

The Iowa Great Places program seeks to recognize communities that take action to enhance their local places while staying true to the qualities that makes them unique. Designated communities have demonstrated a vision that values their assets while challenging themselves to set realistic goals for advancing the quality of life. The program provides Iowa Great Places designation and the opportunity for funding of supported vertical infrastructure projects as defined by the [Iowa Code 8.57](#). The program goals are to cultivate the unique and authentic qualities of Iowa neighborhoods, districts, communities and regions in order to make them great places to live and work through professional development training; technical assistance opportunities; a network of vibrant communities and passionate leaders; and access to other state and local resources. In addition to designation, the program supports projects that are integrated with a shared vision and set of strategies, involve significant partnerships and collaboration, and focus on the development of local and regional assets in the following areas:

- Arts and Culture
- Architecture
- Diversity
- Entrepreneurial incentive for business development
- Historic Fabric
- Housing Options
- Natural Environment
- Amenities

The program, defined in [Iowa Code 303.3C](#), is administered by the Iowa Arts Council, a division of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, and the Iowa Great Places Citizens Advisory Board. Applicants must adhere to the [funding policies](#) of the Iowa Arts Council.

Timeline

February | Information Webinar

An informational webinar will outline the requirements of the designation process and provide resources for community visioning.

May | Application Deadline

The deadline to submit an online application to the program is May 1, 2017 at 11:59 PM.

June | Site Visits

Applicants will be required to host a site visit with Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs staff and Iowa Great Places Citizen Advisory Board members.

June | Designation Notification

Applicants will be notified of designation decisions by June 30, 2017.

August | Funding Letter of Intent Deadline

The deadline to submit an online letter of intent to the grant funding application is August 1, 2017 at 11:59 PM.

Funding & Designation

Iowa Great Places Designation

Iowa neighborhoods, districts, communities and regions are awarded Iowa Great Places designation as a point of civic pride. Designation may be used in signage and marketing material to promote the area. Newly designated Iowa Great Places are added to the Iowa Great Places network on an annual basis through a competitive application process. Once designated, networking, professional development and technical assistance will be provided to the community by the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs. Designated places will also receive additional consideration by other state agency programs for endorsed projects for three years post-designation. Additional consideration is limited to up to three projects proposed through the fall grant funding application cycle and does not apply to the spring designation application. Designated Iowa Great Places must complete a re-designation process every five years at which point they can present new projects for endorsement and potential funding.

Expectations After Designation

Following designation, communities are expected to be active members in the Iowa Great Places network. In order to demonstrate active participation and continued commitment through the re-designation application process, communities must have participated in more than two qualifying Great Places meetings, events or professional development opportunities as determined by Iowa Great Places staff within the five-year designation period. Such opportunities may include an annual meeting, regional networking opportunities, webinars, or sponsored state conferences hosted by partner state agencies. Additionally, all designated Iowa Great Places must be willing to be active participants in the Iowa Great Places mentoring program for potential or newly designated communities as needed. Designated mentors and mentees will be matched by Iowa Great Places staff based on community similarities or geographic proximity. The mentorship structure will be flexible based on the needs of the mentee and can include but is not limited to application advice, visioning best practices, in-person visits, or conference calls.

Available Funding: Application Available Only to Designated Communities in Fall 2017

In addition to the benefits of designation, each designated Iowa Great Place has the opportunity to apply for grant funding for a single project during each five year designation cycle. Designated Iowa Great Places may request funding for up to three proposed projects during each of the first three years of their designation cycle, until funding is received, with the understanding that only one project per designated Iowa Great Place can receive funding. Reviewed project proposals not awarded funding but meeting a minimum scoring threshold may be endorsed by the Iowa Great Places Citizens Advisory Board and eligible to receive three years of additional consideration from partner state agency programs.

Funding for the Iowa Great Places Program is made possible through an appropriation by the Iowa Legislature from the Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund. The appropriation, in addition to remaining funds from past appropriations, constitutes the available funding for the program to award. The Iowa Great Places Citizens Advisory Board reserves the right to withhold awarding 100% of available funds if submitted applications do not meet competitive thresholds. Remaining available funding would be offered in a future grant cycle.

Applicant Requirements

A single entity must be selected to serve as the primary applicant for both designation and future proposed projects involving collaboration between a consortium of partners. The selected entity must meet the definition of eligible applicant. The applicant will be responsible for submitting eligible material during both the designation and funding application processes and will be the entity legally obligated to the terms of an agreement if awarded designation or funding. Partners and collaborating entities are not subject to the eligibility requirements but may be subject to financial and programmatic review during the selection process.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants must be one of the following types of entities. Entities who do not meet these requirements are not eligible to apply.

