



Community Conversation Guide



Diverse housing options in our communities enhance the strength and prosperity of our economy so all Iowans can thrive. As we roll out the welcome mat across the state to ensure Iowans can live where they work, it's critical to educate stakeholder groups across the state about the importance of this initiative. While each relationship has its own nuances, effective conversations depend on a bit of preparation. Assemble some baseline thoughts and be ready to authentically engage with audiences, no matter where the discussion goes. Below are some reminders and talking points when speaking with stakeholders, as well as some thought starters for meaningful conversation.

- 1. Always start with “why.”** There’s a reason you have adopted your vision, your mission, your commitment to housing in Iowa. Clearly define that and look for ways that your “why” aligns with the “why” of the person or group you’re speaking with.
- 2. Let the “Why, Therefore, So That” formula be your guide.** Nearly all communications – whether advertisements, opinion pieces or direct mailers – are best organized according to this simple formula. It brings simplicity and structure to your messaging, and it will ensure you spend more time focused on the why.

“Why, Therefore, So That ...”

WHY: Create the need by exposing or acknowledging the situation or problem.

THEREFORE: Present the solution as a direct outcome of the problem.

SO THAT: Deliver the benefits to affirm the solution and offer a call to action.

- 3. Keep it simple.** Simple words are easier to remember. Simple words also keep your audience engaged; your audience can follow along and will actually hear what you have to say.



4. Localize it! Use the Iowa Finance Authority’s Iowa profile tool to include persuasive statistics for the area.

Example statements:

- Housing demand forecasts (The region is forecasted to need an additional xxx housing units by 2030).
- Housing cost burdened (xx% of renters and x% of homeowners in the region are housing cost burdened).
- Housing problems by income, race and tenure (xx% of black residents are housing cost burdened compared to xx% of white residents).
- Age of housing stock (xx% of housing units built before 1978, causing lead-based paint and other safety risks).
- Vacancy rates (The region has a vacancy rate of x%, which compares to a vacancy rate of 4.8% for the State of Iowa).
- Population trends
- Net Migration trends
- Average commute times
- Poverty rates

The Iowa Profile is available as a part of the community toolkit page at **WelcomeHomeIA.com**.

Please note that custom reports are available for every city in the state, some data points are only available at the county or regional level. Please contact IFA with any questions on how to access the correct report.



Stakeholder: Nonprofit/Community Organizations/ Faith Groups

Some of these groups may be in direct contact with the community members who do or will live in affordable housing. Aligning with their mission and supporting their altruistic goals provides an opportunity to galvanize a strong base of supporters. Email outreach to leaders of these organizations is a good place to start. Requesting an in-person meeting to communicate your position is a good idea. Additionally, if you're a member of a church congregation or a volunteer at a non-profit, share your point of view on housing for all with leadership.

Key Talking Points:

WHY

- Many Iowans are burdened by the cost of housing, spending more than 30% of their income on housing expenses.
- Housing costs are for a significant burden for hard-working Iowans such as grocery store clerks, ambulance drivers, food servers, childcare providers, bartenders and teaching assistants.
 - ◇ For many, their paycheck is less than what it takes to pay the housing and utility bills.
- Families caught in this crisis are one missed paycheck away from losing their homes.

THEREFORE

- These residents play an important role in our communities. Not only are they essential workers, but how and where they spend their income is essential to our economy.
 - ◇ Whether it's getting gas, buying groceries, contributing to local charities or paying taxes, they invest in the community where they live.
- You may have noticed that we're focused on calling this what it is. Housing. No more "flavor of the week" terms. No more distraction. No more confusion. It's housing. It's for everyone. And it benefits us all.
- It's important to support Iowa housing tax credit projects so our community can enjoy the benefits.
 - ◇ The one year impact is \$81.3 million and 1,098 jobs.
 - ◇ The ongoing annual impact is \$15.9 million and 279 jobs.



SO THAT

- For all of us to thrive, every Iowan deserves the opportunity to live where they work, and when they can, it benefits real people, our businesses and our communities as tax dollars are then reinvested.
- We hope you'll use your influence to share this initiative with your networks and join the growing list of Iowans and businesses who have logged their support at **WelcomeHomeIA.com**.