

STRIVING FOR ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

THROUGHOUT THE EASTERN IOWA REGION



Delaware
County



Dubuque
County



Jackson
County



Clinton
County



Cedar
County

2021 - 2026

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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Table of Contents

05

Regional Overview

08

Economic
Development Vision
Statement

05

Strengths,
Weaknesses,
Opportunities and
Threats

13

Disaster and
Economic Recovery
and Resiliency

15

The Strategic Plan

24

Evaluation
Framework





Working Together Towards a Prosperous Economic Future

The East Central Intergovernmental Association (ECIA), formed in 1974, is committed to working with member governments, their citizens, and others to empower eastern Iowa communities and enhance the quality of life in Cedar, Clinton, Delaware, Dubuque, and Jackson Counties. ECIA services and programs cover six broad categories: Community Development, Economic Development, Housing Assistance, Employment and Training, Transit, and Transportation and Planning.

Elected officials from member communities serve on various ECIA boards and have the responsibility for representing the ECIA region on issues such as transportation investments, housing assistance and development, economic development, workforce strategies and community development initiatives. Through participation, ECIA members get the satisfaction of knowing they're providing a voice for their community and their region.

ECIA is an association of local governments and serves as a forum to address regional issues and is a place to introduce, test, nurture new ideas and put them to action. ECIA is an extension of our member government staff providing assistance more efficiently and economically than providing a service individually.

This Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is the result of continuous local planning and outreach which in turn, charts the course for economic growth of the ECIA region. ECIA leaders constantly has its thumb on the pulse of community and economic development in the region through municipal and private representation on ECIA's various boards, to staff regularly in the region, listening to and implementing community's needs.

The CEDS is a formal compilation of ECIA's efforts of empowering communities and their people through sustainable partnerships, promoting equity and inclusivity, and providing services to enhance the quality of life in the region.

This CEDS update is in accordance with guidelines specified by EDA and funded by financial assistance award Number: 05-83-04375-02 from U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration.

Plan of Action

This document is the 2021 Five-Year Update to regional prosperity for the ECIA CEDS. It represents partnership and collaboration between ECIA and its member communities in Cedar, Clinton, Delaware, Dubuque and Jackson Counties.

The 2021 CEDS Strategic Plan reflects the vision of the Development District for regional prosperity and economic development. This plan is meant to be a guide for the entire community. Businesses, students, workers and elected leaders should all find value in the content and data of this report.

The CEDS process is a continuing economic development planning process, developed with broad-based and diverse community participation. The CEDS reflects the specific challenges and opportunities of the ECIA Economic Development District and contains a regional overview, SWOT analysis and strategic direction comprised of goals, objectives, action plans and progress evaluation.

The analysis assesses the state of the regional economy, the opportunities and threats posed by internal and external trends and forces, and the availability of partners and resources for economic development. The community's vision and goals, together with an appraisal of the region's competitive advantages set the strategic direction of the action plan. The action plan establishes program priorities for implementation.

The 2021 CEDS is built on four priorities that are the foundation of this plan:

- 1. Critical infrastructure**
- 2. Diverse population and workforce**
- 3. Business expansion, development, retention, and entrepreneurialism**
- 4. Culture and natural resources**

CEDS Committee

ECIA gathered information from all sectors of the region in development of this plan and from these, a CEDS Committee was formed. The committee's purpose is to formulate a regional economic strategy which will outline an approach to coordinate growth and prosperity that builds on the region's strengths, prioritizes key regional industry clusters and emphasizes collaboration.

Public Sector

Brad Gaul (Jeff Kaufmann, alt.)	Cedar County Supervisor
Tom Determann	Clinton County Supervisor
Don Thiltgen (Steve Lindner, alt.)	City of DeWitt
Milt Kramer (Tim Vick, alt.)	City of Manchester
Linda Gaul	City of Earlville
Jeff Madlom	Delaware County Supervisor
Whitney Baethke	City of Peosta
Beth Bonz	City of Asbury
Roy Buol (Cori Burbach, alt.)	City of Dubuque
Trevor Willis	City of Charlotte
Scott Maddasion	City of Clinton
Brian Wagner	City of Tipton
Jack Willey (Larry McDevitt, alt.)	Jackson County Supervisor
Gerald Smith (Judy Carr, alt.)	City of Maquoketa
Roger Michels (Tom Roth, alt.)	City of Bellevue
Roger Laughlin (Redmond Jones, alt.)	City of West Branch
Teresa Weinschenk	City of Preston

Private Sector

Jim Flogel	Eastern IA Dev. Corporation
Shannon Sander-Welzien	YWCA Clinton
Donna Boss	Delaware Co. Econ Development
Elise Bergan	Edgewood Chamber
Patti Hoffman	Preston Growth & Development
Brian Kelly	EICC-Clinton Community College
Dave Heiar	Jackson Co. Economic Alliance
Shirley Helmricks	Ag Business Owner
Rod Ness	Cedar Co. Economic Development
Derek Olberding	Fidelity Bank



Regional Overview

The ECIA Region includes Cedar, Clinton, Delaware, Dubuque, and Jackson Counties and is a rural region bordering the Mississippi River on the West. Agriculture and manufacturing have been the backbones over the last century. The unique bluffs, beautiful rivers, and parks are the treasured assets and lay a foundation for tourism and historic attractions in the region.

The region boasts a high quality of life, low crime rate, ample educational opportunities and diverse recreational activities. Our area has a perceived high quality of life which has been made stronger given events of the past several years of violent activities globally. Along with a low crime rate, the cost of living in the region is below the national average. The average commute time is less than 15 minutes. Iowa's crime index ranking is lower than the National average with Iowa at 2.5 per 1,000 residents compared to 4.0 per 1,000 residents nationally.

A strong health care delivery system exists with both MercyOne and Finley Hospitals in Dubuque as quality facilities. There is also access within each of the counties to a critical care facility: Delaware County Regional Medical Center, MercyOne (Clinton), and Jackson County Regional Health Center. The area is in close proximity to the internationally recognized medical facility, the University of Iowa Hospital which is within 30 to 120 minutes of our region.

There is a potential market of approximately 18 million people within a 200 mile radius from the ECIA region. The ECIA region is served by U.S. Highways 20, 30, 52, 61, 151 and connects to nearby major interstates I-80 and 380 to the south. From the center or hub of the region, Des Moines is approximately 202 miles away, the Quad Cities is 72 miles away, Chicago is 183 miles away, Madison is 96 miles away, and Minneapolis is 259 miles away. Resources are available through Small Business Development Centers, SBA Certified Development Companies, Community Colleges, Chambers, Economic Development Organizations, Job Training Programs, Regional Planning Organizations, and Community Planning Departments to assist new and existing businesses.

