The Iowa County

COUNTIES INVEST IN INFRASTRUCTURE

IOWA COUNTIES

NUMBER OF PUBLIC ROAD MILES STATEWIDE	SHARE OF COUNTY ROAD MILES OF PUBLIC ROADS STATEWIDE	NUMBER OF PUBLIC BRIDGES STATEWIDE	SHARE OF COUNTY OWNED BRIDGES OF PUBLIC BRIDGES STATEWIDE
114,741	78.39%	24,215	77.98%

- **Counties play a major role in our nation's infrastructure systems, investing more than $122 billion each year.** With America's infrastructure funding needs continuously increasing, the role of counties in facilitating construction, renovation and the expansion of projects across the nation is more vital than ever.
- **Most states place restrictions on counties' ability to generate new funding for infrastructure.** Property taxes, the main source of general funding for counties, are restricted in all 45 states that allow counties to collect property tax. These property tax limitations range from rate and levy limits to assessment limits, disclosure requirements, tax freezes and rollbacks.
- **A strong federal-state-local partnership is vital for a successful national infrastructure network.** Global competition and an increasing backlog of needs at all levels of government require strong federal-state-local and public-private collaboration and solutions. Absent this partnership, the result will be a piecemeal approach to an integrated network of roads, bridges and other infrastructure assets.

STATE LIMITATIONS ON COUNTY REVENUES, AS OF NOVEMBER 2016	
Property Tax Rate Limits	Yes; varies
Limits on Property Assessment Increases	Yes; varies
Limits on Property Tax Revenue (Levy) Increases	No
Personal Property Tax Authority	No
Local Option Sales Tax Authority [Limit]	Yes [1%]
Authority to Create Special Tax Districts	Yes

OUR ASK

Counties urge Congress and the administration to strengthen the federal-state-local partnership in infrastructure by allowing for local decision making, direct local funding and providing a regulatory landscape that encourages increased transportation infrastructure investment.

Roads: NACo Analysis of U.S. Department of Transportation – Federal Highway Administration, Highway Performance Monitoring System, 2016.
Bridges: NACo Analysis of Federal Highway Administration - National Bridge Inventory, 2017.
State Revenue Limits Information: Joel Griffith, Jonathan Harris and Dr. Lisilla Istrate, "Doing More with Less: State Revenue Limitations and Mandates on County Finances" (Washington, D.C.: National Association of Counties, 2016)

STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS INVEST OVER $122 BILLION PER YEAR ON:

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April 2019
The Data Issue

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The Iowa County

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ISAC
Iowa State Association of Counties

ISAC's Mission:
To promote effective and responsible county government for the people of Iowa.

ISAC's Vision:
To be the principal, authoritative source of representation, information and services for and about county government in Iowa.

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Feature - The Data Issue

Data Tsunami and New Horizons
Welcome to The Data Issue of *The Iowa County magazine*.

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Every day the world generates one quintillion (1 followed by 30 zeros!) bytes of data. Rather than slowing or leveling off, this generation is only accelerating. It has been estimated that 90% of all data has been generated in the last two years. We are literally drowning in a flood of data.

As with most associations, over the years ISAC has gathered data related to Iowa counties. This gathering of data helps to produce actual vs budgeted or this year versus last year charts and reports. While having this data is very useful for our counties, I would argue the gathering and reporting is the first step to making this data usable.

What if instead of just gathering and reporting, we connect data across different sources to provide unseen relationships that can help to improve the overall effectiveness of county resources. The building of these 'data bridges' will at least allow us to see where our data ebbs and flows and then will assist us in navigating this ever changing current of data. The hope is that highlighting various county data efforts will inspire additional bridge building.

Biswa Das and team's article "Using Data for Planning and Decision Making" demonstrates by using readily available data, how counties can utilize two key indexes that will assist county officials in answering the age-old question of how effective are we with taxpayer resources? Their article provides a good discussion of not only the traps of data, but a discussion around the relationship opportunities that may lie in your data.

Of importance to all county officials is the discussion of mental health and incarceration. Simply put, could that person having a mental health crisis be better served by programs that treat versus jail? The article on Data Driven Justice and Stepping Up will be provided to our readers with the opportunity to learn more about how focused data can be applied in a pragmatic way to change the lives of these individuals and to reduce cost at the same time.

Programs such as the Data Driven Justice and Stepping Up will need to rely on resources like the Community Services Network (CSN) to assist in building a strong data foundation to grow and expand. New programs based on client outcomes will need data and flexible tools to reach the light of day.

Just as these data programs and other topics covered in this issue are exciting, I'm excited about my retirement later this spring.

In 2006, after 23 years with the JCPenney Company, I found a home at ISAC. My time at ISAC has been both challenging and rewarding. I was privileged to be part of an organization that empowers the staff so they can assist our members in the best possible way.

It has been a distinct honor to serve the counties of Iowa. Our members have taught me the true meaning of public service. Every day you put on that public service cap and work to solve problems and improve your communities. You attend education and networking events to share your successes with others. You are always the most informed AND in front of the real issues before any other level of government. County government simply works!

It has been an immense joy to work with the ISAC staff to collaborate with our members on various projects, events, and programs. Over the years we have worked together to solve issues and pull off minor miracles. You will not find another organization with smarter, hardworking, focused, and fun co-workers. They strive each day to listen to our members and solve their issues. And, with Bill Peterson's mentorship and direction, while I will always feel like I'm a work in progress, he has made me a better version of myself. I will be forever grateful for our time together.

As for my immediate horizon, after some shoulder rehab, I will set off on a cross country bicycle ride from Yorktown, VA to Astoria, OR. To me, retirement is time to work on some other significant life goals and to improve my ability to dodge cars. I am fortunate to have a very understanding wife.

As I climb the steep mountains in Virginia or while being chased by dogs in Kentucky, I'll try and remember what Bill Peterson once learned - when the days are hilly and the wind is in your face and you want to quit, sometimes life is as simple as remembering to just keep pedaling.

Until we meet again…

Feature - Data and Planning

Biswa Das, Gabriel Nelson, and Grace Yi
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Using Data for Planning and Decision Making

All across the industrialized world and in emerging markets, there is an enormous amount of digital data being generated that provides government, businesses, and other stakeholder groups with greater opportunities to make positive changes. IBM estimates that in 2012, about 2.5 billion gigabytes of data were generated in a day, and that 90% of the world's data has been produced in the last few years. Moving ahead, experts predict that the total amount of data in the world will more than double every two years. With the increasing digitization of data in the public domain, access to updated, reliable and detailed data is increasing in Iowa. For example, starting in 2013, all cities in Iowa are mandated to submit their comprehensive annual finance reports (CAFR) electronically. Across the state of Iowa, 99 counties provide services for the everyday needs of their residents in areas such as public safety, roads and transportation, critical health services, environmental and economic development, among others. Counties have access to more digital data on a number of areas including finance, socioeconomics, transportation, education, healthcare, environment, and other important aspects, which are becoming more accessible. While this is good news for county officials, the challenge is in making sure that available data is meaningfully analyzed and used for all kinds of decision making. This short article sheds light on this issue and its various dimensions so users of data not only benefit, but are also aware of challenges of using large volumes of data. Toward this, we use select socioeconomic and financial data to illustrate the aforementioned points.

