

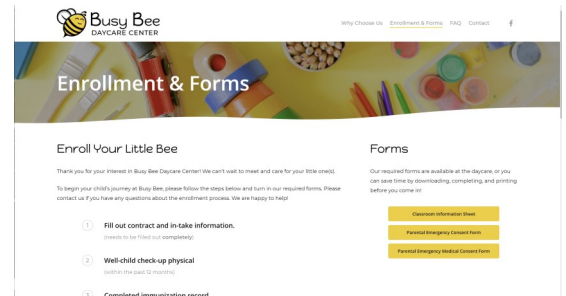
## DIGITAL MARKETING ASSISTANCE TO BUSINESSES

Area 15 RPC was selected to receive funding under the CARES Act through the U.S. Department of Commerce in July 2020. The funds allow Area 15 to provide technical assistance and capacity building for cities and counties, local businesses, and other local stakeholders impacted by the coronavirus.

Through research and planning efforts with our 6-county economic development partners, a new program to assist businesses with digital marketing needs was created. This work includes website development, social media strategies and content development, photography, digital menus, online ordering, and online sales platforms. The goal being to reach customers through new platforms to increase customer base and serve customers in ways that reduce exposure during the pandemic.

Area 15 formed an economic recovery task force to connect with businesses in need of digital marketing support and pair with professionals to provide assistance—at no cost. To-date, seven projects with area businesses are complete, eleven businesses are in-progress, and eighteen businesses are signed up to receive assistance soon.

Belinda Ramirez, owner of Busy Bee Daycare Center in Oskaloosa, received help to develop a website under the program. Customers can now visit the daycare website ([www.oskaloosadaycare.com](http://www.oskaloosadaycare.com)) to learn more about the quality service provided, see photos of the facility, and obtain registration forms. Belinda says without this program she would not have been able to accomplish this critical component for her business and was thrilled with the result! Funding for this program will be available through June 2022. For more information, please contact Holly Berg at [holly.berg@area15rpc.com](mailto:holly.berg@area15rpc.com) or 641-684-8402.



## REDI INC. AWARDS \$250K LOAN TO CAMP365

Fifteen new manufacturing jobs will be created in Albia with a recent loan to CAMP365. REDI Inc. partnered with Albia Industrial Development Corporation to assist CAMP365 to increase production at the Albia manufacturing site. CAMP365 builds portable cabins known as “The Cabin that goes everywhere”. Pictured below is the President and owner Kevin McGregor and Chris Bowers presenting the check for \$250,000. These funds are provided through new grant funding received from U.S. Department of Commerce under the CARES Act of 2020. The purpose of the CARES funds is to assist businesses impacted by the coronavirus pandemic and to create and retain jobs in the area. Congratulations to all involved in this important economic recovery project!



Pictured Chris Bowers and Kevin McGregor. CAMP365 cabin.

## REGIONAL HOUSING TRUST FUND AWARDED \$266,935 BY IFA

The AHEAD Inc. Regional Housing Trust Fund received notice in December from the Iowa Finance Authority of its grant award to the region for affordable housing programs. The grant of \$266,935 will be matched with \$66,734 of local funds to provide a total project of \$333,669 for the 2021-2022 program. Area 15 RPC will administer the program and accept applications for owner and rental housing construction and improvement projects. Most common use of the program is by homeowners in the region seeking repairs such as roofs, plumbing, electric, heat, and air conditioning. Other uses of funds include construction of new affordable owner and rental housing units. AHEAD RHTF serves the area of Davis, Jefferson, Keokuk, Mahaska, Van Buren, and Wapello counties. Applications and guidelines are available at [www.area15rpc.com/rhtf](http://www.area15rpc.com/rhtf).

## IOWA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION REVIEW OF RPA 15

Iowa has 18 Regional Planning Affiliations (RPA) responsible for performing transportation planning in non-urban areas of the state. Each RPA that receives federal funding for administration is responsible for a planning process that meets state and federal guidelines, this includes: assisting with state planning, providing assistance to local jurisdictions, and programming of federal transportation funds. The Iowa Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, and Federal Transit Administration are responsible for ensuring that each RPA is operating in compliance with applicable state and federal laws. As part of this process, the Iowa DOT schedules planning reviews with each RPA approximately every five years.

