



INVESTING

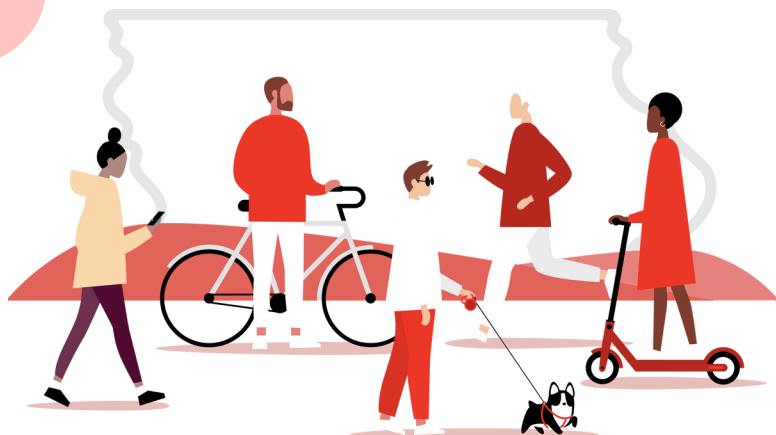
IN

COMMUNITY CHALLENGE GRANTS

GRANTS TO MAKE
COMMUNITIES MORE
LIVABLE FOR ALL AGES

IOWA

COMMUNITIES





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AARP Mission: Empower people to choose how they live as they age.

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization with approximately 38 million members, including 325,000 here in Iowa. AARP Iowa is committed to enhancing the quality of life for Iowans as they age. AARP was founded in 1958 by Ethel Percy Andrus, a retired educator who sought to improve life and expand opportunities for older Americans. AARP Iowa actively engages in advocacy at the national, state and local levels.

AARP Iowa is working to support age-friendly communities that allow Iowans to remain in their homes and communities as they age. The AARP Community Challenge grant program is an integral part of AARP’s nationwide Livable Communities initiative. This initiative aims to transform neighborhoods, towns, cities and counties across the country into exceptional places to live for people of all ages.

What are Community Challenge Grants?



The AARP Community Challenge grant program is part of the nationwide AARP Livable Communities initiative, which aims to enhance the quality of life for everyone. Through this program, communities receive small grants to fund quick-action projects that make their neighborhoods more livable for people of all ages. These projects can include improvements to public spaces, housing, transportation, digital connections, civic engagement and community resilience. The program is open to both nonprofits and government entities. Grants can support permanent physical enhancements, temporary demonstrations that lead to long-term change, or innovative new services.

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Iowa Challenge Grants by the numbers

\$457,354

Total investment in Iowa projects since 2017

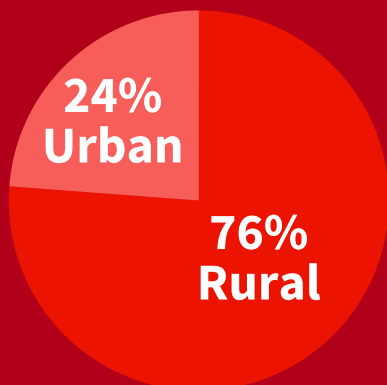


**33 communities
across Iowa**

42

**total grants
(2017-2025)**

Projects by community type:



Average grant amount:



\$10,889



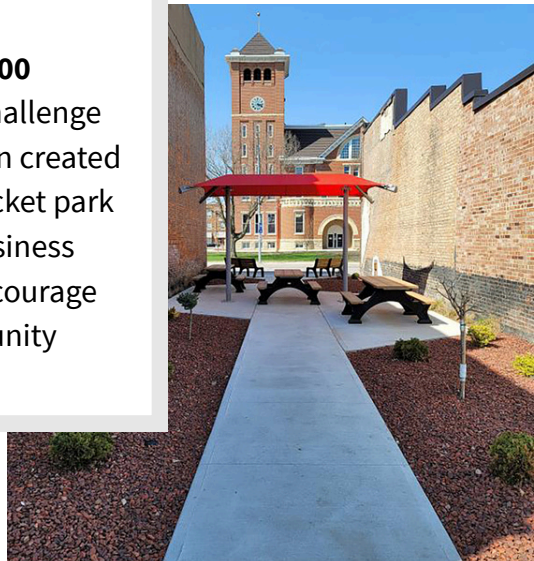
INVESTING IN PUBLIC PLACES

Lit structure on Main Street, Manning

2021 Clarion

City of Clarion | \$15,000

With the Community Challenge Grant, the City of Clarion created a visually appealing pocket park for the City's central business district, designed to encourage the gathering of community members.