ECIA Regional Labor Analysis Top Five Sectors (October 2020)



The area is well-positioned to offer business and industry financial and technical support and assistance to those looking to relocate or expand to the area. There is an excess of \$438,000 available in our local revolving loan fund programs. In addition, Dubuque County has \$738,000 and Jackson County has \$956,000 in revolving loan programs. Other programs and resources include High Quality Jobs, PFSA, EDSA, RISE, Tax Increment Financing, and employment and training programs.

The area is uniquely attractive, both aesthetically and environmentally, being situated or in close proximity to the Mississippi River and the Maquoketa River. The region has five State parks and three State recreational areas, providing many opportunities for leisure and beauty. The region, with its vast natural resources, offers an incredible opportunity to map a new direction that both preserves our rich heritage and uses the innovation and enthusiasm of its citizens to build a more prosperous future for our area.

The very foundation of the region's economy has always been on the rich, fertile soil of our landscape. Recreational opportunities such as parks, trails, hunting, fishing and wildlife observation are fundamental to economic development efforts in our region. Other regional natural assets that make our area attractive and improve our marketing efforts include meandering rivers, rolling hills, towering limestone bluffs, patchwork country sides, grand architecture, simple Americana, fascinating caves, pristine natural prairies, Native American burial mounds, tall forests and quaint villages.

ECIA's Top Five Business Sectors include:

- Wholesale & Retail Trade
- Healthcare & Social Services
- Manufacturing
- Education
- Construction

Information obtained from ECIA Region Labor Analysis

ECIA Region Quick Facts

Source: ECIA Regional
Labor Analysis



203,365
POPULATION

2020 Population by Race/Ethnicity

Total:	203,365
White Alone:	93%
Black Alone:	2.7%
American Indian Alone:	0.3%
Asian Alone:	1.0%
Pacific Islander Alone:	0.5%
Some Other Race Alone:	0.7%
Two or More Races:	1.8%
Hispanic Origin:	2.6%

2020 Employed Population (16+) by Industry

Agriculture/Mining:	3.5%
Construction:	7.2%
Manufacturing:	14.9%
Wholesale Trade:	3.9%
Retail Trade:	12.1%
Transportation/Utilities:	5.2%
Healthcare and Social Services:	15.4%
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate:	5.8%
Education:	10.5%
Public Administration:	2.6%
Other:	18.9%

0.12%
Growth Rate



113,987
Civilian Population
(16+) in Labor force



Associate's Degree
or Higher **36.8%**

Median Home Value
\$155,011



\$57,623
Median Household Income

2020 Employed Population (16+) by Occupation

Blue Collar	28.4%
Farming/Forestry/Fishing:	0.8%
Construction/Extraction:	5.0%
Installation/Maintenance/Repair:	3.8%
Production:	10.2%
Transportation/Material Moving:	8.5%

2020 Population by Age

0 - 4:	5.7%	25 - 34:	12.1%	65 - 74:	10.9%
5 - 9:	5.9%	35 - 44:	11.3%	75 - 84:	5.9%
10 - 14:	6.1%	45 - 54:	12.2%	85+:	2.9%
15 - 24:	12.2%	55 - 64:	14.7%		



Median Age
41.9

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION STATEMENT

The ECIA Comprehensive Development Strategy (CEDS) will inspire and guide the region, its leaders, and the ECIA Economic Development District in creating a dynamic region that measures economic improvement over and above job numbers. This strategy focuses on economic resiliency and recovery while building regional capacity; creating a stable and diversified economy; and improves the overall living environment for our citizens resulting in a vibrant and prosperous region.

Vision: To foster long-term growth and prosperity which will improve the quality of life for the citizens of the region.

The ECIA CEDS committee reviewed existing plans in the region; past CEDS documents; and the SWOT Analysis to develop the four regional priorities as the framework for the goals and objectives of the region's future economy. These priorities include workforce; critical infrastructure; business retention, expansion, and entrepreneurial support; and culture and natural resources.

This 2021-2026 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy five-year plan:

- Identifies a process based on previous best practices for regional community and economic development and open and transparent collaboration.
- Identifies critical regional issues and opportunities over the next five years and an action plan to address these issues and maximize opportunities by maximizing and leveraging assets to compete globally.
- Includes the region's current industry targeted clusters and other potential clusters for future expansion.
- Includes a comprehensive analysis of the region's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.
- Includes strategies to weather downturns and navigate economic change successfully through regional resiliency and diversification.
- Provides action tactics to address the four priority goals for the region's retention and expansion actions; infrastructure enhancements; small business and entrepreneurial support; workforce retention, diversification and attraction; and honoring our cultural and natural resources.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

As part of the 2021-2026 CEDS process to update the goals for the region and to provide direction for economic growth and resiliency over the next five years, ECIA and its partners conducted an in-depth Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis for the region utilizing our regional economic development partners' expertise to develop the SWOT and then our regional CEDS Committee reviewed and approved the analysis. Part of this process was looking at the business climate in the region; the workforce and talent supply; infrastructure; and the quality of life.

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Strengths

- Essential Services (police/fire)
- K-12 Schools
- Access to Higher Education
- Safety
- Recreation Opportunities
- Community Participation
- Natural Beauty
- Job Growth
- Tourism
- Partnerships – Public & Private
- Volunteerism
- Agriculture
- Low Cost of Living
- Access to Mississippi River (parts of region)
- Access to Rail (parts of region)

Weaknesses

- Lack of Critical Infrastructure
- Affordable Housing
- Rural Transportation
- Broadband/Telecommunications
- Rural Business Attraction
- Rural Jobs
- Youth Retention
- Local Funding
- Rural Healthcare
- Lack of Available Workforce
- Outmigration
- Cost of Supplies/Building Materials
- No Access to Rail in part of the region
- No Access to Mississippi River in parts of the region

Opportunities

- New Housing Development
- Workforce Development
- Entrepreneurial Support
- Capital for Businesses
- Small Business Expansion
- Tourism
- Agricultural Land and Support
- Infrastructure
- Natural Amenities
- Redevelopment of Brownfields
- Utilization of Solar Resources
- Cultural Diversity
- Quality of Life
- Entrepreneurialism
- Workforce Training System
- Cultural Activities
- State and Local Incentives/Lending Programs

Threats

- Healthcare
- Youth Flight
- Housing Options
- Water Supply
- Meeting Aging Population Needs
- Limited Retail Opportunities
- Failing Infrastructure
- Impacts of Natural Amenities
- Racial Disparity
- Childcare
- Rural Centers/Downtown Centers
- Small Business Success Planning
- Aging Workforce
- Loss of WIOA Programming
- Substance Abuse
- Population Stagnancy

SWOT Analysis Summary

Recognizing our region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats is an important step to assess where we currently are in the region and where we want to go in the next five years to have real regional impact. The ECIA region has plenty of positive attributes that we will leverage for success, but we know it is important to recognize those threats and weaknesses in order to overcome them to further build on our success.

