

Strategic Evolution:
Iowa's HousingIowa Conference
Transforms into an Innovation Hub

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Strategic Evolution: Iowa's HousingIowa Conference Transforms into an Innovation Hub

In 2023, the Iowa Finance Authority (IFA) ushered in a remarkable strategic shift with its annual HousingIowa Conference, transitioning the event from a flagship learning and networking event into a vibrant convergence of energy and ideas, where action took center stage and all attendees left knowing we were collectively moving housing innovations forward.

Innovation

No longer just a marketing affair, this event has evolved into a nexus for agency strategic objectives, spanning from fostering financial literacy for homeownership to catalyzing innovation and facilitating direct connections between developers and communities ripe for housing solutions – with calls for innovative proposals at the center.

Transforming the conference into a strategic hub for housing innovation yielded remarkable and enduring outcomes, extending far beyond the event's conclusion.

This transformation broke our previous attendance and sponsorship records, while also facilitating the allocation of **millions of dollars** to innovative housing initiatives presented at the event – propelling them forward in ways previously unimagined.

Strategic Objectives

1. Have more attendees attend the event than ever before.
2. Have more support of the event through sponsorships than ever before.
3. Transform the event from a conference to an annual opportunity to see the best in innovation and reward it through highly anticipated opportunities to make the ideas generated a reality and align with strategic goals.

Engage Targeted Audiences

Gone are the days of mere conference spectatorship; we actively engaged our stakeholders, inviting them to participate in various pitch events to transform ideas into reality. Beyond the goals of setting records for attendance and sponsorships, our strategic approach ensured that the event served as a catalyst for meaningful collaboration and impactful outcomes, driving positive change across the state.

Innovation took center stage at the 2023 conference, with a key emphasis on highly anticipated and interactive events like the Iowa Thriving Communities Showcase, the Homeownership Incubator Competition and the Innovation in Housing Pitch Competition, all coming together to create an immersive experience for attendees and tangible benefits for Iowans.

Iowa Thriving Communities Showcase

Dozens of Iowa communities completed an intensive application process to be designated as an Iowa Thriving Community and 11 were awarded the prestigious designation. The designation comes with highly sought scoring points for the 2024 Federal Housing Tax Credit and/or Workforce Housing Tax Credit programs. An Iowa Thriving Communities Half-Day showcase session highlighted how these communities are working to attract housing for all and connected them with developers and housing leaders.

Communities estimate that the designation and development connections made at the conference will usher in an impressive **\$100 million in housing development investments** and an additional **400 housing units to be developed**, alongside a significant and unexpected ripple effect of additional **private investments totaling more than \$30 million** throughout the eleven designated Iowa Thriving Communities alone.

Iowa Homeownership Incubator Competition

The 2023 Iowa Homeownership Incubator was co-hosted with the Iowa Association of REALTORS® and was a challenge to Iowa lending institutions and real estate professionals to think innovatively about the future of homeownership and advancing financial literacy around homeownership among all Iowans.

The pitch competition was so outstanding the panel of industry partners selected to award all three pitch teams with a grant award of \$20,000, \$10,000 and \$5,000 respectively for first, second and third place to further their initiatives. The awards are paying dividends in breaking homeownership barriers across the state with millions in additional private investments leveraged and hundreds of underserved Iowans transformed to homeowners.

Innovation in Housing Pitch Competition

The Innovation Set-Aside solicited creative proposals from developers for housing projects serving special targeted populations or using innovative construction, financing or operations, unique partnerships or other innovations of which otherwise may not be feasible through the 9% Tax Credit round. The finalists presented to a panel of state and national industry experts at the conference and a winner was selected and announced the same day.

The winner, a first of its kind housing and community food hall development secured \$10 million in housing tax credits to make the project a reality.

Measurable Results | Benefits that Outweigh Costs

All of the strategic objectives of the event were met and a record amount of impact came from the conference.

- Set all-time attendance record (854)
- Set all-time sponsorship record
- Connected developers to Iowa Thriving Communities, setting the stage for an estimated \$100 in housing developments equating to 400 units in those communities.
- Advanced an innovative housing project with up to \$10 million in tax credits.

- Over 1,200 Iowans have participated in financial literacy courses facilitated by our Homeownership Incubator partners. These partnerships have also spurred more than \$2.1 million in additional investments.


Demonstrate Effective Use of Resources

Engaging our stakeholders to pitch their ideas not only led to transformative housing initiatives but also yielded cost savings by replacing the need for paid speaker trainings with these pitch panels. Consequently, we were able to reduce our speaker budget.

Replicable

Any HFA could use our tactic of hosting pitch-competition events at their annual conference to draw a more diverse crowd of housing professionals. Other HFAs are able to use this model to turn their annual conferences into an action-based events that serve as hubs for highly-anticipated funding opportunities as well.



**RECORD
ATTENDANCE
854**


**RECORD
SPONSORSHIPS
\$**


**ENGAGED STAKEHOLDERS
IN ACTIVE PARTICIPATION
OF INNOVATION PITCHES
WITH AWARDS TO
MAKE THEM HAPPEN**

Iowa Thriving Communities Showcase

“Excellent forum to allow communities to give their pitch to developers. I sat next to an out of state developer who would clearly benefit greatly from this.”



Innovation in Housing Pitch Competition

“It was a wonderful opportunity to see what others are doing and the competition for credits in an open event was great.”



Iowa Homeownership Incubator Pitch Competition

“I loved the pitch sessions and seeing others creativity.”

