University of Northern Iowa
Annual Economic Development Report
FY2026

To: Board of Regents, State of Iowa | November 2026

University of Northern Iowa
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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 27th 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 3, 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 interactions in FY2026 totaled 4,848, 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 from the past year include:

- Advance Iowa and the Iowa Center for Employee Ownership (IA-CEO) were invited by the Aspen Institute to serve a lead role in their national Employee Ownership Ideas Forum.
- UNI's Geoinformatics Training, Research, Education and Extension Center (GeoTREE) celebrated its 20th anniversary of serving businesses, government agencies and nonprofit organizations across Iowa.
- Karla Organist, senior project manager for the Institute for Decision Making (IDM), was elected to serve as president of the National Rural Economic Developers Association.
- Christy Ryken, director for Strategic Marketing Services (SMS), was elected to serve as chair of the Iowa Energy Center Board of Directors.
- Kathryn Gilbery, local food access coordinator for the Center for Energy and Environmental Education (CEEE), and Patrick Luensmann, director of the John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center (JPEC), were selected for the Cedar Valley's 20 Under 40 Awards presented by The Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier, the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa and the Volunteer Center of Cedar Valley.
- Liesl Seabert, program manager for IDM, was selected for the Des Moines Business Record's 40 Under 40 Awards.
- Joe Bolick, director of the Iowa Waste Reduction Center (IWRC), was elected to serve as chair for the National Pollution Prevention Roundtable Board of Directors.

A Summary of key economic development program outcomes from UNI BCS in FY2026:

Overall Outcomes

- Provided services to clients in all 99 Iowa counties reaching a total of 4,848 unique businesses, communities, nonprofit organizations, and governmental entities; and served over 56,000 additional unique visitors to IASourceLink.com.
- Reached more than 377,000 Iowans through BCS programs and projects.
- Engaged 248 faculty members and 215 students in the direct delivery of BCS client services, while another 3,560 students were reached by BCS programs.
- Leveraged each $1 invested by the State of Iowa with $5 in private grants, contracts, fees or federal funding.

Summarized Impacts on the Iowa Economy

- The Metal Casting Center (MCC) partnered with the Metallurgical Engineering Trade Apprenticeship & Learning (METAL) program led by The Composites Institute to increase exposure of advanced manufacturing career opportunities, particularly in the defense supply chain.
- IDM assisted the Governor's Empower Rural Iowa Initiative with the pilot of Iowa United First Aid, a system of trained first responders, in three counties.
- The Tallgrass Prairie Center (TPC) supported more than 420,000 acres of public roadsides through ecological integrated management services.
- The Irvine Prairie, a prairie-in-progress managed by TPC, increased plantings to 190 acres and improved visitor facilities.
- The FBC has now engaged 878 family-owned companies across the state with programming and guidance since its inception.
- The IWRC assisted 139 Iowa small businesses with detailed environmental assistance.
- Advance Iowa provided 53 Iowa companies with employee ownership assistance and growth strategy assistance.
- The CEEE Local Food Program assisted over 2,800 farmers, business, organizations and individuals to enhance Iowa's local and regional food systems.

Entrepreneurship, Business Development and Incubation

- The JPEC reached 3,477 attendees through nine webinars covering tax law changes, business licensing, strategic planning, and succession planning for Iowa small businesses.
- Advance Iowa assisted 53 Iowa companies and conducted 31 seminars or presentations related to succession planning and employee ownership throughout Iowa and nationally.
- The JPEC partnered with the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) to serve 56,009 unique users seeking small business information through the IASourceLink (ISL) platform.
- Twenty-three peer group sessions for members of Iowa family businesses were provided through the FBC.
- Twelve student businesses were incubated in the UNI JPEC R.J. McElroy Student Business Incubator, and an additional 32 student businesses were provided with business coaching and support by JPEC staff.
- The UNI Small Business Development Center (SBDC) served 294 new clients.

