

RURAL CERTIFIED SITE INITIATIVE



OVERVIEW

Created during the 2024 legislative session, the Iowa Rural Certified Site Initiative (IRCSI) facilitates the development of additional shovel-ready industrial locations in rural Iowa. Certified locations are better able to compete for development projects, which would result in more capital investment and quality jobs for rural Iowa.

The designation indicates the site meets or exceeds nationally recognized standards — including transportation and utility infrastructure — and assures business prospects that due diligence has been completed, reducing risk to companies. This initiative offsets the costs associated with the robust site certification process, which will better prepare rural Iowa for business development opportunities.

ELIGIBILITY

Applications must be submitted by eligible applicants, which include economic development organizations, cities, counties, utility companies, private development organizations and landowners.

A proposed site must:

- Be in a county with a population of fewer than 50,000 per the 2020 U.S. census.
- Meet the minimum required criteria for the Iowa Economic Development Authority's (IEDA) Certified Site program including, but not limited to, land availability, required utility capacities, completed due diligence surveys and site access.

Complete program requirements can be found in the [IEDA Certified Site Program Guidebook](#).

AWARDS

A maximum of \$37,500 is available per applicant, with a 1:1 matching requirement. Applicants must document the availability of matching funds.

Funds will be disbursed as a reimbursement after completing due diligence requirements during the certification process.

ELIGIBLE USES:

- Attorney title opinion
- Boundary survey
- Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA)
- Wetlands delineation
- Threatened and endangered species study
- Cultural Resources Identification Survey (CRIS)
- Geotechnical investigation
- Other costs determined as eligible by IEDA

INELIGIBLE USES:

- Land options or other expenses associated with real estate
- Transportation-related expenses (i.e., roadways, rail spur or improvements)
- Mitigation costs (i.e., wetlands or archaeological)
- Salary/time costs of applicant or consultants
- Other costs determined as ineligible by IEDA

Funds cannot be used to recertify existing certified sites.

IOWA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

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HOW TO APPLY

- Applicants must submit a Notification to Pursue Certification (NTPC) by March 1. The NTPC — linked on Page 10 of the [IEDA Certified Site Program Guidebook](#) — has a designated area to indicate interest in applying for the IRCSI grant.
- Candidates deemed eligible for certification and IRCSI grant funds will then receive instructions on the application process.
- Applications must be received by April 1.

Watch a recording of the [2026 Iowa Certified Site webinar](#) for more details on the certification and grant application processes.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

IEDA will determine which sites should be awarded funding, with priority given to:

- Communities that do not have a certified site.
- Communities that are farther distances from counties with populations of 50,000 or more.
- Sites that have documented support from the applicable city and county government.
- Applicants with a feasible plan to market the site following certification.

The following may impact awards:

- Applicants are limited to one award.
- IEDA must approve funds for certification of at least two sites in each congressional district. Preference will be given to applications in congressional districts that did not receive a minimum of two applications in the 2025 application round.
- IEDA will conduct various background checks on applicants based on the application.

Award amounts will be based on multiple factors, including, but not limited to:

- Number of applications received
- Number of intended awards
- Size of applicant sites

QUESTIONS

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