

**ESS Coordinating Meeting
February 19, 2026**

Attendance

ESS Coordinating Committee Members

Jamie Stargell, Adams County Recorder
Kisha Martin, Ringgold County Recorder
Travis Case, Grundy County Recorder
Denise Baker, Wright County Recorder
Jolynn Goodchild, Plymouth County Recorder
Natalie Steffener, Des Moines County Recorder

Julie Haggerty, Polk County Recorder
Melissa Bahnsen, Cedar County Recorder
Dillon Malone, Iowa Title Guaranty
David Erickson, Dentons Davis Brown
Jesse Huisman, Grundy County IT/ GIS Director

Other Participants

Ann Ditsworth, Dickinson County Recorder
Sandie Smith, Black Hawk County Recorder
Erin Canfield, Boone County Recorder
Cathy Voith, Calhoun County Recorder
Ashten Wittrock, Carroll County Recorder
ReNae Arnold, Dallas County Recorder
Megan Clyman, Davis County Recorder
Amy Assink, Floyd County Recorder
Kelly Spees, Jefferson County Recorder
Nancy Booten, Lee County Recorder
Carolyn Siebrecht, Linn County Recorder
Rebecca Bittner, Lucas County Recorder

Carleen Bruning, Montgomery County Recorder
Andrew Moats, Pottawattamie County Recorder
Joe Otto, Jasper County Recorder
Stacie Herridge, Story County Recorder
Dawn Froese, Linn County Recorder Staff
Cortney Hayler, Linn County Recorder Staff
Patty Hinnners, Scott County Recorder Staff
Jolene Hickie, Worth County Recorder Staff
Nick Lanning, Rafferty Group
Jammie Hoffman
Anthony Bengston, Certified Title of Buchanan

Phil Dunshee, Iowa Land Records
Lisa Long, Iowa Land Records

Samantha McMahon, Iowa Land Records
Corrie Strasser, Iowa Land Records

Welcome

A hybrid meeting of the ESS Coordinating Committee was held via web conference and at the ESS office in Johnston. Chair Jamie Stargell called the meeting to order.

ESS Coordinating Committee Meeting Summaries

The meeting summary of the ESS Coordinating Committee meeting on January 13th was reviewed. Travis Case made a motion to approve the meeting summary. Natalie Steffener seconded and the motion was approved.

Financial Reports

2025 YTD Reports

The Profit & Loss (P&L) statement for the year showed budgeted income of \$2,010,901.06 against budgeted expenses of \$1,580,578.61, resulting in budgeted net income of \$430,322.45. The revolving income for the period was \$41,430,883.32, contributing to a gross income of \$43,441,784.38. Revolving expenses were \$41,424,010.13 with total expenditures of \$43,294,940.91. The total net income for CY 2025 was \$146,843.47.

The Balance Sheet indicated total assets and liabilities at \$2,925,833.32, with \$778,422.58 residing in the Bankers Trust settlement account and \$1,325,737.12 in the Bankers Trust money market account. It is important to note, given accrual-based accounting, the balance sheet figures for the Bankers Trust settlement account are higher than the actual bank account balance.

The committee was provided with a group of Balance Sheet reports detailing the movements of accounts in the ESS accounting software. Specifically, the reserve accounts were moved from the BT Settlement account to the BT Money Market Sweep account. The discussion provided details on how to read the

accounts, showing the BT Money Market Sweep account as “other” for available funds. It was noted that if the money in that specific account were to go into the negative then ESS would access reserve funds. Additionally, increases to two reserve funds were shown. The additional funds for these accounts were approved during the November Finance and ESS Coordinating committee meetings.

Fund 255 reimbursement income was \$530,691.85 with a net income of \$6,981.92.

A motion was made by Jolynn Goodchild to approve the 2025 YTD financial reports. Travis Case seconded, and the motion was approved.

2025 Software Asset Report

The Project Manager updated the Committee on the overall development assets completed in CY 2025, which were primarily related to the county upload API project. While the CUAPI project is ongoing, ESS is expected to increase asset development in 2026 with the creation of a property record notification system. The Committee was asked to review and approve the presented software asset report for 2025.

Jesse Huisman moved to approve the 2025 Software Asset Report, and Denise Baker seconded the motion. The motion carried.

