



## GREATER DES MOINES PARTNERSHIP 2022 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

### **United to Drive Economic Growth: One Voice, One Mission, One Region**

The Greater Des Moines Partnership is the economic and community development organization that serves Greater Des Moines (DSM), Iowa. Together with 24 Affiliate Chambers of Commerce, more than 6,500 Regional Business Members and 365+ Investors, The Partnership drives economic growth with one voice, one mission and as one region. Through innovation, strategic planning and global collaboration, The Partnership grows opportunity, helps create jobs and promotes DSM as the best place to build a business, a career and a future.

The Partnership believes that state government plays an important role in setting the stage for business competitiveness, small business growth and employment-generating investment by the private sector to promote economic growth. Economic growth is achieved by creating an environment that is conducive to business success, leading to job expansion and increased state and local revenues. The result will be an economically thriving state with growing communities that plan and build for the future. Accordingly, The Partnership supports policies that promote economic growth statewide and align with the Capital Crossroads vision plan for DSM.

The Partnership appreciates the opportunity to work with the Governor, the General Assembly and state agencies to accomplish mutually beneficial legislative goals and objectives for the economic betterment of the State of Iowa.

### **FEATURED PRIORITIES**

Although all of the policy positions included in The Partnership's 2022 State Legislative Agenda are important and reflective of the diverse group of Members and Investors, The Partnership will focus on the following priorities:

**Des Moines International Airport Terminal Project** – The Partnership supports state funding for the Des Moines International Airport's terminal project. It is critical to invest in a modernized airport to accommodate the state's economic growth and ensuring a safe and smooth traveling experience for business and commercial passengers.

**Talent** – The Partnership supports strategies to address the existing talent shortages felt by many impacted industries, including continued and expanded support for Future Ready Iowa initiatives, opportunities to engage untapped talent for the workforce such as foreign born and returning citizens and policies that ensure Iowa continues to be a welcoming place that is open for business.

**Pro-Growth Tax Policies** – The Partnership supports a tax structure that encourages business growth through predictability and protection of existing tax exemptions and economic development tools, a decrease in the corporate income tax rate, funding of Iowa’s Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund and an option for a transit hotel-motel tax.

**Community Placemaking** – The Partnership supports the creation of a large-scale investment program designed to transform Iowa’s communities, main streets and local economies through creative placemaking and community development. Projects such as the ICON Water Trails, the Pro Iowa Soccer Stadium and Global Plaza, and others are key Partnership priority projects that benefit the entire DSM USA region.

**Child Care** – The Partnership supports the recommendations of the Iowa Skills2Compete Coalition and the Governor’s Child Care Task Force to increase affordable access to quality child care and promote stabilization in the child care workforce.

**Housing** – The Partnership supports the increase of workforce housing options through policies that leverage federal, state and local resources to address the existing housing shortage throughout Iowa. The Partnership supports an increase in the Workforce Housing Tax Credit, the State Housing Trust Fund and additional incentives for communities and employers to invest in new and existing housing for all Iowans.

**Broadband** – The Partnership supports continued investment in broadband infrastructure to ensure Iowa can recruit and retain businesses and talent and help existing businesses grow and be successful through remote work and flexible work arrangements.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Robust incentive programs are a critical element in Iowa's effort to create and retain high-quality, high-paying jobs and grow capital investment. While Iowa continues to see improving economic indicators as the globe navigates the COVID-19 pandemic, now is not the time to waver in efforts that will aid in recovery. Therefore, The Partnership supports state business development programs for local economic development projects that use performance-based criteria to ensure job creation, capital investment, workforce training, wage and wealth creation in exchange for tax incentives and direct financial assistance.

### Economic Development Incentives

Key to the mission of The Partnership, economic development is essential to the growth of Iowa's population and economy. With a footprint representing both urban and rural Iowa, The Partnership supports economic development programs that support recruitment and retention of business and talent throughout the state. The Partnership supports legislation that demonstrates that Iowa welcomes all people and is open for business. Growing and vibrant communities are necessary to support our diversified talent and workforce needs.

- **Business Development Incentive Programs** – To create jobs and grow the economy, it is essential that the Governor and the General Assembly continue to provide adequate resources for the state's business development programs. The most effective way to do that is to increase the resources available to programs such as the High-Quality Jobs Program. Therefore, The Partnership supports a maximum aggregate tax credit cap that is set high enough to spur growth in local communities and an economic development budget for direct financial assistance that keeps Iowa competitive with other states. Additionally, The Partnership supports the continued refinement of program requirements, such as laborshed wage thresholds, so state programs remain easy to use and accessible to local communities.
- **Entrepreneurship and Early-Stage Industries** – A balanced approach to economic development requires the care and feeding of new business startups in addition to traditional expansion programs. Accordingly, The Partnership supports responsible funding for programs that promote entrepreneurship and provide capital to targeted industries. IEDA programs like the Demonstration Fund and Innovation Fund Tax Credits, among others, accelerate the growth of early-stage businesses, enhance the development of these industries, create critical pathways to sustainability for organizations and promote economic development of all types in Iowa communities. Specifically, The Partnership supports increased funding for the Angel Investor Tax Credit Program as a strategic tool for incentivizing investment in entrepreneurs.
- **Public Accountability in State Programs** – The Partnership supports transparency in the administration of state economic development programs and also seeks to ensure that such transparency strikes a prudent balance between private interests and public accountability.
- **Public-Private Partnerships** – Both the private and public sectors have a role to play in improving global competitiveness. The Partnership supports continued funding for the Iowa Innovation Corporation (IIC). The relationship between the IIC and IEDA represents a unique delivery structure for economic development programs, and it has great potential to

foster entrepreneurship and small business development, diversify the economy and upskill Iowa's workforce.

