



University of Northern Iowa Annual Economic Development Report – FY2024

Section 1. UNI's Economic Development Activities to Enhance Economic Growth in Iowa – Highlights and Summary

The University of Northern Iowa (UNI) provided economic development assistance to all of Iowa's 99 counties for the 25th consecutive year. UNI's economic development outreach programs are housed in the Business and Community Services (BCS) division and work toward supporting UNI strategic goal 2, to "Empower Communities to Shape Their Future." Since 2000, BCS has engaged the entire university community in its outreach efforts, including faculty, staff, students, and alumni – all of whom play a critical role in Building a Better Iowa. Unique client interaction in FY2024 exceeded 4,100, a record high for BCS outreach centers and programs.

Specific areas of service offered by UNI BCS include: entrepreneurship, community and economic development, market research, environmental research and sustainability, metal casting, and manufacturing 4.0.

Some exceptional recognition and milestones in the past year include:

- UNI's Tallgrass Prairie Center was part of the cover story in the January issue of *National Geographic* and celebrated its 25th Anniversary.
- Advance Iowa and the Iowa Center for Employee Ownership received recognition and support from the Ford Foundation and Rutgers University to formally establish a rural-focused ESOP initiative.
- The UNI Foundry 4.0 Center and the Center for Business Growth and Innovation completed a major project with the Defense Logistics Agency to enhance supply chain resiliency for sustainment parts for the military.
- Jennifer Trent, program manager for the Iowa Waste Reduction Center, was elected President of the United States Composting Council.
- The Institute for Decision Making (IDM) was asked to assume the leadership role for the Iowa Rural Development Council for the next year during the executive director's absence
- Drew Conrad, IDM director, was appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Labor to the 14-member federal Workforce Information Advisory Council to serve with other labor market experts across the country.
- The Center for Energy and Environmental Education was selected as the feature presentation at the America Service Commission National Conference for 2024.

Summary of BCS' key economic development program outcomes for FY2024:

Overall Outcomes

- Provided service to clients in all 99 Iowa counties with a total of 4,126 unique businesses, communities, nonprofit organizations, and governmental entities, and served an additional 44,852 unique visitors to IASourceLink.com.
- Reached more than 251,000 Iowans through BCS programs and projects.
- Engaged 113 faculty members and 227 students in the direct delivery of BCS client services, and another 3,122 students were reached by BCS programs.
- Leveraged each \$1 invested by the state with \$5 in private grants, contracts, fees or federal funding.

Summarized Impacts on the Iowa Economy

- Completed a \$2 million investment in the Metal Casting Center's foundry in the newly renovated Applied Engineering Building on the UNI campus to create the most modern foundry on a university campus in the country.
- The Institute for Decision Making (IDM) expanded its partnership with the statewide Industry 4.0 Partner Consortium organized by Iowa's community colleges and Iowa State's Center for Industrial Research and Services (CIRAS) to offer Manufacturing 4.0 training to economic developers.
- More than 325,000 acres of public roadsides have been assisted by the Tallgrass Prairie Center with ecological integrated management services.
- Two additional cohorts of the Black Business Entrepreneur Accelerator (BBEA) were assisted by the UNI JPEC. Overall, assistance has been provided to 77 BBEA graduates.
- The UNI Family Business Center expanded its programming to reach 193 family businesses in 66 counties across Iowa.
- Green Iowa AmeriCorps provided energy efficiency services to 10,000 homes in Iowa and completed 6,000 projects through assistance from 2,700 volunteers and with 400 community organizations.

Entrepreneurship, Business Development and Incubation

- Supported 1,909 Iowa businesses with market information by the Business Concierge team, which is part of IASourceLink.com, a joint program of the UNI JPEC and the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA).
- Expanded the UNI Family Business Center with programs such as the breakfast series, family business workshops, peer group meetings, the annual Iowa Family Business Conference, and conducted the first family business management course at UNI.
- Assisted 91 Iowa companies and conducted 23 seminars or presentations related to succession planning and employee ownership in all regions of Iowa through Advance Iowa.
- Incubated 13 student businesses in the UNI JPEC R.J. McElroy Student Business Incubator and 20 additional students were assisted as affiliate tenants.
- Served 325 new clients through UNI's Small Business Development Center (SBDC).

