

AREA 15 REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

NEWSLINE

**T-Mobile® Hometown Grants**

is investing \$25 million in 500 rural towns over five years to jumpstart projects and build strong communities. Small rural communities with a population of 50,000 or less can apply for up to \$50,000 for physical projects benefiting the public. The grant program is specifically open to 501c3 and 501c6 nonprofit organizations and local government entities. It will help fund projects that foster local connections, like technology upgrades, outdoor spaces, the arts, and community centers.

For more information, visit [Hometown Grant Program: Revitalizing Small Towns | T-Mobile](#). For application assistance, please get in touch with Brandon Dicks at brandon.dicks@area15rpc.com

Area 15 RPC Provides Project Planning and Grantwriting

For those new to city/county government in the area, Area 15 Regional Planning Commission is your local government organization formed since 1974 to assist with economic development and planning needs of the 6-county region also known as the Council of Governments (COG). As members of Area 15 RPC, our programs and grant writing and administrative services are available to you. We help partner our communities with local, state, and federal programs to help fund projects.

LOW INTEREST BUSINESS LOANS AVAILABLE

Low Interest Loans Available to Help Local Business and Industry. Area 15 Regional Planning Commission has funding for new and expanding businesses available through a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) established by the U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Economic Development Administration. Loans are intended to create new jobs or retain existing jobs particularly in targeted industries including technology and advanced manufacturing, bioprocessing, renewable energy, and automation technology. Funds may be used for purchase of equipment, furniture and fixtures, and up to 50% working capital/inventory. Amount of funding is dependent on the number of jobs created or retained; up to \$25,000 per job and maximum loan of \$250,000. These funds are considered as gap financing for projects that may not qualify for full funding through regular channels.

Contact Chris Bowers for more information at 641-814-8403.

AREA 15 RPC FISCAL YEAR 2025 AUDIT RELEASED

Peak & Gerdes LLP recently released the annual audit report for Area 15 Regional Planning Commission. The commission's revenues totaled \$549,260 for the year ended June 30, 2024, a 10% decrease from the prior year.

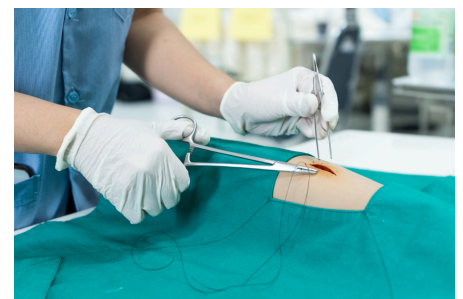
Expenses for the year ended June 30, 2024 totaled \$446,059, a 15% decrease from the prior year. The significant decrease in revenue is due primarily to a decrease in monies received from the federal government as a result of the CARES Act.

The significant decrease in expenses is due to a decrease in monies spent from CARES act funds. The audit gave an unmodified opinion of the financial statements and compliance of the organization which is the highest and best opinion level.

IOWA SOUTH - UPDATE ON EDUCATORS PROGRAM

Iowa South celebrates 10 years of providing the Educators in the Workforce program this year! This is a unique annual workshop series offered by a collaboration between local economic developers and Indian Hills Community College. The program provides educators in grades K-12 the opportunity to learn from key employers in the region about employment opportunities and skills needed for students to enter the local workforce and succeed.

Workshop dates this year are June 16-17 (Technology) and June 18-19 (Healthcare). Iowa South is the regional group of city and county economic developers covering Appanoose, Davis, Jefferson, Keokuk, Lucas, Mahaska, Monroe, and Wapello counties. Area 15 RPC serves as the collaborator and administrator for Iowa South.





Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) Grant Program

Iowa DNR's Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) grant invests in projects that enhance and protect the state's natural and cultural resources. REAP provides funding through the City Parks and Open Spaces and the County Conservation competitive grant programs.



City Parks & Open Spaces

City size categories and grant amount ceilings have been established to assure grants are distributed to all sizes of cities. The amount of REAP grant money available to a city depends on population.



Parkland expansion and multi-purpose recreation developments are typical projects funded under this program. Examples of funded projects include:

- Park Shelter
- Picnic Tables
- Trailheads
- Trees
- Trails
- Trail Lighting
- ADA-Accessible Restrooms
- Natural Spaces for Picnicking and Environmental Education

Ineligible projects include: single or multi-purpose athletic fields, baseball or softball diamonds, tennis courts, golf courses, and other organized sport facilities, swimming pools, playground equipment, frisbee golf, or dog parks. All funded applications must be completed within two years of the grant award.

