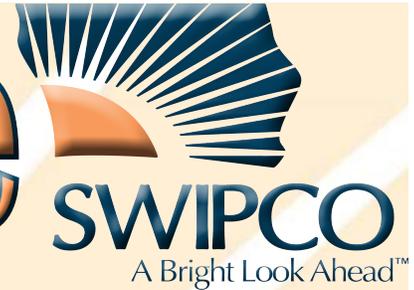


# The Update



**February 2024**

Serving the Counties of Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Montgomery, Mills, Page, Pottawattamie, and Shelby

## SWIPCO Business Revolving Loan Fund is More Accessible Than Ever

Atlantic, IA- Starting and sustaining a business is a challenging journey. Southwest Iowa Planning Council’s Business Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) aims to help business owners on that journey and RLF funds are more flexible than ever before.

The RLF was established to assist new and existing businesses create and retain jobs. RLF dollars are used in conjunction with local lenders to provide gap financing for business development and expansion. As loans are repaid into the pool, the fund revolves back out to other businesses.

The SWIPCO Policy Council recently voted to approve some regulation changes for the fund to make it easier to access. Maximum loan amounts are up from \$125,000 to \$250,000. Applicants must create or retain 1 permanent full-time job for every \$50,000 loaned, up from \$10,000. In addition to loan funds being used for operating capital and equipment, loans can now more easily be used for building and property acquisition and/or building renovation.



The fund is available to new or expanding businesses in Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Montgomery, Page, and Shelby Counties. Applicants must demonstrate the need for gap financing or have been declined by a financial institution. The business proposal must support and enhance the regional economy and contain a business and marketing plan. Applicants must contribute at least 10% of the total project cost.

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The SWIPCO Business RLF currently has \$600,000 available to lend, with another \$350,000 currently loaned out. There are 6 active loans and 86 active jobs currently supported. Since it’s inception, the RLF has loaned out \$2,182,650 and spurred the creation or retention of 197 jobs in the region. Projects have leveraged on average \$5 of private investment for every \$1 loaned out.

Continued.....

## Business RLF Ready to Spur Business Growth

Loans have competitive low interest rates on a 5 to 10-year term. A non-refundable application fee of \$150 will apply.

The process starts with applying with required documentation. Those applications are then reviewed by the RLF Review Board. They will evaluate and make recommendations for funding or denial of the project. The recommended projects are then acted on by the SWIPCO Policy Council. Approved projects will then begin the closing process.



Application materials can be found at [www.swipco.org/business-rlf/application-materials/](http://www.swipco.org/business-rlf/application-materials/) If you would like to inquire about your business qualifying, contact Executive Director John McCurdy at 866-279-4720 or 712-243-4196.

SWIPCO is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

## Sports Bar Gets Startup Boost from SWIPCO Revolving Loan Fund



Red Oak, IA – Red Oak residents wanted a sports bar, but starting a restaurant, especially during a pandemic, can be difficult. Southwest Iowa Planning Council was able to help meet that need by funding Stadium 34, a sports bar started in 2021 in a space left vacant when the Red Coach Inn Restaurant closed during COVID.

The owner, Rocky Rocha, was loaned \$150,000 from the SWIPCO RLF to purchase restaurant equipment and furnishings. Rocha said, “We are very happy with the outcome. SWIPCO was excellent to work with and really helped me plan to make this come to life.”

The restaurant filled a void for the community and Rocha said they’ve supported him in return, “We want to give area residents dining options and a place to gather.”

SWIPCO’s RLF has \$600,000 available to loan to area residents with new and existing business needs. Contact SWIPCO for more information at 866-279-4720.

### SWIPCO Addresses a Variety of Homeowner Needs With Iowa West Foundation Home Repair Grant



Unexpected expenses can be a burden that’s hard to overcome. Often those expenses are very necessary, such as needing to replace a faulty furnace. Lewis resident Kenneth Griffin ran into this need a few years back and SWIPCO was able to get that replacement done by using funds from an Iowa West Foundation grant.

Kenneth originally had a local HVAC team come out and replace a venting section. While doing the work they told him that his furnace and AC units would need to be replaced soon due to some faults in the system. They recommended getting in touch with SWIPCO, so he did and was placed on a list for possible help. The furnace was able to hang on for long enough and when he eventually reached the top of the list, SWIPCO sprung into action. Work was lined up to replace the furnace and ac unit, as well as repairs to the back door.

“They were in and out with the replacement in a day. It made an immediate difference.” Griffin said, “The units are much more energy efficient, and we saw the reduction in our electric and gas bills as well.”

Griffin said the interactions he had with SWIPCO and the contractors were great, “It was a positive experience. Glad to get the help. I didn’t see them much sometimes because of work, but they took care of everything.”

Another unexpected expense for a homeowner can be foundation issues. Nick and Kelley Kinser of Elliott ran into this issue on their rural property. Runoff from a hill behind their home had started to cause bowing in their basement walls.

