



IARCCOURIER

Fall 2011

GROWING IOWA'S REGIONS
FOR OVER 35 YEARS

Volume 4, Issue 3

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Bi-State Regional Commission launches redesigned data portal website

To enhance and expand the services offered through its Data Center, Bi-State Regional Commission developed a vision to create a data portal website. The goal for the site was to collect, store, and disseminate state, federal, and local economic and demographic data/information for its five-county, bi-state region — all at a single website location. Bi-State is the only economic development agency representing all five counties in the Bi-State region, which straddles the Mississippi River in Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois. Other development agencies represent only single governments or various portions of the region.

In 2008 and 2009, Bi-State was awarded an additional \$25,000 in planning dollars from the federal Economic Development Administration to create the data and information website, www.GreaterQCRegion.org. These dollars were matched with local funds, for a total project investment of \$50,000.

Phase one of the project involved the initial design of the website and database, compiling, and uploading the data, and the creation of data reporting tools. Simple location map technology was also incorporated into the site. Bi-State contracted with a website/database development firm out of Cedar Falls, Far Reach Technologies for the development of the website. Bi-State continued its work with Far Reach Technologies to complete a phase two revision to the website.

Phase two improvements have added numerous enhancements. Enhancements to the website include an updated home page, simplified yet enhanced data reporting and visualization tools including the ability to see the data as charts and graphs.

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Iowa Association of
Regional Councils

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SICOG facilitates historic redevelopment in Creston

Iowa's COGs provide a variety of services to their regions: grantsmanship, planning, administration, technical assistance, and special programs. While these direct services benefit local governments and area residents, other activities conducted by COG staff benefit member governments. Networking and utilizing contacts can lead to project initiation.

Several years ago, SICOG staff members attended an IARC staff retreat and participated in a tax credit discussion lead by MetroPlains, LLC, a historic building adaptive reuse housing developer. After the meeting, SICOG staff met with the presenter to discuss the potential of the development of a six-story building in the COG's regional center and largest town, Creston. The building, once a popular hotel, had been abandoned for years, and the City was unwilling to invest in the building or demolish it due to the excessive cost. A structural analysis of the building was completed. The study found the building was salvageable but would be beyond repair within two years. With impending developer interest, the City took action and used Iowa Code 657A to acquire the property. The city then sold the building to the developer for \$1.

During the development of the project, SICOG offered to help find funding through various grant opportunities. The Southern Iowa Council of Governments Housing Trust Fund offered funding for renovation. While local funding was not eventually used for the project, SICOG facilitated meetings between parties and assisted the developer with for USDA Rural Development and Low Income Housing Tax Credit applications. Both applications were funded.

Today, the project is nearly complete. This fall, the former Iowana Hotel will become The Iowana Apartments, a 24-unit senior housing facility. Formerly an abandoned building in the heart of Creston with an assessed value of \$20,000, the Iowana is now worth millions following the \$5 million renovation.

The ground floor of the building will include commons areas and possible retail and/or office space. Now included on the National Register of Historic Places, the building continues to hold to the original design of the once popular hotel and anchors a continued local effort to revitalize downtown Creston.



The renovated Iowana building will become a senior housing facility in Creston. SICOG has assisted in the development of this project since its inception several years ago.



SICOG's facilitation helped reverse the fate of this historic building. Through networking and establishing relationships, SICOG staff was able to further promote community and economic development in the region's largest community.

ECICOG region rises to the occasion to recapitalize RLF

With a \$1.5 million grant from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and \$85,000 in matching funds from the Washington County Riverboat Foundation, the East Central Iowa Council of Governments (ECICOG) originally established a business revolving loan fund (RLF) in September 2008. The purpose of the program is to promote community and economic stability by helping to retain and attract high-growth, entrepreneurial businesses.

The EDA has long acknowledged the public purpose in assisting with the establishment of such RLFs, but it was only due to the economic devastation of the disasters of 2008 that

this resource was made available to the ECICOG region. RLF funding does not supplant commercial lending, but offers the last gap financing that often enhances a financing package.

Although EDA allowed up to five years for the initial funding to be lent out, ECICOG achieved this goal in less than two years. While a significant injection of capital had been made toward economic stabilization in the region, the agency's ability to meet the demand became severely limited in the short term.