- **Tax Increment Financing (TIF)** – The Partnership supports Iowa's TIF law and opposes any effort to limit its scope, duration or flexible use for housing, commercial and industrial development.

## Business Assistance

- **Small Business Support** – Small businesses employ 50% of all private sector employees and have generated 60% – 80% of net new jobs annually during the last decade. To create an environment where small businesses can continue to be successful and to promote a sustainable business environment, The Partnership supports tax-free federal and state grant and forgivable loan programs and legislation that targets all types of small businesses affected by the pandemic. These types of programs positively impact the ability to support and retain businesses in Iowa. Further, The Partnership supports the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) and other entities providing assistance in local and regional economic development efforts that lead businesses to flourish during economic turbulence and maintain a strong workforce in diverse industries. Specific programs include the Targeted Small Business Program and funding to the Iowa Small Business Development Center.
- **Government Purchasing** – The Partnership supports Qualifications-Based Selection (QBS) as the preferred process for the selection of design professionals and Construction Manager at-risk (CMaR) as a viable delivery method option for all public projects.

## Energy

- **Energy Development** – The Partnership supports comprehensive policies and industry-friendly regulatory practices that ensure energy remains affordable, reliable and available for the state's businesses, families and communities. The Partnership supports optional incentives to develop, expand and promote Iowa's renewable energy sources, research and development to improve traditional energy sources, cost-effective energy efficiency programs and other green products and processes, including incentives for building transmission and other energy infrastructure projects necessary to deliver renewable energy to the customers that demand it. The Partnership urges lawmakers and regulators to continue to act on energy policies that will improve safety, bring long-term benefits to all Iowans, reduce the nation's dependence on foreign sources of energy and implement regulatory changes that will allow Iowa businesses to better compete globally. Specifically, The Partnership supports the continued development, expansion and promotion of Iowa's renewable energy sources and carbon-free technologies, including biofuels, wind, solar, hydrogen, nuclear energy and other forms of alternative energy, while avoiding directives or cross subsidies. Finally, The Partnership supports the transport of biofuels via pipeline and electric transmission projects that benefit Iowans.
- **Carbon Sequestration** – The Partnership supports policy recommendations resulting from the Governor's Carbon Sequestration Task Force Initiative that create new markets for Iowa and maintain or increase the state's role as a national leader in renewable and low-carbon

energy.

- **Alternative Fuel/Power Vehicle Readiness** – The Partnership supports state policies and programs that ease the introduction and widespread adoption of electric vehicles in Iowa including policies that simplify the establishment of more charging stations statewide. The Partnership also supports state policies to incentivize the development of cellulosic ethanol from perennial sources such as switchgrass.

## Research and Development

The Partnership supports programs and initiatives to create and leverage scientific and technological developments to keep the region at the forefront.

- **America's Cultivation Corridor Priority Projects** – As global demand for food, feed, fiber and energy increases, the need to invest in innovation, technology and production capacity will also increase. Accordingly, The Partnership supports projects within America's Cultivation Corridor, a dedicated effort to establish Iowa and Iowa as a global center for agbioscience investment, talent and research. This includes the establishment of a nationally renowned innovation ecosystem in Iowa-advantaged bioscience platforms to grow and diversify Iowa's economy. Additional priority projects within The Corridor include, but are not limited to, the ISU Agriculture Experiment Station, the ISU Research Park, Small Business Development Center and Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. The Partnership supports additional renewable energy, value-added agriculture and other research and development initiatives, commercialization and technology transfer initiatives, enhanced science, technology, education and math (STEM) education programming and other initiatives to enhance and expand the region's agbioscience ecosystem.
- **Renewable Chemical Production Tax Credit** – America's Cultivation Corridor is a global center of investment, talent, research and technology in the agbiosciences. To aid in the expansion of the bioeconomy and create new jobs in the Corridor and across the state, The Partnership supports the recent creation and funding of the renewable chemical production tax credit and encourages continued support for this important economic development initiative.
- **Research Activities Credits (RAC)** – Iowa's continued economic strength depends on the ability to generate and harness the latest in scientific and technological developments and to apply these developments to real-world applications. Iowa must continue encouraging companies to invest additional resources in the research, development and experimentation of various products and services that promote both job creation and economic expansion. Accordingly, The Partnership supports the preservation of Iowa's refundable RAC.

## Tax and Budget

The Partnership believes Iowa's tax code should encourage business growth, limit the size and costs of government and reflect the principles of equity, neutrality, simplicity and predictability. Accordingly, The Partnership supports continued exploration of income tax reform and opposes efforts that would increase the tax burden on Iowa employers.

