda, Red Oak, and Shenandoah

In 2023, MAPA was awarded SS4A planning funds to lead the development of a **Comprehensive Safety Action Plan (CSAP)** for the cities of Atlantic, Clarinda, Red Oak and Shenandoah in [Regional Planning Affiliation \(RPA\)-13](#) (Southwest Iowa Planning Council/SWIPCO) and the cities of Glenwood, Harlan and Missouri Valley in [RPA-18](#).

Through the development of the comprehensive safety action plan, we located key areas of safety concern and established solutions that cities can use to increase safety and reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries in our region. Strategies and projects included in the CSAP may be eligible for future safety funding opportunities.

North Iowa Area Council of Governments (NIACOG)

Career Education Training Center Funding - Hampton, IA

The North Iowa Area Council of Governments (NIACOG) helped secure a major investment in the region's future by writing a successful grant application that brought in \$3 million toward a new \$4 million Career Education Training Center in Hampton. The Center opened this fall and is already providing hands-on training for high school students in three high-demand fields: health care, construction, and advanced manufacturing.

By connecting students with real career pathways and the skills local employers need, the project strengthens North Iowa's workforce pipeline and supports long-term economic growth. This investment helps address population decline, meet critical workforce needs, and prepare students to enter rewarding careers immediately after graduation. The Career Education Training Center represents a significant commitment to North Iowa's students, businesses, and future prosperity.

NIACC Career Center | Photo credit: NIACOG

IMPACT MAP

See the impact we are making!

This map illustrates the significant impact of Iowa's Councils of Governments (COGs), demonstrating the **wide range of projects** we lead and support across the state.



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

These initiatives strengthen community well-being, drive economic growth, and address critical needs—especially in **Iowa's rural areas**, where limited staffing and resources often constrain economic and community development efforts.

[LEARN MORE](#)

AWARD RECOGNITION

NADO Excellence in Regional Transportation Award

Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission (UERPC) has been awarded a 2026 Excellence in Regional Transportation Award from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) for its project, "Charging Up Rural Iowa: EV and Charging Infrastructure Planning in Northeast Iowa."

"The Excellence in Regional Transportation Awards program showcases effective and creative transportation initiatives that improve accessibility, mobility, safety, and quality of life in regions around the United States," said Rick Hunsaker, who was serving as NADO President at the time the award was presented and is now Immediate Past President. "Programs and projects like UERPC's regional EV infrastructure and workforce planning effort foster community and economic connections and promote effective transportation networks."

[READ FULL PRESS RELEASE](#)

NADO Excellence in Regional Transportation Awards logo

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

COGs are hiring!

Check out the new employment opportunity:

- **Community Development**
Director - MIDAS Council of Governments

COGs offer rewarding careers where professionals work directly with communities, tackle real-world planning challenges, and partner with local leaders to make a difference.

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

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM MEMBERS

We greatly appreciate our Partnership Program members for their support. Together, we're creating meaningful impact in Iowa communities.



LEARN MORE

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