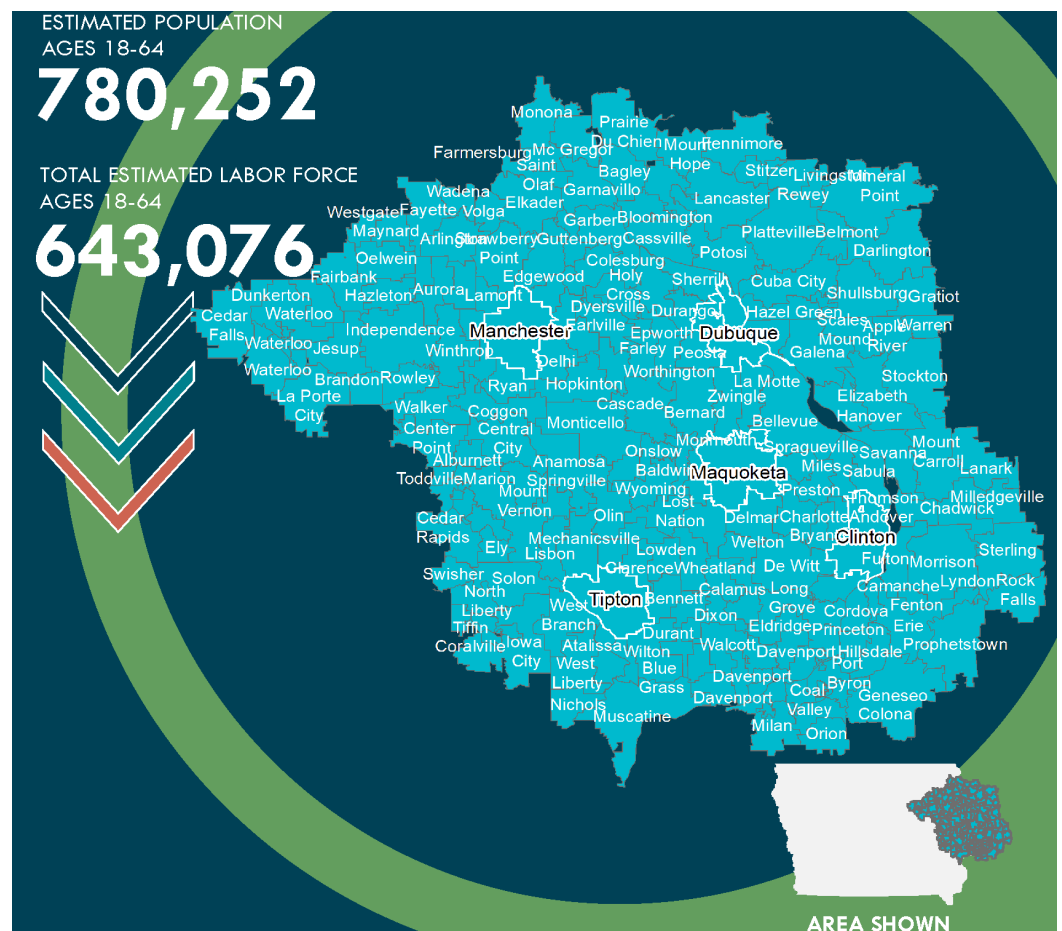


THE ECIA REGION TODAY

The Opportunities

The ECIA region, in Eastern Iowa, is rich in agriculture and boasts a high quality of life, low crime rate, ample educational opportunities, and has a potential market of 18 million people within a 200 mile radius from the region. The region is close to the Mississippi River with two of our largest communities, Clinton and Dubuque, directly on the Mississippi. The region has five State parks, three State recreational areas, trails for hiking, and water trails under development making it attractive to area residents and visitors. The region boasts a low crime rate and has a strong health care delivery system and is accessible to the University of Iowa Hospitals, which are within a 30 to 120 minute drive from all areas of the region.

Job growth has remained strong and unemployment rates have been lower than the national average through the COVID-19 Pandemic. The manufacturing industry has remained strong with over 14% of people employed are in the manufacturing sector in the Dubuque Area Laborshed and 17.5% employed in the Clinton Laborshed area. Another strong industry is the healthcare and social services sector with over 16.5% of people employed in this industry in the Dubuque Area Laborshed and 13% employed in this sector in the Clinton Laborshed. The manufacturing sector had an increase of 9% in total jobs from 2014 to 2019 and the healthcare and social services sector saw an 11% increase from this same time period. A growing sector for the region is the Finance and Insurance industry with more than a 35% growth in volume of jobs from 2014 to 2019.



Information obtained from ECIA Region Labor Analysis



THE ECIA REGION TODAY

The Challenges

Public infrastructure such as water, sewer/wastewater, stormwater, and roadways are aging and funding resources for public improvements is lacking. The need to expand fiber to rural areas remains a top priority for people telecommuting and for businesses wanting to locate or expand. The outmigration of youth in the region is a major concern. In many cases, students leave to attend a state university or college, to not return and accept employment in the region upon graduation. Affordable housing is another concern with the lack of new housing stock being constructed for entry level homes with price points under \$200,000. Rental housing is also aging and new quality rentals are not being constructed to fill the need.

What Needs to Be Done

With our many partners in the region, there needs to be a concerted effort to improve the public infrastructure; increase access to fiber for internet; recruit and retain our youth; and to improve access to workforce housing both rental and homebuyer. These areas requiring improvement link to the needs of the local businesses, employees and the local governments.

Top Priorities

The CEDS Committee reviewed the priority areas for the ECIA region's implementation plan and the priorities are: attracting and retaining a diverse workforce; support critical infrastructure; business retention, expansion and entrepreneurial development; and cultural and natural resources.



2019 Clinton Regional Development Laborshed Study & 2018 Greater Dubuque Laborshed Study
 2018 Greater Dubuque Laborshed Study & 2019 Clinton Regional Development Laborshed Study
 2019 Economic Indicators Report for Dubuque Laborshed
 2019 Economic Indicators Report for Dubuque Laborshed

Diverse Workforce

The Opportunities

Centrally located in the Midwest, the cost of living in the region is moderate and the access to excellent K-12 schools, higher educational opportunities, low crime rate, and essential services such as fire and police, makes it a very attractive region for current residents and employer recruitment. Employment opportunities in the manufacturing, health and social services and the finance and insurance industries provide strong employment opportunities. The regional economic developers devote time, talent and financial resources to provide businesses with innovative workforce solutions such as AccessDubuquejobs.com; Newcomer Services; Distinctively Dubuque; Home Base Iowa; Inclusive Dubuque; and DubuqueWorks. Additionally, we have three community colleges in the region working with employers to provide certificate and continuing education training to upskill and train the workforce; three private universities in Dubuque and three other private colleges scattered throughout the region; and the University of Iowa is within an hour drive to almost any community within the region.