- **Pro-Growth Tax Policies** – The Partnership supports a tax structure that encourages business growth, limits the size and costs of government and reflects the principals of equity, neutrality, simplicity and predictability. Accordingly, The Partnership supports continued exploration of income and corporate tax reform and opposes efforts that would increase the tax burden on Iowa employers.
- **Combined Corporate Reporting** – The Partnership opposes the adoption of a combined corporate income tax reporting structure in Iowa. Moving to combined reporting would add complexity to an already complex system, may lead to costly litigation and may result in a net revenue decrease for the state.
- **Commercial and Industrial Property Taxes** – The Partnership supports the current implementation of property tax relief and will continue to support meaningful property tax relief that is coupled and linked with targeted alternative revenue streams, meaningful regulatory relief and state backfill for local governments.
- **Corporate and Personal Income Taxes** – The Partnership supports efforts to simplify and reduce Iowa’s corporate and personal income tax rates to strengthen Iowa’s economic competitiveness.
- **Single Factor Corporate Income Tax** – The Partnership supports the preservation of Iowa's corporate single-factor income tax formula. The single factor formula has been a pillar of economic development for the state since 1934. In recent years, other states have recognized the success Iowa has had with the single factor formula and are moving to adopt similar statutes to compete in today’s global economy.

## **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

The Partnership supports efforts to develop and build upon plans that support a long-term community vision to enhance the region for residents and visitors by investing in sustainability, housing, infrastructure and quality of life. Supporting these efforts also includes plans such as Capital Crossroads, The Director’s Council One Economy Blueprint for Action, Bravo’s Regional Cultural Assessment, Global DSM: International Talent Strategy, The Tomorrow Plan, Central Iowa Community OpportUNITY Plan, Age-Friendly Greater Des Moines Initiative and existing city master plans.

### **Sustainability Development**

The Partnership supports incentives that encourage sustainable development that spurs energy efficiency and conservation. The Partnership also supports transit-oriented development, historic preservation, environmental remediation, complete streets and redevelopment that is pedestrian-friendly and encourages walkability.

- **Brownfield and Grayfield Redevelopment** – The Partnership supports efforts to enhance the Brownfield and Grayfield Redevelopment program through additional funding to encourage green, sustainable redevelopment efforts and to revitalize economically



obsolescent and energy-inefficient structures and commercially blighted areas.

- **Historic Tax Credits** – Historic Rehabilitation Tax Incentives stimulate Downtown housing, business expansion and neighborhood revitalization. Accordingly, The Partnership supports the continued improvement and further expansion of the Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program.
- **Comprehensive Planning and Iowa Smart Planning Principles** – In an effort to advance DSM’s competitiveness nationally and internationally, The Partnership supports comprehensive planning and the Iowa Smart Planning Principles.
- **Distressed Areas and Urban Core Development** – Some areas of the state need more time, resources and attention than others to return to economic prosperity. Therefore, The Partnership supports efforts to drive state resources and public-private partnership investments into distressed areas and urban core projects.
- **Topsoil** – The Partnership supports the federal standard for topsoil requirements, as set by the Environmental Protection Agency and adopted by the Iowa Environmental Protection Commission, which will help prevent urban stormwater runoff and keep excess nutrients and pollution out of the waterways.

## Housing

- **Housing** – The Partnership supports the increase of workforce housing options to address the existing housing shortage throughout Iowa. Safe and stable housing improves the health of residents, improves educational outcomes for children and contributes to the recruitment and retention of the region’s diverse and growing workforce. The Partnership supports strategies that leverage a variety of state and local resources to increase the number and variety of homes available in the region, including the ability of local governments to maintain existing tools to expand workforce housing. Specifically, The Partnership supports:
  - Increased investment in the State Housing Trust Fund (SHTF), by removing the annual cap on the Real Estate Transfer Tax, allowing the SHTF to grow through its dedicated 30% share of the Real Estate Transfer Tax.
  - Permanently increasing the annual allocation of credits to the Workforce Housing Tax Credit program. Recent temporary revisions to the program make much needed improvements to the program and allowing the program to grow annually will keep Iowa from falling behind in meeting its housing needs.
  - A specially designed State Housing Tax Credit Program that targets the housing needs for projects too specialized or too small to compete for the Federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits. Credits from the program should be designed to appeal to local investors seeking a vehicle to invest in Iowa communities. Special consideration should be given to designing an Iowa program that enhances the use of 4% federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits managed by the Iowa Finance Authority.
  - Iowa Finance Authority’s down payment and closing costs programs to make homebuying more affordable.

## Digital Infrastructure

- **Broadband** – The Partnership supports continued funding for the Empower Rural Iowa Initiative to better connect Iowans while supporting workforce readiness. Based on The Partnership’s Broadband Initiative Report, funding for tech-neutral infrastructure, affordable service and digital literacy will ensure Iowa is able to recruit and retain businesses and talent and help existing businesses grow and be successful through remote work and flexible work arrangements.
- **Smart City Technology** – The Partnership supports state policies and programs that ease the introduction and widespread adoption of emerging technologies in Iowa. These technologies include, but are not limited to, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, transportation network companies and vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-infrastructure Smart City technology necessary for autonomous vehicles.