Local Economic Development

- Provided strategic planning and comprehensive research assistance to 126 community partners, 10 additional regional groups, and 45 service providers and utilities companies across Iowa through IDM.
- Assisted with the creation of the Iowa Rural Vitality Coalition in collaboration with Empower Rural Iowa, the Iowa Rural Development Council, ISU Extension, The University of Iowa and Wellmark.
- Conducted a statewide survey of tourism organizations and presented the results to assist the IEDA and its tourism industry partners.
- Helped lead the statewide Industry 4.0 Partner Consortium to help economic developers to better assist local manufacturers.
- Trained an additional 90 economic developers through the Heartland Economic Development Course.

Waste Reduction, Environmental Assistance, and Sustainability

- The Local Food Program (CEEE) worked with 180 organizations in 18 counties providing technical assistance and education on local projects and goals.
- Worked with the Resilient Iowa Communities project with city and county partners on 8 greenhouse gas and carbon sequestration initiatives.
- Distributed native seed for 43 county roadsides and more than 3,000 acres as part of the Tallgrass Prairie Center's (TPC) roadside vegetation project and published an interactive map to showcase native roadsides.
- Expanded the Irvine Prairie in rural Benton County from 77 to 292 acres.
- Certified 38 craft breweries across the state through the Iowa Green Brewery project, a nationally recognized program of the Iowa Waste Reduction Center (IWRC).
- Provided customized environmental technical assistance and on-site reviews through the IWRC to 114 Iowa small businesses and conducted 9 energy efficiency visits with small businesses.
- Expanded solar radiation modeling for the entire state of Iowa by the GeoTREE Center for the Iowa Energy Center.

Advanced Manufacturing and Market Research

- Trained 234 military painters at 5 satellite training sites through the STAR4D program.
- Served 40 Iowa foundries and supply chain companies with automation and Internet of Things (IoT) sensor technologies through the Foundry 4.0 Center.
- Completed a supply chain resiliency program with the Defense Logistics Agency to enhance the Department of Defense supply chain for sustainment parts.
- Hosted more than 900 visitors to demonstrate new Manufacturing 4.0 innovations and the digital twin at the Foundry 4.0 Center.
- Conducted research among Iowa businesses for the IEDA to better inform economic assistance and programming related to recent economic conditions.
- Provided market research and competitive intelligence to 12 Iowa companies and organizations by Strategic Marketing Services (SMS).

Section 2. Technology Transfer and Intellectual Property

FY2024	
	UNI
Number of disclosures of intellectual property	13
Number of patent applications filed	3
Number of patents awarded	2
Number of license and option agreements executed on institutional intellectual property	1
Number of license and option agreements yielding income	12
Revenue to Iowa companies as a result of licensed technologies	\$5,200,000
Number of start-up companies formed, in total and in Iowa	107/107
Number of companies in research parks and incubators	18
Number of new companies in research parks and incubators	7
Number of employees in companies in research parks and incubators	22
Royalties/license fee income	\$68,810
Total sponsored funding	\$35,088,062
Corporate-sponsored funding for research and economic development and revenue generation	\$1,117,300
Annual appropriations for economic development	\$1,460,740
Regents Innovation Fund	\$900,000

Section 3. Overview of UNI’s Economic Development Programs

UNI outreach services and community and economic development activities are outlined in a table format on the following four pages. The format provides a brief overview of each program, its purpose, types of clients served, outcomes from the past year, and some aggregate outcomes. Together, the programs served 4,126 unique businesses and organizations in the past year and another 44,852 individuals through the IASourceLink.com entrepreneurial development system and the Business Concierge.