Local Economic Development

- IDM provided strategic planning and comprehensive research assistance to 95 community partners, 11 additional regional groups, and 58 service providers and utility companies across Iowa.
- IDM collaborated with the Professional Developers of Iowa and the Iowa Economic Development Authority to create a professional development program for mid-career economic developers in Iowa.
- SMS and IDM helped two regional economic development groups complete wage and benefit surveys of their employers in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the compensation and employment landscape within their regions.
- IDM staff coordinated the Leadership Exchange and Leadership Bootcamp for Empower Rural Iowa and the Iowa Rural Development Council.
- The Heartland Economic Development Course, managed by IDM, trained nearly 70 economic developers.

Waste Reduction, Environmental Assistance, and Sustainability

- The Local Food Program (CEEE) served over 2,800 individuals providing technical assistance and education on local food systems.
- Cities and counties partnered with the CEEE's Resilient Iowa Communities on nine greenhouse gas and carbon sequestration initiatives.
- Native seeds for nearly 1,500 acres were distributed to 46 county secondary roads departments as part of the TPC's Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management project
- Support for native plantings was provided by the TPC to farmers, landowners and professionals in all of Iowa's 99 counties.
- The IWRC Iowa Green Brewery project supported 40 certified craft breweries across the state while expanding the program to surrounding states in partnership with the EPA.
- Provided one-to-one customized environmental technical assistance and on-site reviews through the IWRC to 139 Iowa small businesses. Energy efficiency visits were conducted by the IWRC for 17 small businesses.
- The GeoTREE Center developed a new LIDAR data dissemination application which is used across Iowa for the delivery of high-resolution cloud-native data products.

Advanced Manufacturing and Market Research

- Trained 323 military painters at six satellite training sites through the IWRC's STAR4D program.
- Served 15 Iowa and US foundries and supply chain companies with automation and Internet of Things (IoT) sensor technologies through the Foundry 4.0 Center.
- Completed Department of War (DOW) sponsored research on metal casting process control techniques to support the defense supply chain for sustainment parts.
- Hosted over 410 visitors at the MCC and Foundry 4.0 Center for demonstrations of Manufacturing 4.0 innovations and the digital twin.
- Four major seminars related to additive manufacturing and 4.0 technical solutions were provided for the metal casting and defense supply chain.
- Eighteen Iowa companies and organizations benefitted from market research and competitive intelligence by Strategic Marketing Services (SMS).

Section 2. Technology Transfer and Intellectual Property

FY 2026

	UNI
Number of disclosures of intellectual property	17
Number of patent applications filed	0
Number of patents awarded	1
Number of license and option agreements executed on institutional intellectual property	0
Number of license and option agreements yielding income	9
Revenue to Iowa companies as a result of licensed technologies	$3,500,000
Number of companies graduating from UNI incubators (in total)	265
Number of companies in research parks and incubators	12
Number of new companies in research parks and incubators	7
Number of employees in companies in research parks and incubators	19
Royalties/license fee income	$33,484
Total sponsored funding	$47,233,054
Corporate-sponsored funding for research and economic development and revenue generation	$1,902,110
Annual appropriations for economic development	$1,466,419
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 4,848 unique businesses and organizations in the past year and 56,009 individuals through the IASourceLink.com entrepreneurial development system and the Resource Ranger.

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

Services	FY26 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, peer round tables **Serves**: Small and medium enterprises	✓ 53 companies assisted, 44 with employee ownership. ✓ 31 seminars on succession planning, employee ownership, and business continuity. ✓ Hosted and supported 42 networking, educational and business assistance workshops/events.	✓ Project work with 276 SMEs, impacting 7,518 employees across the state in all quadrants 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-sized family-owned enterprises	✓ 195 companies assisted. ✓ Delivered 5-part seminar series for family-owned companies. ✓ Facilitated 23 peer group sessions. ✓ Hosted Annual Conference with 158 attendees. ✓ Hosted Annual Family Workshop with 77 attendees. ✓ Service to clients in 55 counties.	✓ Worked with 878 small- and mid-sized family-owned companies across the state in all 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	✓ CEEE environmental health staff organized 58 unique presentations across three initiatives highlighting the work of the program. Conservatively reached over 159,000 individuals. ✓ The UNI Local Food Program served over 2,800 individuals including UNI staff and students, farmers, gardeners, AmeriCorps Service Members and host sites, and community members. The program had over 190 partner businesses and organizations in 20 counties. ✓ The Veggie Voucher Program provided $20,925 in fresh	✓ Over the past 16 years Green Iowa AmeriCorps has provided energy efficiency services to 11,000 homes and educated 115,000 people. The program has completed more than 900 service projects alongside more than 450 community organizations and 30,000+ volunteers. ✓ Since its founding in 2015, the Nourish Iowa AmeriCorps VISTA Program has worked to eliminate poverty through food access initiatives across the state. And placed more

