



Application to Host the 2027 or 2028
Iowa Leadership Exchange & Bootcamp

Submission Deadline: March 31

Submit To: Bill Menner at Director@iowardc.com

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The Iowa Rural Development Council (IRDC) is a non-profit organization of service providers and rural residents from across the state. Membership represents a wide variety of organizations, individuals, and for-profit companies with interests in rural economic and community development.

Over the past 6 years, the Iowa Leadership Exchange & Bootcamp has drawn leadership program managers, leadership resource providers, and those passionate about community and leadership development for a 2-day event of learning, sharing, and networking. The format provides attendees with educational and networking opportunities to learn about best practices and resources for leadership programming and development. Hosted in October each year, the first day includes a half-day bootcamp for only those community “teams” who submitted for and received a Leadership Bootcamp Grant. The full event then kicks off at 1 pm for all attendees, with an evening reception wrapping up the day. The second day ends around 3 pm for all attendees.

The first 4 years were hosted by the Governor’s Empower Rural Iowa Initiative and Iowa Economic Development Authority, with the Iowa Rural Development Council as a key partner. For the last two years, the Iowa Rural Development Council has been the primary host with the Governor’s Empower Rural Iowa Initiative and Leadership Iowa as key partners. The Exchange includes meals and refreshment breaks, full group presentations, and 4-5 breakout sessions on both days. The morning of the first day includes only bootcamp teams, approximately 30-40 people.

The anticipated attendance for the two-day exchange is 125.

OBJECTIVE

This application process will allow IRDC to identify and select the two most qualified sponsor organizations with the facilities and capabilities to host the Iowa Leadership Exchange & Bootcamp in either 2027 or 2028. Preference will be given to applications that represent partnerships between event facilities and other sponsor organizations.

The Leadership Exchange Committee, along with the IRDC Executive Director, will review all submissions and select the communities that best meet the attendees’ needs and that meet or exceed the minimum requirements. A site visit to the community may be requested. The Leadership Exchange Committee will present final recommendations to the IRDC Board. The IRDC Board will make the final decision on the location, hotel(s), and meeting space.

GENERAL INFORMATION

ESTIMATED SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

RFP Announcement	Friday, January 23, 2026
Bids Due	Tuesday, March 31, 2026
Decision Communicated to Applicants	Friday, May 29, 2026

IRDC reserves the right to revise the schedule above.

SUBMISSION OF BID

Application must be submitted electronically to Executive Director Bill Menner at Director@iowardc.com.

DATES:

The two-day summit is held annually during the last week of October.

- Anticipated dates (subject to change):
 - October 26-27, 2027
 - October 24-25, 2028

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF SCHEDULE:

The first day includes breakfast and lunch for only Leadership Bootcamp participants, approximately 30-40 individuals. The Leadership Exchange kicks off at 1 pm on the first day with general sessions, 4-5 concurrent breakout sessions, and a mid-afternoon snack. An optional networking event is typically offered to conclude the day (30-40 attendees). Day 2 includes a general session, 4-5 concurrent breakout sessions, breakfast, and lunch, with the event ending at 3 pm. The exchange attendance is anticipated at 125, and the bootcamp attendance is anticipated at 30.

Possible meeting venues could include: convention centers, hotel meeting spaces, museums, corporate meeting rooms (e.g. banks), theaters, fraternal halls, colleges, restaurants, churches, and/or libraries.

- Summit headquarters (registration and refreshment breaks) must be situated together in a centrally-located facility.
- Space is needed for 8+ exhibit booths. Some exhibitors may require access to electricity. An adequate number of 6' tables and chairs must be provided.
- The general assembly room for plenary sessions should have a seating capacity of at least 125 attendees.
- Five rooms with seating for 30+ are required for breakout sessions. The assembly and breakout session rooms should be in the same building. IRDC would consider multiple sites if they were all located within a one to two-block radius.
- All facilities must be accessible and accommodating of mobility needs.
- Access to all exchange sites the day before the exchange for setup is preferred.
- Audiovisual capabilities, including microphones, are required in the general assembly room and in all breakout session rooms.
 - At a minimum, each room must be equipped with a handheld or lapel microphone suitable for presenters and audience interaction.
- Adequate Wi-Fi must be available in all facility locations, and complementary Wi-Fi should be provided to attendees at exchange headquarters and in meeting facilities.

