

The Rural Housing Readiness Assessment Grant program helps rural communities use publicly available data to shape development codes, local ordinances and housing incentives tailored to their needs.

In partnership with Iowa State University (ISU) Extension and Outreach's Rural Housing Readiness Assessment workshops, funding from the program will empower communities to assess their current development environment and enact changes resulting in the creation of policies and procedures attractive to potential developers.

The program, defined in the Iowa Administrative Code, is administered by the Center for Rural Revitalization, a division of the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA), in consultation with the Governor's Empower Rural Iowa Initiative task force and ISU Extension and Outreach.

TIMELINE

July 1, 2026

Application opens through [iowaGrants.gov](https://iowagrants.gov).

August 26, 2026

Application deadline is 4 p.m. CDT.

Fall 2026

Applicants will be notified of funding decisions.

Fall 2026 – June 30, 2028

All project activities and incurred expenses must occur within the eligible funding period. Funding is awarded on a reimbursement basis after expenses have been incurred for approved project activities.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Eligible Use of Funding

The Rural Housing Readiness Assessment Grant program provides funding for housing assessment data collection and the ISU Extension and Outreach Rural Housing Readiness Assessment workshop. Funds may be used to fulfill that process at the discretion of the grant recipient but must contribute to the completion of the housing assessment report, workshop or implementation of the workshop outcomes within the contract period.

Eligible Applicants

Local city and county governments, as well as federally recognized tribal governments physically located in Iowa, are eligible. The government must exist in and benefit a community in Iowa with a population of 20,000 or fewer that is not contiguous to a city with a population of 40,000 or more. Countywide projects must be located in one of the 88 least populous counties in Iowa.

Eligible Project Requirements

Requirements for Rural Housing Readiness Assessment Grant awards include, but are not limited to:

- Applicant must demonstrate the capacity for grants administration.
- Application must demonstrate the feasibility of completing the proposed activities with the funds requested and within the contract period.
- Application must identify and describe any other sources of funding for the proposed activities.
- Applicant must provide required 1:1/2 cash match.
- Applications must agree to contract with ISU Extension and Outreach for the facilitated Rural Housing Readiness Assessment workshop.
- Applications must identify any additional partner organizations that will be utilized in data collection or implementation processes.

FUNDING

Grant Request Amount

Grant recipients will be awarded \$20,000. A portion of the total project cost must be used to contract with ISU Extension and Outreach for the Rural Housing Readiness Assessment workshop. The workshop price is dependent upon the number of communities involved.



Match Requirement

Applicants are required to demonstrate investment in the project process by providing a minimum cash match of \$10,000. The cash match must be secured, dedicated to eligible expenses, an integral part of the project and expended within the eligible funding period. The \$10,000 match requirement may be raised through a combination of public and private sources but may not include in-kind donations of goods or services, unsecured funding or loans.

- Cash match constitutes actual cash contributed toward direct project expenses by the applicant or other funding sources.
- Funding already being used as match for another program — including other funds from IEDA — cannot be used to meet the match requirement.

Funding Period

All project activities and incurred expenses must occur within the eligible contracted funding period of fall 2026 through June 30, 2028. Funding is awarded on a reimbursement basis after expenses have been incurred for approved project activities within this period. Expenses incurred before or after the eligible funding period are not eligible for reimbursement.

Disbursement of Funds

Disbursements will be made on a reimbursement basis. Each disbursement claim must be for an amount of at least \$1,000. All claims must be submitted through [IowaGrants.gov](https://lowagrants.gov). The following items are required when submitting a claim:

- An invoice and proof of payment.
- Additional documentation, if requested by IEDA.

ONLINE APPLICATION SUBMISSION

All applications must be submitted through [IowaGrants.gov](https://lowagrants.gov). Applications submitted in any other format will not be accepted.

Applicants must create a user account to access and complete the full application. Late, incomplete or ineligible applications will not be considered.

REVIEW PROCESS

Applications will be reviewed for completion, eligibility and adherence to published guidelines. Reviews are based solely on the information submitted by the deadline; new information or clarifications submitted after the deadline will not be considered unless requested by the review committee. Eligible applications will be referred to a volunteer grant review committee for competitive evaluation. The committee includes members of the Governor's Empower Rural Iowa Initiative task force, ISU Extension and Outreach staff and expert professionals. The committee reserves the right to recommend conditional or partial funding. Funding recommendations will be submitted to the director of IEDA for consideration and approval. Each applicant's authorized official will receive award notification. All funding decisions are final.