Section 3. Overview of UNI’s Economic Development Programs (continued)

Services	FY24 Results	Cumulative Results
Advance Iowa (AI)		
Rural/urban consulting program focused on small- and medium-sized existing businesses to provide succession planning, strategic planning, training, and peer round tables Serves: Small and medium enterprises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 91 companies assisted ✓ 23 seminars on succession planning, employee ownership, financial literacy and value building ✓ 7 peer group meetings ✓ Hosted and supported 46 networking, educational and business assistance workshops/events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Project work with 170 SMEs, impacting 5,692 employees across the state in all regions and industries.
Family Business Center (FBC)		
Programs and services for Iowa family-owned businesses including business succession, next-generation leadership development, peer learning and events Serves: Small and medium family-owned enterprises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 193 companies assisted ✓ 5 part seminar series for family-owned companies ✓ Annual conference with 108 attendees ✓ 4 learning sessions ✓ Hosted annual family workshop with 54 attendees ✓ Service to clients in 66 counties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Worked with more than 200 small- and mid-sized family-owned companies across the state in all regions and industries.
Center for Energy and Environmental Education (CEEE)		
Technical assistance, educational programs and leadership in residential energy efficiency services, local food systems, improving community food security and environmental health, and sustainability efforts for K-12 schools Serves: Iowa residents, nonprofit organizations, local governments, school districts, and counties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The UNI Local Food Program worked with 180 organizations in 18 counties providing technical assistance and education ✓ The Resilient Iowa Communities in collaboration with city and county partnerships assisted with 8 greenhouse gas inventory projects, and successfully implemented energy and carbon sequestration projects ✓ 50 individuals received training in energy benchmarking software skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Green Iowa AmeriCorps provided energy efficiency services to 10,000 homes and educated 100,000 people and more than 6,000 service projects alongside 400 community organizations and 27,000+ volunteers. ✓ More than 1,000 members have given 850,000 hours to Iowa communities. At the national rate of in-kind value of a volunteer hour, the program has leveraged over \$28.5 million in support for Iowa.

Geoinformatics Training, Research, Education and Extension Center (GeoTREE)		
<p>Geospatial technologies, education, research and outreach activities for federal, state, local and tribal agencies</p> <p>Serves: Federal, state, local and tribal governmental agencies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Concluded multi-year project with Iowa DNR ✓ Carried out urban heat monitoring and modeling in 10 Iowa Cities as part of Iowa Energy Center ✓ Provided solar radiation modeling for the entire state of Iowa as part of Iowa Energy Center ✓ Developed modeling and mapping for the Regional Center Study with the Iowa Department of Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Project work with public agencies, academic groups/departments and private companies. ✓ Developed and delivered many geospatial data and custom applications.
Institute for Decision Making (IDM)		
<p>Hands-on community and economic development guidance and research</p> <p>Serves: Economic development organizations, chambers commerce, city councils, communities, utility companies and others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Assistance and research provided to 126 community organizations, 10 regional development groups, and 45 service providers and utility companies ✓ Assisted with the establishment of the Iowa Rural Vitality Coalition with Empower Rural Iowa, the Iowa Rural Development Council, Iowa State University, the University of Iowa and Wellmark, and helping to facilitate 2 pilot community planning processes ✓ Developed and conducted a Business Retention & Expansion Academy for Iowa ✓ Provided technical assistance to the Governor’s Empower Rural Iowa initiative ✓ Partnered in a statewide Industry 4.0 Partner Consortium 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Served more than 850 communities, counties and groups in all of Iowa’s counties. ✓ Trained more than 1,350 economic development professionals.