- Federally tax exempt 501(c)3 nonprofit organization incorporated and physically located in Iowa
 - Physical location is defined as maintaining a current home office and registered agent address in Iowa defined by Iowa Code [490.501](#) as well as maintaining a primary staff presence physically located and working in Iowa.
- Unit of local, county or federally-recognized tribal government physically located in Iowa
- Municipal agencies with 28E agreements physically located in Iowa

Ineligible Applicants

- Unit of state or federal government
- For-profit or commercial entity
- Entities geographically located within a currently designated Iowa Great Places
- Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs grantees who have an outstanding final report or who have been placed on a department funding moratorium

Online Application Submission

Applicants must submit applications via the Iowa Arts Council's SlideRoom, an online application portal. Applications will not be accepted in any other format. Late, incomplete or ineligible applications will not be accepted. Applicants can access the current online application requirements at www.iowaartscouncil.slideroom.com. Applicants must create a login to view the full application requirements for the program. Applicants can visit the [SlideRoom Help Desk](#) for technical assistance related to the online submission.

Designation Review Process

Department Eligibility Review

Full applications will be reviewed by staff for completion, eligibility and adherence to published guidelines. Applications are reviewed as submitted. New application information or subsequent application clarification submitted after a program deadline is not considered. Staff will also review an applicant's record of compliance and good standing with the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, State and Federal government. Applications or applicants determined by staff to be ineligible will not move forward to panel review and are specifically denied any appeals process.

Competitive Panel Review

Eligible applications will be referred to a competitive review by a panel of Iowa Great Places Citizens Advisory Board members and citizens. Applicants who submit an application may also be required to undergo a site visit by the Iowa Great Places Citizen Advisory Board and Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs staff. Designation recommendations will be submitted by the Iowa Great Places Citizen Advisory Board to the Director of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs for consideration and approval. The applicant's authorized official will receive designation notification. All decisions are final and may not be appealed due to dissatisfaction. Applicants may review the department appeals policy for information on grounds for appeal and the appeal process.

Scoring Rubric

Application Review

The Iowa Great Places Scoring Rubric will be used to evaluate applications. Each section has criteria and corresponding point values to ensure a fair review process. The application rubric is on a scale of 44 points; this score will be combined with the site visit score for a total possible 51 points. To receive designation an applicant must receive a minimum score of: 41 (80%).

Only applicants who reach the threshold for designation will be eligible for the fall 2017 funding cycle application round.

1 - APPLICANT PROFILE: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
Applicant organization will be solely responsible for maintaining designation. Organization has designated an active board or committee with clearly defined objectives and realistic work plans. Applicant demonstrates a strong record of progress through relevant notable achievements, strategic priorities and a commitment to network with other local and regional organizations.	Applicant organization will be solely responsible for maintaining designation. Organization has designated a board or committee with objectives and work plans. Applicant demonstrates a record of progress through achievements and strategic priorities.	Applicant organization has not indicated that they will be solely responsible for maintaining designation. Organization has not designated a board or committee. Applicant does not have a record of progress through relevant notable achievements and strategic priorities.

2 - COMMUNITY CHARACTER: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
Community has strong cultural and historic character, diverse citizen involvement and an enthusiastic desire for growth. Visioning efforts clearly define physical boundaries of proposed Iowa Great Place.	Community has cultural and historic character, citizen involvement and an expressed potential for growth. Visioning efforts define physical boundaries of proposed Iowa Great Place.	Community has minimal identified cultural and historic character, low citizen involvement and lack of expressed interest in growth. Visioning efforts do not define physical boundaries of proposed Iowa Great Place.

3 - VISIONING PROCESS: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
Visioning Process demonstrated broad and diverse community support and understanding of the Iowa Great Places initiative, high participation in a thorough visioning process and a relevant mission statement that reflects the purpose of Iowa Great Places.	Visioning Process demonstrated community support and some understanding of the Iowa Great Places initiative, satisfactory participation in a visioning process and a mission statement that reflects the purpose of Iowa Great Places.	Visioning Process did not demonstrate community support or understanding of the Iowa Great Places initiative, low participation in a visioning process and an unclear mission statement.