	vegetables to families in the Cedar Valley. ✓ Nourish Iowa AmeriCorps VISTA members supported 75 nonprofit food events.	than 65 VISTA members to host sites throughout Iowa. ✓ Since its start, Green Iowa AmeriCorps over 2,000 members will have contributed over 100,000 hours to serve Iowa communities
Geoinformatics Training, Research, Education and Extension Center (GeoTREE)		
Geospatial technologies, education, research and outreach activities for federal, state, local and tribal agencies **Serves**: Federal, state, local and tribal governmental agencies	✓ Developed high resolution land cover data for approximately 20% of Iowa for DNR. ✓ Developed new LIDAR data dissemination application used statewide for the delivery of high-resolution cloud-native data products for the State of Iowa ✓ Captured drone and ground-based 360° imagery for Iowa Water Trails and developed virtual tour	✓ Project work with public agencies, academic groups/departments and private companies. ✓ Development and delivery of many geospatial data and custom applications serving a variety of stakeholders across Iowa.
Institute for Decision Making (IDM)		
Hands-on community and economic development guidance and research **Serves**: Economic development organizations, chambers commerce, city councils, communities, utilities and others	✓ Assistance, training and research provided to 95 community organizations, 11 regional development groups, and 58 services providers and utilities ✓ Continued to assist the Governor's Empower Rural Iowa with the piloting of the Iowa United First Aid project in three Iowa counties ✓ Led the planning and coordination of the Leadership Exchange and Leadership Bootcamp for Empower Rural Iowa and the Iowa Rural Development Council ✓ Assisted the Professional Developers of Iowa, the Iowa	✓ Served more than 870 communities, counties and groups in all of Iowa's counties to date. ✓ Trained more than 1,565 economic development professionals through the Heartland Economic Development Course.

	Economic Development Authority, MidAmerican Energy and others develop a new professional development program for mid-career economic developers in Iowa	
Iowa Waste Reduction Center (IWRC)		
Free, confidential, non-regulatory environmental and energy efficiency assistance for small businesses, public entities, food waste reduction, and education. **Serves**: Small businesses in Iowa; food waste generators; military and industrial painters	✓ Detailed one-on-one environmental assistance was provided to 139 Iowa small businesses, including 17 energy efficiency visits. ✓ Military painter training was conducted by IWRC staff at center facilities and at 6 satellite sites training a total of 323 painters.	✓ Provided detailed assistance or on-site review to 7,113 Iowa small businesses. ✓ Provided 5,715 certifications to military painters and DOW contractors.
John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center (JPEC) and **Small Business Development Center (SBDC)**		
Entrepreneurship education, business consulting & training, research, and capital investment programs serving entrepreneurs. **Serves**: Student entrepreneurs, faculty and staff, small and medium-sized businesses, entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurial service providers	✓ JPEC served 5,099 individuals. ✓ 12 student businesses incubated and an additional 32 student businesses were supported. ✓ 9 webinars hosted 3,447 participants. ✓ ISL website accessed by 56,009 unique visitors. ✓ SBDC served 294 clients.	✓ The JPEC Student Business Incubator has provided space to more than 265 business owners since FY05. ✓ Since FY23, 4,572 students have learned about and crafted an elevator pitch through presentations by JPEC instructors. ✓ Since FY11, 79 businesses and nonprofits have had their projects completed by Entrepreneurial Strategy students. ✓ Since FY12, over 560,000 unique users have been served on the ISL platform. ✓ Contributed to the start of 128 businesses.