Iowa Waste Reduction Center (IWRC)		
<p>Free, confidential, non-regulatory environmental and energy efficiency assistance for small businesses, public entities, food waste reduction, and education.</p> <p>Serves: Small businesses in Iowa, food waste generators, and military and industrial painters</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Detailed one-on-one environmental assistance was provided to 114 Iowa small businesses, including 9 energy efficiency projects ✓ Military painter training was conducted by IWRC staff and at 5 satellite sites, training a total of 234 painters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provided detailed assistance or on-site reviews to 6,810 Iowa small businesses. ✓ Provided 5,284 certifications to military painters and DoD contractors.
John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center (JPEC) and Small Business Development Center (SBDC)		
<p>Entrepreneurship education, business consulting and training, research, and capital investment programs serving entrepreneurs.</p> <p>Serves: Student entrepreneurs, faculty and staff, small- and medium-sized businesses, entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurial service providers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ JPEC served 5,357 individuals ✓ 13 student businesses incubated ✓ 2 cohorts of BBEA served 17 business owners ✓ 8 webinars hosted 4,324 participants ✓ ISL website accessed by 44,852 unique visitors ✓ SBDC served 325 clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The JPEC Student Business Incubator has housed 240 business owners. ✓ Since FY13, 4,147 Wilson College of Business students have learned about and crafted an elevator pitch through JPEC instructors. ✓ Since FY12, over 490,000 unique users have been served on the ISL platform. ✓ Contributed to the start of 107 businesses.
Metal Castings Center (MCC) and Additive Manufacturing Center (AMC)		
<p>Metal casting technologies, applied research, testing, training and manufacturing 4.0 technologies</p> <p>Serves: Iowa casting users, foundries and foundry suppliers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Active contracts with 40 Iowa foundries ✓ Conducted DOD-sponsored research into automation and robotics, IoT and digital twins production processes ✓ Provided technical training in Manufacturing 4.0 technologies ✓ Invested approximately \$2 million into modernization efforts of the Metal Casting Center’s foundry on campus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Over 2,350 industry-funded projects have been completed to date and more than 100 clients assisted with additive manufacturing, Industry 4.0 and/or cast metals technologies. ✓ Completed a 3-year casting supply chain resiliency project for the Defense Logistics Agency.

Strategic Marketing Services (SMS)		
<p>Market research and analysis</p> <p>Serves: Businesses, entrepreneurs and nonprofit organizations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Completed 5 market research projects with 12 organizations ✓ Assisted many local Iowa community organizations including municipalities, economic developers, public high schools, utility organizations and businesses ✓ Provided consulting services to 6 Iowa organizations in the areas of energy, finance, manufacturing and economic developers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Since 1990, market research and analysis services have been provided to 343 Iowa companies.
Tallgrass Prairie Center (TPC)		
<p>Coordination of county roadside managers, farmers and agricultural conservation professionals; native seed industry; educational materials on the tallgrass prairie ecosystem; restoration to support recommendations</p> <p>Serves: Iowa county governments, ag technical service providers/buyers, UNI and local educators, community, county conservation boards, and academic researchers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Distributed native seed for 43 county roadsides ✓ Supplied native seed stock to commercial growers ✓ Provided technical support to landowners, farmers, and professionals in all 99 counties ✓ Distributed prairie roots banners and displays to 44 schools and science museums ✓ Provided advanced scientific training and hands on experience to UNI undergraduate and graduate students ✓ Expanded Irvine Prairie in rural Benton County from 77 to 292 acres with funding for installation and maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ More than 50,000 acres of Iowa counties rights-of-way have been planted to native vegetation. ✓ 47 Iowa counties use ecologically integrated management on 325,000 acres of public roadsides. ✓ Public and private land managers have access to 90 species of Iowa-source seed including grasses, sedges, wildflowers, and scrubs. ✓ Over 125 UNI students engaged in hands-on experience and scientific training.

Section 4: Regents Innovation Funding Report

The UNI FY2024 Regents Innovation Funding (RIF) projects and outcomes partially supported by this fund are included in this annual economic development report.

Section 5: Collaborative Projects

Each year, UNI works closely with the other Regent institutions and state and federal agencies on collaborative projects. The following projects represent a sampling of these joint initiatives.