Managing and Analyzing Data

Reliable and detailed data offers significant benefits to planners and decision makers working to develop better policy choices. With the increasing volume of data that Iowa counties have access to over time, finding ways to organize it provides the first opportunity to use it meaningfully. The American Planning Association (APA) states that the availability of detailed data could: facilitate more efficient ways to manage resources; help evaluate existing programs and policies; increase safety and well-being; increase quantitative support in the forms of statistics, models, maps, and simulations that planners can use to demonstrate how and why they came to certain decisions; and open up new ways to cross-analyze and visualize datasets to gain new insights and identify new relationships between variables that impact community systems.

Socioeconomic data is often useful in planning-related decisions. Table 1 presents a few selected indicators derived from socioeconomic and financial data. We compared two counties, one that has witnessed significant population growth (Dallas) and another that continues to depopulate over time (Wapello). What does the data tell us? A closer inspection reveals several interesting phenomena. Dallas County has grown significantly over 2014 to 2017, and has witnessed a rise in median household income. However, fewer percentage of those living in Dallas county work within the county, which contrasts with Wapello County, where population has declined but a vast majority work within the county (Wapello is a regional economic hub in southeast Iowa). Demographic shifts are commonly used in understanding future needs. However, caution must be exercised while analyzing data. For example, if projections are not made responsibly, it may not necessarily lead to accurate description of future conditions. Past trends do not always mirror the future. Therefore, supplementing data by understanding local and unique factors driving the population changes based on more in-depth understanding of local conditions is a more pragmatic way to arrive at any meaningful description of the future. Similarly, going beyond a county to understand regional patterns is also advisable since population shifts in the region may also influence a county that may not be witnessing any changes by itself. Under such a scenario, budgeting for resources or making investments by anticipating the future may be a bit more complex. Margin of error (MOE) in census data is another critical aspect to consider in order to understand the accuracy of available data. Data gets revised periodically, and thus, treating it as absolute fact can sometimes be misleading.

Similarly, property valuation and levy rates do not provide much insight rather than the obvious, whether they are changing over time, and if so, what does this mean and how that could assist in decision-making. Toward this, we created two indicators - fiscal capacity and fiscal effort - that allow counties to understand the trends in their county in relation to similar counties or 'peers.' By grouping all county financial data into four major groups based on population size, it allowed for creating the two indexes across similar counties. As illustrated in Table 1, Dallas County has significantly higher per capita property valuation compared to its peers. This is reflected in the fiscal capacity index we calculated, which indicates the relative robustness of the tax base. In addition, its fiscal effort index is lower than 100, meaning its levy rate is lower compared to its peers. By contrast, Wapello County has a relatively lower capacity index, and expectedly, the fiscal effort index is high, suggesting a higher levy rate in Wapello County compared to peer counties. However, the per capita property tax generated in both counties are significantly below the median values across the state. These indexes provide a frame of reference on the robustness of local

property tax base as well as tax burden of individuals and businesses in the county. This information is useful when a county is making long-term plans to assess the residents' willingness to pay for additional taxes. It is therefore upon counties to use data and utilize a variety of analytical approaches including statistics, empirical models, simulations and maps to assist in decision-making. Data on revenues and expenditures also reveals interesting trends. Although Dallas is a growing County and Wapello is declining, both have significantly lower levels of per capita revenues and expenditures compared to the statewide median estimates. Local factors are major drivers and thus it is prudent to examine each individual county to arrive at any meaningful inference on what is driving those trends.

Table 1. Select socioeconomic and financial indicators

	Dallas		Wapello	
	2014	2017	2014	2017
Population Estimate	77,400	87,235	35,212	35,044
Percentage of Elderly Population (65+) Estimate	9.70%	10.40%	17.10%	17.70%
Median Household Income	$73,847	$82,719	$41,425	$43,329
Worked in county of residence	34.80%	37.00%	83.80%	81.30%
Worked outside county of residence	64.50%	62.00%	15.90%	18.00%
Per Capita Property Tax Revenue	$236	$250	$256	$249
Median Per Capita Property Tax Revenue	$380	$426	$380	$426
Per Capita Revenues	$480	$501	$552	$563
Median Per Capita Revenues	$968	$1,169	$968	$1,169
Per capita expenditures	$448	$453	$588	$509
Median Per Capita Expenditures	$964	$964	$964	$964
Fiscal Capacity		121.64		80.21
Fiscal Effort		68.87		111.07

Source: U.S. Census, and Iowa Department of Management

Discussion

Decision makers must be cautious about what they are learning from the data, how they are using it, and what implications it could potentially have through their decisions. For example, if projections of future population are used as a criteria for making long-term capital investments for public infrastructure, there is a possibility of 'excess' if projections fall short. Not only is it not a necessary expenditure, it also adds to the annual budget since operation and maintenance will continue for the 'excess' infrastructure. Similarly, if commuting patterns are used for making transportation related decisions, they could also help in understanding how the dollar flows are happening within and outside of the county. This information provides an understanding of revenue loss or gain to those responsible for managing county finances.

With increasing availability of digitized data, new opportunities are being created to improve understanding and build capacity to better serve current needs and get ready for the future. This trend is likely to continue into the future and warrants increasing capacity at county level to use data. County officials may need periodic training to stay updated on such trends and make use of analytical tools, both quantitative and qualitative, to use data to justify and provide a rationale for their decision-making. In addition, counties need to use data to understand implications of state and federal laws on their finances. With lower levels of governmental support to counties, data can guide counties to adapt to changes, small and big, increasing preparedness. Similarly, understanding relationships between different variables, facilitated by the access to more data, can assist in better understanding and decision-making. This, in the long-run, could help in not just making service delivery more efficient, but also in better outcomes that improve residents quality of life. That is what counties continue to work toward and strive for.