The Challenges

Employers have been experiencing a skilled labor shortage and the region is experiencing an aging workforce. While the working age population of 15 to 69 is projected to decline nationally-1.2%, Iowa is projecting a -3.2%, and the region is expecting a decline of 6.5% between 2019 and 2029. Wages remain lower than the national average in the region with the earnings at 6.5% less than the National median wage. Retaining youth, access to quality childcare, racial disparity, and affordable housing options are also areas impacting the ability to recruit and retain workforce in the region.

What Needs to Be Done

The region must continue to work with employers to pay a higher median wage and continue working closely with the area colleges to provide training in the high demand jobs; develop public private partnerships to create affordable day care and housing options; and expand training options for improving and promoting diversity and equity in the region to assist with workforce recruitment and retention.

Critical Infrastructure

The Opportunities

The region's geographic location provides access to 1,300 miles of waterway and links five states to the Gulf Coast export markets. The region is served by US Hwy 20, US Hwy 151/61, US Hwy 52, US Hwy 30, and Interstate 80 in the southern portion. These major roadways provide a ground connection to the rest of Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, and the rest of the nation. The railway system is also an excellent transportation network for the region with Iowa, Chicago, Eastern Railroad, Corp (IC&E) operating along the Mississippi River. The Canadian National/Illinois Central (CN/IC) operates a line across the Mississippi River. Additionally, the southern portion of the region is served by Union Pacific, BNSF, and Canadian Pacific. Lincolnway Industrial Rail and Park Services is located west of Clinton and is served by Union Pacific. The regional air service is provided by Dubuque Regional Airport; Clinton Municipal Airport; Quad City International Airport; Eastern Iowa Airport (Cedar Rapids Airport), and Chicago O'Hare International Airport.

In addition to road, air, water and air transportation, the need for maintaining and improving water, sewer, stormwater, and wastewater is critical especially in our smaller more rural communities. The State of Iowa has gone to accepting quarterly Community Development Block grant applications for critical infrastructure projects with cities over 15,000 population able to apply for \$800,000 in grant funding with over 51% Low to Moderate Income population numbers.

The Challenges

The lack of transportation funding to maintain the roadways, rail lines and river port areas is an issue for future expansion and development and can restrict growth. With COVID-19, our smaller regional airports have had flights suspended due to airline travel restrictions and funding. Highway access on Hwy 20 in Illinois connecting Dubuque to Rockford and into Chicago is over a billion dollars to finish the last stretch of four-lane. Hwy 30 from Cedar Rapids to Clinton remains a two-lane and is a four-lane priority. Port improvements and lock and dam improvements are necessary up and down the river to expand barge and river transportation with improvements estimated in the hundreds of millions of dollars in the ECIA region alone.

The lack of infrastructure funding is also an issue for the region. CDBG funding has been cut by more than 50% nationwide in recent years and the cost of water and sewer improvements has sky rocketed. Cities and counties are finding it necessary to bond and/or take-out long-term loans to improve basic health and safety infrastructure improvements.

What Needs to Be Done

Continued planning and coordination with the Iowa Department of Transportation and working through the DMATS Metropolitan Planning organization and the Regional Planning Affiliation is critical to furthering the water, rail, air, and transportation priorities. Identifying these priorities through the Long-Range Transportation Planning process is critical to securing funding through federal and state grants for priority projects. Partnering with economic development entities, Chambers of Commerce and private businesses is also important in furthering public-private partnerships and securing funding for regional priority transportation related projects.

Continued advocacy is needed to for programs to assist with public infrastructure improvements. Cities and counties must be pro-active through their planning efforts developing capital improvement programs planning and budgeting in five to ten-year increments for these necessary improvements.

Business Retention, Expansion, and Entrepreneurial Development

The Opportunities

Job growth has remained strong in the region and unemployment rates through the pandemic remained less than the national average with current rates in the ECIA region hovering around the State average of 4.3% and national average around 7%. According to area employers, strengths include strong leadership, employee work ethic, and a strong quality of life. The region boasts a strong business retention program with local economic developers making over 200 calls a year on local businesses and an additional 100 calls made related to COVID-19. Prior to the pandemic, over 33% of the area businesses had plans to expand. Partnerships with the community colleges and universities in the region remains strong and is an asset to providing a highly educated and skilled workforce.

The Challenges

The economic uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic has many area employers changing or slowing their plans for expansions and future growth. The top three barriers according to a survey of regional employers indicates that economic uncertainty, finding employees, and regaining their customers are top three barriers to post-pandemic recovery. While the partnership with the community colleges and universities is positive, enrollments have declined due to a decline of the traditional age student population and the lack of interest in the skilled trades remains a concern for area employers. Entrepreneurial development has remained slow due to the lack of capital for new small business development and the lack of entrepreneurial support.

What Needs to Be Done

Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC) with its economic development partners including ECIA, has developed a rapid response program for companies related to COVID-19. A hotline and a cohort of business experts has been implemented and expanded to provide resources for businesses needing assistance related to pandemic recovery and planning. This initiative should continue and should be expanded with additional resources. Business retention calls remain even more important during this time of uncertainty to keep abreast of company needs and concerns responding quickly and accordingly to avoid company closures in the region. Resources for entrepreneurs continue to be a priority and responding to the needs for working capital is a priority for economic developers in the region and the State of Iowa.



Cultural and Natural Resources

The Opportunities

The ECIA region is home to five of Iowa's state parks, vineyards along the Iowa wine trail, micro-breweries, numerous golf courses, skiing, Mississippi River Museum, and the world-famous Field of Dreams. The Grant Wood Loop is a newer initiative connecting the cultural assets in three of the five ECIA counties emphasizing the great outdoor assets. The region is home to three gaming casinos and a greyhound racing park. A wide selection of artistic and cultural expression ranging from painting, local festivals, plays, dances, concerts, and movies make up the art and culture of our region.

Finally, the Mississippi River and the Maquoketa river run through the region providing for many boating, whitewater rafting and bird watching activities. The region has a strong commitment through volunteerism that creates a great sense of place and lends itself to much local support and involvement in many of the regional cultural and entertainment activities. Diversity remains a priority encouraging more diverse activities and recruiting a more diverse population overall to the region.