Advance Iowa / Center for Business Growth and Innovation – Partnerships Key to Success

- The partnership with the Iowa Governor’s Office and Empower Rural Iowa continued to promote economic vitality in rural communities by providing community presentations and individual business consultations on succession planning, business continuity, valuations, and employee ownership strategies. A special initiative began to assist independent grocery stores to ensure their sustainability as pockets of food deserts are developing in the state.
- The Iowa Center for Employee Ownership (IA-CEO) strengthened its foundation by expanding its Advisory Council to 23 members representing both public and private sectors across the state. Employee ownership is garnering attention through 20 community presentations, 3 radio shows, and interviews for 3 print publications.
- The Center for Business Growth and Innovation continued its partnership with the National Center for Defense Machining and Manufacturing on the Defense Logistics Agency/Department of Defense Foundry 4.0 project, creating, coordinating and administering Industry 4.0 outreach opportunities regionally and nationally for this contract.

Center for Energy and Environmental Education (CEEE) collaborated on projects with ISU and UI

- CEEE provided services to Iowa municipalities to conduct a greenhouse gas inventory and best practice assessments across Iowa, including Fairfield, Mt. Vernon, Decorah, and Urbandale.
- CEEE worked closely with ISU Extension Local Food and Enterprise Development through a planning grant from the Kellogg Foundation, to develop a plan to strengthen Iowa’s food system.

The GeoTREE Center worked collaboratively with state agencies and multiple organizations

- The GeoTREE Center worked with state agencies such as the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Iowa Department of Education, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Iowa Department of Economic Development – Iowa Energy Center, local agencies such as Waterloo Water Works, non-profits such as the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa, and provided services to numerous private companies.

UNI Family Business Center (FBC) partnered for expansion of family business services

- The UNI Family Business Center and the UNI Advance Iowa program along with Prairie Capital Advisors and Brown Winick collaborated on an ESOP program. This was a great way to mix the expertise of Advance Iowa with our member’s interests and experiences. Family businesses often need a source of liquidity during a succession plan or because of an untimely death in the family.

- The UNI Family Business Center has taken a proactive partnering approach with the Iowa Small Business Development Center system to create awareness for the unique complexities of family-owned companies. Educational program delivered to all Iowa SBDC regional directors this past year to share insights and describe some of the challenges that family firms face.

Institute for Decision Making (IDM) collaborated with economic development partners

- The Institute for Decision Making (IDM) launched the Iowa Rural Vitality Coalition to assist rural communities with improving the health and vitality of their residents and their communities. This work is in partnership with the Governor's Empower Rural Iowa Initiative, the Iowa Rural Development Council, Iowa Economic Development Authority, Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, the Wellmark Foundation, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, and the University of Iowa College of Public Health. With the coalition, IDM helped design a community planning process that uses the Comprehensive Rural Wealth Framework in assessing a community's assets and in developing a strategic plan. Two pilot communities have been selected and the planning processes have been launched with IDM assisting with the facilitation of both planning efforts.
- IDM took the lead in developing and conducting a Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) Academy for economic development in Iowa. The Academy was developed in partnership with the Professional Developers of Iowa (PDI), the Iowa Economic Development Authority, Iowa's community colleges and utility companies. The Academy served as PDI's spring training event held in Des Moines. To design the Academy's format, content and materials, IDM staff established a working group that included representatives from local economic development organizations, the Center for Industrial Research and Service (CIRAS) at Iowa State University, the utility companies, community colleges, Iowa Economic Development Authority, Iowa Workforce Development, fellow UNI Business & Community Services programs and other service providers. Over 100 economic development professionals participated in the Academy.

Iowa Waste Reduction Center (IWRC) collaborated with state and national partners

- The IWRC partnered with the EPA Region 7, the Iowa Recycling Association, Iowa DNR and the National Pollution Prevention Roundtable to host education webinars on a variety of environmentally-related topics.
- The Iowa Waste Reduction Center helped Iowa DNR to host a one-day painter training workshop for the DNR Air quality staff and inspectors. The two sessions were attended by a total of 20 Iowa DNR Staff and provided them with basic understanding of the painting and coating process.
- The IWRC staff continues to work with the Iowa DNR and other stakeholders to help rewrite a current restrictive composting administrative rule to help facilitate growth of the composting industry in the state.

