Engaging Iowa: A Report on the DCA Statewide Community Conversations
Lord Cultural Resources is a global professional practice dedicated to creating cultural capital worldwide.

Lord assists people, communities, and organizations to realize and enhance cultural meaning and expression.

Lord distinguishes itself through a comprehensive and integrated full-service offering built on a foundation of key competencies: visioning, planning, and implementation.

Lord values and believes in cultural expression as essential for all people. Lord conducts itself with respect for collaboration, local adaptation, and cultural diversity, embodying the highest standards of integrity, ethics, and professional practice.

The Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) consulted with Lord on this Community Engagement Report to clarify its goals, gain the tools to achieve those goals, and to assist in executing the steps needed to achieve those goals in order to benefit all Iowans.
Friendly Welcoming People

The Conversations

Wind Power

THE ARTS

Quality of Living

Values & Kindness

People who sincerely want to know your story

A PLACE TO GROW

great place for families

The food!

loosemeats maid-rites taverns

Historic Architecture
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“We have to work on our perception of Iowa; it’s a great state and it’s progressive.”
—Quad Cities Community Conversation

The Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) has a significant role in shaping Iowa’s future, documenting and celebrating its past and engaging today’s Iowans in arts, history and culture.

With the opportunity to renovate the State Historical Building of Iowa, the DCA undertook a dynamic, statewide public input process. Feedback from Iowans was needed not only to inform the revitalization of the state’s flagship museum, but also to spark conversation about arts, history and cultural priorities across the state so that the department and the building itself both reflect the needs and voices of all Iowans.

In July 2014, the DCA convened these community conversations to hear Iowans discuss what makes their communities vibrant, ways the DCA can serve as a resource for Iowans, and how this all might be shared in a revitalized State Historical Building of Iowa. Based on the input of Iowans, the DCA has the opportunity to better plan for its future and in doing so, continue to make Iowa a culturally vibrant state by connecting Iowans to the people, places and points of pride that define us.

GOALS OF DCA STATEWIDE CONVERSATIONS

- Identify a long-term vision for the Iowa DCA
- Identify Iowans’ top priorities for arts, history and culture across the state
- Enable the DCA to maximize its impact on Iowa communities
- Recommend a dynamic structure for the DCA that is sustainable in scope and use of state resources
- Develop a vision for the future State Historical Building
ENGAGING IOWANS

The Iowa DCA Community Conversations launched in early July 2014 with a series of large public meetings in locations throughout the state. To ensure that every Iowan who wanted to could attend, the DCA and planning team selected locations that were within 30 minutes of every Iowa citizen. The community conversations were held in the following locations:

The entire community engagement process reached **more than 1,500 individuals**, soliciting public input through:

- 30 community conversations in multiple locations throughout Iowa
- 20 interviews with community leaders and Iowa legislators
- A dedicated digital forum consisting of an online town hall meeting
- An online survey

Following the initial July conversations, the DCA confirmed the findings in meetings with statewide community, social, and business leaders.

DEFINING IOWA’S ART, HISTORY AND CULTURAL NEEDS

Participants were encouraged to celebrate their state and community by:

- Taking their photo while holding their answer to the question: “What do you love most about your community?”
- Writing on sticky notes—as many as they wanted—the answer to the question: “What makes you proud of Iowa?”
Each meeting was structured with discussion points and the following four questions:

1. What is your name and hometown and where do you go for fun in your town?
2. How is your community culturally vibrant? And how can the DCA help you enrich it?
3. What Iowa stories or themes would you want to know more about?
4. How can all of this be shared in a revitalized State Historical Building of Iowa?

Iowans freely shared information and reports on the highlights of group conversations. They provided insight into challenges, priorities, and vision for each community. Participants were also given the opportunity to ask questions of DCA officials. From these conversations, the team categorized the feedback of attendees into five key findings:

**KEY FINDINGS**

- **Connectivity.** Iowans want opportunities for residents, creative businesses, arts and cultural organizations, and others to network with each other and across the state. They are looking to the DCA to provide and facilitate opportunities to connect, communicate, and access resources.

- **Awareness.** Promoting Iowa’s identity as a progressive, innovative and culturally healthy state that has much to offer is imperative for many Iowans. Iowa has too many “best kept secrets” and we need to ensure Iowans—and those outside our borders—are aware that Iowa and its communities are culturally vibrant and have much potential to seize.

- **Sustainability.** Capacity building and providing access to resources to ensure sustainability of Iowa’s art, heritage and cultural assets was a top priority for Iowans. Communities want the DCA to help enable them so they can grow and thrive, implement long-term visioning with community buy-in, and identify ways to attract and retain young talent.

- **Education.** Communities want access to creative learning experiences, especially for students related to arts in education and Iowa history. The DCA can enhance these innovative learning experiences, and continue to help build a 21st-century-skilled workforce.

- **A Cultural Center for ALL Iowans.** Iowans want a State Historical Building of Iowa that is a cultural hub for the state, and a place that reflects all 99 counties. This cultural hub needs to be the core from which different aspects of our quality of life can stem.
You can smile at a stranger and get a smile back! Green space

Iowa is a place to grow!

History of Iowa

It's small enough for big dreams.

Friendly people

Historically progressive + inclusive

Iowa loves
- Freedom to create what we want
- The focus on using our land for good
- Sustainability in all areas of development

Pigs

The rich heritage of band music

Corn!