Applications are due on August 15, 2025

County Conservation: Counties are eligible to receive these funds if they are dedicating at least 22¢ per \$1,000 of the assessed value of taxable property in the county for county conservation purposes

IOWA DNR DERELICT BUILDING PROGRAM



Area 15 RPC is excited to share the news that City of Richland was awarded two grants under this year's Derelict Building Program for \$42,500. The projects involve two properties located at 121 and 123 N. Richland Street in Richland, Iowa. The city worked with Area 15 Regional Planning Commission and the Iowa Waste Exchange to prepare an application to help de-construct the deteriorated buildings and

divert the material away from the landfill. The city identified local groups and individuals that volunteered to take all brick and concrete to use for erosion control, and all wood and tin to be reused in another home or upcycled into a new design. Applications for this program are accepted annually in February. If your city is interested in this program, contact Chris Bowers or Hector Hernandez at (641) 684-6551.

STOCKPORT AWARDED WASTEWATER GRANT



Area 15 RPC would like to extend our congratulations to the city of Stockport for their award of a \$300,000 grant through the WTFAP (Wastewater and Drinking Water Treatment Financial Aid Assistance Program). This grant, along with their \$500,000 CDBG grant, will cover a significant portion of their total sewer rehab project, with a total cost of \$1,363,000.

These additional grant funds will lower the impact on household monthly sewer utility bills more than was already anticipated. Applications for the WTFAP are accepted once per year, and are prioritized based on several criteria. Area 15 RPC was thrilled to help Stockport secure this grant!

UPCOMING GRANTS

Program	Purpose	Deadline	Eligible Applicants
IDNR Water Recreation Access Cost-Share Program	Constructing or improving boat access facilities to Iowa's lakes and streams. Projects can include boat launching ramps, loading/off-loading docks and other structures to enhance use by the public.	September 30, 2025	Political subdivisions of the State of Iowa
IDNR Water Trail Cost-share Program	Infrastructure improvements along state designated water trails or water trails on track for state designation.	Ongoing	Local governments
IDNR Water Trail Planning Assistance	Planning for water trail development as navigable waters used by Iowans for boating, fishing, inner-tubing, paddling, wildlife viewing, etc.	December, 2025	Local governments
IEDA Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT)	Tourism, recreation, and entertainment capital projects, such as museums, libraries, swimming pools, trails, large recreational areas, amphitheaters, etc.	Ongoing	Local governments, nonprofits
IDOT RISE Program	Funding to provide road/street access to expand business parks and development areas.	Ongoing	Local governments
IDNR Fish Habitat and Wildlife Habitat Promotion	Programs and projects to improve fishing and wildlife habitat.	November 30, 2025	County conservation boards
IDOT Highway Safety Improvement Program	Grants for low-cost systematic safety improvements in the \$10,000/mile range focusing on lane departure crashes	August 15, 2025	Local governments
Wapello County Foundation	Medical care and treatment, scientific research, rec facilities, education, public projects/quality of life	August 31, 2025	Tax exempt organizations, local governments
Keokuk County Community Endowment Foundation	Arts and culture, health, human services, community betterment, historic preservation, etc.	May 31 (intent) October 31, 2025	Tax exempt organizations, local governments
Davis County Community Foundation	Arts & culture, community betterment, education, recreation, youth development, health/human services	November 1, 2025	Tax exempt organizations, local governments



UPCOMING HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY

We're excited to announce that this summer, we'll be sending out a Housing Needs Survey to gather valuable insights for our Housing Action Plan (HAP). This plan is a key part of our annual application to the State Housing Trust Fund, and your feedback will play a crucial role in shaping the future of housing in our region.

The HAP is designed to assess and address the housing needs of our residents, ensuring we develop strategies that meet the demands of today and prepare for the needs of tomorrow.

The survey will help us better understand the current housing challenges faced by our communities. Including the types of housing that are most needed, whether affordable, market-rate, or special housing, preferences for housing designs, locations, and amenities and opportunities for improvement in the local housing market.

We'll be distributing the survey to individuals and organizations that have expressed interest in housing development in our area. If you would like to be added to the list of recipients, please reach out to us by emailing

matt.naumann@area15rpc.com.

YOUR PARTICIPATION IS KEY TO
ENSURING THAT OUR HAP REFLECTS
THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF THE REGION
AND HELPS US SECURE MUCH-NEEDED
RESOURCES FOR HOUSING PROJECTS.