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Feature - Data and Behavioral Health and Justice

Using and Sharing Data to Drive Behavioral Health and Justice Decisions: Frequently Asked Questions

An estimated two million annual jail admissions involve adults with serious mental illnesses and almost three-quarters of these individuals also have co-occurring substance use disorders (SUDs). People with untreated mental illnesses and SUDs may engage with various health, human services, and justice systems due to the nature of their condition. Coordinating services across these systems can benefit the individual and the community at large, but in many counties, the data and information sharing necessary to do this effectively continues to be a challenge.

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Data are a valuable tool that can help better serve county residents as well as demonstrate the impact of an initiative or the severity of an issue affecting the community. Incorporating a data focus to county efforts can help identify some of the best opportunities to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in the jail. Data are also necessary to set benchmarks against which progress can be measured.

As a leader of the Data-Driven Justice and Stepping Up initiatives, the National Association of Counties (NACo) provides guidance to counties to better serve individuals with mental illnesses and SUDs involved in the criminal justice system. In this role, NACo frequently receives questions about using data in the strategies and approaches counties develop to effectively serve justice-involved individuals with behavioral health needs. This article seeks to share and respond to some of the most frequently asked questions.

Data-Driven Justice: The Data-Driven Justice (DDJ) project brings communities together to disrupt the cycle of incarceration and crisis. Communities participating in the initiative develop strategies that promote better outcomes for frequent utilizers by aligning justice, health, and human services systems around data. For more information, visit www.NACo.org/Data-Driven-Justice.

Stepping Up: The Stepping Up initiative is a national effort to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in jails. It is the result of a partnership between the National Association of Counties, the Council of State Governments Justice Center and the American Psychiatric Association Foundation. For more information, visit www.StepUpTogether.org.

1. What kind of information do I need to make data-driven decisions?

Data are everywhere, but understanding the type and level of data needed can seem daunting. The first step in figuring what type of information your county needs is identifying what it is your county wants to know. If a county wants to know why the number of people with mental illnesses in the jail is increasing, it may start by investigating the different reasons why individuals come to the jail and stay in the jail. Stepping Up recommends that counties collect information on four key measures to identify a baseline and track changes to jail mental health prevalence rates: jail bookings, jail length of stay, connections to treatment, and recidivism rates. Knowing these data points and comparing them to the general jail population will help identify areas where disparities exist in how people with mental illness are treated or impacted and surface opportunities to change course. For example, if the data show that individuals with mental illnesses are staying in jail longer than other people, counties may choose to look at case processing or bail policies that might be driving the differences. While individual-level case information can be helpful when conducting a formal evaluation, aggregate data that can be shared without privacy concerns are often enough to inform areas for needed change.

2. My county has limited data and technology capacity. How can we still be data driven?

Counties should not be deterred by presumed limited capacity when trying to execute their mission to be data driven. The key is for counties to not get bogged down in what they don't have, but to recognize and effectively use what they do have and then identify places where there are opportunities to get or do more. Rather than expending resources to create a new data platform, county leaders can foster cross-agency collaboration to identify how they can use existing data and data systems to

inform mutual priorities. To do this, it may be useful for county planning teams, such as criminal justice coordinating councils, to map out or take an inventory of which data are available from each partner agency and whether and how that data can be shared. Some counties use the Sequential Intercept Mapping model to determine which data are available at key parts of the justice system, including arrest, courts, jail, reentry, and community supervision. Data inventories should include health and human services partners such as behavioral health care providers and housing services. This process may also illuminate opportunities to leverage one agency's data, technology or analysis capacity. Once partners agree on what they have, what they are willing to share, and where gaps exist, they might seek resources to conduct a one-time analysis to better understand a problem or for longer-term funding to increase ongoing data capacity. Counties are increasingly partnering with local universities to enhance their data analysis and research capacity; many universities will participate at little cost to the county.

3. What is the difference between data integration, data sharing, and information sharing?

Through data sharing, data integration, and information sharing, communities can address the growing need for coordinating systems of care and aligning resources to better serve individuals with mental illnesses and SUDs. These three mechanisms offer different levels of information for counties to use:

- Data integration is when data from systems like health, human services, and justice are linked together in one place, such as a data warehouse. Data integration systems provide a safe and secure location for client-level information to be stored and used by agencies with access to the system. For example, Polk County's Management Information System (MIS) stores individual-level information from Polk County Health Services (PCHS) and the Sheriff's Office and can be accessed in real time for sharing information on mutual clients to best connect them to services and supports. Because this information is housed in one location, it also allows the county to track and analyze outcomes for these individuals to inform policy and practice change.
- Data sharing is the process of taking data from one agency and using it in another agency. Data sharing can involve individual-level information that may or may not be identifiable. For example, a jail may share with a local behavioral health provider the people with mental illnesses who have been booked. The best practice is to have a data sharing or use agreement [see Question 5]. Unlike data integration, data sharing often happens on an ad hoc or regularly scheduled basis (e.g., monthly or yearly) rather than in real time. Like data integration, when shared data are analyzed, it can provide a clearer picture of trends.
- Information sharing involves the passing along of client information between entities to help with care coordination. For example, when a client of PCHS is booked into the county jail, the MIS sends a notification to PCHS case managers informing them that their client has been booked into the jail, allowing the case manager to contact the jail's medical unit about the person's medications. Depending on what information is being shared and with whom, state or federal laws such as HIPAA may require that agencies obtain signed consent forms to share this level of information.

4. Don't HIPAA and 42 CFR Part 2 prohibit sharing of data?

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and 42 CFR Part 2 (Part 2) are federal laws dictating how individuals' health information can be shared. Despite common misconceptions, rather than prohibiting the sharing of individual-level information between agencies, these laws were enacted to help agencies share information on mutual patients to better meet their needs. Health care and behavioral health care providers, including jail health care providers, as well as health plans and health care clearinghouses, are considered covered entities that can share information under HIPAA regulations without the need for signed consent forms. Issues with HIPAA arise when a covered entity wants to share with a non-covered entity like a police officer; however, there are circumstances where this is still permitted and legal agreements such as releases of information or consent forms can also be created to authorize sharing of client information in situations where this is not typically allowed. The creation of 42 CFR Part 2 was to prevent SUD information from being misused in non-treatment settings and strictly prohibits the sharing of information if the individual has not granted specific consent. State privacy laws tend to differ and can possibly be more restrictive. In that case, state regulations take precedence over the federal standard. If agency leaders are still uncomfortable with sharing information, they may benefit from connecting with peers in other counties to see how they have effectively and legally shared this type of information. Some states or universities also host workshops or other forums that can help educate hesitant data owners on how to share information under HIPAA.

Continues on page 11.