## Quality of Life

- **Community Development and Placemaking** – The Partnership supports a bold investment in placemaking with a major financial package that allows for the expansion of programs that will invest in creating culturally vibrant communities — both large and small — building upon the authentic assets with enhanced attractions and tourist destinations.
- **Cultural Investments** – The Partnership supports continued investment in arts and culture through the Department of Cultural Affairs and Iowa Arts Council to develop culturally vibrant communities and places that attract businesses and skilled workers to Iowa. Research shows arts, film and media, culture, history, historic preservation and science can serve as catalysts for vibrant and livable communities that will position Iowa to be more competitive as a leader in innovation. Arts and cultural organizations enhance the quality of life by making communities more desirable places to live, work and play, attracting people and families with unique experiences.
- **Endow Iowa Tax Credits** – The Partnership supports the continuation and expansion of the Endow Iowa Tax Credit program to further strengthen communities through charitable giving and building permanent endowment funds to benefit Iowa charitable causes.
- **Gaming** – The Partnership recognizes the economic and community development importance of Prairie Meadows and the gaming industry across Iowa. Accordingly, The Partnership opposes increasing the tax rate for the gaming industry.
- **Local Revenue for Quality of Life Investments** – The Partnership recommends that the General Assembly allow additional local option hotel/motel tax to be collected and distributed according to the requirements of the existing Iowa statute and to be used at the discretion of local governmental entities for quality of life expenditures to market the state and DSM.



- **State Historical Building Renovation** – The Partnership strongly supports continued funding for the renovation of the State Historical Building and State Historical Museum to become a world-class attraction for visitors to the capital city. Renovations will better preserve the state’s vast artifact collection, will provide greater public access and will create 21st-century educational resources rich with exhibits on Iowa history and culture. A reinvented museum will better showcase the people, places and points of pride that define Iowa.

## Transportation and Mobility

The economic impact of transportation systems to a region, state and nation cannot be overstated. The Partnership believes that investing in a complete, multimodal transportation system and infrastructure is a core function of state government that is critical to driving commerce, efficiently moving goods and people, creating jobs and spurring additional economic growth.

- **Aviation Funding** – Airports provide a significant economic impact to the area and regions served. The infrastructure of these vital resources is deteriorating and in desperate need of rebuilding and expansion. Therefore, The Partnership supports increased Vertical Infrastructure Program funding for Iowa airports, including annual allocations to Commercial Service Airports and General Aviation Airports. Additionally, The Partnership supports using American Rescue Plan dollars along with other funding investment opportunities to fund the Des Moines International Airport terminal project.
- **Transit Funding** – As the community looks to recruit and retain employees and businesses, connect people to jobs, grow the economy and ensure age-friendly communities, it is essential to provide funding for a variety of mobility options. The Partnership supports the Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART) Commission’s efforts to diversify funding options away from a heavy reliance on property taxes. This includes support for exploring the hotel/motel tax as a revenue source for transit in communities.
- **Multi-Use Trails** – Multi-use trails are utilized as a mode of transportation and provide economic development benefits, improved quality of life enhancements and recreational opportunities for Iowans. The impact of trails and outdoor recreation have on supporting physical and mental health became even more clear during the height of the pandemic. To help DSM become the “Trails Capital of the World,” The Partnership supports:
  - Continued investment in the Iowa DOT State Recreational Trails Program.
  - Continued investment in trails by fully funding and extending the Iowa Department of Natural Resources’ Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) program.
  - A funding mechanism for regionally coordinated development and maintenance of the trails network that has become an important cultural tourism amenity.
  - Funding for the strategic completion of critical gaps in the existing trails network and making connections between major trails and destinations.

- Investing in signature trail projects that generate economic opportunities for local communities and celebrate the heritage of our places, such as the Great American Rail Trail.
- Investing in on-street infrastructure and safe routes to school projects that fill critical gaps in the non-motorized trail network and improve connectivity to schools and workplaces.
- **Rail Funding** – The Partnership supports continued investment in the IDOT Rail Revolving Loan and Grant Fund to help develop rail improvements and support DSM's freight rail facilities in recognizing that the freight rail system provides critical infrastructure for transporting certain commodities and other commercial goods. The Partnership also supports continued funding for the IDOT Passenger Rail Fund Program to provide matching funding for passenger rail infrastructure development, with the goal of establishing intercity passenger rail service from Chicago to DSM to Omaha along the Iowa Interstate Railroad.
- **Surface Transportation Funding** – The Partnership supports continued improvements to the existing Road Use Tax Fund (RUTF) to reallocate funding to more highly traveled primary roads and continued investment in Iowa's transportation system. The Partnership continues to support the Iowa Transportation Commission's swapping process that allows federal transportation dollars to be exchanged for state transportation dollars to give local governments more flexibility with transportation decisions. Additionally, The Partnership supports the funding formula for surface transportation funding established by the Transportation Investment Moves the Economy in the Twenty-First Century Fund (TIME-21).
- **U.S. 65/Iowa 5 Interstate Designation** – The Partnership supports designating the U.S. 65/Iowa 5 Beltway/Purple Heart Highway as part of the U.S. Interstate System. Designating this part of the beltway as part of the U.S. Interstate System would open up economic development opportunities for the communities located along the route, give DSM a true Interstate ring like many other competitor metro areas across the country and possibly decrease current interstate congestion. Designation must be approved by the Federal Highway Administration and American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, with an application submitted by the Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) including an operational report, safety analysis and identification of any necessary design exceptions. Although no new construction is necessary, new signage, upgraded pavement markings and a minimum speed limit would be required and future maintenance and upgrade responsibilities will need to occur.
- **Innovative Funding** – The Partnership supports long-term planning and examination of innovative funding mechanisms and delivery methods, such as public-private partnerships and alternative project delivery methods that protect taxpayers and make the necessary resources available for these significant capital investments, including aligning with potential federal infrastructure initiatives.
- **Mobility Infrastructure and Safety** – The Partnership supports diverse mobility options, including micro-mobility innovations and the development of on-street bike and mobility facilities that connect to, and integrate with, the existing system to have a complete network that encourages all forms of active transportation. The Partnership also supports strengthening traffic laws to improve the safety of bicyclists using Iowa's roadways.