2018 Manning

Main Street Manning | \$5,000

The nonprofit, Main Street Manning, created a vibrant public space by installing 12 lit structures on Manning's Main Street.



The AARP Community Challenge Grant provided us monies to design and fabricate beautiful, lit artwork along Main Street. We receive many comments from visitors and community members about how it brightens the drive down our historic brick Main Street. ”

- Ron Reischl, former Main Street Manning Board President



Carlisle 2017

City of Carlisle | \$9,515

Iowa's first Community Challenge grantee, the City of Carlisle, installed ten benches, ten planters, eight bicycle racks and 20 banner-sign mounts for its trails and downtown, creating a more walkable, attractive community.



Avoca 2018

Avoca Public Library | \$7,392

The grant enabled Avoca Public Library to purchase outdoor musical instruments to enhance the library's green space.



Nevada 2025

Main Street Nevada | \$10,000

Two underutilized downtown areas were transformed into gathering spots with accessible seating and shade.



Harlan 2019

City of Harlan | \$7,000

Using Challenge Grant funds, the City of Harlan created a StoryWalk for community members to simultaneously enjoy reading and the outdoors. The project was designed to encourage people of all ages to use the walking trail and the park.

Walcott 2024

City of Walcott | \$12,000

With this AARP grant, the City of Walcott laid new asphalt and paint on one tennis court and converted a second into pickleball courts.

Villisca 2025

**Villisca Community
Betterment**

Association | \$8,446

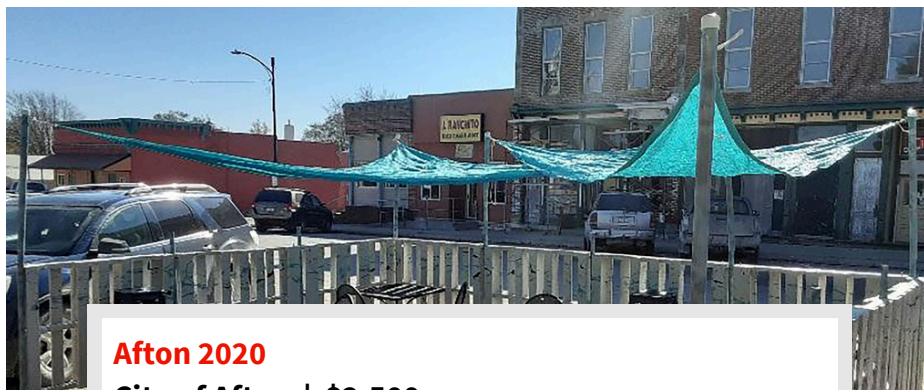
This nonprofit created a StoryWalk with 20 weatherproof display stands with book pages and children's activities.

Chariton 2023

**Chariton Free Public
Library | \$2,500**

The library transformed the land next door into an accessible gathering space and sensory garden, which is open year-round and offers educational events on gardening, wildlife and nature appreciation.





Afton 2020

City of Afton | \$2,500

The grant allowed the City of Afton to develop a portable parklet that's movable for events at various locations.



Estherville 2021

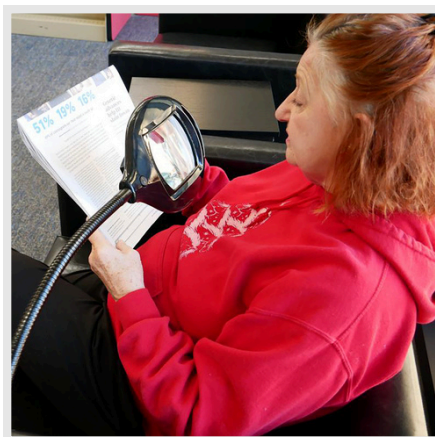
City of Estherville | \$8,000

With this project, the City of Estherville installed intergenerational swings.