Recognizing the magnitude of the remaining unmet need in the region, the EDA invited ECICOG to submit an application for an amendment to its current funding contract that would provide an additional \$2.9 million to re-capitalize the RLF. Securing the additional funding was reliant on the region's ability to produce \$195,000 in matching funds in a short time frame.

The region was ready to rise to the occasion. Over the course of less than three weeks, ECICOG board members, staff, and regional partners knocked on doors, made presentations, attended public meetings, and prepared funding applications. Through the process, the region was not only successful in raising the match, but equally important, was able to demonstrate its strength and commitment as a community.

A variety of contributors committed to provide new matching funds for the RLFs recapitalization. The list of contributors providing the match represents all sectors of the economy and all corners of the region, as well as statewide partners. It includes individual investments from \$2,500 to \$45,000, and is a testimony to the shared investment in the region's economic vitality.



Acting Secretary of Commerce, Dr. Rebecca Blank, announces an award of \$2.9 million to ECICOG at the offices of Ovation Networks, Inc. in Cedar Rapids (August 2011)

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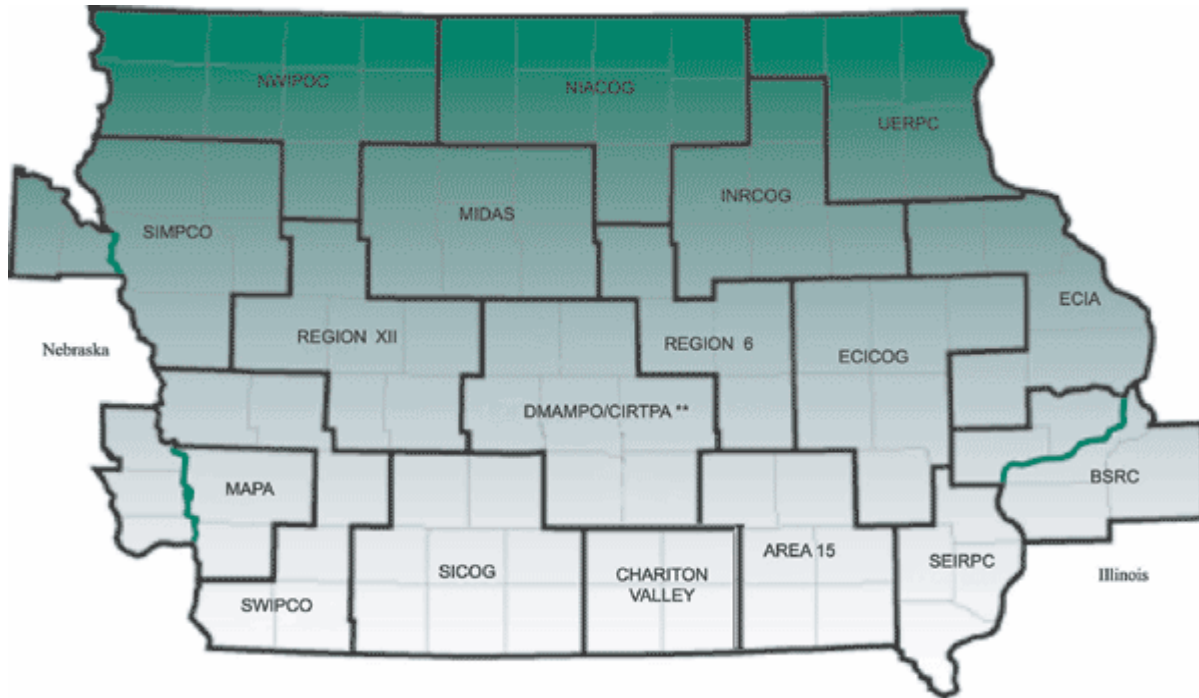
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Organizations contributing to ECICOG's RLF in 2011 include the following:

2011 Contributors to ECICOG RLF	
The Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation	
The Cedar Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce	
Washington Betterment Foundation	
Linn County Board of Supervisors	
ECICOG	
Johnson County Board of Supervisors	
Washington County Board of Supervisors	
Alliant Energy	
Benton County Board of Supervisors	
MD Orthopedics, Inc.	
Iowa Area Development Group Community Foundation	
Kirkwood Community College	
Jones County Board of Supervisors	
Jones County Economic Development	
Gazette Foundation Fund	
Bankers Trust	
Midwest One Bank	

Based on experience with the initial RLF capitalization, ECICOG estimates an additional thirty companies could be assisted with the re-capitalization funds. More importantly, as original loans reach maturity, the full value of the initial \$1.6 million loan pool will be available to re-lend. These two significant injections of EDA and local funding will create a community and economic resource of more than \$5 million that should revolve into perpetuity.