The Challenges

The region continues to have a relatively low diverse population with less than 5% overall in minority population throughout the region. Efforts to recruit remain strong but we continue to lack the cultural resources and support systems in place to maintain a diverse population in the region. Funding for natural, cultural and tourism related projects has decreased at both the State and Federal levels leaving it to the region to secure funding for many of its cultural and natural resource related projects.

What Needs to Be Done

Public-private partnerships are important to move forward many of the cultural and natural resource projects in the region and to secure any type of grant funding. Convention and visitors bureaus, economic development organizations and Chambers of Commerce will continue to play a vital role in recruiting and retaining households and to maintain the workforce which is critical to the needs of our regional businesses. Continued sensitivity, diversity and equity training needs to remain a priority across the region providing for a more open and inclusive environment encouraging a diverse population. This training needs to come from the top down to encourage all participation.

ECIA Region Economic and Disaster Recovery



Disaster Recovery and Resilience

Communities that are well placed to adapt to changes underway or potential social, economic, or environmental future shocks are the most resilient. The concept of community resilience is rooted in a social-ecological systems (SES) approach where resilience is most commonly defined as the ability of a system to sustain or absorb external shocks while maintaining the same functions and form of the system. Economic resilience is important from two perspectives. In one respect, it is about a community's individual businesses and short-term, practical actions to sustain their operations after a disaster. On the other hand, economic resilience is concerned with the broader regional economic development and long-range adaptability to a changing, and often turbulent, economic environment.

Business Resiliency

It has been shown that apart from direct damage to premises, the largest impact of a disaster was the disruption of essential services like water, electricity and wastewater treatment. Other factors included disruption in logistics flows, reduced employee productivity through transportation difficulties and the effects of the disaster on their homes and reduced customer traffic. Developing emergency and recovery plans or buying business interruption insurance would alleviate some of the recovery issues.

Roughly 40 percent of companies hit by natural disasters never reopen, according to estimates by the Labor Department. Usually, large businesses and corporations bounce back to pre-disaster levels, but smaller companies suffer more, especially those that were not thriving before the event. With that, the needs of smaller businesses must be taken into account to increase survival rates, and businesses having a strong vested interest in ensuring the preparedness of utility companies, emergency services, and public services, need to be at the table in community preparedness and recovery planning.

An important component of the business resiliency in the ECIA region is our partnership with Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC) and the Economic Development Administration in a program targeted to business recovery. NICC is manning a business hotline to respond to the needs of businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic. NICC has trained counselors answering the hotline providing guidance to businesses with questions related to the pandemic, business operations, funding assistance, etc. Additionally, NICC and its partners are providing targeted one-on-one technical assistance to businesses impacted by the pandemic.

A team of business experts are dispatched out into the field to work with businesses and assist with their economic recovery. Additionally, ECIA capitalized an EDA CARES revolving loan fund for businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. ECIA can lend funding to businesses to assist in their recovery efforts, expansion, etc. The ECIA EDA CARES RLF is a tool used to assist businesses with their economic resiliency during the COVID-19 crisis.

ECIA Region Economic and Disaster Recovery

Economic Resiliency

The ECIA region is highly susceptible to flooding, high winds, hail, and other natural disasters that damage crops and take a toll on roads and other infrastructure. The region's economic stability and resilience has always been a priority to ECIA and its partners.

The ECIA region has taken a proactive approach and has examined what it means to be resilient and has determined a proactive and determined attitude is imperative to remain a thriving enterprise despite the anticipated and unanticipated challenges that will emerge. Resilience moves beyond a defensive security and protection posture and applies the entity's inherent strengths to withstand crisis and deflect attacks of any nature. Resilience is the empowerment of being aware of the situation, the risks, vulnerabilities, and current capabilities to deal with them, and being able to make informed tactical and strategic decisions.

Multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plans (MJHMP) have been completed for all counties in the ECIA region. A multi-jurisdictional plan is important because it: offers an opportunity to cooperate on mutual concerns; allows economies of scale by leveraging individual capabilities and sharing costs and resources; avoids duplication of efforts; and imposes an external discipline on the process.

Resiliency efforts are regularly discussed at the frequent Mayor's meetings ECIA facilitates within all five ECIA counties. Topics related to these efforts have and will include: special disaster allocations relating to strengthening essential services, creating disaster planning documents, and special programs to rebuild communities like meal delivery and shingle replacement. The Iowa Council of Governments (ICOG), in which the board is comprised of executive directors from each of the Iowa Councils of Governments, and is staffed by an outside agency, is embarking on a resiliency toolkit project that will assist ECIA staff when working with communities and other groups in their efforts toward recovery and resiliency.



ECIA Region Economic and Disaster Recovery

Disaster Resiliency

The ECIA region is committed to being a resilient region with respect to disaster mitigation and preparedness. Disasters know no boundaries and cast an immediate need for cooperation and collaboration across city and county borders. There has to be an integration of responses and resources to support those areas that have weak capacity. ECIA coordinates with county governments as lead jurisdictions and local emergency management coordinators and will ensure that all jurisdictions, including school districts, participate. ECIA assists cities in implementing plan recommendations in current planning processes and evaluating the effectiveness of those actions and overall planning process.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, ECIA developed a Pandemic Disease Response Plan, which includes pandemic events that include influenza and other emerging viruses. According to the World Health Organization (WHO): “An influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus appears against which the human population has no immunity, resulting in several simultaneous epidemics worldwide with enormous numbers of deaths and illness. With the increase in global transport and communications, as well as urbanization and overcrowded conditions, epidemics due to new influenza virus are likely to quickly take hold around the world.”

Influenza is a highly contagious respiratory virus that is responsible for annual epidemics in the United States and other countries. Each year an average of 200,000 people are hospitalized and 36,000 die in the U.S. from influenza infection or a secondary complication. During an influenza pandemic the level of illness and death from influenza will likely increase dramatically worldwide (Iowa Department of Public Health-IDPH, 2006). The impact of an influenza pandemic on the local economy and business processes could be devastating. It is likely that 15-35% of Iowa’s population will be affected. There is potential for high levels of illness and death, as well as significant disruption to society, our economy, and potentially our schools, making planning for the next influenza pandemic imperative (IDPH, 2006).

Measuring Resilience

To measure resilience, a region can look at its past successes and if they can assess the cost and benefits of enhancing their resilience, that will be a true example to promote to their regional partners and will only bode well for future resiliency efforts. The FEMA Community Rating System is the best flood impact measuring tool for the ECIA region. Improvements on levees and infrastructure give the community a better rating and lowered insurance rates for residents and also proves economic resilience for potential investors, new businesses and industries.

