

Western Iowa Advantage is a collaborative group of economic development officials in Audubon, Calhoun, Carroll, Crawford, Greene, Ida, and Sac Counties.

Join WIAD Partner Region XII COG for their Small Business Webinar Series

Region XII Council of Governments is hosting a small business webinar series. The current schedule of events can be found below along with the registration link. For full descriptions of each webinar and for more information you can view the schedule [HERE](#).

Why You Need a Website and Tips to Building a Solid One - March 3 @ 7:30 am - [Register Here](#)

Website Platforms and How to Integrate Ecommerce - March 10 @ 7:30 am - [Register Here](#)

Grow Your Business with Google - March 17 @ 7:30 am - [Register Here](#)

Do You Know Where Your Customers Are? - March 24 @ 7:30 am - [Register Here](#)

I Have a Facebook Business Page...Now What? - March 31 @ 7:30 am - [Register Here](#)

Square Solutions: Tools to Run Your Business- Even When it is Not Business as Usual - April 7 @ 7:30 am - [Register Here](#)

Economic Development 101 - April 14 @ 7:30 am - [Register Here](#)

Revolving Loan Funds Available for Qualifying Businesses

Loan funds are available for businesses who are looking to create or retain jobs in the specified counties. Funds may be used for building construction, acquisition, or rehabilitation, equipment purchase, and working capital. Each fund has individualized requirements, interest rates, and availability. Contact the fund for more specific information.

Fund	Eligible Counties	Maximum Loan	Contact
Region XII Development Corporation	Audubon, Carroll, Crawford, Greene, Guthrie, Sac	\$300,000	Tami Lehmann Tlehmann@region12cog.org
Greene County Development Corporation	Greene	Determined by funding availability	Ken Paxton ken@greencountyiowa.com
Chamber & Development Council of Crawford County	Crawford	\$15,000	Evan Blakley eblakley@cdcia.org
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative	Western Iowa	Fund balance	Jim Gossett jimg@rvec.coop
Calhoun County Economic Development	Calhoun	\$50,000 or determined by funding availability	Jill Heisterkamp ccedc@calhouncountyiowa.com
Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association	Calhoun	\$50,000 or determined by funding availability	Keaton Hildreth khildreth@calhounrec.coop
Ida County Economic Development	Ida	\$200,000	Rita Frahm rmfracm@gmail.com

Western Iowa Advantage is Providing the SizeUp Tool so Local Businesses Can Access Market Intelligence

Ellen Williams, Golden Shovel Agency, Copywriter

In its ongoing effort to build a stronger local, regional, and statewide economy, Western Iowa Advantage has released free access to SizeUp so that local Iowa businesses can obtain market intelligence to help them forge a pathway to success.



“Western Iowa Advantage is a collaborative effort of economic development officials in Audubon, Calhoun, Carroll, Crawford, Greene, Ida and Sac Counties working to effectively market the many viable economic assets of this region,” said Brandy Ripley, Chair of Western Iowa Advantage and Executive Director of Sac Economic and Tourism Development. “Our goal is to advocate for our region, and partner with those businesses currently working here, as well as those considering relocation and/or expansion in the area. To this end, we offer assistance with location searches, permits, financial/tax incentive programs, utilities, workforce demographics, job-training programs and more. The ‘more’ now includes the SizeUp tool.”

SizeUp’s local business intelligence capabilities are designed to help small and medium-sized businesses access the data they need to succeed.

Features and data categories include:

Benchmark Performance — Compare a business’ performance to other competitors in the industry. SizeUp uses millions of data points in its analysis.

Demographic Analysis — Interactively map up-to-date demographic, labor force, and consumer expenditure data for the area based on hundreds of variables.

Assess Competitiveness — Map where potential competitors, customers, and suppliers are located to determine how best to serve existing customers as well as new customers, and to pick suppliers.

Find Best Places to Advertise — Determine the optimal areas to target the next advertising campaign based on industry performance and target markets.

User-friendly and Intuitive Interface — SizeUp is easy to navigate and use without training.

Caches User Information — SizeUp can access information previously entered on the same computer.

Getting started is easy. Visit www.westerniowaadvantage.com/sizeup-small-business, and enter an industry and location in the box. The user will then be taken to a screen where under the “My Business” tab, they can enter more specific information like revenue, average annual worker salary, and number of employees. A visually striking report will show a current business owner or budding entrepreneur exactly where they stand in direct relation to regional competitors.

Under the “Competition” tab, not only can competitors be found, but potential customers, and suppliers are also identified. In addition, business owners who sell directly to consumers can track where households spend the most dollars in a variety of groupings. Users can map local patterns for hundreds of wide-ranging consumer expenditure categories: everything from seeds to new trucks to whatever is important to them.

Under the “Advertising” tab, business owners can choose where to target advertising based on total revenue, revenue per capita, most underserved markets, average revenue, total employees, or household income. Further adjustment of various industry performance variables and demographic characteristics under the “Filters” tab can customize the data even more.

“We are very excited to offer the SizeUp tool to our local businesses,” said Ripley. “SizeUp levels the playing field by providing smaller businesses with similar market intelligence that was previously only available to huge corporations. This data will help businesses make smarter decisions.”