Specifically, The Partnership supports a 'Vision Zero' policy that utilizes data-driven and evidence-based best practices to reach the goal of zero fatalities and serious injuries on city streets.

## Water Infrastructure

The State of Iowa has a unique opportunity to invest in Iowa's soil and water infrastructure – an infrastructure critically important to the state's wealth and prosperity. While the state has started down a path of increased investments, more resources are needed to address the challenges facing these resources. The Partnership sees the primary pathway to success as a public-private investment in waterways across the state.

- **Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund** – The Partnership supports funding the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund (IWILL) and the recreation, conservation and water quality goals outlined in the voter-approved formula. In addition, The Partnership supports keeping water trails and paved trails as part of the IWILL formula and supports using tax credits and market-based approaches focused on multi-benefit collaborative solutions. These investments should be used to leverage additional dollars through public-private partnerships.
- **Dam Mitigation and Water Trails** – Creating vibrant communities with recreational amenities is essential to workforce attraction and economic development. As such, The Partnership supports the funding of programs that mitigate low-head dams and help to establish water trails. Specifically, The Partnership supports increased investment in Iowa's Low-Head Dam Mitigation and Water Trails program. There is significant interest in water trails and dam mitigation in rural and urban areas, and state funding for these efforts is essential for leveraging investments from local jurisdictions and private-sector partners. Additionally, The Partnership supports policy updates that provide liability protections to the communities supporting outdoor recreation amenities.
- **Port Authorities** – The Partnership supports using port authorities as elements of successful economic development and placemaking strategies. This tool allows communities to better work together on regionally-transformative commerce-focused, economic development or quality of life projects by better delineating risk between jurisdictions and merging financing similar to how other infrastructure projects are deployed.
- **Data-Driven Investment** – The Partnership supports the effective use of public funds to encourage water quality monitoring at the watershed level by using technology and data to inform state investment within watersheds. This data is important to inform and implement adaptive management. Meaningful measurement networks will require collaborative work across jurisdictional boundaries, building from monitoring data already accomplished through public utilities, private partnerships and voluntary monitoring. In addition, The Partnership supports investments in continued and expanded academic research of best practices, programs and policies.
- **Regional Water Utility** – The Partnership believes local solutions often provide the best policy. Therefore, The Partnership believes changes to local water utilities should be determined at the local and regional level.

- **Wastewater, Stormwater and Flood Mitigation Infrastructure** – Frequency and intensity of flooding has increased in recent years, with devastating impacts to both rural and urban communities. These events provide a reminder of the need for more strategic investments in flood mitigation, resiliency and stormwater infrastructure that prioritized multi-benefit solutions. Addressing this challenge will take a unified statewide approach that supports natural as well as built infrastructure. Therefore, The Partnership supports a statewide focus on policies and funding for modernization of flood mitigation and resiliency strategies, water systems, source water protection, wastewater treatment and comprehensive planning.
- **Watershed Approach and Planning** – To provide safe and affordable drinking water, and ensure water security for Central Iowa, wastewater treatment and stormwater mitigation, The Partnership supports regional watershed planning. The Partnership also asks for ongoing funding to implement these plans through targeted conservation and flood mitigation practices, proactive approaches to optimize nutrient and other chemical applications and sustainable urban development. As the watershed providing drinking water to one-sixth of the state’s population, the Raccoon River watershed must be designated as a top priority.
- **Watershed Investment Strategies and Financial Resources** – The Partnership supports allocating funding sources to meet infrastructure needs for flood mitigation and water quality improvements that are targeted and prioritized by watershed with annual accountability for the state’s investment. Funding must be permanent, adequate, timely, reliable and sustainable, and create incentives that spur public and private investments in watersheds across jurisdictional boundaries.
- **Waterways and Land Protection** – The Partnership believes in the importance of creating and maintaining parks, trails, natural places and Iowa’s creeks, rivers and lakes. Strategic investments in outdoor recreation serve as catalysts to revitalize communities, enhance quality of life and grow the region’s workforce. The Partnership supports increased investments and using American Rescue Plan dollars for the state’s water and land resources and funding programs that build the water trails network, enhance safety, improve water quality and provide connected habitat corridors in and along the many miles of waterways and adjoining greenways that are a vital natural asset in Iowa.

## TALENT

Talent recruitment and retention is a top priority issue for Partnership Members and Investors to address the workforce shortage. Talent impacts every corner of Iowa and must be addressed in order to support the future of the state’s economy. Iowa must be a welcoming place for all.