Additionally, the ECIA region can measure resiliency efforts in the following areas:

1. Number of businesses utilizing the NICC hotline.
2. Number of businesses utilizing the NICC experts
3. Number of cities and counties updating their Hazard Mitigation Plans over five years.
4. Number of businesses and number of loans utilizing the EDA CARES RLF program.
5. Number of disaster related training ECIA conducts through its USDA programming
6. Number of FEMA grants pursued over five years.



Four-Goal Implementation Action Plan

Based upon extensive analysis, the CEDS committee and our regional stakeholders have developed a detailed implementation plan that addresses the priority goals for the upcoming five years. This strategy builds on our strengths and addresses our challenges. The implementation plan will be utilized to help guide future economic and community development projects and investments in the region as they address critical needs and barriers to regional prosperity. Each goal and objective are associated with tactics to provide accountability and performance measures to track progress and success.

Four Goals for the ECIA Region

1. Maintain and Modernize critical Infrastructure for a more competitive region
 - a. Transportation, broadband, water, sewer, downtowns, community facilities
2. Attract and Retain a Diverse Population and Workforce to meet the needs of regional employers
 - a. Child care, quality jobs, housing, diversity and inclusivity
3. Support Business Expansion, Development, Retention and Entrepreneurialism for regional prosperity
 - a. Business retention and expansion, entrepreneurial centers, capital investments, opportunity zones
4. Honor Culture and Natural Resources through enhancing the quality of life
 - a. Rivers, trails, recreation, respect new cultures and diversity



Goal 1

Maintain and Modernize critical Infrastructure for a more competitive region

Objective

Enhance community and public facility infrastructure and increase access to community services and amenities to meet the demands of regional employers and their employees.

Adequate capacity and condition of infrastructure assets contributes to overall economic competitiveness. Strategic investments must be made to ensure that these assets are maintained and expanded. The region will remain competitive and have a competitive advantage when businesses, entrepreneurs, and residents are able to make use of robust infrastructure for water/sewer/gas/storm sewer; broadband/fiber; and road, rail, air and water transportation systems.

TACTIC 1: Modernize the Region's Infrastructure to Meet the Future Demand and Respond to the Changing Business Needs and the Needs of the Region's Residents.

- Promote available land in industrial and business parks for growth in the region by nurturing collaborative projects and by providing technical assistance to cities, counties, and economic development partners in the region.
- Promote and pursue studies and funding mechanisms to expand industrial and business parks in the region.
- Promote and pursue funding mechanisms through the Iowa DOT to expand roadways into business parks.
- Promote and pursue partnerships and programs to enhance access to fiber optics and broadband throughout the region.
- Encourage regional planning efforts and collaboration.
- Promote, encourage, and pursue partnerships and funding mechanisms to improve and expand the region's water, sewer, stormwater, etc.

TACTIC 2: Preserve and Revitalize the Heart of our Communities to Meet the Needs of the Businesses and their Employees.

- Promote, encourage collaboration and partnerships to pursue downtown revitalization programs to improve the vital infrastructure in the heart of our cities.
- Encourage short- and long-term downtown planning.
- Research and pursue funding mechanisms to assist with downtown revitalization efforts.
- Encourage and support entrepreneurial opportunities in the downtown centers of our communities.

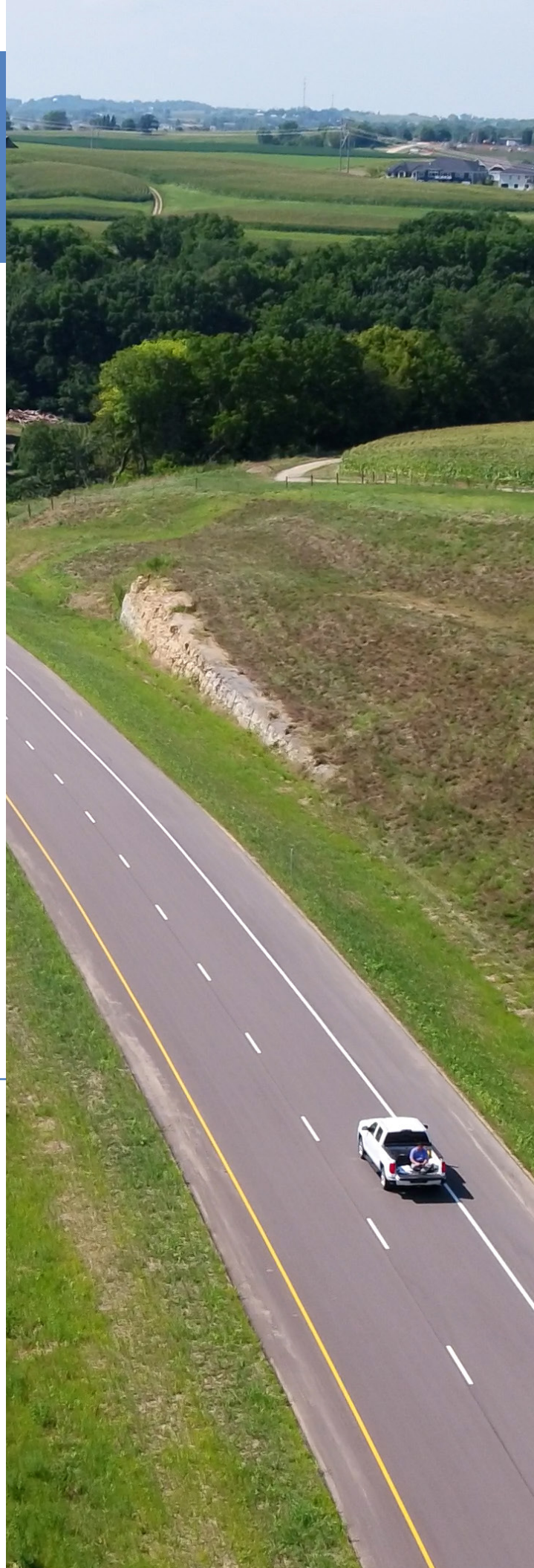


TACTIC 3: Develop and Support Multi-Modal Infrastructure Improvements to Meet the Needs of the Businesses and the Region's Residents.

- Encourage investments in highways, river and rail infrastructure, and air funding throughout the region and into surrounding areas outside the region to improve access and connectivity.
- Work closely with the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the Regional Planning Affiliation (RPA) on their planning program to ensure priority economic development projects are part of their long-range transportation plan.
- Encourage collaboration and participation in freight, rail, air, and port studies and programs in the region.
- Research and pursue funding mechanisms for priority transportation related projects in the region through partnerships with the MPO, RPA, cities, and counties in the region.
- Promote alignment of economic development priorities and transit related projects in the region.

IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

Prosperity Eastern Iowa and all economic development partners; Dubuque Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (DMATS); Regional Planning Affiliation; Dubuque, Delaware, Jackson, Cedar and Clinton Counties; all 66 city local governments; Chamber of Commerce entities; Freight, Rail and Air associations; Iowa Economic Development Authority; Iowa Department of Transportation; Economic Development Administration; United States Department of Agriculture; regional and local transit agencies; local and regional airports; regional and local ports.



Goal 2

Attract and Retain a Diverse Population and Workforce to Meet the Needs of Regional Employers

Objective

Enhance the availability of childcare, increase quality jobs and provide housing in a diverse and inclusive region.

TACTIC 1: Support efforts to attract, maintain and expand childcare services in the region.

- Work with partners to identify/expand affordable/multi-shift daycare.
- Assist in implementing and working with communities toward improving available childcare options.
- Promote and assist with access to childcare issues due to barriers such as transportation, distance, hours, openings.

TACTIC 2: Track and analyze workforce data regionally to identify trends and skill gaps.

- Partner with IowaWorks, community colleges and other partners to track and analyze workforce data. (ie. Iowa Workforce Development data, number of business calls made).
- Transform perceptions about the skilled trades.
 - o Develop new and strengthen existing business and industry days throughout the region.
 - o Research workforce development programs targeted at students and their parents as a possible model for Prosperity Eastern Iowa.
 - o Educate school personnel about job opportunities within the skilled trades.
 - o Assist other partners in creating an “image” campaign to change parents and students’ perceptions of the trades.

TACTIC 3: Increase and diversify workforce housing options (single family homes, multifamily units, lots, and rental units) throughout the region.

- Explore federal and state grant opportunities to diversify housing options.
- Partner with regional public and private housing developers to research and develop housing opportunities.
- Promote housing needs assessment and housing implementation plans in the region to support the development of new housing opportunities.

TACTIC 4: Market available jobs in Eastern Iowa, specifically those in high demand areas.

- Research best practices for recruiting high demand workers to Eastern Iowa.
- Expand the partnership with community colleges for job training classes.
- Develop new or strengthen existing programs that train veterans, non-traditional, unemployed, and under employed individuals for high demand jobs.



TACTIC 5: Educate businesses about available workforce programs in the State.

- Remain abreast on state driven workforce initiatives (i.e. Skilled Iowa, Future Ready Iowa) and encourage implementation within the region.
- Encourage high school students and others seeking employment to obtain the NCRC certificate.
- Promote and encourage diversity, equity and inclusivity training and programming in the region.

TACTIC 6: Improve understanding of all ethnic cultures that live and work within or visit the region.

- Enhance public infrastructure to ensure the delivery of services to address diversity and equity.
- Attract a diverse workforce by creating a more inclusive environment.
- Collaborate with area colleges and universities to retain our college graduates in the region including graduates participating in foreign exchange programs.

IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

Prosperity Eastern Iowa and all economic development partners; Dubuque Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (DMATS); Regional Planning Affiliation (RPA); Dubuque, Delaware, Jackson, Cedar and Clinton Counties; all 66 city local governments; Chamber of Commerce entities; Iowa Economic Development Authority; Iowa Economic Development Administration; Childcare Resources and Referrals; Area Community Colleges; and IowaWorks.



Goal 3

Support Business Expansion, Development, Retention, and Entrepreneurialism for Regional Prosperity

Objective

Continue to support business retention and expansion through capital investments, entrepreneurial centers and opportunity zones.

TACTIC 1: Increase business retention and expansion.

- Support efforts to attract, maintain, promote and expand regional industries.
- Work with regional leaders and Chamber of Commerce to develop marketing strategies that engage networks of small businesses that would benefit from collaboration.
- Support and promote the efforts of workforce development agencies and their programs.
- Support and promote the efforts of educational institutions and their business programs.
- Assist jurisdictions in downtown planning and development.

TACTIC 2: Support and increase creation of entrepreneurial centers.

- Assess current entrepreneurial centers and identify gaps.
- Research and determine best practices for entrepreneurial opportunities and programs for the region.
- Identify what entrepreneurial resources are lacking and collaborate with partners to resolve.
- Integrate entrepreneurship into the K-12 curriculum to encourage it at a young age and provide a way to change the culture over time.
- Encourage an economic development environment that supports entrepreneurship, endorses existing businesses and attracts new business.



TACTIC 3: Assist regional businesses in capital investments.

- Increase number of business visits.
- Enhance access to capital for companies to improve and expand their operations.
- Develop inventory of available land and vacant buildings.

TACTIC 4: Better utilize the opportunity zone designations in the region to leverage new projects.

- Assess where current opportunity zones exist.
- Identify potential projects and investors within the designated opportunity zones in the region.
- Work with partners to attract opportunity zone investors to invest new capital and expansions in business creation.
- Drive more economic development in opportunity zones.
- Work with partners to find businesses interested in operating in opportunity zones.

IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

East Central Intergovernmental Association and its city and county members, Prosperity Eastern Iowa, Jackson County Economic Alliance, Delaware County Economic Development, Cedar County Economic Development Commission, Jones County Economic Development, Northeast Iowa Community College, Eastern Iowa Community College, and Kirkwood Community College.



Goal 4

Enhance Quality of Life Through Honoring Arts/ Cultural Events and Natural Resources in Our Region

Objective

Improve the livability factor and desirability of the region as a destination for business by enhancing and expanding access to arts/cultural events, rivers, trails, and other recreational and national excursion areas.

TACTIC 1 – Promote Celebration of the Arts and Cultural Events

- Integrate arts and cultural differences into the K-12 curriculum to encourage celebration of experiencing different cultures.
- Increase investments in cultural/arts events, organizations, and institutions.
- Promote quality and artistic renewal by encouraging commission of murals and other artwork throughout the region.

TACTIC 2 – Ensure Cultural Sustainability for the Wellbeing of All

- Integrate culture within daily activities, policies, and programs.
- Ensure equal access to and participation in activities and events within the region.
- Mobilize culture by promoting events as inclusively as possible.
- Continue educating elected officials and citizens on the value of focusing funding opportunities for quality of life programs and projects.