Feature - Data and Advocacy

Bolstering County Advocacy with Data
In an age where people and governments are increasingly connected across county, state, and national boundaries, information on nearly any topic imaginable abounds. As information and data have become more widely accessible, the standards for policymakers have risen, since they now have the ability to harness data to measure the impact of their policies on their constituents. With data increasingly driving policies at the local, state, and federal levels, advocacy efforts must be grounded in data. This article presents three tips that county leaders can use to bolster their advocacy with data.

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1. Know the Resources Available to Your County
First and foremost, county leaders should learn what resources are available to them, both within and outside of the county. Many counties may not understand the full amount of data that are available to them and that their agencies are already collecting. County leaders can foster an environment of interagency collaboration and talk with department heads to learn what information they collect and how they might use it for advocacy. Some counties – like Prince George's County, Md. and Catawba County, N.C. – have developed dashboards to track the successes and needs of the county.

Many policy areas, however, cut across county and state lines. Other counties or organizations may have already collected and analyzed the information that your county is seeking, so some research and interjurisdictional collaboration can save a county both time and resources. The National Association of Counties (NACo), ISAC, and other organizations will often collect data on national or statewide issues, doing the work for their county members.

NACo's County Explorer interactive mapping and benchmarking tool (available at www.explorer.naco.org) contains hundreds of county-level indicators that counties can use to bolster their advocacy work. County leaders can examine a map of the country or of their state that reflects a dataset of importance to them or create a benchmarking table that compares their county with any other county in the nation. NACo and ISAC also provide numerous other tools, reports and policy briefs to aid counties in their policy and advocacy efforts, with statistics, graphs and research that have already analyzed the data. County leaders can augment their own efforts by engaging with these organizations and learning about the resources they have to offer.

2. Use Data to Tell the County Story
The ability to collect the necessary data for advocacy is the first step; equally-important is the ability to effectively use the data. Statistics, graphs, and other types of analyses do not often convey the desired message without the proper framing and context. Instead of simply presenting facts and figures, county leaders can use data to craft a story with their county's message. A story, with data as its foundation, can have much more of an impact than a statistic alone.

NACo's advocacy profiles, hosted on its County Explorer tool, provide a good example. These profiles embed a variety of datasets into a story to develop a message at either the county or state level. Each profile centers around a specific policy issue and presents a well-honed, pointed message that can be easily delivered to a lawmaker in Congress or a state legislator.

NACo's Statewide Infrastructure profile for Iowa (pictured on the cover) ties statistics on the involvement of county governments in developing the nations transportation system with their financial needs. According to NACo's data in the profile, Iowa counties own and maintain nearly 115,000 public road miles and over 24,000 public bridges – or nearly 80% of each. Yet, the state of Iowa places limits on counties' abilities to raise property tax rates, to increase property tax assessments, to levy sales taxes, and to create special districts, thereby limiting counties' abilities to provide this essential infrastructure. The profile ties these two sets of statistics with a short narrative to complete the story and ask Congress to support the county role in funding the construction and maintenance of the nation's infrastructure system.

3. Partner with Data-Driven State and National Organizations
Finally, after gathering the necessary information and creating the message, the last aspect of advocacy with data is communicating that message in a powerful way to state and federal policymakers. This last portion is where partnerships with NACo, ISAC, and other organizations are crucial.

Feature - Data and Advocacy

NACo advocates for county governments at the national level, using the combined influence of counties to ensure that the policies that Congress develops will enhance and not restrict the ability of county leaders to provide key services to their residents. Similarly, ISAC – along with other state associations of counties – harnesses the collective bargaining power of counties across the state to promote county priorities in the state legislature. When NACo lobbyists go to Congress, they bring with the American County Platform. They can explain that nearly 80% of county governments – that is, the nearly 2,400 NACo member counties – have examined, debated, and voted to stand by the plethora of policy stances the Platform outlines. County leaders can make their voice heard at the state and national level more strongly by participating in the policy setting process of these organizations.

Alongside the policy setting process, county leaders can partner with these organizations in their research efforts. NACo and ISAC conduct research to collect additional county-level data from members and outside sources to further emphasize certain county priorities. Rather than present a single county's story, these organizations pull together data on counties across the state or country and demonstrate to policymakers the impact their policies could have on a larger scale. By combining data from numerous counties, NACo, ISAC, and others add the weight of a state or the country to their advocacy efforts without losing the county story. County leaders can, therefore, partner with these organizations in their data collection efforts to help ensure the integrity of the information they are presenting. Furthermore, counties can take the reports and analyses produced by these organizations to emphasize their own advocacy efforts and demonstrate that their county is not alone in its concerns with or support for a specific piece of litigation.

Counties have access to more data than ever before – often available right at their fingertips. Knowing how to properly harness their capabilities and send a clear message through data is key to advancing county policy priorities and to telling the county story. Much of this work, however, has already been done by NACo, ISAC, and similar organizations. County leaders can partner with these organizations and build on their work to strengthen the federal-state-local partnership and make their county's story heard at the state and national levels.

Continued - Behavioral Health and Justice

5. What kind of legal agreements can counties use to facilitate the use of data?
County agencies and other key stakeholders can create legal agreements for sharing information in order to design and implement effective criminal justice, health, and human service collaborations. There are two types of legal agreements that help partners facilitate the sharing of information.

- A Business Associate Agreement (BAA) allows HIPAA-covered entities to disclose protected health information (PHI) to business associates such as corrections departments who are contracted to perform a task or activity involving PHI such as claims processing, benefit management, or any other activity regulated by HIPAA.
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is established to create procedures for communication and coordination of care between two or more agencies and details the roles and responsibilities of each to share information. They may also feature common goals for the relationship. For example, a sheriff's office may create an MOU with a behavioral health center to coordinate systems of care for justice-involved individuals with mental illnesses.

Counties should consult local legal experts familiar with state and local privacy laws to construct their own sharing agreements. NACo's Data-Driven Justice website also has various county examples of MOUs and BAAs that comply with federal and state privacy standards.

Feature - Data and Decision Making

Data-Driven Decision Making

Using data to make decisions, aka data-driven decision making, is not a new concept. However, as I sat down to write this article, I found myself overwhelmed with the sheer size of the subject. In today's sociopolitical climate, relying on data can be confusing and, at times, seemingly misleading. Questions arise such as; who is presenting the data? What bias might the presenters or researchers have? Is there appropriate technical ability used in compiling the data? Is there a purpose, or a story, to the data or are the data being collected just for the sake of collecting data or outdated requirements? Is the entity collecting the data using it as a carrot or a stick? What is the motivation of the individuals entering the data to ensure the integrity of the data? How is data validated? These questions are valid and important. Answering the questions are also a part of the science involved with the utilization of data. All of us, regardless of our technical ability or knowledge of the process, have the responsibility to ask these questions of ourselves and others whenever presented with a set of data asserted to be fact.