<i>Snapshot of ECICOG RLF</i>	
Total number of loan	15
Total RLF fund loaned to date	\$1,831,812
Total funds leveraged	\$44,176,687
Total jobs created	65
Total jobs retained	248



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www.area15rpc.com

Bi-State Regional Commission

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Rock Island, IL 61204-3368
Phone (309) 793-6300
www.bistateonline.org

Chariton Valley Planning & Development

308 N. 12th Street
Centerville, IA 52544
Phone (641) 437-4359
www.charitonvalleyplanning.com

East Central Intergovernmental Association

7600 Commerce Park
Dubuque, IA 52002
Phone (563) 556-4166
www.ecia.org

East Central Iowa Council of Governments

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Cedar Rapids, IA 52402
Phone (319) 365-9941
www.ecicog.org

Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments

229 E. Park Ave.
Waterloo, IA 50703
Phone (319) 235-0311
www.inrcog.org

Metropolitan Area Planning Agency

2222 Cuming
Omaha, NE 68012
Phone (402) 444-6866
www.mapacog.org

MIDAS Council of Governments

602 First Ave. South
Fort Dodge, IA 50501
Phone (515) 576-7183
www.midascog.org

North Iowa Area Council of Governments

525 Sixth St., SW
Mason City, IA 50401
Phone (641) 423-0491
www.niacog.org

Northwest Iowa Planning & Development Commission

217 W. Fifth St., PO Box 1493
Spencer, IA 51301
Phone (712) 262-7225
www.nwipdc.org

Region 6 Planning Commission

905 E. Main St., Suite A
Marshalltown, IA 50158
Phone (641) 752-0717
www.region6planning.org

Region XII Council of Governments

1009 East Anthony St., PO Box 768
Carroll, IA 51401
Phone (712) 792-9914
www.region12cog.org

Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Council

1122 Pierce Street
PO Box 1077
Sioux City, IA 51105
Phone (712) 279-6286
www.simpco.org

Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission

211 N. Gear Avenue
West Burlington, IA 52655
Phone (319) 753-5107
www.seirpc.com

Southern Iowa Council of Governments

101 East Montgomery St.
Creston, IA 50801-0102
Phone (641) 782-8491
www.sicog.com

Southwest Iowa Planning Council

1501 SW Seventh St.
Atlantic, IA 50022
Phone (712) 243-4196
www.swipco.org

Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission

134 West Greene St., PO Box 219
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continued from page 1 Users can now obtain a “Quick Report” with general data and information about a location by clicking on that locality on a map interface. The website now contains expanded datasets, allowing users to conduct historic trending. Back-end data and content management improvements were also completed. The website was re-launched on October 1, 2011. For more information, please visit www.GreaterQCRegion.org.

The screenshot displays the Greater Quad Cities Region website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for "QCRegion ReportBuilder", "Visiting & Living Here", "Doing Business Here", "About Us", and "Contact Us". Below the navigation bar, a map of the region is shown, with a red line indicating Interstate 80 and a blue line indicating the Mississippi River. The map is titled "QCRegion ReportBuilder" and shows various counties and cities. To the right of the map, there is a search bar and a "Search" button. Below the search bar, there is a section titled "More Regional Statistics" and a "GreaterQCRegion Profile" section. The profile section lists several key statistics:

Total Population	422,435
Labor Force, current month	229,179
Percent Unemployed, current month	7.2%
ACCRA Cost of Living (Percent of average; average = 100)	99.4
Educational Attainment High School Diploma or higher	88.1%
Bachelor's Degree or higher	23.9%
Median Household Income*	\$48,483

* Data is for the Davenport-Rock Island-Moline, IL-IA Metropolitan Statistical Area.

Below the profile section, there is an "Announcements" section with three items:

- GreaterQCRegion.org gets facelift** 10/1/2011 [Read More](#)
- NEW DATA! 2010 Census** 9/30/2011 [Read More](#)
- NEW DATA! August 2011 Labor Force** 9/29/2011 [Read More](#)

At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with the text "Greater Quad Cities Region ©2011 • [Privacy Policy](#) • [Terms of Use](#) • [Sitemap](#) • [Login](#)".