Des Moines 2023

Des Moines South Side Library | \$1,500

To increase accessibility for library patrons aged 50 plus, the library used the grant to provide large print keyboards, magnification tools and mobility aids.

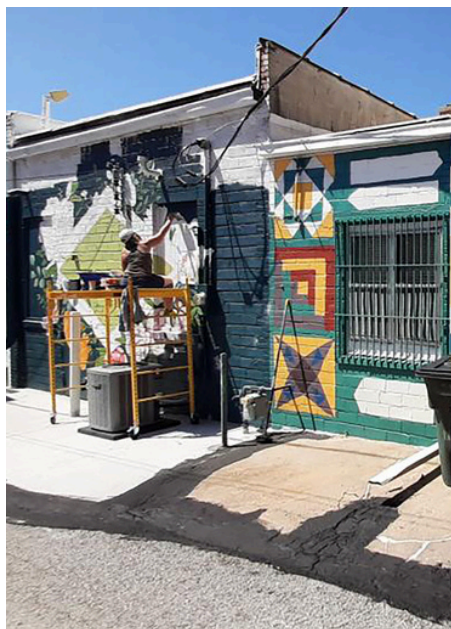




Oakland 2021

Golden Hills Resource Conservation and Development | \$10,400

AARP worked with the Golden Hills Resource Conservation and Development nonprofit to improve two public areas with art installations, accessible benches and landscaping.



Greeley 2022

City of Greeley | \$10,000

With the Challenge Grant, the City of Greeley installed decorative light poles along State Highway 38 as part of the city's effort to create a downtown corridor.



Epworth 2023

American Legion John White Post 650 | \$7,500

American Legion John White Post 650 created a veterans memorial in Epworth to commemorate the service of men and women in all branches of the armed forces.

Holy Cross 2025

Holy Cross Hometown Pride Committee | \$12,000

This grant enabled the renovation of a tennis court and the addition of two accessible pickleball courts and benches.

Graettinger 2023

City of Graettinger | \$20,000

The City of Graettinger made two new community installations: easily accessible pickleball courts in the main park area and a walking trail.



The City of Graettinger's AARP grant has been a **game-changer**—quite literally. With funding directed toward our new pickleball courts and trail system, we've seen a remarkable boost in outdoor activity, cross-generational engagement and overall community wellness. The courts have become a local favorite, drawing everyone from competitive players to families just looking for fun. Meanwhile, the trail system has invited walkers, joggers and cyclists of all ages to enjoy the outdoors, encouraging healthier lifestyles and stronger neighborly connections. It's been inspiring to see how these additions have brought people together, sparking new friendships and a genuine sense of pride in our shared public spaces. ”

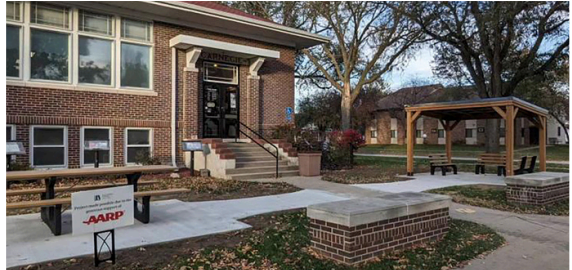
- Kara Currans, Graettinger City Clerk



Logan 2023

Logan Public Library | \$8,000

An underutilized lawn became an opportunity to create a public gathering space with a gazebo and seating.



Wilton 2023

Wilton Public Library | \$2,500

With the help of a committee of volunteers, Wilton Public Library improved a garden space by developing a sensory area. The volunteers did the bulk of the planting and grant activity management.

Bondurant 2024

City of Bondurant | \$20,000

To improve the shoreline of Lake Petocka, the City of Bondurant created a garden and trail featuring five works of art. The City also constructed a new kayak launch and installed seating and lighting.



Keokuk 2018

Keokuk Parks Foundation | \$3,000

The grant enabled Keokuk Parks Foundation to resurface old tennis courts into six pickleball courts. The Foundation also installed two benches on the courts, a sign to display the pickleball rules and a trash receptacle.