HOUSING COMMITTEE

Applicants are asked to establish a housing committee to guide the process. It is recommended that the committee include seven to 10 individuals, such as elected officials, city staff, representatives from real estate and finance, nonprofits, major employers and concerned residents. Communities are also recommended to publicly advertise the opportunity to serve on the committee. Additional guidance can be provided by ISU Extension and Outreach.

SCORING RUBRIC

Eligibility Review

Applications must demonstrate evidence of the following:

- Applicant eligibility.
- Funding request meets eligible project and expense requirements.
- Proof of required cash match.
- Project duration does not exceed contract period.
- Application is complete and submitted through iowaGrants.gov.

Application Review

Applications will be evaluated using the Rural Housing Readiness Assessment Grant scoring rubric. Each section includes specific criteria and corresponding point values to ensure a fair and consistent review process. Additional consideration — an extra five points — is awarded to applications for projects located in communities with a population of 10,000 or fewer. The rubric is based on a 57-point scale.

1 — APPLICANT PROFILE: 5 points possible

5

Applicant clearly identifies strategic priorities and appropriateness in initiating the study and demonstrates a strong track record of progress through relevant achievements.

3

Applicant identifies relevant notable achievements or strategic priorities.

1

Applicant does not adequately identify relevant notable achievements or strategic priorities.

2 – TIMING AND NEED: 5 points possible**5**

Proposal clearly identifies recent momentum, demonstrates excellent timing and reflects a commitment to active participation and engagement in addressing housing needs.

3

Proposal identifies some recent momentum and commitment to participation and engagement in addressing housing needs.

1

Proposal does not clearly or adequately identify recent momentum or demonstrates inappropriate timing and commitment to participation and engagement in addressing housing needs.

3 – HOUSING COMMITTEE: 5 points possible**5**

Proposal clearly identifies an active committee with multiple, diverse partners. Key partner roles and responsibilities are well-defined and will enhance the success of the process.

3

Proposal identifies a housing committee with multiple, diverse partners. Key partner roles and responsibilities are defined.

1

Proposal does not identify an active housing committee with multiple, diverse partners. Key partner roles and responsibilities are not well-defined.

4 – EXISTING DOCUMENTATION: 2 points each**2**

Previous housing studies

2

Vacant lot survey or data

2

Current housing-related city ordinances

2

Downtown upper-story inventory

2

Comprehensive plan

2

Ordinances or resolutions enacting housing-related incentive programs

5 – IMPLEMENTATION: 5 points possible**5**

Proposal has strong implementation objectives. Project will be successfully realized through a clear, detailed timeline of deliverables. Applicant and partner responsibilities are well-defined.

3

Proposal has identified achievable implementation objectives and timeline of tasks. Applicant and partner responsibilities are identified.

1

Proposal implementation objectives are unclear or not measurable. Multiple concerns about project achievability. Timeline of tasks is insufficient. Applicant and partner responsibilities are unclear or not identified.

6 – BUDGET: 5 points possible**5**

Project budget and intended use of funds are clear and appropriate.

3

Project budget and intended use of requested funds are identified and adequate.

1

Project budget and intended use of requested funds are unclear or inadequate.

7 – BUDGET LOCAL SUPPORT: 5 points possible**5**

All of the applicant match is from local, including county and city government, or private sources.

3

More than half of the applicant match is from local, including county and city government, or private sources.

1

Less than half of the applicant match is from local, including county and city government, or private sources.

8 – SUPPORT MATERIAL: 5 points possible**5**

Support material is highly relevant to the project, is of high quality and clearly supports the project's need.

3

Support material relates to the project and is of average quality.

1

Support material is not relevant to the project, is of poor quality or does not support the project's need.

9 – GRANTSMANSHIP AND CASE FOR SUPPORT: 5 points possible**5**

The application is clear, concise and well-composed. Case for support is exemplary and merits investment from the state.

3

The application is clear. Case for support is adequate.

1

Application is unclear or poorly composed. Case for support is inadequate or does not merit state investment.

CONTACT

Potential applicants are encouraged to review all published materials and contact Sacha Wise, director of Empower Rural Iowa, at 515.348.6156 or sacha.wise@iowaeda.com with questions well in advance of the application deadline.