John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center (JPEC) collaborations benefit students and community

- JPEC staff developed and delivered programming for 2 cohorts of the Black Business Entrepreneur Accelerator (BBEA), a program of 24/7 BLAC serving an additional 17 black-owned businesses in the Cedar Valley region. In collaboration with UNI Dining, 5 BBEA Catering business were invited to participate in a venue takeover at the UNI Dining Center on campus. The entrepreneurs took advantage of the opportunity to showcase their menu to the UNI campus.

- JPEC collaborated with the statewide JPEC network to offer pitch competitions to students and Iowa Ventures. 15 students pitched their business and students from Drake, NIACC, and UNI were awarded prizes to grow their business. In the Iowa Venture competition, 46 Iowa companies applied and 13 pitched for \$100,000 in prizes. UNI Alum Russel Karim, with Dhakai, was awarded the top prize.

IASourcelink - Iowa Economic Development Authority

- Direct business assistance was provided to 1,909 Iowa business owners via the IASourcelink.com referral service and an additional 44,852 Iowans sought information from the online resources. The IASourceLink program continues as a strong partnership between UNI and the Iowa Economic Development Authority. This program provides assistance on business-related issues and links Iowa's businesses with support resources from around the state.

Metal Casting Center (MCC) and Foundry 4.0 Center collaborated with educational institutions and technical organizations

- The Foundry 4.0 Center collaborated with Hawkeye Community College to provide workshops on the basics of robotics for the metal casting industry and suppliers to the U.S. Department of Defense.
- The MCC collaborated with the Rock Island Arsenal and the Steel Founders Society of America (SFSA) on a project to investigate the effects of pressurized solidification on microstructure development and physical properties of steel.
- The Foundry 4.0 Center collaborated with the SFSA to develop entry level Internet of Things (IoT) systems for the foundry industry. This work also required the development of presentation materials to disseminate to industry. Technology transfer was done during the workshop to help 25 members of the SFSA learn how to make their own IoT system.

Strategic Marketing Services (SMS) partners with Iowa organizations

- SMS worked in collaboration with IDM to assist the Cedar Valley Regional Partnership in assessing the starting and maximum wages for occupations in a variety of industries, assessing additional wage-related benefits such as pay increases and wage differentials, and understanding paid time off policies and benefits, workplace incentives, workforce trends, and community quality of life amenities. The goal of collecting this intelligence was to help the Cedar Valley Regional Partnership in attracting new talent.
- SMS worked in collaboration with IDM and assisted Travel Iowa and Iowa Travel Industry Partners (ITIP) in assessing travel organization's budget/funding, staffing, and salary and benefits information. The report was utilized by ITIP as their annual staffing and budget report to their membership. A total of 28 businesses and organizations completed the survey, which included destination marketing organizations, convention and visitors bureaus, chambers of commerce, and local city or county economic development organizations.

Tallgrass Prairie (TPC) Partners with Iowa universities and associations

- The TPC provided technical assistance on prairie reconstruction in collaboration with ISU Extension, Iowa State University STRIPS team, the Iowa Monarch Conservation Consortium, as well as private companies, agricultural landowners, and federal conservation agencies. Activities included field day presentations across Iowa, widespread distribution of case studies

on prairie strips at the North American Prairie Conference, and the Practical Farmers of Iowa annual conference. Research results on the Conservation Reserve Program's role in monarch butterfly recovery were shared and the factors affecting native seed price and availability across the upper Midwest and Great Plains regions.

- The TPC worked closely with the Iowa Department of Transportation and dozens of Iowa county governments to supply enough seed to plant more than 1,100 acres of county Iowa roadsides with native plants, and to co-host an annual conference of roadside managers. The TPC collaborated with native seed stakeholders including native seed companies, the Iowa DOT, the Iowa Crop Improvement Association, and the USDA Plant Introduction Center to supply source-identified seed for roadside planting and other prairie restorations across the state.