Kelley said she originally approached SWIPCO without telling her husband because she had a high school friend who previously received help. They were put on a list for help and after a four-year wait, which unfortunately is typical because of high demand, they got the call. They then went through a qualification and inspection process.

“It was really perfect timing as some big rains had made the issue worse. It took around two weeks to get everything prepped and then about 3 days for the work.” Kinser said.

Continued.....



### Iowa West Foundation Home Repair

Nick and Kelley appreciated how attentive everyone was during the process. Even when there was an issue, they got a quick response, "There was an issue with the contractor billing and Matthew Lee told me not to worry and addressed it right away." Kelley said, "Sandy Hansen followed up after a couple days and updated me on everything."

They said the work was interesting to see the process and the different techniques that were implemented to support the foundation. You could tell their appreciation, "I just wish more people knew about what SWIPCO can do." Kelley said.

SWIPCO utilizes a number of different grant programs for home repair projects and qualification guidelines can vary between them. All are income based and have wait lists, so check with SWIPCO staff early to see if you qualify.

### SWIPCO is Hiring

#### Atlantic, Harlan, Red Oak, and Shenandoah Area Drivers Wanted

Southwest Iowa Transit Agency (SWITA) is seeking part-time drivers in the Atlantic, Harlan, Red Oak and Shenandoah areas for a number of shifts. Applicants must possess or be willing to acquire a commercial driver's license class C with passenger endorsement (SWITA will assist with ELDT and drive test), and enjoy working with the public. Starting wage is \$16.00 per hour plus IPERS and PTO. Applicant must be able to obtain a CDL Medical Exam and pass a DOT pre-employment drug screen.

More information and the ability to apply online for this position is located on [www.swita.com](http://www.swita.com).

For questions contact Daurine Petersen at 800-842-8065. Please apply online or send the application to SWIPCO, Attn: Daurine, 1501 SW 7th St., Atlantic, Iowa, 50022 or email to [daurine.petersen@swipco.org](mailto:daurine.petersen@swipco.org).

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### SWITA by the Numbers

	January 2023	YTD (Since July 1)	
Total Miles	157,391	1,031,441	
Total Hours	9,089	59,574	
Total Rides	42,795	268,722	
<u>January Rides by Service</u>		<u>January Rides by Demographic</u>	
Workforce Rides	6,915	Disabled	21,472
Taxi Rides	4,158	Elderly	2,646
Student Rides	6,212	Other Gen. Public	18,677
Other	25,510		

## SWIPCO Welcomes Brandie McFarland as Human Resource Specialist



ATLANTIC, IOWA -- Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO) welcomes Brandie McFarland as a Human Resource Specialist. She will work alongside Human Resource Coordinator Daurine Petersen to assist with many HR duties including on-boarding new employees, driver training, and compliance.

Brandie brings a wide range of administrative experience with her including a long tenure at Glenwood Resource Center. Brandie feels this role is a great fit for her, "I love working with people and I've always been involved with administrative duties, so I feel very comfortable in the role."

She was born and raised in Stanton and still resides on the family acreage near there. She spends much of her time outside of work at her daughter's activities or coaching, as she is the head softball coach at Stanton. When not at the ballfield or in a gym she enjoys keeping up with maintenance of her property.

SWIPCO and SWITA have nearly 100 employees between office staff and drivers, so Brandie will help all of them with any current needs and help bring new employees on board.

## SWITA Welcomes Gina Gentile as Transit Scheduler



ATLANTIC, IOWA -- Southwest Iowa Transit Agency (SWITA) welcomes Gina Gentile as a Transit Scheduler. Gina will join the team that connects area residents to the transportation they need.

Gina resides in the Oakland area with her family. She comes to SWITA from working a number of years for the Iowa National Guard as a Family Assistance Center Coordinator.

SWITA serves eight counties in Southwest Iowa with a fleet of 100 vehicles. Transportation provided includes work routes, student transportation, day habilitation routes for disabled individuals, medical transport, and a range of other services.

Gina enjoys traveling to warm locations when she can.

# SWIPCO Welcomes Holly Jackson to Planning Department



ATLANTIC, IOWA -- Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO) welcomes Holly Jackson as a Community Development Specialist, Planner. She will work with communities throughout the SWIPCO region primarily on zoning and codes of ordinances.

Jackson comes to SWIPCO with a wealth of experience in public service. She was the Mills County Zoning Administrator for nearly

a decade and spent nearly six years on the Glenwood City Council. Jackson grew up in the Glenwood area, where her mother served as the Mills County Auditor for 23 years.

Jackson said it was tough to leave her previous roles but feels good about the change, "I really enjoyed my time with the county and city council. I had a lot of great relationships and many of those people are close friends. I hope they continue to succeed. I just felt like it was time for a change."