## Education

The Partnership believes a strong and aligned education system and proven workforce development programs are critical to Iowa’s quality of life and are leading factors in recruiting business to Iowa. Learners from pre-kindergarten to adult must have access to quality education and skills development opportunities that will encourage Iowa residents to become lifelong learners and economically secure citizens. Circumstances of 2020 and 2021 further

highlighted challenges and disparities among many lowans, particularly marginalized populations. To properly educate and develop all of the region's students and current workforce, and attract and retain skilled workers, The Partnership supports the following:

- **Early Childhood Education** – The Partnership supports efforts to ensure quality, accessible and equitable early childhood education opportunities for virtual and in-person learning. The Partnership maintains that all children, including 4-year-olds, should have access to high-quality pre-school. The Partnership also supports improving literacy and school-readiness skills among at-risk children by raising the per-pupil funding level for children in pre-school. Additionally, The Partnership supports funding a full-day program for children in poverty to support the schedules of working families.
- **K-12 Education** – The population of DSM is becoming more diverse due to shifts in race, ethnicity, immigration and economic diversity. These shifts are changing the landscape with profound implications for education, policymakers, parents and the community. Changing demographics have and will continue to alter school practices, policies and budgetary needs. To minimize the impact of political and economic swings, The Partnership supports establishing a benchmark of an appropriate investment in the education of Iowa's future workforce and to ensure that schools are equipped with resources to support immigration students and families.

The Partnership supports legislative solutions that can be enacted to better equip the region's students to compete in the global marketplace and enjoy a high quality of life. To this end, The Partnership supports the following initiatives and reforms:

- A funding formula that includes weighting for poverty level, recognizing that children raised in poverty are twice as likely to start kindergarten needing extra help to read by third grade and are four times more likely to drop out of school.
- Incorporating dropout prevention and funding for at-risk students in the foundation formula. Supports allowing districts to request additional funding for dropout prevention up to the 5% maximum cap.
- Efforts to develop equitable access to broadband for all students across the region.
- Efforts to establish comprehensive community mental health systems to offer preventative and treatment services and comprehensive school mental health programs that include increased access to in-school mental health professionals via in-person or telehealth visits, funding for mental health professionals serving students, ongoing training to improve the awareness and understanding of child mental health needs, integration of suicide prevention and coping skills into existing curriculum and the creation of a mental health resources clearinghouse for schools and community providers.
- As the region's school districts continue to seek paths to recruit and retain qualified educators in a variety of disciplines, The Partnership supports increased flexibility in teacher certification and accelerated approval of teachers who are credentialed in another state.
- Expansion and enhancement of the Iowa Teacher Loan Forgiveness program to effectively address critical shortages in curricular areas such as math, science, computer

science, foreign languages, English Language Learner (ELL) and special education. Additionally, The Partnership supports the inclusion of mental health professionals who agree to provide services to schools.

- To support the growing need for STEM education, Iowa will need more young people choosing to become STEM educators. Therefore, the state must create additional incentives to encourage STEM careers in education.
- To support summer learning and literacy programs for all at-risk students to prevent summer learning loss. Specifically, provide funds for schools to provide research-based, intensive literacy programming for all students who are not proficient in reading.
- To support programs and initiatives that expand the time and opportunities for school personnel to work with students on college and career planning.
- To support increased funding for additional counselors in schools to help students on college and career planning, expanding the College and Career Transition Counselor program now in place at the Iowa Department of Education.
- Additional resources to schools to identify achievement gaps among students due to the loss of in-person instruction. Any state or federal funds should be equitably distributed and allow for maximum flexibility and local control.
- **Postsecondary Education** – Technological advancement, global competition and the emerging knowledge-innovation economy are driving an increasing demand for postsecondary education and training. In the United States, 65% of all jobs in 2020 required some level of postsecondary education, and the demand reached 68% in Iowa. Iowa's future economic growth and competitiveness depends on increased postsecondary attainment by the workforce. To ensure DSM has the highly skilled workforce needed to succeed, The Partnership supports state initiatives to promote affordable and accessible postsecondary opportunities and efforts to increase completion rates in these programs. Accordingly, The Partnership supports efforts to expand college accessibility, affordability and completion through:
  - Expanded promotion of financial literacy initiatives, increased FAFSA Completion rates, college savings options, available tax incentives and other programs designed to help students and families prepare financially for future higher education expenses.
  - Continued support for the state-funded Iowa Tuition Grant, Kibbie Grant, Iowa Scholars, the Future Ready Last Dollar scholarships and other programs that invest in financially eligible students attending Iowa's high-quality public and private higher education institutions.
  - Support for initiatives that help students efficiently complete postsecondary degree or certificate programs, including but not limited to ideas such as awarding prior learning credits to adult students, dual credit programs for high school students, internship programs and policies that make it easier for students to transfer credits.
  - Continued support of the Workforce Training and Economic Development Fund, Iowa Industrial New Jobs Training Program and the Iowa Jobs Training Fund as implemented



through the community college system throughout Iowa.

- Support of the Iowa Board of Regents' initiatives to provide affordable tuition and the ability for students to graduate quickly from the three public universities.

