

# Every County Counts: Empowering Communities Against Cancer, The Cancer in Iowa: 99 Counties Project

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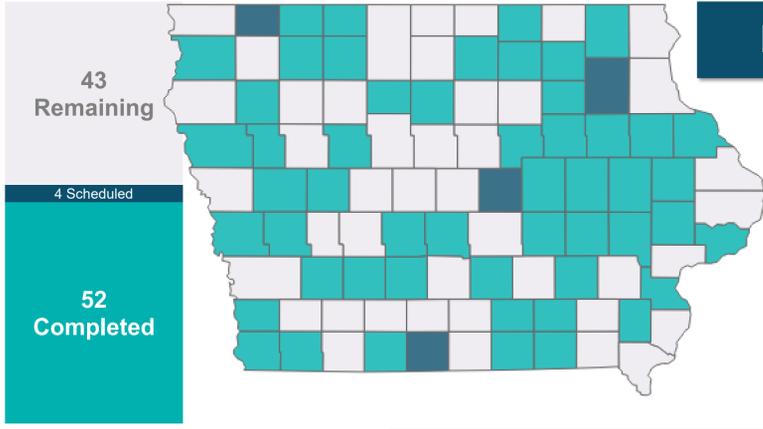


## Introduction

Iowa has the second highest cancer incidence rate in the US. Many people across the state are concerned about Iowa's high cancer incidence and want to know more.

The aim of this project is to enhance community engagement and education around cancer prevention and control across all of Iowa's 99 counties.

- Goal:**
1. Provide Iowans in all 99 counties with cancer data specific to their county
  2. Provide information about risk factors and screening guidelines, along with actions they can take to address cancer concerns and promote healthier communities
  3. Answer questions and listen to concerns of the community



## Engagement

- 2,000+ participants in 52 meetings
- 85% said they would recommend the meeting to others
- 83% said the meeting was of excellent or good quality (13% said average)
- Over 1600 media mentions, raising awareness of cancer in Iowa and the Iowa Cancer Registry
- 6 counties scheduled follow-up meetings

## Planning the meetings

- Intended Audience**
- General public, health professionals, non-profit organizations and staff, local, state, and federal officials and staff
- Set up 30-minute planning meetings with public health directors to cover:
- Meeting logistics: scheduling, presentation details, and meeting set up
  - Format (e.g., in person, hybrid, virtual format)
  - Identify local resources that can be included
  - Strategies for disseminating information about the meetings and inviting members of the community to participate
- A cross-organizational planning team develops outreach lists for each county.

- Event registration is hosted by Iowa Cancer Consortium, which facilitates longer-term engagement with cancer control.
- After each presentation, an evaluation survey is administered to the county public health planning teams and participants.
- Resources given prior to presentations**
- Registration link
  - Advertising Flyer with top statistics and meeting information
  - Media Handout to share with journalists
  - Resource Guide of state cancer-related resources



## Outcomes: Examples of Actions Following the Meetings

- 1st County Presentation: Palo Alto County (Nov. 2024)**
- Provided 800 free radon test kits
  - Received grants that helped fund the installment of radon mitigation systems in 64 homes
  - County coalition adopted a new Community Health Improvement Plan focused on cancer prevention/control
  - Enrolled as a site in a University of Iowa led grant to increase lung cancer screening in rural areas

Multiple counties have become a site in a UI CPH grant to increase lung cancer screening in rural areas with high lung cancer rates

"During our CHIP Cancer focus group, we used the 99 County Project presentation, to refresh participants on the most common cancers in Dickinson, as well as specific prevention and detection strategies. We combined this with the Iowa Cancer Plan. **These two tools helped guide our brainstorming conversations, staying on track and solution driven.**"

One hospital hosted a **prostate cancer luncheon** (physician provided education, including the importance of screening, and highlighted as one of the top 5 cancers in Iowa). Partnered with the Community Health Free Clinic **to provide prostate cancer screening** (PSA tests) to men who are uninsured, underinsured, or have no PCP. They plan to host similar educational events with breast, colon, and lung cancer.

One county health department **reached out with community concerns about high nitrate levels in their water**; they were connected with leaders of the UI Center for Health Effects of Environmental Contamination (CHEEC) who helped them create talking points.

At least **16 bills related to cancer prevention and control have been proposed in the 2026 Iowa Legislative Session**, including one from the Governor to raise the tobacco tax for the first time in 19 years. Others address radon testing and mitigation, minors' use of tanning beds, cancer research funding, minimum unit pricing for liquor, water quality, and prior authorization for screenings.

Referred county to the Iowa Cancer Plan which **"gave them an ideal framework to start thinking about such an overwhelming project."**

Connected the public health staff in counties interested in **limiting tobacco retailer density** so they could learn from each other's strategies

99 Counties Project Team was awarded the Spirit of Collaboration Award by the Iowa Cancer Consortium membership.  
 "...Their presentations were very informative but also accessible to the average person who is curious about cancer control and prevention in their community." -Johnson County Public Health Department

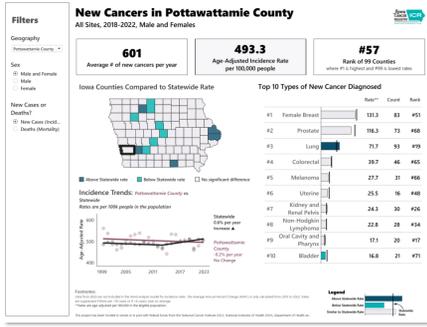
## Topics participants asked about

- The main topics participants asked for more information about were:
- The environment (water quality/pollution, radon, farming, pesticides)
  - Causes of cancer (smoking/tobacco/vaping, alcohol, genetics, diet/nutrition)
  - Next steps (action steps that can be taken, policy, advocacy)
  - Questions regarding specific cancer sites

## Next Steps

- Conduct meetings for the remaining counties.
- Create sustainable dashboards to continue sharing data each year

- **County-level dashboards:** Snapshot of County's top cancers and trends
- **Cancer specific dashboard:** State and county-level stats by sex, race, stage, & over time
- **Pediatric, Adolescent & Young Adult Dashboards**
- **Prevalence (Survivor) Dashboard**



## Acknowledgments

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## Presentations

- 1) Background**  
Cancer Registry, Project Goals, Cancer in Iowa, Explain complexity of cancer, Key Terms
- 2) County-Specific Data**  
Top 5 Cancers, Incidence & Mortality vs State & US, Stage, Screening, Risk Factors
- 3) Resources**  
Local organizations, Iowa's Cancer Plan, Policy Examples, Resources related to environmental concerns

Presentations and advertising flyers were created using the data visualization software (Tableau) to populate county-specific data and information for advertising flyers and presentations for each county