On October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020, Chris Bowers and Chris Kukla met virtually with representatives from the Iowa Department of Transportation to conduct a review of RPA 15, which serves Jefferson, Keokuk, Mahaska, Van Buren, and Wapello counties. This review included a review of and discussions on the RPA's: organizational structure, outreach to local jurisdictions and the public, fulfilling state planning requirements, assisting with local planning, and Title VI.

The report issued by Iowa DOT following the review concluded that the transportation planning process in RPA 15 meets the requirements, and activities are being carried out in accordance with governing regulations, policies, and procedures. The RPA was commended for its efforts in several areas, including: maintaining a current website, translating documents into Spanish, assistance to local jurisdictions with plans/projects, coordination with neighboring RPAs, communication with funding applicants, and small city and transit representation on RPA boards. The DOT encouraged the RPA to continue exploring ways to enhance the transportation planning and programming process for the region.

## RPC ASSISTS AREA NON-PROFIT WITH STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic planning is critical component of an organization's operations as important to an organization because it provides a sense of direction and outlines measurable goals. The Video Game Capital of the World is a new organization which is developing a museum in Ottumwa to recognize and celebrate the community's place in the history of video games.

Senior Planner, Holly Berg, is working with the organization to equip them with the tools to run a successful organization and develop a road map to a future museum. Holly is leading the Board of Directors through the formation of a mission statement, development of by-laws and museum collections policy. The board will soon meet to finalize the development of a 3-year strategic plan, with the ultimate goal of opening a physical museum.

If your board or organization could benefit from strategic planning, contact Area 15 RPC to discuss how we can help!



## INVITATION TO SUBMIT TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROJECTS

RPA 15 is extending an invitation to cities, counties and other stakeholders in the 5-county region (Jefferson, Keokuk, Mahaska, Van Buren, and Wapello) for transportation planning projects the RPA can assist with starting July 2021 through June 2022. The objective is to help regional members develop projects that can be funded and will improve the community and region. Types of work that the RPA may assist in include, but are not limited to:

- Assisting local governments or bicycle and pedestrian groups with planning facilities, identifying and pursuing funding.
- Coordinating between local government or schools and the Iowa DOT regarding jurisdiction, requirements, and assistance to improve safety.
- Working with local governments and development agencies to improve access to businesses that will create jobs.

The RPA will review the submitted projects and determine the project(s) that best fit with the available resources of the RPA. Selected projects will be included in the FY2022 Transportation Planning Work Program which outlines activities from July 2021 through June 2022. Requests should be submitted by February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021. To submit a request, questions, contact Chris Kukla at [Chris.Kukla@area15rpc.com](mailto:Chris.Kukla@area15rpc.com) or 641-814-8401.

## OPPORTUNITY<sup>2</sup> EXPLORES NEW WAYS TO HELP INDUSTRIES

In economic development, business retention and expansion is equally important to business recruitment. Opportunity<sup>2</sup> is looking to support current businesses by piloting a new “economic gardening” project. Economic gardening looks to invest in the growth of “Stage 2” companies, which are those who have: 1) \$1 to \$50 million in sales, 2) growth in 3 of the last 5 years, 3) sales to external markets outside the town they are located, and 4) a CEO interested in expanding the company.



The program will help business leaders in four key areas: strategic market research, geographic information systems, search engine optimization and social media marketing. The program will begin working with four businesses in 2021, and if successful, expand to more businesses in the Opportunity<sup>2</sup> region.

## UPCOMING GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Please note on DEADLINES to allow several weeks/months for planning to submit a quality/fundable application			
Program	Purpose	Deadline	Eligible Applicants
IEDA CDBG Sustainable Community Demo	Innovative and creative projects to support community sustainability. Projects may include green energy and streetscape.	Open	Local governments
Surface Transportation	Road and Bicycle/Pedestrian improvement projects within the five county RPA region	April 1, 2021	Local, County Governments
Alliant Energy Hometown Safety	Grants up to \$2,000 to purchase emergency equipment, such as Jaws of Life, AED's in public buildings, thermal imaging cameras, etc.	March 1, 2021	Communities served by Alliant Energy
CDBG Water and Sewer Program	Water and wastewater improvements: plants, mains, lagoons, pumps, towers, etc.	Jan/Apr/Jul/Oct 1 <sup>st</sup>	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.	Jan/April/July/Oct 15 <sup>th</sup>	Local governments, nonprofits
Solid Waste Alternatives IDNR	Programs to encourage landfill alternatives – recycling, diversion, new technologies, new manufacturing processes, etc	July 1, 2021	Local governments and solid waste agencies
Jefferson County Foundation	Educational, cultural and charitable purposes benefiting Jefferson County	June 1, 2021	Non-profit organizations
Wapello County Foundation	Medical care and treatment, scientific research, rec facilities, education, public projects/quality of life	August 2021	Tax exempt organizations, local governments

## DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PROJECT UPDATES

October 29 marked a grand opening of the 3-block streetscape project in downtown **Ottumwa**. The 100-300 Blocks of E. Main Street in Ottumwa have been completely transformed into a safe, inviting, and sustainable space for both vehicles and pedestrians alike. Improvements included replacement of underground water/sewer/stormwater infrastructure, new sidewalks, streets, permeable pavers, bike racks, benches, planting areas, trees, and public art. The ribbon-cutting celebration was held in tandem with the City of Ottumwa being recognized as Iowa’s Small Business Community of the Year by the U.S. Small Business Administration.

The streetscape project was funded, in part, by grants from the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS), plus contributions from the City of Ottumwa, Ottumwa Water Works, and the Ottumwa Regional Legacy Foundation. The RPC helped secure an \$800,000 Community Facilities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) from IEDA and a \$55,000 Urban Water Quality Initiative grant from IDALS. This project is expected to be fully complete this Spring of 2021.



Ceremony Re-opening Main Street 10.29.2020

The CDBG façade improvement projects in **Oskaloosa** (Phase 3) and **Sigourney** are on track to go to bid and begin construction this Spring 2021. Final designs are expected to be ready for the RPC to submit to IEDA for Section 106 (historic) review in February. Asbestos testing will also occur in February on both projects and Sigourney is expected to go to bid slightly before Oskaloosa due to additional time necessary for clearance by the City’s Historic Preservation Commission.

The RPC is working with the **cities of Bloomfield, Fremont, Ottumwa, New Sharon, and Sigourney** on several other grant programs to make improvements in their downtown districts. The RPC is assisting in the development of applications to the Iowa DNR’s Derelict Buildings Grant program, the Iowa Downtown Resource Center’s Community Catalyst Building Remediation Grant program, Main Street Iowa’s Challenge Grant program, IEDA’s upper-story housing CDBG program, and the Iowa Rural Heritage Rehabilitation program through the State Historic Preservation Office of Iowa.

## KEOKUK CO. RECEIVES FEDERAL GRANT FOR DISEASE RESPONSE

Keokuk County was recently awarded \$18,478 in federal CDBG Disease Response funding to address emergency public health needs caused by the coronavirus. Money will be used to purchase supplies for the courthouse to promote health and safety practices including touchless hand sanitizer dispensers and stands, sanitizer, and a scanning thermometer kiosk. The project also includes funding for Public Health to purchase a projector and screen, seven (7) new laptop computers and accessories. The supplies will be used to offer telehealth services, patient monitoring, and remote capability. Area 15 RPC staff worked together with Keokuk County Emergency Management to submit the application.

CONTACT US	STAFF	BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Area 15 RPC 224 E. Second Street P.O. Box 1110 Ottumwa, IA 52501 (P) 641.684.6551 (F) 641.684.4894 info@area15rpc.com <a href="http://www.area15rpc.com">www.area15rpc.com</a>	<b>Chris Bowers, Executive Director</b> chris.bowers@area15rpc.com <b>Chris Kukla, Transportation Director</b> chris.kukla@area15rpc.com <b>Bradley Grefe, Senior Planner</b> brad.grefe@area15rpc.com <b>Holly Berg, Senior Planner</b> holly.berg@area15rpc.com <b>Matt Naumann, Program Coordinator</b> matt.naumann@area15rpc.com	<b>Mike Hadley, Chairperson</b> (Keokuk Co.) <b>Dale House Vice-Chair</b> (Van Buren Co.) <b>Bryan Ziegler, Treasurer</b> (SBDC) <b>Matt Greiner</b> (Davis Co.) <b>Wayne Huit</b> (Wapello Co.) <b>Mark Gronendyk</b> (Mahaska Co.) <b>Dee Sandquist</b> (Jefferson Co.) <b>Jim Morlan</b> (Sigourney) <b>John Helgerson</b> (Private Sector) <b>Donnie Garrett</b> (Private Sector) <b>Josh Laraby</b> (Economic Development)

**AREA 15**  
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION  
PLANNING FOR BETTER COMMUNITIES