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Then, there is the human element involved. Many people glaze over as soon as data becomes the focus. A lot of people believe data is just for IT nerds (oops…IT professionals), scientists, and academia. Others distrust data, having strong opinions that the presentation of data is merely theory and leaves no room for the authentic experience of an individual. Others are intimidated and prefer to rely on their own experience, or collective opinions of their peer groups. These are also valid considerations when deciding to begin managing issues or solving problems using a data lens.

What is the benefit to making decisions relying strongly on data vs. individual experience?

- A shared vision can be identified and cultivated. This increases commitment and participation.
- A greater good mentality can emerge as people get excited about the shared vision.
- Bias is reduced because rather than individualistic experience being the factor upon which decisions are made, an objective set of facts is being utilized.
- Transparency occurs naturally as measurable progress goals are identified, and adjusted, as challenges and issues are addressed along the way.
- Inherently, change begins to emerge as people see it's not about being right or wrong, but in working together to achieve the shared vision.

The key is to start small and fail fast. Identify a few important data elements to collect that will measure the effect of high-level concerns at a local level, and then pull the data up to the highest level to analyze across entities. I am using "local" in this context to refer to the smallest group of people, such as a team within a department, a department within a county, or a county with the state. Working locally is crucial to get the real story the data is telling, but staying in local silos limits solutions that could be used for the greater good.

For example, let's say a group in Iowa would like to know if there is a correlation between the lack of affordable housing and homelessness. Right away, there will be some assertions that a study isn't needed because common sense says of course there is a correlation. If we had more affordable housing for people, they wouldn't be on the streets. You may argue this based on personal experience from your own family members or people you work with. You are convinced this is the truth and are ready to move forward with funding additional housing ASAP and may start moving in that direction without any further study. Yet, the person right across from you may adamantly disagree. They may argue, affordable housing is available, but people don't want to work. Again, they may believe this based on personal experiences.

The person sitting next to them may state that affordable housing is important, but, based on their own experience, homelessness is not caused by lack of housing. The cause is mental illness and the lack of affordable medication. And on and on… there can be hundreds of theories attributed to the root cause of homelessness.

Identify the lowest denominator of why. Why do we want to find the correlation between affordable housing and homelessness? Because we want to know why homelessness has not decreased when more housing is available. Why do we want to know that? After going through this cycle, the lowest denominator of why may be because we want to eliminate or reduce homelessness. So, does the team proceed with the project to find a correlation between homelessness and affordable housing? Not necessarily.

Define a measurable focus. The team must next define a measurable focus by first defining homelessness. Is this definition specific and simple? If so, is there data available from reputable sources that identifies a true picture of the homeless population? This data may include age, military status, mental health diagnosis, sex, history of homelessness, and availability of appropriate housing as meets the groups criteria. If not all the data is available, a technical solution may be needed to begin collecting the missing data in a consistent manner across the state. The data elements must be simple, true/false or option based, and never free text based. The questions must be very easily understood by those answering and those analyzing the data. There should be as little gray area as possible within the question itself. For example, instead of asking 'is the person homeless', the question could be asked, 'how many days in the last month has the person slept outside'. In this way, the question is not subjective.

Implement small solutions to test theories. What happens if the individuals having mental health conditions have contact with a mental health professional quarterly? What happens if a van takes veterans to the hospital to get their checkups? Does this increase the likelihood that they will have the support needed to make a small step, even as small as going to a homeless shelter? What if they are offered supported employment? Does that increase their confidence and give them a sense of pride and does that have an overall impact on the issue?

Measure, Adjust, Measure Again. The only way to know if a theory is having an impact is to have real people input data in real-time in a shared system. Yet, these very same people are likely overwhelmed with meeting the demands of their current duties. A technical solution may help here such as putting three critical elements needed as the first data entry points a person sees when they login to the tracking system.

Replicate. Don't put in a solution state-wide until you know it can be replicated within different populations of people and across different economic areas.

Have Patience. Gathering a baseline takes time. Finding solutions takes time, study, and making slight adjustments and then trying again. Just because something works in one area may not mean it will work in another area. Also, just because a solution doesn't seem to work, don't throw it out. Make a small adjustment and try again.

Trust and Verify. Be willing to believe the data even if it conflicts with your own experience. Be willing to question the data as well, but trust in the process you and your team are implementing.

In summary, be brave and start small. You don't need to be a technical genius to use data as a tool. As I was researching for this article and stressing myself out, someone very close to me said (and I paraphrase) "remember, you don't have to know everything to know something." With that being said, I hope these simple suggestions on managing teams and problem-solving efforts using data are helpful.

Feature - Data and Budgeting

Budgeting with Data

Based on the title you may have prepared yourself to read some information on reviewing past expenditures, estimating future costs, looking at revenues, etc. to prepare a budget. And while those are important steps, this article will focus on how a different type of data was utilized to make some budgeting decisions.

Andrea Jansen
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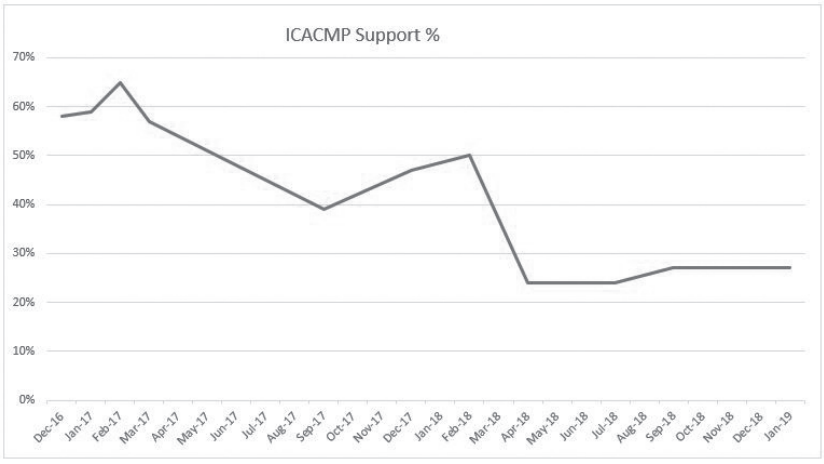
First, here is a little background information. In July 2016 the ISAC began management of the Iowa County Attorney's Case Management Project (ICACMP). In looking at the current organization of the Project, we realized that tracking what projects/tasks the staff were working on would be a helpful place to start.

Early on it was evident that the majority of staff time was spent on user support efforts. Subsequently, our next step was gathering more data to investigate this area more. After collecting 12 months of data we started to analyze it. Initially with questions like how many support issues are we resolving per month? How many tickets are being sent in per user? How about per county? Eventually, evolving into questions like what are the common characteristics of counties that submit a higher volume of tickets?

