

New statewide contest invites Iowa college students to report on “business-for-good”

DES MOINES — The Iowa Newspaper Foundation (INF), in partnership with the Drake School of Journalism & Mass Communication and the Zimpleman College of Business at Drake University, has announced the launch of the inaugural Iowa Business-for-Good Journalism Contest — a new statewide opportunity for college students to explore how Iowa businesses and organizations create economic value while delivering social benefit.

The contest offers a unique platform for cross-disciplinary collaboration: each team must include one journalism (or communication/media) student and one business (or economics/accounting/analytics) student. Teams may be drawn from different accredited Iowa colleges or universities.

Eligible stories may either spotlight a specific business or examine larger systemic issues — but all entries must highlight both a real economic dimension (for example, business models, strategy or operations) *and* a meaningful social dimension (impact on workers, customers, communities or environment).

Prizes & Recognition

- **1st Place:** \$1,000 to the student team + \$1,000 to their school
- **2nd Place:** \$500 for the team + \$500 for the school
- **3rd Place:** \$250 to the team + \$250 to the school
- In addition, finalists and honorable mentions will receive certificates.

Winning submissions may be considered for publication by the Des Moines Business Record.

Important Deadlines

- Submission deadline: **May 1, 2026**
- Winners announced: **By June 1, 2026**

Submission Requirements

- Original work created between Sept. 1, 2025, and April 15, 2026 — not previously published.
- Length: 1,500–2,000 words.
- Multimedia package, including: a feature image (min. 2400 px), at least one original visualization (data + methods note), portraits of quoted sources, two additional

assets (photos, short video ≤ 60 seconds, or graphics), plus alt text, captions/transcripts, and a social-media ready post.

Teams also must submit a “dual byline contribution statement” outlining who did what — along with a methods note, fact-check memo, signed photo/video consents, and any needed location permissions.

Why It Matters

The Iowa Business-for-Good Journalism Contest was established through a generous gift in honor of Mary-Anne Vieregger. By encouraging student reporters and business-school students to collaborate, the contest seeks to stimulate thoughtful coverage of how Iowa’s businesses are shaping communities for the better — telling stories that go beyond profit and explore purpose, impact, and sustainable economic growth.

As Iowa Newspaper Foundation Director noted, this contest reflects a growing recognition of journalism’s role in documenting and amplifying businesses in local communities.

Students and higher-ed institutions across Iowa are encouraged to form teams and begin discussing project ideas now. Those seeking teammates can use the contest’s “Connect with Students” tool, available on the INA website.

For more information — including submission instructions, further guidance, and contact details — visit <https://inanews.com/learn/goodjournalismcontest/> or contact Jana Shepherd at 515-244-2145 or jshepherd@inanews.com.

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