FOOD AND BEVERAGES:

Proposals should include menus with prices and catering policies. The facility must be able to guarantee meal prices at least 6 months in advance of the summit. Meals will need to be catered onsite.

NETWORKING ACTIVITIES:

The Leadership Exchange traditionally hosts one evening function after the first day. These have been held on the property in the past, but off-site would be considered depending on the distance from the primary facility and/or lodging with transportation. Please provide information regarding the availability of unique options for evening receptions.

LOCAL SPONSORSHIP SUPPORT:

Proposals should identify any confirmed local sponsors willing to support the Iowa Leadership Exchange & Bootcamp if the location is selected. If sponsors are not yet confirmed, proposals should describe how the local host organization(s) would work in partnership with the IRDC Event Committee to identify, cultivate, and secure local sponsors, including potential sponsor types or sectors (e.g., financial institutions, utilities, healthcare, employers, foundations).

CONTENT

Your proposal should include the following:

- Contact information for a point person responsible for local arrangements, and a secondary contact to be copied on all correspondence.
- A statement of interest from the sponsor organization for hosting the Iowa Leadership Exchange & Bootcamp, including the reasons you believe your community is the best location for the exchange.
- A map detailing the location of the proposed exchange site(s), lodging, and parking.
- An indication that all venues included in the application will not be undergoing renovation at the time of the exchange.
- An indication that any lodging providers are certified as having completed human trafficking prevention training in compliance with Iowa Code section 80.45A.
- Sufficient information regarding the community's ability to host the Iowa Leadership Exchange & Bootcamp based on the following criteria:
 - Adequate lodging facilities within a ten (10) mile radius of the exchange site must be available. Preference will be based on affordability and quality.
 - Estimated rental fees for the proposed exchange facilities. Preference will be given to venues that can be provided at no or reduced cost.
 - Proposed plan for refreshments during registration and breaks. Preference will be given to sponsor organizations willing to find sponsors to cover the cost of refreshments.
 - Audio/visual equipment (including microphones in all meeting rooms), tables, and chairs for all rooms must be available. Preference will be given to sponsor organizations able to provide this equipment at no cost or reduced cost.

- Proposed ideas for the evening networking event. Preference will be given to sponsor organizations willing to find sponsors and host the networking reception.
- Available transportation to and from all exchange venues, along with the necessary contact information. Preference will be given to sponsor organizations able to provide transportation between exchange facilities, hotels, and receptions (trolleys, buses, etc.) at no or reduced cost.
- Any additional information that would enhance your application and make it stand apart from others submitted.

LODGING/ROOM RATES AND PROVISIONS

Night before Exchange	Day 1	Total
10 Rooms	45 Rooms	55

- Room block to be reviewed prior to the room block cut-off date, with the ability to reduce without penalty or increase if rooms are available.
- Exchange attendees will book directly with the lodging establishment, with room cost and tax being paid by each individual.
- The hotel should guarantee not to sell guestrooms at a lower rate than the guestroom rate established for IRDC over summit dates, with the exception of qualified rates to include Government State rates. If the Hotel is offering a lower guestroom rate, the Hotel agrees to adjust the guestroom rates for all prior reservations for the Guest Room Block and make the adjusted guestroom rate available to all.
- Room block Exchange rates cannot exceed the rates offered on other online sites.
- The Guest Room Block cut-off date should be no earlier than three weeks prior to the event, with rooms provided at the group rate after the cut-off if rooms are available.
- Room attrition should specify our ability to reduce the room block without penalty.
- Room rates available for the day prior to Conference date.
- Please include the maximum number of rooms the organization can block.
- If a single hotel is unable to accommodate the entire room block, please identify overflow plans.

EXHIBIT SPACE NEEDS

- This event includes exhibits by industry suppliers. Exhibit space needs are as follows:
 - Contiguous space to accommodate (8+) 8'x10' exhibit booths.
 - Close proximity to the primary event meeting space and public restrooms.
 - Sufficient lighting, electrical supply, high-speed wireless, and wired Internet access.