

# Community Matters Now



A monthly publication for Iowa leaders from Extension and Outreach Community and Economic Development

## FUNDRAISING IN A TIME OF ECONOMIC SHORTAGE

By Lynn Adams | Community Development Specialist

Nonprofit organizations, suddenly paralyzed by a new reality thrust upon them by COVID-19, are now asking the question: Can we fundraise? The short answer is yes and the longer answer is how.

You may have noticed how abruptly advertisements for products and services by the for-profit sector evaporated as the pandemic inflicted staggering pain and suffering on people and communities. Businesses and industries paused advertising even though they had at their disposal departments fully staffed with seasoned professionals. They too a breath to recalibrate for these times. Now you are witnessing the emergence of advertising for consumerism but with a much different tone and language.

Fundraising is critical for the survival of nonprofits and the mission work of many of them is now more important than ever as we attempt to move people through this life-threatening crisis and into recovery. Form a COVID-19 task force to make a comprehensive plan to transform your traditional fundraising campaign style. Here are just a few broad things to address in that plan:

Focus on retention: Work to move one-time givers to monthly givers and increase the gift amounts from your existing sustainers.

Expand your use of social networking to nurture donor relationships and get creative with online engagement opportunities such as video conferencing events.

Vigilantly review your monthly donor reports and immediately communicate with anyone who has lapsed or may lapse due to an expiring credit card, for example.

Be fearless with using new platforms that reach into new audiences for an introduction to your work now that may lead to increasing your donor base later.

Regardless of your nonprofit mission, continue to message your value and relevance, especially through stories shared by your donors.

So, for you all on the front lines and those working behind the scenes to provide comfort and care and are helping people to meet their basic human needs in your communities, it is absolutely okay to ask for gifts from your donor base, especially since your costs are probably increasing. You can make that case just use a softer ask which includes language like "if you are able."

For those enriching lives through music, art and culture, ensure you remain an option for people wanting to give on your websites. Heighten your presence with unique engagement opportunities that illuminate your value. Perhaps a museum can offer a virtual tour or a cultural center can conduct a series of online cooking classes.



This is not a time for acquisition, so focus on retention and moving people into higher gift levels. Some people are still able to and will continue giving. Use loving and understanding language for those who may have to suspend giving in these times.

### ONLINE RESOURCES

[PANDEMIC CHECKLIST FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS](#)

[COVID-19 HEALTH AND ECONOMIC INDICATORS](#)

[NONPROFIT FUNDRAISING DURING AND AFTER COVID-19](#)

[COVID-19 FEDERAL RURAL RESOURCE GUIDE](#)

[REGISTRATION FOR VIRTUAL MUNICIPAL PROFESSIONALS INSTITUTE AND ACADEMY](#)

[COVID-19 IOWA EVICTION AND FORECLOSURE PREVENTION PROGRAM](#)

## EXTENSION CED ASSISTS PUBLIC, NONPROFIT SECTORS

Last month we focused Issue 2 of *Community Matters Now* on the efforts we are making to assist small businesses through the long and difficult COVID-19 response and recovery process. This month we want to draw your attention to just a few of the steps we are taking to help the public and nonprofit (P-NP) sectors adjust to the current reality. While the focus and objectives of P-NPs are different than those of the private sector, all need funding to survive. In "Fundraising in a Time of Economic Shortage" Lynn Adams offers ideas—gained through years of experience working with nonprofits—on how pandemics and recessions need not result in drastically reduced giving when the organization's mission is clear and compelling. Jane Goeken has moved her

long-successful Grant Writing 101 course on line, and explains how P-NP sector partners can access her expertise even during these times of limited face-to-face outreach.

In addition to money, P-NP sector organizations need effective leadership. Our Leading Communities program offers skills and engagement techniques to current and aspiring local leaders, while our Rural Housing Readiness Assessment program provides an evaluation and action planning process for community leaders who want to take the initiative to address challenges they are facing in providing quality, affordable housing. Our CED specialists have created new materials, tools and techniques for carrying on the

work of these programs through a mix of virtual classroom and virtual engagement methods, and good old-fashioned one-on-one assistance.

Like businesses, local governments and philanthropic organizations cannot simply press "pause" and wait to solve long-standing challenges until things return to "normal." Because you cannot press "pause," neither have we.



Gary Taylor  
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## GRANT WRITING 101 SUCCESSFULLY TRANSITIONS TO VIRTUAL FORMAT

By Jane Goeken | Community Development Specialist

Grant Writing 101 is one of several programs from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Community and Economic Development (CED) to be offered virtually. In the age of social distancing, CED specialists continue to adapt to the changing needs of Iowans.

Grant Writing 101 is a three-hour workshop that provides hands-on training in seeking and writing successful grant applications for representatives of nonprofits, local government, schools, and other organizations.

The virtual workshops are presented by ISU Extension and Outreach community development specialists Jane Nolan Goeken and Eric Christianson. Both have extensive experience writing and reviewing grant applications and working with various federal, state, local, and private foundation grant programs. During the workshop, they assist participants in

exploring various public and private funding sources and provide instruction and tips on planning projects and writing successful grant applications.