Let's fast forward to September 2018, and we were beginning to prepare preliminary ICACMP budget numbers for FY 2020. By this time, we have gathered a few samples of data and decided to utilize it to prepare two budget options for the Board. The first option was the standard budget that the Project has done in the past with a per county flat fee and per user fees. The second option was to offer support tiers and vary flat fee costs based on the data we had collected. As it turns out, the data was showing us that some counties rarely utilized ICACMP staff for support while others relied on it heavily. Acknowledging that neither of these was better than the other (but again it was where staff was spending the majority of their time), we thought it would be helpful to provide a benefit to the counties that rarely utilized the service. We also liked the idea of providing that choice to the individual county attorney's offices. After we presented both options, there was a lot of great discussion among the ICACMP Board members. Overall, they decided to offer members several flat fee options based on varying support levels and this was formally accepted by the Governing Board the next month. From there, we sent out support tier recommendations to each county, and we are collecting their responses currently.



We also use this data for other initiatives like advancing our user support efforts. Examples of this include: increased documentation, knowledge based articles on processes/questions we are getting frequently, and providing user webinars and trainings. Because of this we have seen a drop in the time staff is spending on user support:

Decreasing the time spent on support has not only allowed ICACMP to be more efficient and effective for our members, but it also allows staff to work on additional projects.

If it were not for both the staff resourcing and support data, we would not have been able to think about the dues structure and budgeting in this different capacity. In the future it is our plan to continue down this path and see what further information this data can show us.

Please contact me with any inquiries about this process or ICACMP. I can be reached at 515.244.7181 or ajansen@iowacounties.org.

Feature - NACo Conference Report

NACo Legislative Conference Report
"Healthy citizens are the greatest asset a country can have." - Winston Churchill

Melvyn Houser
ISAC NACo Board Representative
Pottawattamie County Auditor
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Data, data, data! What's the use of all this data if it's not correct? Cara Brumfield of the Georgetown Center on Poverty spoke to our Ag and Rural Affairs Committee about the upcoming 2020 census. Much of the federal dollars that come to our rural areas is allocated by population. That would include SNAP, waste water, Rural Business Opportunity, housing loans, and more. So, it is imperative that everyone is accounted for - especially the elderly, poor, displaced, or homeless. And most especially this time since the Census Bureau will be conducting an online census. That was a big concern to many of the members there because of the lack of good broadband in many of the rural areas. (More on that in a bit.) The Bureau hopes to get a 55% return via the online process. Others will be reached by mail or door-to-door as it has been in the past. If our more affluent citizens are the only ones counted and some of our poor are not, that would skew the data and the median income level in the county could be reported high, and the county or region would be ineligible for federal assistance. So, what we are to do locally is set up a Complete Count Committee whose job would be to make sure everyone is counted. This might involve our public health department, community services, or some nonprofits who can reach some homeless folks, whether in shelters or under bridges.

At the Rural Action Caucus we had some of the same discussion, particularly regarding the broadband connectivity issue. Apparently, the FCC Broadband map is not accurate. If one household or business in an area has good download speeds, then that area is defined as covered by high speed internet, even though others in the same area have slow speeds. NACo is partnering with other rural initiatives in a program to collect as much accurate connectivity data as possible. The objective is to download a free app called TestIT and measure the download speeds through the county. This data will be compiled, and a new coverage map will be developed to show where high speed broadband exists and where it doesn't. Your mission, if you choose to accept it, is to contact your county engineer, sheriff, and others who work throughout the county and have them and their staff do a speed test via the TestIT app. If they have iPhones, they just go to the App Store and search for TestIT. Droid users will need to search TestIT/NACo.

The Conference's General Sessions didn't focus on data so much, but I did get a certain vibe from the various speakers. Among them were our Senator Joni Ernst, Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar, Ben Carson from HUD, Secretary of Labor Alexander Acosta, and others. What we hear on the news and read in print, left or right, Republican or Democrat, gives the impression that our government is dysfunctional and at a standstill. Either they don't care about taxing the public, or they don't care about providing needed services in order to keep taxes down. Both senators said that they are working across the aisles. Senator Ernst says bipartisanship is working and blaming the other party just doesn't cut it. Senator Marco Rubio talked about small enterprise development and echoed some of the ideas of Robert Reich, former economic advisor to the Clinton Administration. Capitalism is a great tool if we would use it the way it should be used. What Rubio was saying reminded me of one of my favorite authors, Wendell Berry. Read his book, "Culture and Agriculture the Unsettling of America." When we listen to these folks talk for more than one little sound bite that we get on the news, we know that that they are doing the best they can for the public. What Kelley Ann Conway said really solidified this in my mind. She said that an employee who fails a drug test, should not be fired, but should be retained and given some drug treatment while still in the workforce. What's the point of firing him or her and then continuing to use and be a burden on society? There just seemed to be this vein of compassion and goodwill coming from all the speakers.

I've written about this before, and I'll probably continue to do so. NACo is partnering with the National Collaborative for Infants and Toddlers. It is funded by the Pritzger Children's Initiative. This is one of NACo's Signature Projects to raise awareness of toxic stress brought on by Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACES. Things like poverty, hunger, neglect, parental drug abuse or alcoholism, and mental and physical abuse. The toxic stress alters a child's brain development and will last a lifetime, manifesting itself in physical and mental ways. All of them bad. So, here is what you need to do. Go to www.naco.org. Under "Resources" click "Signature Projects" find NCIT and read about the county's role in early childhood development. Then download the resolution and have your board pass it and send the resolution to NACo. I'm sure your local early childhood board would facilitate.

I've given the reader several missions to accomplish, but I have one more. Go to a NACo Conference. It could be the beginning of a beautiful relationship.

Miscellaneous

An Ounce of Prevention is Worth a Pound of Cure
It's better to stop something bad from happening in the first place than to repair the damage after it has happened. This is one of the basic founding principles of Iowa Communities Assurance Pool (ICAP)!

ICAP developed a service exclusively for its members called ICAP Legal Access. This service is designed to save the member money, reduce hassles, and save employee time. This service also protects member assets, including but not limited to, people and property.

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What exactly is the ICAP Legal Access?
ICAP Legal Access is a free legal consultation service provided exclusively to ICAP members. Every member of the pool is now eligible to receive up to 180 minutes of free legal consultation per year.