Stay tuned for more information as we approach the survey launch this summer. We look forward to hearing from you and working together to make our region a great place to live!

AHEAD Regional Housing Trust Fund's Owner-Occupied Home Repair Program

The Owner-Occupied Home Repair Program is designed to assist eligible homeowners with the cost of home repairs and improvements that ensure the health, safety, and livability of their homes.

What Does the Program Offer?

- **Financial Assistance for Home Repairs:** RHTF provides financial support for a variety of home repairs, including but not limited to roofing, plumbing, electrical systems, heating and cooling systems, and accessibility modifications.
- **Affordable Financing:** The program offers low or no-interest loans, making home repairs more affordable and accessible to low and moderate-income homeowners.

To be eligible for the program, homeowners must:

- Live in one of the following counties: Davis, Jefferson, Keokuk, Mahaska, Van Buren, or Wapello in Iowa.
- Be the owner-occupant of the property that requires repairs.
- Meet income guidelines set by the program.

How to Apply

1. Review eligibility criteria and income guidelines. <https://www.area15rpc.com/rhtf>
2. Submit an application. Be sure to include all required documentation, such as proof of income and ownership.
3. Once your application is submitted, the AHEAD team will review your request and may schedule a home visit to assess the needed repairs.
4. If approved, you'll be notified of your loan amount, and the repair process can begin!

For more information or to apply, visit the AHEAD Regional Housing Trust Fund at <https://www.area15rpc.com/rhtf> or call 641-814-8400. We are ready to assist you with any questions you may have about the program or the application process.

Unlocking Homeownership in Southeast Iowa: RHTF Down-Payment Assistance Program

For many individuals and families in Davis, Jefferson, Keokuk, Mahaska, Van Buren, and Wapello counties, the dream of homeownership may seem out of reach due to the challenges of saving for a down payment and covering closing costs. The AHEAD Regional Housing Trust Fund (RHTF) Down-Payment Assistance (DPA) program is designed to bridge this gap and make homeownership attainable.

Loans of 10% of purchase price, up to \$10,000, to assist homebuyers with down payment and/or closing costs associated with the purchase of a home.

To qualify for the Down-Payment Assistance program, applicants must:

- Be employed in the six-county region served by AHEAD RHTF.
- Be purchasing a home within city limits of an incorporated city in the six-county region.
- Have a total household income at or below \$100,000 adjusted gross income from the most recent Federal Income Tax return 1040.
- Demonstrate the ability to repay the loan.

Interested individuals can apply for assistance at any time. To begin the application process, contact Matt at 641-814-8400 to schedule an appointment.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR HOMEBUYERS

The Iowa Finance Authority (IFA) offers a suite of down-payment assistance programs designed to make homeownership more accessible. These programs are ideal for first-time buyers, veterans, and those purchasing in targeted areas.



1. FirstHome Program

This program connects first-time homebuyers with affordable mortgages and local lenders. Benefits include lower interest rates, reduced mortgage insurance, and down payment assistance. Eligible applicants can receive either a \$2,500 grant or a second loan of up to 5% of the home's sale price, repayable upon sale or refinance.

2. Homes for Iowans Program

Available to both first-time and repeat homebuyers, this program offers a second loan of up to 5% of the home's sale price. No monthly payments are required, and repayment is due upon sale or refinance.

3. Military Homeownership Assistance Program

Eligible service members and veterans can receive a \$5,000 grant to assist with down payments and closing costs. This grant can be combined with other IFA programs.



Interested?

Interested homebuyers should contact an IFA participating lender to begin the application process. The lender will assist in verifying eligibility and guiding applicants through the necessary steps. A list of participating lenders is available on the IFA website. [Homeownership | Economic Development & Finance Authority](#)



Homes for Iowa house in Fairfield

BUILDING FUTURES: HOW HOMES FOR IOWA AND COGS ARE BRINGING AFFORDABLE HOUSING HOME

Born from a unique collaboration between state agencies, nonprofits, and correctional institutions, Homes for Iowa constructs quality, affordable homes while equipping incarcerated Iowans with valuable trade skills. The concept is as innovative as it is impactful. Homes for Iowa addresses two of the state's most pressing issues: the skilled labor shortage and the lack of affordable housing.

Constructed by individuals at the Newton Correctional Facility who are learning trades like carpentry, electrical work, and plumbing, each home is a fresh start—for both the builder and the buyer.