Metal Castings Center (MCC) and **Foundry 4.0 Center (F4C)**		
Metal casting technologies, applied research, testing, training and manufacturing 4.0 technologies **Serves**: Iowa casting users, foundries and foundry suppliers	✓ Provided technical assistance to 5 Iowa foundries and 10 additional foundries. ✓ Conducted DOW-sponsored research in metal casting and process control techniques. ✓ Delivered 4 seminars on additive manufacturing for metal casting in the Midwest. ✓ Provided 91 lab scale foundry kits for K-12 shop teachers, 19 of whom were in Iowa.	✓ Over 2,400 industry-funded projects have been completed to date and more than 105 clients assisted with additive manufacturing, industry 4.0 and/or cast metals technologies.
Strategic Marketing Services (SMS)		
Market research and analysis **Serves:** Businesses, entrepreneurs and nonprofit organizations	✓ Completed 17 market research projects with 18 organizations. ✓ Assisted many local Iowa community organizations including economic developers, utility organizations, higher education, and businesses. ✓ SMS has provided consulting services to 6 Iowa organizations, some of which have developed into FY26 projects. These organizations encompass academic institutional support, broadband services, home healthcare equipment, and medical device tracking technology.	✓ Since 1990, market research and analysis services have been provided to 354 Iowa companies.
Tallgrass Prairie Center (TPC)		
Coordination of county roadside managers, farmers and agricultural conservation professionals; native seed industry; educational materials on the tallgrass prairie ecosystem **Serves**: Iowa county governments, ag	✓ Distributed native seed for 46 county roadside departments totaling almost 1,500 acres (19,000 lbs. of seed). ✓ Provided technical support to landowners, farmers, and professionals in all 99 counties.	✓ More than 50,000 acres of Iowa counties rights-of-way have been planted to native vegetation. ✓ 65 Iowa counties and 28 cities use ecologically integrated management on 420,000 acres of public roadsides.

technical service providers/buyers, UNI and local educators, community, county conservation boards, and academic researchers	✓ Distributed prairie root banners and specimens to 20 schools and science museums. ✓ The Irvine Prairie was increased to 190, hosted 10 prairie walks and improved visitor facilities.	✓ Public and private land managers have access to an expanding inventory of Iowa-source seed including grasses, sedges, wildflowers, and shrubs blooming spring through fall. ✓ Research results influence conservation practices throughout the upper Midwest.

Section 4: Regents Innovation Funding Report

The UNI FY2026 Regents Innovation Funding (RIF) projects and outcomes partially supported by this fund are summarized in a separate annual report but also 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 IA-CEO Advisory and Executive Councils include leaders from the Iowa Economic Development Authority, Iowa Association of Business & Industry, Iowa Finance Authority, Iowa Rural Development Council, Senator Grassley's office, Iowa's Lieutenant Governor's office, and UNI faculty, as well as strong representation from Iowa's business community leadership. This collaboration with state leaders provides essential guidance, insights, and support to help IA-CEO educate and guide companies on their journey toward employee ownership. Their expertise strengthens IA-CEO's mission to foster a thriving, equitable business landscape across the state.
- Advance Iowa and IASourceLink continued their collaborative outreach delivering strategic business education and accessible online support to Iowa's small- and mid-sized businesses. Advance Iowa's staff provided business growth and business transition webinars—offered both live and recorded—equipping business owners with practical tools for strategic planning, innovation, and succession readiness. IASourceLink amplified these efforts by connecting business owners to licensing guidance, funding pathways, and its statewide network of more than 1,000 support partners. Advance Iowa further supported Iowa small- and mid-sized businesses through the release of the Business Life Cycle Campaign and Magazine, which included a dossier style publication summarizing six months of business growth and business transition insights. The downloadable guide, made available through IASourceLink, helps business owners understand and navigate each phase of the business life cycle.