These courts have improved the community by providing a space for all citizens to play the fastest growing sport in America free of charge... The **community has reacted positively** as players now have a dedicated space to play pickleball and most days the courts are filled with players. The neighborhood also improved in that there was no longer a deteriorated, vacant tennis court that was an eyesore in the neighborhood. Some adjacent property owners even made improvements to their property such as landscaping, yard cleanup and one painted their house because of the influx of citizens coming to their neighborhood on a daily basis. ”

- Annette Peevler, Public Works/Planning Administrative Secretary for the City of Keokuk



Des Moines 2021

Des Moines Historical Society | \$10,000

An accessible, walkable park was created that includes an interactive trolley sculpture and interpretive signage to memorialize the historic Des Moines trolley line.

INVESTING IN HOUSING



Children's LEGO® ADU replicas, Johnson County

Johnson County 2023

Johnson County Livable Community Housing Action Team | \$11,921

Johnson County's Livable Community Housing Action Team collaborated with the Johnson County Affordable Housing Coalition and the Greater Iowa City Homebuilders Association to stage competitions for children aged 17 and younger to design LEGO® replicas of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) to raise awareness of this housing option.



“The beauty of the LEGO® bricks is that they are reusable, and we have been able to continue utilizing them to continue building awareness of ADUs...I think it provided an excellent introduction to the younger generation about ADUs while allowing their parents and other members of the public to get more information about the different types of ADUs and steps to build them.”

**- Jeff Kellbach, Aging Specialist
with Johnson County Social
Services**





Des Moines 2020

Home Opportunities Made Easy, Inc. | \$36,000

For this housing project, Home Opportunities Made Easy (HOME), Inc. constructed an ADU demonstration in an urban neighborhood.

Dubuque 2024

Four Mounds Foundation HEART Partnership | \$15,000

The grant enabled Four Mounds Foundation HEART Partnership to provide local students with the opportunity to complete home modifications for low-income older adults, with on-the-job training for the students.



Bettendorf 2025

Quad City Area REALTORS® | \$15,000

Students and professionals submitted Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) designs for a cash prize competition.



INVESTING IN TRANSPORTATION

Safety signage for pedestrians and cyclists, Des Moines



Des Moines 2024

The Avenues of Ingersoll & Grand | \$7,500

As part of a district-wide effort to improve safety and usability of the streetscape, The Avenues of Ingersoll and Grand installed 40 signs at 28 properties, alerting drivers to look out for cyclists and pedestrians.

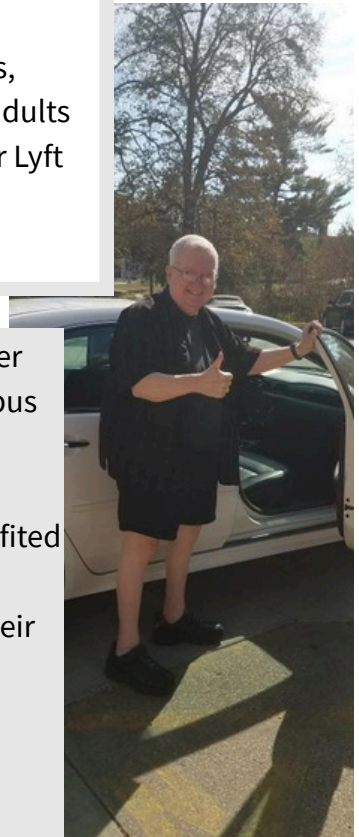
Des Moines 2022

Aging Resources | \$11,500

An Area Agency on Aging, Aging Resources, created a telephone call center for older adults without a smartphone to order an Uber or Lyft through a third-party service called GoGo Grandparents.

“This transportation program allowed older adults to schedule rides outside normal bus hours, allowing them to access their community for health care and social interactions... The older adults who benefited from this transportation program were thrilled to be more actively involved in their community and less isolated by lack of transportation.”

- Margaret DeSio, Special Projects Coordinator





Woodbine 2018

Woodbine Main Street | \$1,800

Woodbine Main Street installed interpretive signage in the downtown buildings of the historic district to increase walkability and community engagement.