COGs such as the Area 15 Regional Planning Commission serve as the local boots-on-the-ground partners in the Homes for Iowa model. These regional planning organizations coordinate directly with interested buyers, whether municipalities, developers, or individuals—to guide them through the purchase and placement process.



Here's how COGs support the program:

- **Outreach & Education:** COGs promote Homes for Iowa within their regions, helping communities understand the benefits of purchasing a home through the program.
- **Navigating the Application Process:** Purchasing a Homes for Iowa home involves specific paperwork, timelines, and compliance requirements. COGs offer hands-on guidance to ensure buyers meet all criteria and deadlines.
- **Site Coordination:** COGs perform initial assessment of lots and identify potential obstacles to delivery.

To date, Homes for Iowa has placed 120+ homes across the state, helping reduce housing shortages while fostering second chances. Thanks to the involvement of local COGs, the process is smoother, more accessible, and more responsive to each community's needs.

If you're a local official, nonprofit, or prospective homeowner interested in how Homes for Iowa can work for your community, the Area 15 Regional Planning Commission is your best first call.

Call Matt Naumann at 641-814-8400 for more information.



TRANSPORTATION FUNDING UPDATE

As cities and counties begin preparing for the FY 2027–2030 funding cycle, it's important to take note of current application activity and key upcoming deadlines. For the STBG/SWAP and TAP programs, Keokuk County has applied, Mahaska County has submitted a request, and an application for 10-15 Transit is in progress for FY 2026–2029.

Applications for the Surface Transportation Program (STP) and STBG/SWAP are due by April 1, 2026, at 5:00 PM. The same deadline applies to the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). These funding opportunities support a wide range of critical transportation improvements across the region. Applicants are strongly encouraged to start preparing their materials early. More information and application details can be found at the following links:

THE SPEED FEEDBACK SIGNS PROGRAM

This program, offered by the Iowa DOT, provides free installation of radar-based digital signs that display the speed of oncoming vehicles, helping slow traffic and improve safety. Eligible applicants include incorporated cities with populations between 750 and 15,000 that are located on state highways.

The DOT will provide and install the signs at no cost to the city, and a five-year warranty is included. Once installed, the city assumes ownership and maintenance responsibilities. Interested cities should contact their local Iowa DOT district office to schedule a site visit and begin the application process.

STP & STBG/SWAP

[www.area15rpc.com/
surface-
transportation-
program](http://www.area15rpc.com/surface-transportation-program)



[www.area15rpc.co
m/transportation-
alternatives-
program-1](http://www.area15rpc.com/transportation-alternatives-program-1)

TAP

THE DOT SIGN REPLACEMENT GRANT PROGRAM

opens for its January 2026 cycle on March 27, 2026, at 9:00 AM. This first-come, first-served program supports the replacement of damaged or outdated regulatory, warning, and school area signs. Only cities and counties are eligible to apply. Funding is available for up to \$5,000 for cities and \$10,000 for counties, with additional reimbursement available for reflective post strips (up to \$1,000 for cities and \$2,000 for counties). Applications must be submitted online using the new platform—Excel forms will not be accepted. For questions, contact Hector Hernandez at 641-814-8401.

For more information, visit [Sign Replacement Program](#) | [Department of Transportation](#)



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANTS

The Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) manages the State Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program on behalf of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Area 15 RPC is a partner of IEDA and attends monthly training, and can assist your community with project development for application to the following programs:

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

This competitive program assists projects such as day care facilities, senior centers, vocational workshops, and storm water projects. Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis as funds are available.

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION FUND

This program can be used to rehabilitate blighted downtown buildings to provide economic opportunities for people, especially those of low- and moderate-income. Projects must meet HUD's Slum and Blight National Objectives.

WATER/SEWER

This competitive program assists cities and counties with projects such as sanitary sewer system improvements, water system improvements, water and wastewater treatment facility projects, storm sewer projects related to sanitary sewer system improvements and rural water connections. Application deadlines are Jan 1 and Apr 1.



CITY CODE UPDATE SERVICES

Maintaining and updating the city's codebook keeps city councils aligned with the standards and Iowa codes. Area 15 RPC provides city codification services for our membership.

We ensure that your city's codes reflect the most current safety regulations, legal requirements, and best practices.

We help our cities with the process of organizing and updating the codebook according to model standards.

For more information contact:
Brandon Dicks
641-814-8404.

NEWSLINE

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AREA 15
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

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