Such consultation can be utilized in any one, or combination of, these areas:

- Employment law: such as hiring; discipline; termination; employee handbooks; discrimination; and wage and hour investigation
- Zoning and land use: such as constitutional takings and regulatory exactions
- Open records and open meetings laws
- Indemnification provision review in contracts: including what the provisions means and any recommended changes
- Attorney-to-attorney consultation resources: which allows for consultation between city and county attorneys representing ICAP members and the municipal law specialists at the Hopkins & Huebner Law Firm

ICAP members seeking legal consultation services in any of these areas should call 1.877.303.ICAP, and we urge every member county to take advantage of this valuable ICAP benefit.

Just as vaccinations reduce disease and human suffering, ICAP Legal Access provides timely legal advice which reduces hassles, stress, negative public opinion, budget-busting legal expenses, and a myriad of other unforeseen inconveniences, all of which could have been avoided had decision-makers sought early legal counsel.

Inoculate your county from unnecessary legal entanglements! Call 1.877.303.ICAP.

CRMS is an Elite Preferred Vendor, and the programs they represent, ICAP and IMWCA, are endorsed programs of ISAC. Learn more about CRMS at www.crmsia.com. Learn more about ICAP Legal Access at www.icapiowa.com/icap-legal-access.

Employment - Appanoose County Engineer

Appanoose County, Iowa, is seeking qualified applicants for the position of county engineer. The position requires a Professional Engineer in the state of Iowa. Registration as a land surveyor in Iowa is preferred, but is not required. The county engineer is responsible for the overall planning, direction, coordination, and supervision of the county secondary roads cepartment, including the effective, safe, and efficient construction, maintenance, and engineering of all county secondary roads and related services. Possible salary ranging from $80,000 to $110,000 with salary negotiable depending upon experience and qualifications. Employee single health and dental insurance paid. Applications and job description/expectations may be found at: http://www.appanoosecounty.net/appanoose-county/employment. Please submit both the application and a resume to the auditor. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled. Appanoose County is an EOE. Appanoose County has prime deer hunting and fishing available. Honeycreek Resort on Rathbun Lake offers eleven miles of walking trails. Forward application materials to: Kelly Howard, Appanoose County Auditor, 201 N 12th ST, #11, Centerville, IA 52544 or khoward@appanoosecounty.net.

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2019 calendar

April
14-17 ISSDA Civil School (Airport Holiday Inn, Des Moines)
18 ISAC HIPAA Program Meeting (Polk County River Place, Des Moines)
23-24 Iowa Governor's Conference on Public Health (Airport Holiday Inn, Des Moines)
25 ISAC Board of Directors Meeting (ISAC Office)

May
7-10 Treasurers Conference (Ameristar Holiday Inn, Council Bluffs)
15-19 NACo WIR Conference (Spokane, Washington)

June
5-7 Recorders Summer School (Council Bluffs)
12 ISAC Scholarship Golf Fundraiser (Toad Valley Golf Course, Pleasant Hill)
18-21 ITAG Conference (Sheraton, West Des Moines)
26 ISAC Board of Directors Meeting (ISAC Office)

July
11-15 NACo Annual Conference (Clark County, Nevada)
17-19 Auditors Annual Conference (Burlington)

August
20 ISAC LPC Meeting (Veterans Memorial Community Choice Credit Union Convention Center, Des Moines)
21-23 ISAC Annual Conference (Veterans Memorial Community Choice Credit Union Convention Center, Des Moines)

September
15-18 ISSDA Jail School (Holiday Inn Airport, Des Moines)
18-20 ISAC Board of Directors Retreat (Dubuque County)
26 ISAC LPC Meeting (ISAC Office)

October
6-9 Assessors Fall Conference (Airport Holiday Inn, Des Moines)

November
20-21 ISAC Board of Directors Meeting (ISAC Office)

December
8-10 ISSDA Winter School (Airport Holiday Inn, Des Moines)

If you have any questions about the meetings listed above or would like to add an affiliate meeting to the ISAC calendar, please contact Kelsey Sebern at ksebern@iowacounties.org.

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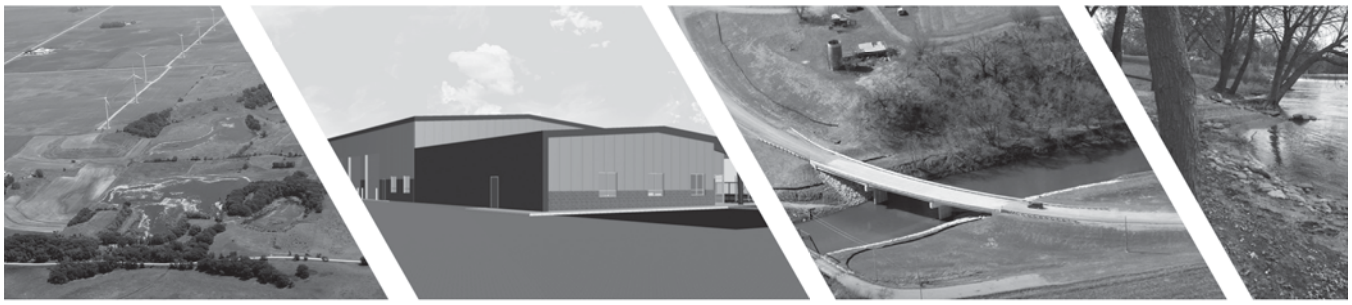