## Workforce

- **Workforce Development** – The world of work is rapidly changing due to the integration and augmentation of new technologies across all industry sectors and jobs. The Partnership believes the state should continue to encourage partnerships between Iowa's business and industry and education institutions, as well as support training incentives to businesses to invest in large scale upskilling and reskilling of our existing workforce. The Partnership supports the following policies that will support The Partnership's Future Ready DSM 75x25 effort to ensure 75% of DSM working-age adults have degrees, certificates and other credentials by 2025:
  - Increase funding for the Future Ready Iowa Initiative to help grow Iowa's workforce through new investments that build on the solid foundation of programs and funding currently in place, which includes ongoing support for the Last Dollar Scholar program.
  - Expanded funding for the STEM Internship program to Iowa employers developing STEM talent.
  - Continued funding and refinement of proven programs within the Iowa Economic Development Authority, Iowa Workforce Development and the Iowa Department of Education that measure success and ensure accountability, invest in regional strategies and industry-based public-private partnerships, build career pathways to good jobs for all Iowans, secure new investments for Iowa's integrated learning programs that combine basic skills development and occupational skills training for low-skilled adult workers, and expand access to supportive services for adult learners enrolled in education and training programs.
  - The recommendations of the Iowa Skills2Compete Coalition to further up-skill and train more workers for Iowa's key industries. This includes maintaining current investments in adult basic education, PACE programs, pathway navigators, industry sector partnerships, GAP tuition assistance and expanding PACE programs to include apprenticeships and other work-based learning opportunities.
  - The development of a Certificate of Qualification for Employment program designed to help individuals with criminal convictions obtain employment and professional licensure which certifies to employers the returning citizen has gone through a rigorous employability review process.
- **Career and Technical Education (CTE)** – All Iowa students need to be better prepared to make informed career pathway decisions aligned to the workforce needs of the future through expanded CTE, career exploration opportunities and regional planning involving both educators and employers.

- **Child Care** – The Partnership supports the recommendations of the Iowa Skills2Compete Coalition and the Governor’s Child Care Task Force to lead efforts to increase affordable access to quality child care and promote stabilization in the child care workforce.
- **Judicial Access** – The Partnership supports funding opportunities and programs that help ensure fair and equal access to the justice system. Access to justice initiatives include but are not limited to adequately funding the judicial branch, supporting programs to promote efficient and fair access to the court and legal system, alternative methods to provide appropriate assistance from legal counsel, including legal aid programs, and various studies and task forces seeking ways to more efficiently and fairly ensure justice for all.

## Talent Recruitment and Retention

Talent recruitment and retention is a top priority for Partnership Members and Investors. In the recent release of 2020 census data, Iowa continues to lag in population growth. While the DSM region is setting records among its peers, the need for growth outweighs the progress. Identifying groups of untapped talent is an opportunity for Iowa and DSM to continue filling the outsized need for employees throughout the economy.

- **Global Talent** – The Partnership believes that enabling hard-working, talented people from across the global who choose to live and put their skills to work in the United States will enhance the region's international competitiveness and net many high-paying jobs for all Americans. To strengthen talent acquisition and retention, business development and economic growth in DSM, The Partnership supports immigration-related legislation that will continue to improve the economy and opposes state-based punitive anti-immigration proposals. Therefore, The Partnership encourages support for the following key priorities:
  - Increased funding, programming and access for English as a Second Language (ESL) and English Language Learner (ELL) classes, for both K-12 students and adult members of those families. Creation of an advisory committee to help bridge the gap between immigrant talent and Iowa’s existing workforce training programs.
  - Creation of incentives for Iowa companies to hire international students as interns by adding this population as a category in the state intern program.
  - Increased supportive services for refugees to address the adjustment challenges that refugees face in navigating new communities across the state.
  - Recognizing the contributions of foreign-born residents to the economy and workplaces by creating welcoming initiatives that seek to integrate and maximize those contributions of immigrant workers and entrepreneurs of all backgrounds, including the ability of immigrants to obtain safe, reliable transportation options.
  - The creation of a task force to study and recommend a process to review professional certifications, credentials and licensure, held by foreign-born residents and residents new to Iowa, granted by institutions outside of the state and/or the U.S., and where applicable, recertify to state and federal standards in an effective and efficient manner.

- The creation of a statewide refugee task force, appointed by the Governor, to address the challenges and create efficient methods of resettlement for refugees in Iowa.
- **Justice Reform** – The nation and region has reached a critical moment in history, calling on DSM and the state to address equity in meaningful ways. The Partnership, through efforts including the CEO Commitment to Racial Equity in DSM by supporting state policies that support equity. This includes the work of the Governor’s FOCUS Committee on Criminal Justice Reform and supporting the One Economy Blueprint for Action.
- **Military Recruitment and Retention** – The Partnership recognizes that returning or retiring military personnel have many skills and talents that Iowa businesses need and therefore supports efforts to recruit and retain these honored individuals to Iowa. The Partnership supports the state’s Home Base Iowa initiative as a “one-stop-shop” approach to assisting veterans with employment and education needs as well as integration into the community.
- **Talent Recruitment and Retention Benefits** – The Partnership supports policies that offer employees and employers benefit options to attract and retain an educated workforce. Specifically, The Partnership supports:
  - Efforts to increase access to broadband to further the ability to attract teleworkers from across the country to live in the DSM region.
  - Implementation of the scheduled tax exemption from state income tax liability for employees on student loan repayment benefits.
  - The creation of loan forgiveness and/or tax credit programs designed to benefit Iowa higher education students who stay in the state following graduation.
  - Expanding existing programs or new initiatives that incentivize Iowa employers to provide tuition assistance and/or education loan repayment assistance to incumbent workers who seek to improve skills through continuing educational attainment.