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

- CEEE collaborated with the University of Iowa's Center for Health Effects of Environmental Contamination (CHEEC) on a drinking water sampling and education project.
- CEEE provided services — which included conducting energy audits, providing tree planting services and community garden installations —to Iowa municipalities including Waterloo, Cedar Falls and a variety of rural communities.
- In partnership with the ISU Extension Farm, Food and Enterprise Development program, CEEE planned and hosted the Iowa Farm & Food Conference, which focuses on community food systems.

The GeoTREE Center worked collaboratively with state agencies and multiple organizations

- The GeoTREE Center historically works with state agencies such as the Office of the State Archaeologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Iowa Department of Education, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Iowa Economic Development Authority and

the Iowa Energy Center. It also works with local agencies such as the Waterloo Water Works and the City of Waterloo, nonprofits like the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa and Cedar Valley Arboretum and Botanical Gardens and has provided services to numerous private companies.

- The GeoTREE Center works collaboratively with various faculty, students, and staff from across the campus including academic departments such as History, Communications and Media, Earth Science, Biology, Wilson College of Business, and others, as well as groups on campus such as University Relations, Facilities Management, the Institute of Decision Making, and many others.
- In the last fiscal year, the GeoTREE Center worked on funded projects from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Black Hawk Soil and Conservation District, the City of Madison, WI, and the City of Waterloo Traffic Operations

UNI Family Business Center (FBC)

- The FBC partnered with IASourceLink, the Iowa Economic Development Authority and UNI's Advance Iowa program, bringing together the expertise of the FBC with the business audience of IASourceLink. FBC shared common steps in the succession planning process with small businesses across Iowa. This content was also recorded for future and repeat viewing.
- An FBC partnership with Western Iowa Advantage and Carroll County Growth Partnership provided a seminar for businesses in their region. The focus was on family business succession, including the challenges and opportunities facing multigenerational ownership in rural Iowa. Practical strategies were offered to help local leaders support long-term business stability in their communities.

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

- IDM continued to partner with the Governor's Empower Rural Iowa Initiative (ERI) as the Iowa United First Aid (IUFA) project continues to be piloted in Calhoun, Cass, and Van Buren Counties. IUFA is a system of trained volunteer responders, deployed via cellphone-based technology, to provide first aid assistance to reduce response times and enhance EMS coverage in rural parts of the state. IDM assisted in the initial development of the program and over the past year focused on promotion of the program at state and national conferences. IDM's participation in meetings to consider vendor system with a custom-developed product involved collaboration with ERI/IEDA, Iowa Department of Management, and private technology vendors.
- IDM, in partnership with the Iowa Rural Development Council, Leadership Iowa, the Iowa Economic Development Authority, Iowa State University Extension, Iowa Association of Business & Industry, and a several community leadership organizations, continued to expand the Iowa Leadership Exchange and Bootcamp, Iowa's premier professional development event for community leadership program coordinators, resource providers, and community leaders. The Exchange brings together participants from across the state to share best practices, strengthen leadership development programs, and build a stronger statewide network of leadership practitioners. IDM staff chaired the statewide planning and led its year-round development, including curriculum design, speaker recruitment, program coordination, event promotion, logistics, and facilitation. IDM team members also served as instructors and facilitators, equipping participants with practical tools, innovative ideas, and a deeper network that strengthens leadership development efforts across Iowa.

- IDM partnered with PDI, IEDA, the Iowa Area Development Group, MidAmerican Energy and several local and regional economic development organizations to develop PDI ConnectED, a professional development program designed to prepare and connect Iowa's next generation of economic development professionals. IDM helped build the program from the ground up, leading curriculum development, recruiting instructors, reviewing cohort applications, securing sponsors, and coordinating overall program implementation. The competency-based program combines classroom instruction, mentoring, and practical application while introducing participants to the statewide network of organizations, programs, and resources that support economic development in Iowa. In addition to helping design and launch the program, IDM staff serves as instructors and mentors for the program, helping participants build both the technical expertise and professional relationships needed to advance their careers and strengthen communities across the state.