Iowa City 2024

Plan + Place with Morningside-Glendale Neighborhood Association | \$2,500

To promote neighborhood walkability and discuss potential walkability improvements, Plan + Place with Morningside-Glendale Neighborhood Association held walk audits.



Glidden 2019

City of Glidden | \$10,000

The City of Glidden created a trail to connect both sides of town. It went across U.S. Highway 30 and connected the City's aquatic center to Northland Park.

Stanton 2021

Stanton Community Foundation | \$3,000

To encourage residents to use the community walking trails, get outdoors, and celebrate the town's Swedish history, Swedish-themed mile markers were installed along the Stanton Greenbelt Trail.

Perry 2022

Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency | \$20,000

The AARP Community Challenge Grant allowed the Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency to install five bus signs and five benches around Perry where people can wait for the FlexConnect bus service.

It also completed the first Social Determinants of Health survey and designed and printed 100 FlexConnect bus passes for new users.



Bloomfield 2025

Bloomfield Main Street | \$15,000

To improve pedestrian safety, Bloomfield Main Street repaved streets, repainted parking lines and installed high-contrast crosswalks.

Iowa City 2025

Cycling Without Age @ Bike Library | \$12,560

Cycling Without Age @ Bike Library expanded its programming to include a wheelchair-accessible trishaw.



Tama/Toledo 2022

Tama/Toledo Healthy Hometown Committee | \$45,275

Using the most robust AARP Challenge Grant awarded to an Iowa project, the Tama/Toledo Healthy Hometown Committee installed a rapid flashing beacon and two crosswalks, allowing safer access between the two communities.



“The AARP Community Challenge really did **jumpstart** projects for Tama/Toledo. Tama & Toledo were improved because the rapid flashing beacon connected and allowed all citizens from our two small towns to cross Highway Business 30 safely to access schools, shopping, banking and recreation. AARP truly makes a difference.”

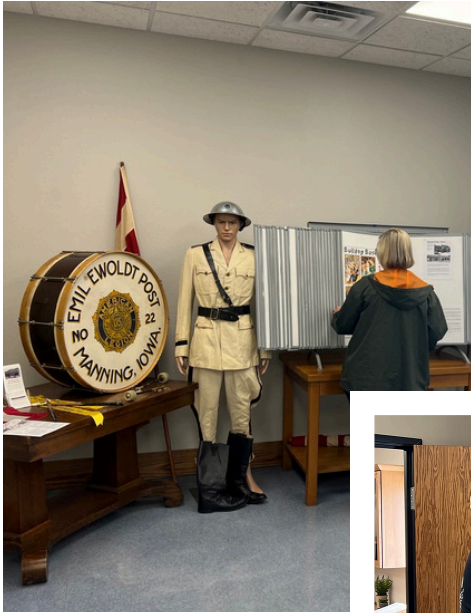
- Denise Fletcher, Co-chair of the Hometown Action Team for Tama & Toledo





INVESTING IN COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Display cases housing cultural items, Manning



Manning 2021

City of Manning | \$7,500

The City of Manning created display cases for items of cultural significance at public places, increasing the community's visual character.



Monticello 2024

Monticello Public Library | \$15,000

With this Community Challenge Grant, Monticello Public Library purchased a mobile kitchen for health and nutrition classes. Classes include topics like making healthy food choices while on a budget and cooking basics for children and teenagers.



Manning 2025

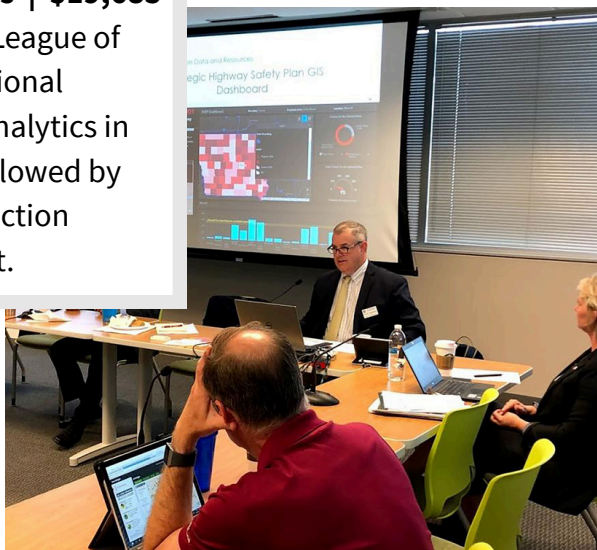
City of Manning | \$2,500

Manning created emergency preparedness kits and held community trainings.