## Health Care

Personnel in the health care field have been rightly called heroes and support at all levels within this field has been needed and tasked to the limits through the COVID-19 pandemic. The importance of the entire health care team has never been more important than what has been experienced through the images of the health care providers, respiratory therapists, physical therapists and the extensive staff from custodial to dietitians all needed to maintain the high patient loads being experienced. In addition, Iowans have seen first-hand the importance of equitable access to health care for all as the state continues to work through the public health crisis. The preparation from public health and health care providers to respond quickly to the distribution of the vaccine, therapeutics and new medical breakthroughs have called on the best of researchers and scientists. The Partnership recognizes the value of collaboration to ensure the necessary medical support for the DSM region as Iowa continues to work through issues such as a shortage of health care workers and ever-changing variants of the virus.

- **COVID-19 Response** – COVID-19 has presented Iowa's health care system with unprecedented challenges. Through collaboration and resilience, health care leaders across the state have stepped up to keep Iowans safe. The Partnership supports continued COVID-19 mitigation efforts such as encouraging citizens to be vaccinated, ensuring adequate personal protective equipment for essential workers, free and accessible testing and adhering to social distancing and mask recommendations from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- **Health Care Workforce** – Iowa has significant shortages of health care providers and frontline health care workers, and this has only expanded during the pandemic. An adequate health care workforce is critical for access to care and economic development for the entire State of Iowa. The Partnership supports a variety of initiatives to increase the health care workforce and encourage people to enter this field.
  - The Partnership continues to support loan repayment programs and other recruitment and retention efforts for health care professionals. The aging population of both dentists and physicians in Iowa requires a robust pipeline of newly trained providers.
  - Direct care support professionals are Iowa's largest occupation, yet among the most difficult to attract and retain, due to low wages, lack of access to benefits, the physical and emotional demands of the work and few opportunities for career advancement within the field of direct care. To ensure the state is prepared to meet the need, The Partnership supports reimbursement rates and policies that allow providers to offer pay and benefits that support recruitment and retention of direct care workers to Iowa.
  - State-led programs and public-private partnerships to attract new, diverse audiences into the nursing field through broad education opportunities to ensure a long-term solution to the current and expected shortage.
  - Establishment of funding for fellowships and expanded residency programs for psychiatry as well as fellowships in OB/GYN for those going into primary care.
  - Graduate Medical Education (GME) funding for additional graduate medical and dental education to grow Iowa's health care workforce, with a focus on priority needs such as primary care, fetal maternal health, psychiatry and dentistry. In addition, The Partnership supports those with an Iowa connection be given priority for state and federal funded opportunities for graduate medical education to retain as many Iowa graduates as possible.
- **Mental Health Funding** – The Partnership supports long-term or subacute care to support community-based services at a sustainable rate and to provide for adequately funded adult and children's mental health services. Specifically, The Partnership supports the following:
  - State investment to ensure statewide availability of robust mental health services, including trained staff-to-field crisis hotline calls, mobile dispatch teams and case management services.
  - Funding for intensive residential services for individuals with severe mental illness and/or developmental conditions.

- Defined length-of-stay limits to be established in Iowa Administrative Code for crisis residential and subacute care needs.
  - Sustainable funding for community-based providers to ensure community placement is viable.
  - The establishment of a sustainable funding formula to protect the mental health care needs of adults and children contending with chronic mental health conditions.
- **Public Health** – It is clear to all the importance of public health and the role it plays after seeing the frontline effort in providing guidance and direction during the pandemic. Funding and planning for future public health crisis responses, such as COVID-19, should be prioritized and made available to better prepare for the future. Many of the greatest public health challenges are highly complex and often linked to causes and solutions beyond traditional public health departments (e.g., housing, transportation, education, water and air quality, criminal justice and employment). The Partnership supports a focus on the social determinants of health to achieve meaningful, systemic care savings and efficiencies. Additionally, The Partnership supports adequate funding and policy changes that curb vaping and tobacco use for both young people and all Iowans.
  - **Telemedicine** – The interest from Iowa citizens in receiving virtual care and telehealth services have expanded exponentially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The positive experiences of patients and providers demonstrates the demand for these services, the added convenience and safety for the patient and provider, reductions in travel time and the overall transformation in the delivery of health care services. The Partnership supports continued efforts to find cost-effective ways to expand the availability of telehealth, working closely with providers and payors to ensure ongoing access to care for patients. Additionally, The Partnership supports finding solutions to the gap in telehealth services for children currently being covered during the pandemic, which will particularly help residents in rural communities with limited access to psychiatric services. The Partnership also supports expanding permissible telehealth providers to include therapists without originating and distant site restrictions contained in Medicare.
  - **Tort Reform** – Iowa's access to health care services, increases in health care costs, recruitment and retention of Iowa physicians and facility closures affecting Iowans due to litigation are all impacting the overall quality of health for Iowans and adding to the health care workforce shortage issue, impacting Iowa and its rural communities. To address this issue and stave off further impact, The Partnership supports a tort reform cap.