Goeken and Christianson piloted the first virtual Grant Writing 101 workshop to 17 representatives of nonprofits, local government, schools, and other organizations in Wayne County of April 20. This workshop, originally scheduled as an in-person session in March, was canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since successfully piloting the virtual workshop, Goeken and Christianson have completed sessions for two additional counties. ISU Extension and Outreach CED cosponsored a workshop with ISU Extension and Outreach – Madison County on May 21 for 23 participants and with ISU Extension and Outreach – Palo Alto County on May 27 for 14 participants.

Tom Leners, administrator of the Greater Madison County Community Foundation, lauded the impact of Grant Writing 101. "I believe the average application was a better-written, easier-to-read document," he said.

"Better applications made the grant selection process easier for the board. Board members didn't have to interpret the grant writer's intent."

As the state begins to reopen, Grant Writing 101 can be delivered either as a face-to-face or an online workshop. The fee for the program is \$750, with sponsors permitted to charge participants to recoup part or all of the sponsorship fee.

Communities or organizations interested in scheduling a Grant Writing 101 workshop can contact Jane Nolan Goeken at 712-240-2504 or [jngoeken@iastate.edu](mailto:jngoeken@iastate.edu).

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## HOUSING PLANNING TAKES ON A VIRTUAL TWIST

By Abbie Gaffey | Community Development Specialist

Neither rain, nor snow, nor heat, nor gloom of night, nor pandemic can stop community leaders from envisioning a better future for their communities – even if they have to do it virtually.

Community leaders in Ida Grove are learning about their community's need for housing while also learning new uses for platforms such as Adobe Connect, Mural virtual strategic planning software, Google Docs, Qualtrics surveys and, of course, Zoom.

Ida Grove is the inaugural community for the Rural Housing Readiness Assessment (RHRA) program that Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Community Economic Development is providing through grants from the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) and their Empower Rural Iowa division. The RHRA is a data-driven decision-making program where participating communities learn where to find the information they need, how to interpret the data, and how to incorporate the data into decisions. The program includes a self-study assessment tool that a community uses to find the various policies, ordinances, codes, programs, resources, and rules that guide housing development in their community. After completing the tool, ISU provides an educational workshop

exploring the results of the assessment and explaining various aspects of housing market development, giving examples of what other communities in Iowa have successfully used to address their own housing needs. The next step is gathering community input on what types of housing, and at what price points, residents would like to see developed in their town. The program concludes with a co-created strategic plan identifying projects and resources that will help the town achieve its housing goals.

While the RHRA was envisioned to be a face-to-face educational program delivered in participating communities, the COVID-19 social distancing guidelines make it difficult for smaller communities to find gathering spaces to accommodate groups of 25 or larger in a safe manner. Virtual technology allows ISU Extension and Outreach CED a means of safely working with larger groups while modeling how community engagement and planning can be adaptable, interesting, responsive, and collaborative. The unexpected side benefit of the virtual delivery method has been to increase the technological proficiency of community leaders as they use platforms



such as Zoom and Connect in non-passive ways such as responding to poll questions, working in break out rooms, brainstorming on virtual “sticky walls,” and sharing documents in real time.

Both the CDBG and Empower Rural Iowa RHRA programs offer the same workshops, assessment tool, and planning process with the main difference being that the Empower Rural Iowa grant pool requires a competitive application. To apply for the Empower Rural Iowa funding, interested communities should contact Liesl Seabert at 515-348-6154 or [rural@iowaeda.com](mailto:rural@iowaeda.com). Communities with a low-moderate income population of 50% can apply directly to ISU Extension and Outreach CED by contacting Jon Wolseth at 515-509-0558 or [jwolseth@iastate.edu](mailto:jwolseth@iastate.edu).

## APPANOOSE, HENRY COUNTIES SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETE VIRTUAL LEADING COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

By Brian Perry | Community Development Specialist

Leading Communities: A Place-Based Community Leadership Program provided by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Community and Economic Development (CED) was offered virtually for the first time to three counties that had classroom instruction interrupted by COVID-19. Two of the counties, Appanoose and Henry, completed the program in May. The third, Sac County, will finish this July.

Appanoose and Henry Counties had completed five of the six sessions of Leading Communities prior to the closings. Sac County has sessions five and six to complete.

Given the opportunity to complete the program virtually, all three counties agreed to continue and CED staff recreated the entire program in a virtual environment.

The format for the final sessions were generally in keeping with those in the classroom, with the exception that each virtual session took place over two periods of time. The flow was the same as the classroom, while the communication options were changed. This was to keep the same rhythm for the participants.

Making the program virtual did not lessen the positive impact that Leading Communities has on participants.

“The Leading Communities Program has been wonderful for our community. When the Chamber of Commerce decided to sponsor a community leadership program, we had no idea how valuable the vision portion of our program would be,” said Kristi Ray, executive director of the Mount Pleasant Chamber of Commerce.

With the coming fall classes, CED faculty and specialists will continue to adapt to the changing needs of Iowans while improving the delivery of programming. To keep the program within the same six-session time frame, Leading Communities will employ the “flipped classroom” method of teaching, allowing participants to read assigned work ahead of each session. This form of asynchronous and synchronous learning will allow for the session to be discussion- and activity-based and kept within a two-hour time frame.

Virtual Leading Communities will also be platform-independent to allow it to be accessible in more settings.

Communities and organizations interested in hosting Leading Communities should contact Brian Perry at 501-772-8988 or [bmperry@iastate.edu](mailto:bmperry@iastate.edu).

# IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

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