4 - VISION PLAN: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
Applicant demonstrates completion of a holistic visioning effort with measurable goals and identifiable objectives. Vision plan strongly exemplifies bold thought and innovation, fosters a sense of identity by cultivating the unique and authentic qualities of place and will clearly have a transformative impact on community vitality and quality of life.	Applicant completed a visioning effort with identifiable objectives. Vision plan addresses bold thought and innovation, a sense of place and identity and may have a transformative impact on community vitality and quality of life.	Applicant's visioning effort was limited, unclear, or did not result in identifiable objectives. Vision plan does not represent bold thought and innovation, does not adequately foster a sense of place and identity and is unlikely to have a transformative impact on community vitality and quality of life.

5 - VISION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
Confident the Vision Plan goals and objectives will be successfully realized through strong implementation objectives supported by a clear timeline of activities.	Vision Plan goals and objectives are achievable through identified implementation objectives and a timeline of activities.	Concerns about Vision Plan goals and objectives achievability. Implementation objectives and timeline of activities are inadequate.

6 - VISION PLAN PARTNERS: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
Vision Plan is supported by multiple, diverse partners. Key partner roles and responsibilities are well defined and will enhance identified objectives.	Vision Plan is supported by partners. Key partner roles and responsibilities are identified.	Vision Plan is supported by minimal partners. Key partner roles and responsibilities are unclear or not identified.

7 - VISION PLAN EVALUATION: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
Vision Plan uses strong qualitative and quantitative measures to analyze achievement of goals and implementation of objectives.	Vision Plan identifies methods or measures to analyze achievement of goals or implementation of objectives.	Evaluation methods and measures are weak, inadequate or unclear.

8 – VISION PLAN ELEMENTS CATEGORIES: 8 points possible			
1	1	1	1
Vision Plan elements focus on the development of local and regional assets related to Arts & Culture.	Vision Plan elements focus on the development of local and regional assets related to local Historic Fabric.	Vision Plan elements focus on the development of local and regional assets related to Architecture.	Vision Plan elements focus on the development of local and regional assets related to the Natural Environment.
1	1	1	1
Vision Plan elements focus on the development of local and regional assets related to Housing Options.	Vision Plan elements focus on the development of local and regional assets related to Amenities.	Vision Plan elements focus on the development of local and regional assets related to Entrepreneurial Incentives for Business Development.	Vision Plan elements focus on the development of local and regional assets related to Diversity.

9 - LOCAL SUPPORT MATERIAL: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
Local support material is highly relevant to the Vision Plan, of high quality and clearly supports the Vision Plan's excellence. Contains a minimum of five support letters from local government representatives, school board, community organizations, non-profits and local businesses.	Local support material is relevant to the Vision Plan and of average quality. Contains a minimum of two support letters from local government representatives, school board, and local businesses.	Local support material is not relevant to the Vision Plan, of poor quality or does not support the Vision Plan's excellence.

10 – GEOGRAPHIC CONSIDERATION: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
Applicant is located in a rural area under-represented by existing Great Places.	Applicant is located in an area under-represented by existing Great Places.	Applicant is not located in an area under-represented by existing Great Places.

11 – CULTURAL OBJECTIVES: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
Vision Plan focuses significantly on the art, history and culture of the community. Goals and objectives will clearly enhance the cultural identity of the community.	Vision Plan considers art, history and culture of the community. Goals and objectives will potentially enhance the cultural identity of the community.	Vision Plan does not consider art, history and culture of the community. Goals and objectives will not enhance the cultural identity of the community.

12 - MEDIA SUPPORT MATERIAL: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
Support material is highly relevant to the Vision Plan, of high quality and clearly supports the Vision Plan's excellence.	Support material relates to the Vision Plan and is of average quality.	Support material is not relevant to the Vision Plan, of poor quality or does not support the Vision Plan's excellence.

13 - GRANTSMANSHIP & CASE FOR SUPPORT: 3 points possible		
3	2	1
The application is clear, concise and well-composed. Case for designation is exemplary and merits recognition from the State.	The application is clear. Case for designation is adequate.	Application is unclear or poorly composed. Case for designation is inadequate or does not merit state recognition.

Glossary of Terms and Definitions

Applicants should refer to the [glossary](#) for clarification of program terms and definitions.

Contact

Potential applicants are encouraged to review all published material and contact Iowa Arts Council staff, Liesl Voges at 515-242-6195 or liesl.voges@iowa.gov, with questions well in advance of application deadlines.