McMAHON Partners with Corn Board Manufacturing, Inc. to Design First-Ever, Zero-Carbon Wood Substitute Manufacturing Facility

CORNBARD™ PRODUCTS REDUCE CARBON WASTE AND DEFORESTATION
THROUGH REUSABLE WOOD-SUBSTITUTE PRODUCTS

McMahon Associates, Inc. (McMAHON), a full-service, professional engineering and architectural firm, is designing and overseeing the construction of a manufacturing plant for Corn Board Manufacturing, Inc. The facility, which will be located in Sac County, Iowa, will be used to convert corn stover biomass – leaves, stalks and husks – into an environmentally-friendly wood alternative called CornBoard™. The CornBoard™ product will be used to make pallets that weigh less but have the same, if not stronger, structural integrity as traditional wood pallets.



Future site of Corn Board Manufacturing, Inc.

"This project is one of the most specialized and innovative projects we've ever had the privilege of working on. CornBoard™ is offering a truly innovative product that's nothing like anything else on the market. It's a real game changer for the environment, jobs in rural America and additional revenue sources for farmers in the Corn Belt. A facility of this kind requires an extremely specialized team of experts working together to facilitate the production of the CornBoard™ pallet, which will be utilized by forward thinking environment-aware companies across the world," Paul E. Benedict, P.E., S.E., President at McMAHON, said. "The team at McMAHON, along with our talented partners, are uniquely positioned to design, build and manage a first-of-its-kind facility such as this."

McMAHON is managing this project and designing the facility and partner C.D. Smith will provide construction services.

"Corn Board Manufacturing, Inc. is designing pallets, furniture, building materials, skis and even snowboards from a product that requires low to no carbon waste," explained Corn Board Manufacturing, Inc.'s CEO, Lane Segerstrom. "We are able to build these manufacturing facilities right in the middle of the Corn Belt, providing thousands of jobs, securing thousands more and creating a no-waste solution for everyday products our nation needs to keep moving forward."

"With our legacy of leadership in manufacturing, deep agricultural roots, and a commitment to conserving our natural resources, Iowa is a great match for this great company," Debi Durham, executive director of the Iowa Economic Development Authority and Iowa Finance Authority said.

According to Circular Supply Chains Inc., one million acres of forests in the U.S. are cut down to make pallets. Many of these pallets are only used one time and then are sent to a landfill where they take up more space. This process continues each and every day.

Corn Board Manufacturing Inc. is flipping this model on its head by creating entirely recyclable pallets. And, through CornBoard's pallet leasing program, they will never end up in a landfill. When a company is done using the pallets they're returned to the Corn Board Manufacturing facility where they are re-used again or broken down, recycled and re-made into another pallet.

"For more than a year we have been excited to work with Corn Board Manufacturing, Inc. on their new Sac County location," Brandy Ripley, Executive Director of Sac County Economic and Tourism Development said. This is an outstanding opportunity for not only Sac County, but also for our region and our state."

To learn more about McMAHON and its many projects and services, including the design and project management of the new Corn Board Manufacturing Inc. facility, visit mcmgrp.com.

Both the WIAD Region & the State of Iowa See Unemployment Rate Increases in December

The Western Iowa Advantage Region's monthly unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) rose from 2.6 percent in December 2019 to 2.9 percent in December 2020, according to figures released from Iowa Workforce Development. Iowa's unemployment rate was 3.3 percent in December 2020 up from 2.9 percent in December 2019. The U.S. unemployment rate was 6.7 percent in December 2020. Total employment in the region fell from 41,590 in December 2019 to 38,640 in December 2020.

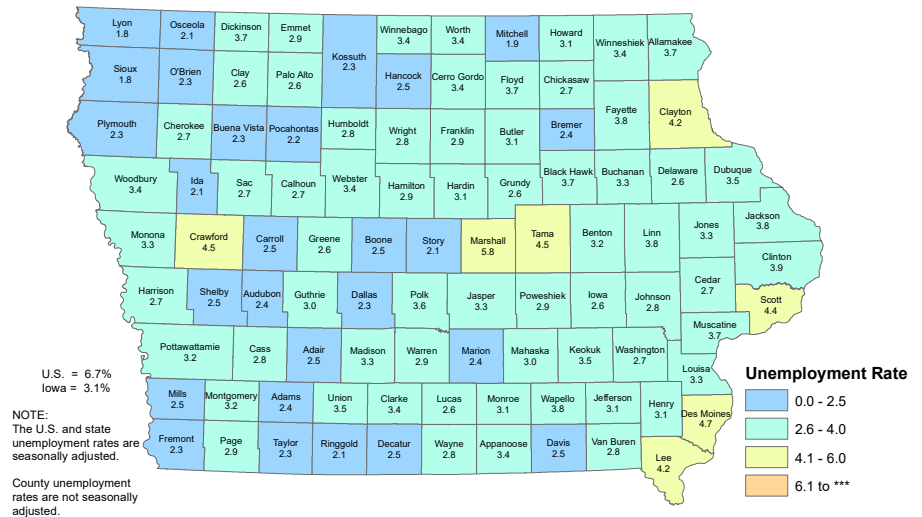
Western Iowa Advantage tracks various economic indicators in Audubon, Calhoun, Carroll, Crawford, Greene, Ida, and Sac Counties in Iowa, including employment trends.

County unemployment rates in the region for December 2020:

Audubon 2.4%
Calhoun 2.7%
Carroll 2.5%
Crawford 4.5%
Greene 2.6%
Ida 2.1%
Sac 2.7%

Iowa Unemployment Rates by County

December 2020



Source: Labor Market Information Division, Iowa Workforce Development

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