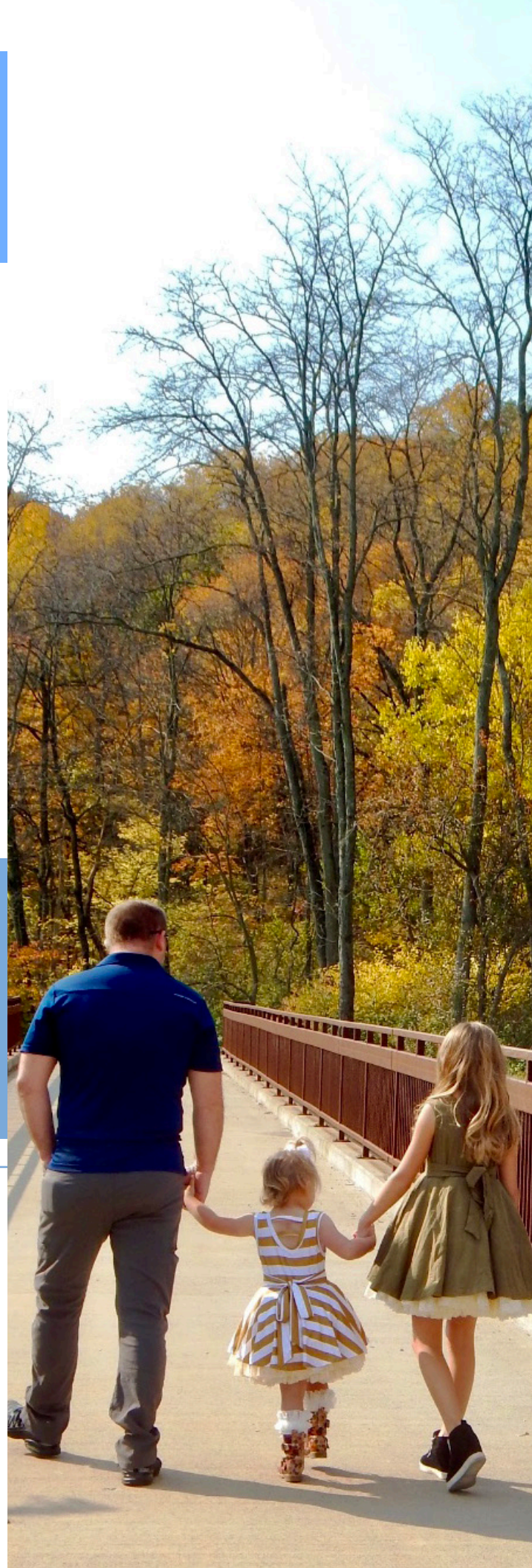


TACTIC 3 – Enhance Access to Natural Excursion areas and Recreational Activities.

- Continue to expand the level of public awareness of parks available by promoting sites like: <http://www.gwloop.com/>.
- Enhance and expand walking, biking, running, and other recreational facilities in the region.
- Expand and enhance the region's existing recreational tourism activities, areas and facilities with maximum effectiveness recognizing budget constraints and the need for grant and local funding
- Continually strive to improve existing facilities while seeking opportunities for future development.

IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

Prosperity Eastern Iowa and all economic development partners; Dubuque, Delaware, Jackson, Cedar and Clinton Counties; all 66 city local governments; Chamber of Commerce entities; Iowa Economic Development Authority; Economic Development Administration; Jackson County Economic Alliance; United Way; Tourism Entities; Conservation Board Entities, Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs and local arts groups.



Evaluation Framework

The evaluation framework serves as a mechanism to gauge and measure progress on the implementation of the overall CEDS goals while providing information for our CEDS Annual Performance Report in each of the years of the five-year report. These regular updates keep the strategic direction and action plan relevant and the CEDS current and provide an opportunity for the CEDS Committee and our partners to visualize progress.

The evaluation framework is an important element of the ongoing planning process and should answer the questions “How is the region doing?” and “What can we do better?” The performance measures will help to evaluate this progress of activities in achieving the vision, goals, and objectives of the ECIA region.

ECIA will update the CEDS annually and will post and distribute the results of each annual evaluation in its CEDS Annual Performance Report over the next five years. The CEDS Committee will adjust the goals as needed throughout the next five-year period when changing strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities are identified. The ability to adjust the metrics ensures the CEDS is focused on relevant tactics for achieving continued prosperity in the region.

Goal 1

Maintain and Modernize critical Infrastructure for a more competitive region

- Number of EDA/CDBG planning related projects addressing infrastructure needs for water, sewer, broadband/fiber, downtown investments, business park expansion or development, etc.
- Total funding available and grants awarded from federal and state programs for water, sewer, wastewater, broadband/fiber, etc and total public and private investment.
- Total DMATS/RPA funding available and grants awarded for transportation and multi-modal projects in the region.
- Total funding available and grants awarded for downtown revitalization and upper story housing projects in the region.

Goal 2

Attract and Retain a Diverse Population and Workforce to Meet the Needs of Regional Employers

- Number of new day care centers opened in the region and their locations and hours of operation.
- Number of open slots at childcare centers regionally.
- Number of industry days hosted by partners in the region.
- Number of new housing developments initiated by public and private partners in the region.
- Number of Opportunity Dubuque programs offered and the number of graduates annually.
- Number of new apprenticeship programs created throughout the region.
- Percent change of minorities living in the region and percent change of minorities working in the region.
- Number of educational opportunities hosted by ECIA and those ECIA staff attend, in the region related to diversity, equity and inclusivity and the number of people in attendance at each event.

Goal 3

Support Business Expansion, Development, Retention, and Entrepreneurialism for Regional Prosperity

- Number of business retention calls conducted in the region and number of workforce related issues/opportunities as a result of the calls.
- Number of new business proposals developed throughout the region.
- Number of new businesses locating in the region or expanding in the region and the total investment.
- Number of entrepreneurial centers opened in the region and the number of new entrepreneurial businesses opened in the region.
- Number of new business-related or housing activities developed in opportunity zones in the region.
- Number of businesses partnering and utilizing community college related training programs to grow and expand in the region.

Goal 4

Enhance Quality of Life Through Honoring Arts/Cultural Events and Natural Resources in Our Region

- Change in population in the region.
- Number of arts and cultural programs/events held in the region.
- Number of communities with culture creations (trails, murals, paintings, bike paths, etc.).
- Number of new projects and funding levels in the Grant Wood Loop initiative annually.

Projected Metrics



Summary Call to Action

The 2021-2026 ECIA Comprehensive Economic Strategy is designed to build capacity and guide the economic prosperity of the region. It is a key component in prioritizing regional clusters and emphasizing collaboration and reflects the views of the public and private sectors of the region. While business recruitment is one component to developing a prosperous region, critical infrastructure; diverse population and workforce; business expansion, development, retention, and entrepreneurialism; culture and natural resources factor into the strategic plan for developing a foundation for securing the future health and prosperity of the ECIA region.



2021-2026 STRIVING FOR PROSPERITY
IN THE EASTERN IOWA REGION
Available online at ecia.org

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