Iowa LTAP Work Zone Sign Package Program: 2025–2026

tech transfer summary

This program, started in 2017, provides an avenue for Iowa cities with populations under 10,000 to obtain a basic package of work zone signs and personal protection vests. From a total of 160 applicants, 10 cities were awarded packages in 2025–2026.

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RESEARCH PROJECT TITLE
2025–2026 Iowa Work Zone Safety Sign Package Program

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The Iowa Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) is dedicated to providing technical and management assistance to Iowa's local governments through a variety of programs and resources.

The mission of the Institute for Transportation (InTrans) at Iowa State University is to save lives and improve economic vitality through discovery, research innovation, outreach, and the implementation of bold ideas.

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Goal

The goal of this Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT)-funded project was to provide an avenue for small cities to obtain a basic package of work zone signs and personal protection vests that could help them improve the safety of their work zone setups and increase the safety of their workers and the traveling public.

Problem Statement

The ability to acquire and set up work zone-related devices that are in compliance with the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways* (MUTCD) can sometimes be difficult for smaller cities. The smaller budgets for these cities can result in a lack of inventory and/or the use of signs that are in poor condition, and Iowa has nearly 1,000 incorporated and unincorporated cities with populations under 10,000.

Background

Although city budgets are limited, particularly for cities with populations under 10,000, those smaller cities' public works departmental staff members have demonstrated a commitment to work zone safety by attending or planning to attend related workshops and training events in Iowa.

The Iowa Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) led a pilot program in 2017 to assist those smaller cities by providing acceptable work zone temporary traffic control devices or replacing their outdated equipment. This project is a continuation of the program.

Work zone sign package in 2017

Project Description

A technical advisory committee guided the design, creation, and implementation of the small city work zone sign package program. The project tasks included the following:

1. Develop the content of the work zone sign package. The package distributed consisted of four ROAD WORK AHEAD signs and four CLOSED overlays, two ONE LANE ROAD AHEAD signs, two BE PREPARED TO STOP signs, two Type III barricades, sixteen 28-in. traffic cones, six Class 2 safety vests, eight sign stands, and ten 42-in. channelizer cones.

2. Define the eligibility rules to apply and compete for the sign package. These rules included having a city population of 10,000 or fewer. This year, the program was open to all cities that met the population criteria, and extra points were given to those cities that had at least one staff person who had completed work zone or other related training in the last three years.

3. Develop an application and advertise the program through various avenues including consultants, the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities, Iowa DOT, Iowa County Engineers Association Service Bureau, Iowa Public Works Service Bureau, and Iowa League of Cities. The application consisted of 12 questions designed to determine the need that each eligible city had for the work zone sign package.

4. Define and apply an evaluation and ranking process that assigns points to the answers for each question for each applicant.

Key Findings

- The work zone sign package appears to contain many or most of the devices needed by smaller cities within Iowa.
- Many respondents demonstrated a desire to make work zones safer for their workers and the residents of their cities.
- The answers to the application questions appeared to measure the need for the work zone sign package relatively well.
- The answers to the open-ended questions showed that the majority of the cities that responded had a lack of work zone-related inventory or had inventory that was out of compliance.
- The recipient cities with staff who had not attended work zone safety training in the past were open to staff attending training in the near future.
- The population range for the applicant cities in 2026 ranged from 87 (Carpenter, Iowa) to 8,370 (Denison, Iowa) residents, and the average applicant population was 1,805.

2026 Recipient Cities

- Belle Plaine
- Britt
- Elkhart
- Hawarden
- Inwood
- Kingsley
- LaMotte
- Newell
- Red Oak
- Sabula

"Super great Monday morning news. We really appreciate being chosen and look forward to seeing you in April. Thanks to those who chose Red Oak from the large pool of worthy applicants!!" City of Red Oak

"On behalf of the City of Newell, we are truly honored to have been selected as one of the 10 recipients of the Work Zone Safety Sign Package. This Iowa DOT-funded program is a tremendous benefit to our community by helping us enhance safety for both our roadway workers and the traveling public. We appreciate the support and investment in smaller communities like ours." City of Newell

"Awesome news for Inwood. Thank you for your work with the Work Zone Safety Sign Package Program and thank you to the Iowa LTAP. We are smiling." City of Inwood

"Just wanted to say THANKS again. What a wonderful program. It definitely helps out the City of Elkhart." City of Elkhart

Recommendations

- Advertisement of the program should continue to be broadened to raise awareness of the program to encourage more participation.
- The application value of participation in a work zone safety training class may need to be increased. For more information on work zone training, please visit the Iowa LTAP Work Zone Safety Workshops page.
- Priority should be given to first-time applicants and previous applicants that have not been awarded a package over previous recipients of the work zone sign packages.
- The importance of the narrative sections in the application should continue to be emphasized to encourage more city representatives to elaborate on their viewpoints of roadway worker safety and their need for work zone safety devices.
- Since many smaller cities may not be familiar with Iowa LTAP, the initial contact email message needs to contain language about the program's institutional support such as that it is funded by the Iowa DOT, is a part of Iowa State University, etc.
- The application should continue to contain a "release" that allows quotes and photographs from it to be used to advertise the program.
- This program should be continued given the need still exists to assist smaller cities with their acquisition and application of work zone-related devices.

Implementation Readiness and Benefits

This year, the program provided basic work zone signs, equipment, and personal protection vests to 10 smaller cities that otherwise would not likely be able to afford to purchase new or replacement work zone equipment. This will better ensure the safety of their workers and the traveling public.