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

- The IWRC collaborated with the Iowa DNR, Iowa State University, the Iowa Composting Council, Cedar Rapids Linn County Solid Waste Agency and SCS Engineers to develop and host a compost operator recertification program.
- The IWRC partnered with EPA Region 7, the Ozark Environmental and Water Resources Institute at Missouri State University, and the Pollution Prevention Institute at Kansas State University to expand the Iowa Green Brewery Certification to their respective states.
- The IWRC partnered with the IEDA to conduct energy efficiency audits at 12 rural grocery stores across the state to qualify the businesses to receive grant funding from IEDA for improvements.

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

- The UNI JPEC collaborated with the statewide JPEC network to offer pitch competitions to students and Iowa ventures. Fifteen students pitched their businesses and students from Drake, NIACC, and UNI were awarded prizes to grow their business. In the Iowa Venture Competition, 52 Iowa companies applied and 12 pitched for $100,000 in prizes.
- 56,009 Iowans sought information and business assistance was provided through 2,247 direct interactions with Iowa business owners via IASourcelink referral services and the Resource Ranger. The IASourceLink program continues as a strong partnership between UNI and IEDA. This program aids with business-related issues and links Iowa’s businesses with support resources from around the state.
- The UNI JPEC facilitated a small business accelerator in partnership with the nonprofit 24/7 BLAC. The Vitality Accelerator curriculum focuses on the fundamentals of business structure, financials, operations and marketing for small to medium businesses. Two cohorts were hosted during the year with 8 graduates of the program.

Metal Casting Center (MCC) collaborates with regent institutions and technical organizations

- The MCC collaborated with the Steel Founders' Society of America to develop a new methodology to measure iron oxide content in foundry system sands. In partnership with the UNI Chemistry Department, MCC offered solutions to this historically difficult problem, and the methodology is being adopted by operating foundries across the country.
- The MCC joined other cast metals industry experts in a federal initiative, Casting Augmentation Tiger Team, funded by Deloitte. This effort seeks to develop solutions for systemic issues in the defense casting supply chain for maintenance and sustainable castings for the DOW.
- The MCC joined a national campaign launched by The Composites Institute to increase awareness of advanced manufacturing career opportunities. The Metallurgical Engineering Trade Apprenticeship & Learning (METAL) program is a network of 12 universities funded by the Office of the Secretary of War to expand workforce participation in the domestic manufacturing space through hands-on training programs.

Strategic Marketing Services (SMS) partners with Iowa organizations

- SMS collaborated with IDM to assist the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities and its members quantify the comprehensive economic footprint of the municipal utility industry in Iowa, covering electric, water, gas, and telecommunications services. The primary project objectives were to measure the industry's total contributions to the state's economy by collecting specific data on employment, operating revenues, and capital investments.
- SMS worked in collaboration with IDM to complete wage and benefit studies for the Cedar Valley and Iowa Lakes Regions. The studies provided a comprehensive analysis of the compensation and employment landscape in the two regions of Iowa. The primary project objectives for both studies were to benchmark starting and maximum wages, evaluate the prevalence of various fringe benefits, such as health insurance and retirement plans, and identify regional workforce trends and recruitment barriers. For the Cedar Valley study, SMS and IDM worked with Grow Cedar Valley and the Cedar Valley Regional Partnership, and for the Iowa Lakes study they partnered with the Iowa Lakes Corridor Development Corporation.

Tallgrass Prairie Center (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 days, widespread distribution of native seed and a service providers list, and sponsorship of the Practical Farmers of Iowa annual conference. The TPC shared research results on factors affecting native seed prices, as well as seed mix design, roadside management, and monarch butterfly recovery.
- The TPC worked closely with the Iowa Department of Transportation and dozens of Iowa county governments to supply enough seed to plant more than 1,400 acres of Iowa county 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-ID seed for roadside planting and other prairie restorations across the state.