Familiarity from working with SWIPCO on projects connected her to the new position. "It will be nice to be able to continue to work with Glenwood and Mills County, but I'm also excited to get a chance to work with some other communities in the region. They all have different needs," said Jackson.

Holly resides near Glenwood with her husband Jonathan and four children Lecey, Livia, Maxton, and Maverick. She enjoys following their activities. She also enjoys volunteering and getting involved such as being a 4-H leader. In her free time, she enjoys gardening, canning, cooking, baking, and caring for their various pets.

### Interested in Being Involved?

SWIPCO currently has vacancies on our housing trust fund and revolving loan fund boards. Contact Executive Director John McCurdy if you have an interest in any vacancy.

### Upcoming Grant Information:

- Iowa HOME-ARP Program Funds. March 8, 2024
- RPA-13 Transportation Alternatives Program Fund. March 18, 2024.
- IEDA Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program. March 18, 2024
- IDNR Solid Wastes Alternatives Program. Quarterly- March 31, 2024
- FHLB Affordable Housing Program. May 1, 2024
- Iowa Arts Project Grant. May 15, 2024
- Iowa Cultural Capacity Building Program. May 15, 2024
- Iowa Thriving Communities. May 15, 2024
- Land and Water Conservation Fund Program. June 15, 2024

### Building Addition Nearing Completion

Here is a sneak peek of the new SWIPCO office space at our main office in Atlantic. Staff will move back in during the next month.



### Birthdays & Anniversaries



**Erin Hudson**  
Community Development  
Director  
1 Year of Service



**Phil Richter**  
Building Inspector I  
4 Years of Service

**Ashley Hayes**  
Community Development  
Specialist II  
Birthday Month



**Daurine Petersen**  
Human Resource Coordinator  
13 Years of Service

# From the Desk of the Executive Director...

**John McCurdy**  
Executive Director

This month we've led our newsletter with a couple pieces about our business revolving loan fund. This is a program that SWIPCO offers that we honestly haven't promoted heavily in the past couple of years. That's primarily because some of the rules and regulations to use these funds made loans very difficult to make. Recently the SWIPCO board has been able to make some important amendments and we believe that now's a great time to put more emphasis on our loan program because those funds should be out in the community, not sitting in the bank.

That being said, sometimes I get calls regarding our loan program and what folks are really looking for is a grant—something that doesn't need to be repaid. It's important to keep in mind that most grant programs are for things that don't generate revenue (or not enough revenue to pay for themselves) but are seen as important public services/goods. For example, our grant programs to repair homes, which are also highlighted in this issue are structured as grants because the agencies that are giving us the funds to do those repairs see preserving the housing stock in our area as an important public good. Most support to businesses, like our revolving loan fund, are structured as loans because the point of a business is to have positive cash flow. So yes, we only want to make business loans to businesses that can show that they will be able to pay back the loans. The difference between us and the bank is that we are willing to take on much more risk—in fact being turned down for at least part of the loan by a bank is a requirement to be funded by us—and we can often do lower interest rates, but at the end of the day we do ask tough questions and want to have confidence that the business will succeed.

If you are looking to start or expand a business, there are a lot of resources to help. I strongly encourage anyone interested to first start with your local county economic development organization and a local banker. They are a wealth of resources and once you get their input, then let's talk and make it happen!

## SWIPCO STAFF

**John McCurdy, AICP**  
Executive Director

**Mark Lander**  
Transit Director

**Erin Hudson**  
Community Development Director

**Karen Mauer**  
Administrative Services Director

**Rhonda Brown**  
Finance Manager

**Daurine Petersen**  
Human Resources Coordinator

**Kersten Abild**  
Transit Scheduler II

**Ann Anstey**  
Grants Specialist II

**Mary Auten**  
Grants Specialist I

**Michael Ballinger**  
Safety Coordinator

**Barb Boggs**  
Grants Specialist I

**Dani Briggs**  
Lead Planner

**Tracy Clark**  
Transit Scheduler III

**Tammy DeBord**  
Grants Specialist III

**Gina Gentile**  
Transit Scheduler I

**Mark Hansen**  
Fleet Mechanic

**Sandy Hansen**  
Grants Specialist III

**Ashley Hayes**  
Disaster Recovery Coordinator

**Julie Hays**  
Transit Scheduler I

**Dee Holtz**  
Administrative Assistant

**Holly Jackson**  
Planner I

**Amy Jones**  
Benefits & Payroll Specialist

**Adam Kisner**  
Maintenance Assistant

**Aaron Koontz**  
Grants Specialist I

**Matthew Lee**  
Building Inspector II

**Brandie McFarland**  
Human Resources Specialist

**Chris Parks**  
Communications Coordinator

**Nicole Rhodes**  
Grants Specialist II

**Phil Richter**  
Building Inspector I

**Kristen Templeton**  
Transit Coordinator

**Teresa Wright**  
Finance Specialist