Des Moines 2019

Iowa League of Cities | \$19,685

This project by Iowa League of Cities created educational workshops on data analytics in local government, followed by an immersive quick-action demonstrated project.



Dyersville 2019

Dyersville Economic Development Corp. | \$10,000

A community plaza and amphitheater were created in an open green space and connected by a walking and biking trail to the downtown riverfront development – all as part of flood recovery efforts.



Ely 2023

Ely Public Library | \$3,360

Ely Public Library provided its community with four virtual reality devices, enabling older adults to use new technology for education and entertainment.



Challenge Grant Application Information

AARP®

Pay to
the order of

THE CITY OF GRAETTINGER

TWENTY THOUSAND AND ⁰⁰/₁₀₀ ——— Dollars

\$ 20,000

For PICKLEBALL COURTS-FLAGSHIP
GRANT

Jo Ann C. Jenkins
Jo Ann Jenkins, Chief Executive Officer

NON-NEGOTIABLE

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Month Day, Year

How to apply for an AARP Community Challenge Grant

Local governments and nonprofits can apply by visiting aarp.org/CommunityChallenge. The grants are open to 501(c)(3), 501(c)(4), and 501(c)(6) nonprofits and government entities. All projects must be completed by December of the same year grants are awarded. There are three types of grants available.

1

Flagship Grants

Flagship AARP Community Challenge grants have ranged from several hundred dollars for smaller, short-term activities to tens of thousands of dollars for larger projects. Since 2017, AARP has funded projects with an average grant amount of \$10,000 to \$12,000. Nine out of ten grants (or 92 percent) are for \$20,000 or less. AARP accepts applications for projects that benefit residents in the following categories:

- Creating vibrant **public places** that improve open spaces, parks and access to other amenities
- Delivering a range of **transportation and mobility options** that increase connectivity, walkability, bikeability and access to public and private transit
- Supporting a range of **housing** options that increases the availability of accessible and affordable choices
- Increasing **digital connections** and enhancing digital literacy skills of residents
- Supporting **community resilience** through investments that improve disaster management, preparedness and mitigation for residents

2

Capacity-Building Microgrants

Combining \$2,500 grants with additional resources (such as webinars, cohort

learning opportunities, up to two hours of one-on-one coaching with leading national nonprofit organizations and AARP publications), this grant opportunity accepts applications for projects that benefit residents — especially those age 50 and older — in the following categories:

- **Disaster Preparedness Training:** Implement disaster preparedness training programs and resources for residents
- **Walk Audits:** Implement walk audit assessments to enhance safety and walkability in communities
- **Bike Audits:** Implement bike audits to enhance safety and bikeability in communities
- **HomeFit Guide Modifications:** Implement education, simple home modifications and accessible safety solutions to create and maintain “lifelong homes”

3

Demonstration Grants

This opportunity funds projects that encourage the replication of promising local efforts. The demonstration

grant opportunity accepts applications for projects that benefit residents in the following categories:

- **Enhancing pedestrian safety** by creating safer streets and sidewalks
- **Expanding high-speed internet** (broadband) access and adoption
- **Reconnecting communities** divided by infrastructure
- **Implementing housing design competitions** that increase community understanding and encourage policies that enable greater choice in housing



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AARP

11-7-2024

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0604/0000

Pay to the order of THE AVENUES OF INGERSOLL AND GRAND \$ 7,500.00
SEVEN THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED AND 00/100 Dollars

For COMMUNITY CHALLENGE GRANT

Jo Ann C. Jenkins
Jo Ann Jenkins, Chief Executive Officer

NON-NEGOTIABLE

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