

# PROJECT SYNOPSIS

## Background

The University of Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities (IISC) and School of Urban and Regional Planning are working in collaboration with ECIA to evaluate PEI's flagship programs' current usage, participant satisfaction, and marketability, in addition to identifying best practices to increase effectiveness.

*Opportunity to take stock:*  
Since Petal Project's inception in 2009, a comprehensive evaluation has not yet been conducted to determine how effectively the program meets its own goals and PEI's strategic vision for the region.

*Making a Business Case for a Sustainable Region:*  
A 2016 international study indicates 90% of executives see sustainability as important, yet only 25% of companies have generated a clear business case for these practices.

## Petal Snapshot

- 10+ industries represented
- 4,000+ jobs within Petal companies
- X current participants
- X former participants
- Participants centered in Dubuque County

## Project Scope

An evaluation of The Petal Project offers an opportunity to unite best practices in sustainability with the salient issues facing businesses and communities in Eastern Iowa.

Substantial contact with regional businesses, economic development stakeholders, and key workforce segments is necessary to inform a refreshed program structure and business plan for the Petal Project. Existing research on established sustainability metrics, successful brand promotion, and the impacts of business leadership in workforce retention, cost savings, and environmental impacts will add insight from national and international best practices.

The goal of this project is to create an economic development initiative through a revitalized business certification program that better embodies Prosperity Eastern Iowa's mission and strives for economic prosperity and holistic sustainability in the region.

## Deliverables:

- Refreshed certification program that embodies Petal Project's environmental focus, with additional criteria addressing the social and economic aspects of sustainability through new attention to workplace culture and worker retention, two issues highlighted in PEI's strategic plan
- Streamlined reporting mechanisms for participating businesses
- Business plan for new program to be marketed and funded



Sustainable  
Businesses

Sustainable  
Region

Environmental, Social,  
and Economic Returns

### Next steps:

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- Observe strategic planning session to gain understanding of PEI's updated strategic plan and future direction for programming
- Surveys, interviews, and focus groups from participating Petal Project businesses/organizations and other stakeholders
- Comparative analyses of successful sustainability and 'green' programs; literature reviews for impact of sustainable business leadership on workforce, consumers, and environment

## How You Can Help:

### ◆ Provide Contact Information

Conducting interviews, distributing surveys, and facilitating focus groups surrounding economic development and sustainability issues within the region will be crucial to our input-gathering process. **If you believe your business/organization could offer insight or you know another group that would be willing to share their thoughts, please email or call us with their contacts!**

### Contact Us:

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Please email Emily Seiple at [emily-seiple@uiowa.edu](mailto:emily-seiple@uiowa.edu) or call Marti Wolf at **(314) 973-0952**.

We would love to schedule a phone, Skype, or in-person interview with you or someone representing your business or organization!

We are in weekly contact with Holly, so if you lose this paper, she has our contact information.

We would love to have all contact information for businesses and organizations in the region gathered by the **end of October** in order to provide ample time to gather input.