

www.westerniowaadvantage.com ■ info@westerniowaadvantage.com ■ 712.792.9914
PO Box 768, Carroll, Iowa 51401 January 2026

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

WIAD Hosts Legislative Roundtable

Western Iowa Advantage held a legislative roundtable December 2, 2025 at Region XII Council of Governments. Senator Tim Kraayenbrink, Representative Craig Williams, and candidate Rachel Burns discussed important regional issues including housing, economic development and TIF, community development, and transportation. Leaders discussed the challenges of development in rural Iowa and ways the State can be more helpful in community and economic development efforts.



Above (L to R): Jalonna Ehler, Lake View City Administrator; Chris Mason, President SpArC; Sara Slater, Executive Director Audubon County Economic Development; Paul Plumb, Executive Director Chamber & Development Council of Crawford County; Candidate Rachel Burns; Senator Tim Kraayenbrink; Representative Craig Williams.



Above (L to R): Candidate Rachel Burns, Senator Tim Kraayenbrink, Representative Craig Williams.

Open Meetings Open Records Trainings to be Held

Region XII COG staff, including Chris Whitaker and Rick Hunsaker, have been accepted as an approved trainer to provide Open Meetings and Public Records training by the Iowa Public Information Board. House File 706, which was enacted by the State of Iowa, requires newly elected and appointed officials to participate in a minimum of one hour of training regarding open meetings and open records law. Other significant changes involve changes to violation penalty provisions and legal dispute settlements regarding Iowa's sunshine laws.

Region XII COG will provide this in-person training to all elected and appointed officials that are members within the COG service area (cities and counties within Audubon, Carroll, Crawford, Greene, Guthrie and Sac Counties and associate member cities) at no cost. While the trainings are free to attend, reservations are required.

You may register for the following training sessions and Region XII plans to offer this session again in the future. Please click on the corresponding link to the session you would like to register (once successfully registered, you will receive a confirmation e-mail) or you may call Michelle Kooiker at 712-792-9914 to register.

[Tuesday, January 27, 6:00 PM. Region XII COG Training Room, 1009 E. Anthony Street, Carroll.](#)

[Monday, February 2, 6:00 PM. ACED, 800 Market Street, Audubon.](#)

[Thursday, February 5, 6:00 PM. Greene County Community Center, 204 W. Harrison St, Jefferson.](#)

[Wednesday, February 11, 6:00 PM. Wall Lake Community Center, 209 2nd Street, Wall Lake.](#)

Information on additional sessions can be found at: region12cog.org/webinarspodcasts.

Existing Employers Drive Future Job Growth in Carroll County

Through ongoing Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) visits conducted by the Carroll County Growth Partnership, local employers are sharing encouraging news about the future of job growth in Carroll County. National and state economic development research consistently shows that nearly 80 percent of economic growth and job creation comes from existing businesses and industry. These findings are being reinforced locally through conversations with Carroll County employers. During recent BRE visits, businesses across multiple sectors have indicated plans for operational expansion in 2026 and 2027, signaling confidence in their companies and in the communities they call home.

While these expansions do not include the construction of new facilities or increases in physical square footage, they are nonetheless significant. Employers are preparing to grow by adding production lines, increasing capacity, expanding services, or enhancing internal operations. These types of investments often lead directly to new job opportunities, increased wages, and a stronger local supply chain — all without the visible footprint of traditional expansion projects.

BRE visits are a core strategy of the Carroll County Growth Partnership's economic development efforts. By meeting one-on-one with employers, CCGP gains valuable insight into workforce needs, infrastructure challenges, capital investment plans, and opportunities for growth. This proactive approach allows the organization and its partners to respond early, connect businesses to resources, and help remove barriers that could limit expansion.

The positive outlook shared during these visits underscores the importance of supporting the businesses already operating in Carroll County. Job creation and economic vitality are not driven solely by business attraction, but by the continued success, investment, and expansion of existing employers. These businesses form the backbone of the local economy, and their growth plans point to a strong and resilient future for Carroll County.

Available Building: 121 E Lincoln Way, Jefferson

The City of Jefferson currently has a building for sale within the city's downtown square. This 5,808 square foot, former bakery building is zoned commercial and available for retail development. The first floor has a restaurant space and office space on the second floor. Jefferson is located in Greene County and this building is located in the downtown, south of Highway 30. For more information, contact Greg Picklapp, Ames Regional Economic Alliance at 515-232-2310 or greg@amesalliance.com.



It's easier here!

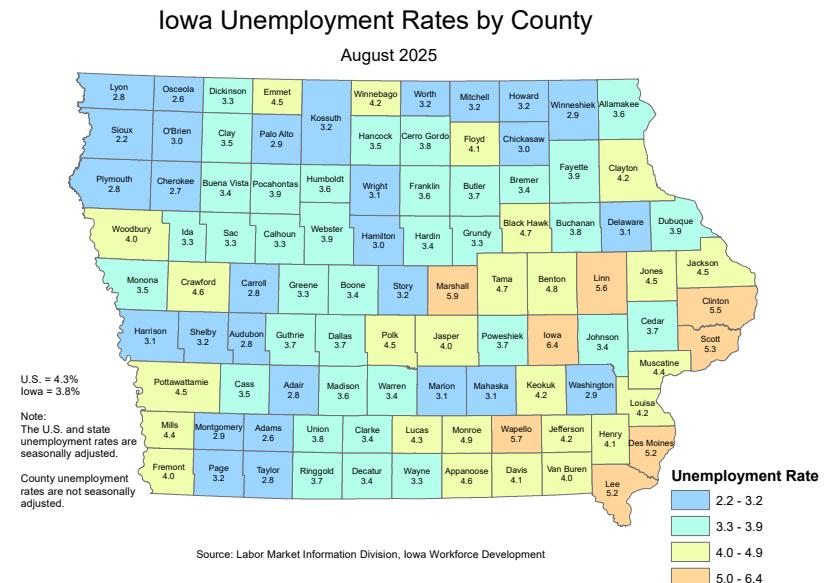
Western Iowa Advantage Region and State of Iowa See No Change in Unemployment Rate in November 2025

The Western Iowa Advantage Region's monthly unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) was 2.7 percent in November 2025 steady from 2.7 percent in November 2024, according to figures released from Iowa Workforce Development. Iowa's unemployment rate was 3.1 percent in November 2025 steady from 3.1 percent in November 2024. The U.S. unemployment rate was 4.6 percent in November 2025. Total employment in the region increased to 39,160 in November 2025 from 38,140 in November 2024.

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 November 2025:

Audubon 2.5%
 Calhoun 2.7%
 Carroll 2.3%
 Crawford 3.4%
 Greene 2.6%
 Ida 2.6%
 Sac 2.6%



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