

# Community Heart & Soul®

— Guided by what matters most —

## POSTVILLE, IOWA

Known as the "Hometown to the World," Postville is a growing city with a young, diverse population. The city boasts a bustling farmers market and a thriving downtown surrounded by hills and valleys of the Driftless Area of Northeastern Iowa.

POPULATION:  
2,500

CHALLENGE:  
Engagement  
across multiple  
languages and  
cultures

FOCUS:  
Connecting  
community  
development to  
economic  
development

KEY TOOL:  
Community  
Network Analysis

### Postville “by the numbers”:

- 41% of the Postville population speaks a language other than English at home
- 7 Heart & Soul statements, promoted in six languages, articulating what matters most to all residents
- Over 10% of residents shared stories or took a survey
- 10 action ideas already completed and 10 more in progress!

### Local conditions:

Growing out of a desire to change the narrative about Postville, members of the Postville community came together to form Our Postville Community Heart & Soul. The initiative received a Community Heart & Soul Seed Grant in 2021, helping to launch the local effort. In starting a new community development initiative, local leaders wanted to ensure all voices in the community were heard—a significant challenge given the diversity of ethnicities and cultures in town. Community Heart & Soul offered a way to engage all voices in the community to articulate a vision for the future.

The initiative received grant funding from the Rural Innovative Iowa grant, Power of Connections, and the Iowa Area Development Group. Local organizations contributing to the success of Heart & Soul in Postville include Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative, Allamakee County Economic Development, the City of Postville, Postville School District, and the Postville Public Library.

### Partnership:

The Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque brought the Community Heart & Soul initiative to this region of Iowa and supported the work in Postville by contributing a Certified Heart & Soul Coach and shared learning opportunities with other Iowa Heart & Soul towns.

### Volunteer and Community Response:

Establishing trust in the community was a unique challenge for Our Postville Heart & Soul. The Heart & Soul team focused on building relationships through trusted networks and connectors. Translating materials into multiple languages was essential to involving everyone in the Heart & Soul process. The Postville Public Library served as a central hub for connecting with various communities through existing programs and events.

Volunteers gathered stories and input from residents by participating in local events, connecting through WhatsApp, administering surveys, attending Shabbat meals, and more.

## Heart & Soul Outcomes:

Community Heart & Soul continues in Postville as the city and residents work in partnership to implement the Postville Action Plan.

Early accomplishments include:

- Formation of the Heart of Postville/Alma de Postville Welcoming Committee, which is working on ways to make Postville a more welcoming community (such as developing a resource guide for newcomers).
- Creation and hiring of a new city staff position – Director of Community Development.
- Resumption of English as Second Language courses in town through Northeast Iowa Community College
- Establishment of a community space to store small home goods and clothing for newcomers who might arrive without key essentials like winter coats.
- Creation of a database of bilingual residents aimed at increasing language access for residents at town events.