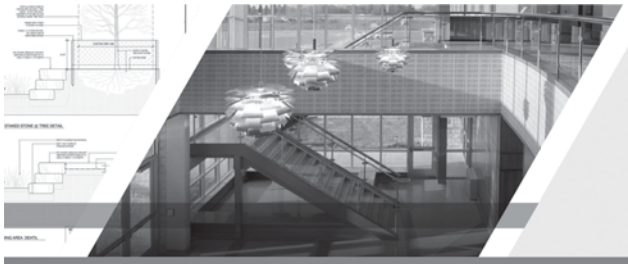

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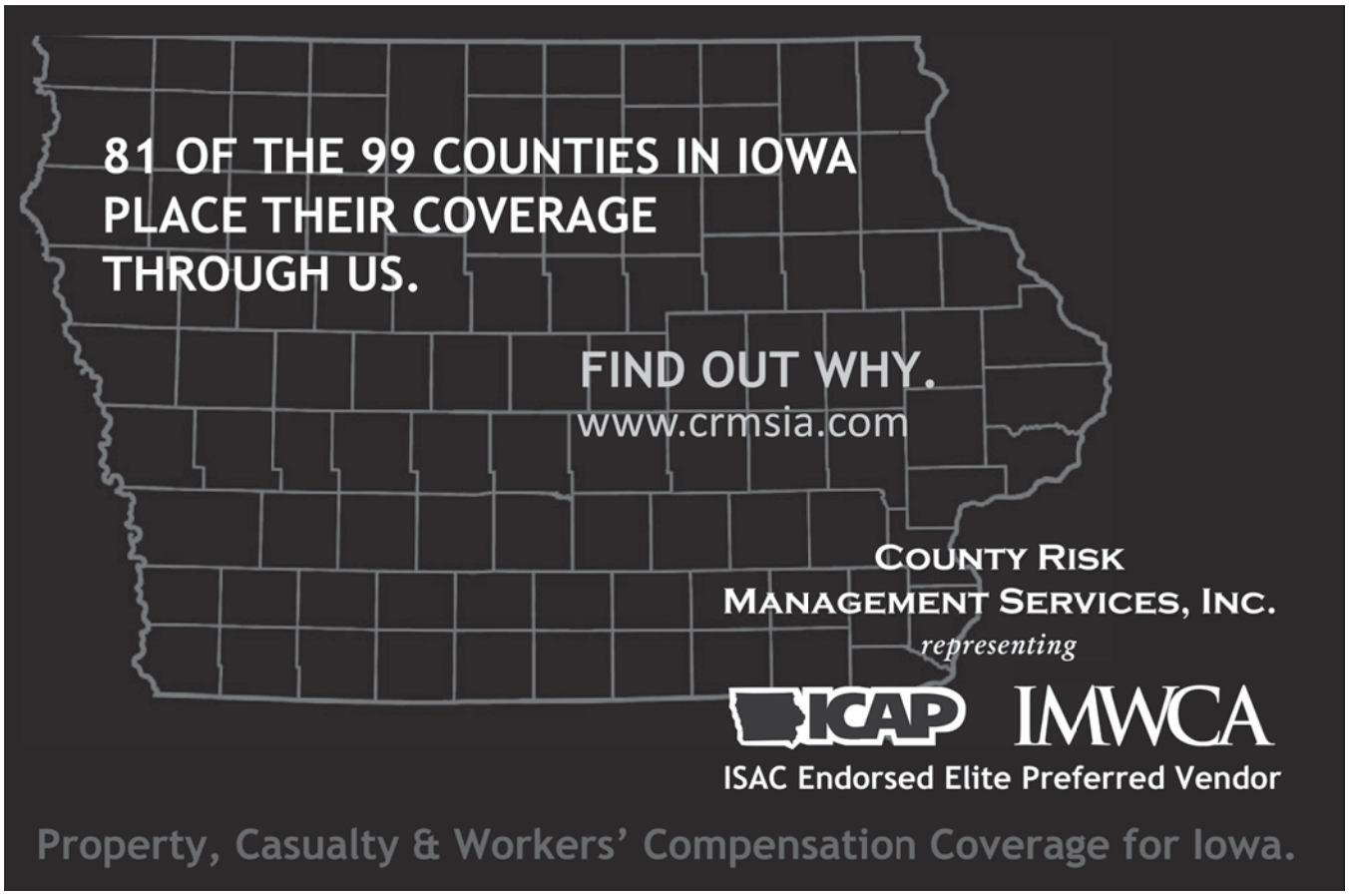
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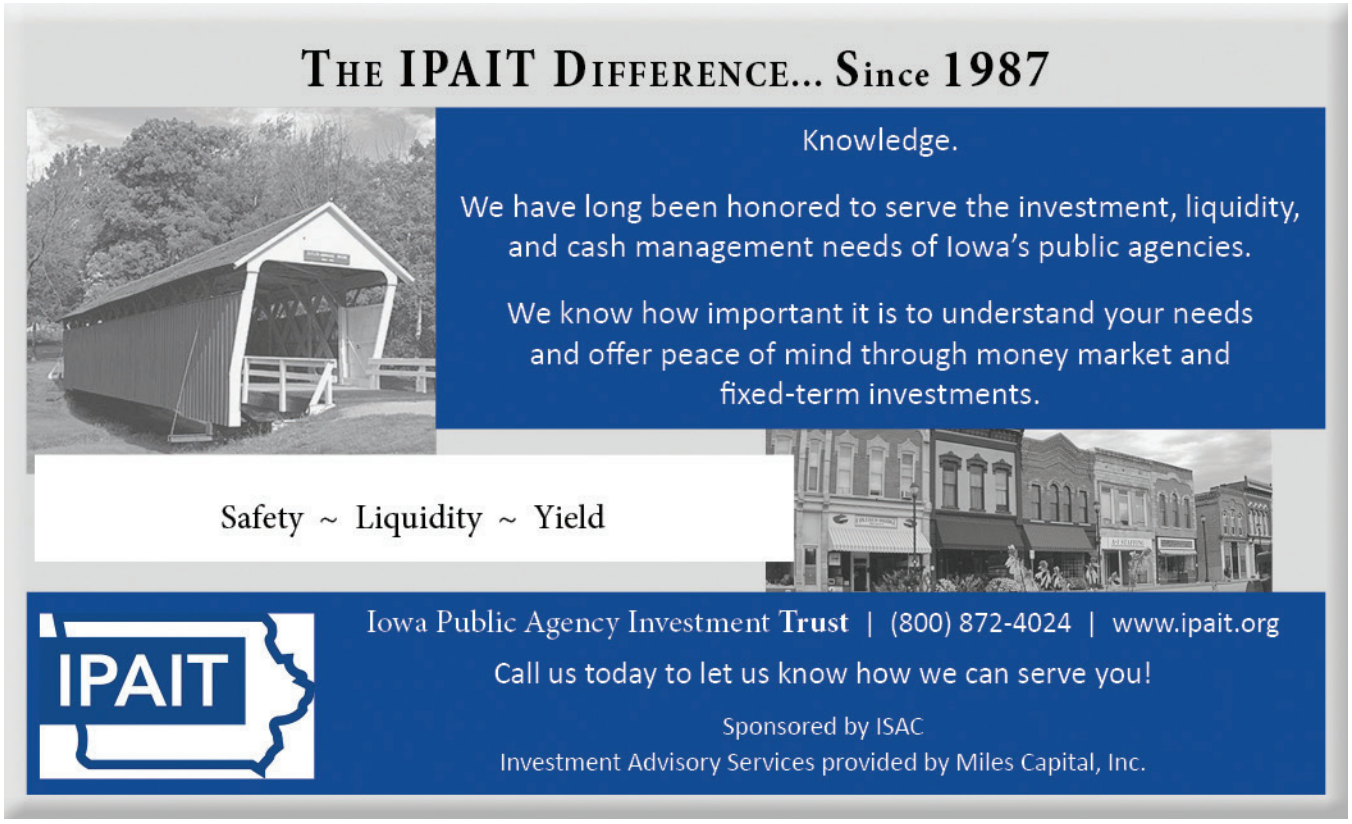
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