

2026 Iowa Rural Certified Site Initiative (IRCSI) Policy and Procedures

Notification to Pursue Certification Submission Deadline: March 1, 2026

Application Submission Deadline: April 1, 2026

Match Amount: 1:1

Funds will be disbursed on a reimbursement basis.

Purpose:

To facilitate the development of additional certified industrial sites in rural Iowa, the Iowa Rural Certified Site Initiative (IRCSI) was created by 2024 Iowa Acts, Senate File 574, Division II. The legislation directed IEDA to allocate funds to support applicants for certification in counties with a population of less than 50,000 per the 2020 federal decennial census, and who are pursuing site certification through the IEDA Certified Site Program. Grant awards must be dispersed across the four Iowa congressional districts with two awards per district.

Eligible Applicants:

Eligible applicants include economic development organizations, cities, counties, utility companies, private development organizations, and landowners.

Eligibility Requirements:

The proposed certified site must:

- Be located in a county with a population of less than 50,000 according to the 2020 federal decennial census
- Meet the minimum required criteria for the IEDA Certified Sites Program including, but not limited to: land availability, required utility capacities, completed due diligence surveys, and site access.
- See Certified Site Program Guidebook for complete requirements for certification.

The applicant must document the availability of matching funds.

Funds may not be used for recertification of existing certified sites.

Eligible applicants for the 2026 IRCSI will be identified and invited to apply by IEDA based on the Notification to Pursue Certification (NTPC) that is required to initiate the site certification process. See

How To Apply for additional information about the application process.

Eligible Uses of Funds:

- 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 the authority

Only costs incurred after a NTPC has been submitted will be eligible.

Ineligible Use of Funds:

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

How to Apply:

- Interested eligible applicants should attend the 2026 Certified Site Program application kickoff webinar in January 2026 or review recorded webinar. Contact Amy Kuhlers at certsites@iowaeda.com to register to receive updates about the webinar.
- Applicants must complete the Notification to Pursue Certification (NTPC) by March 1, 2026 via a link in the 2026 Certified Sites Guidebook. The Guidebook will be distributed via email following the kickoff webinar to those who have expressed an interest in certification.
- The submitted NTPC forms will be reviewed by certification consultants to determine whether proposed sites are candidates for certification. IEDA will then review the NTPC forms from certification-eligible applicants to determine eligibility to apply for grant funds. Eligible IRCSI applicants will be notified by IEDA and invited to apply for grant funds and receive instructions on how to commence the grant application process.
- During the certification process, applicants will complete due diligence requirements and can submit requests for reimbursement of allowable expenses and supporting documentation.

Evaluation and Approval

IEDA staff will make a recommendation to the Director as to award amounts and which applicants should receive grants based on the following criteria:

1. Priority will be given to communities that do not have a certified site.
2. Priority will be given to communities that are greater distances from counties with a population greater than or equal 50,000.
3. Priority will be given to sites that have documented support from the applicable city and county government.
4. Priority will be given to applicants with a feasible plan to market the site following certification.

In addition to the evaluation criteria described above, the following may impact awards:

5. There is a limit of one award per applicant per fiscal year.
6. IEDA must approve funds for certification of a maximum of two sites in each congressional district.
 - IEDA will perform due diligence, including conducting background checks on applicants.
 - Preference will be given to applications in congressional districts that did not receive a minimum of two applications in the 2025 application round.

Awards amounts will be based on multiple factors, including, but not limited to, the following:

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

The Director of the IEDA makes the final determination as to which applicants will receive grants and grant amounts.

Grant Administration

Recipients will enter into a contract with IEDA for administration of the awarded funds.

Funds will be disbursed following submission of acceptable documentation that the grantee has expended funds for costs that are eligible for reimbursement.