CY 2026 Budget Amendment

The Project Manager presented the E-Submission trends in 2025, which reflected an overall positive trend late into the year and into 2026. While it is not yet known whether current trends will continue throughout 2026, January was another above-average month, and ESS is beginning the year with a positive net balance. Income and expense adjustments were made to reflect the shift from budgeted to actual reporting. One example is related to the prior expectation of a paid full-time developer for the full month of January, which did not occur until later in the month. Overall, income is expected to increase by \$4982.17, while expenses are expected to decrease by \$9,667.59 for the year. This resulted in an increase in net income of \$14,649.76 ahead of previous projections.

It was noted that government legislation with Rafferty Group came in above budget, as there were some carry-over expenses from December into the January billing cycle. ESS continues a yearly Iowa Mortgage Association (IMA) membership, which was renewed in January rather than in March as projected. There was also an increase in expenses for JetBrains, an asset used by developers, due to changes in fees and services.

A motion was made by Travis Case and seconded by Julie Haggerty to approve the budget amendment, as presented. The motion was approved.

Contracts and Agreements

Audit Engagement – Denman

A recommendation was made to the ESS Coordinating Committee to approve the engagement letter provided for Denman & Company to perform the 2025 audit. The projected cost would be \$11,000, which is included in the 2026 budget.

Julie Haggerty made a motion to approve the audit engagement with Denman & Company. Jolynn Goodchild seconded the motion, and the motion was approved.

ESS Employee Handbook Update

Proposed changes were made to the ESS Employee Handbook when the Professional Employment Organization (PEO) was changed from Paychex to Connectify. Additionally, a few more details were added to stay aligned with current laws and maintain best practices.

Melissa Bahnsen moved to approve the ESS Employee Handbook update and Kisha Martin seconded. The motion was approved.

Notification System RFQ

The Project Manager provided an update on the request for quotes (RFQ) from various development providers to assist with implementing a notification system that would serve multiple counties through a single platform. After the notification system is built, tested, and launched, users could choose to enroll in the notification system at no cost. Enrollment in the notification service would also enable users to access Search on the ILR system. Specific details about the notification system and its integration with Search can be found in section 4.3 of the RFQ in the meeting packet.

Currently, third-party estimates and accompanying project proposals are under review. All questions submitted to ESS by the prospective providers were compiled into a document with ESS responses, which was made available to all eligible development providers. With the RFQ process underway, it is possible that a decision may be made at a special ESS Committee meeting on March 11, 2026. No action was taken by the Committee.

ESS Director Search

The Committee received a status report about the search for the next ESS Executive Director. After receiving more than 150 applications and several rounds of virtual and in-person interviews, the Search Subcommittee recommended hiring Jammie Hoffman as the new ESS Executive Director. Jammie Hoffman has experience in executive leadership, software development, and project management and has served in various leadership roles.

Travis Case moved to authorize the hiring of Jammie Hoffman to fill the ESS Executive Director position. Julie Haggerty seconded, and the motion was approved.

Office Space Relocation

An update was provided to the Committee by the ESS Committee Chair, Jamie Stargell, and ESS administrative staff about the search for new office space for the ESS and Iowa Land Records team. Over forty properties were initially considered, with nine offices selected for on-site visits. After careful review, the team identified two properties for consideration and provided a detailed analysis to the Committee.

The search for new office space was primarily conducted on the west side of the metro, with an estimated size of 1,500 to 2,000 square feet, and a preference for a location that is already configured for office use.

Dillon Malone moved to authorize the negotiation of a lease for the office space located at 2910 Westtown Parkway. Travis Case seconded. The motion was approved.

Legislative Update

Note: Due to time constraints, the legislative report was moved towards the end of the meeting. The summary of this presentation is included here for continuity.

Nick Lanning of the Rafferty Group provided an update on legislative activity impacting County Recorders this session. The following topics are notable.

- Redaction and shielding remain topics of interest in this session. Ongoing discussions have focused on clarifying the distinction between the redaction and shielding initiatives while reviewing resources required for implementation. These conversations have also been used to highlight HF1031, which includes provisions related to Back the Blue shielding.
- House File 1031 has the potential for action the Senate Ways and Means Committee later in the session. Discussions with legislators indicate that the proposed fee may need to be adjusted.

Fee Policy Options

The Project Manager provided an in-depth memo with suggested amendments to scale back the recording fee to a smaller amount, while still achieving the goal of an increase and updating policy to give counties more flexibility.

Overall, the Project Manager recommended a strategic reset to improve the possibility of success in this legislative session. A common sentiment of the members of the Committee was that “something is better than nothing.”

FinCEN Residential Reporting Rule

Dillon Malone of Iowa Title Guaranty presented information about the FinCEN Residential Real Estate Reporting Rule to the Committee. Under this new rule, it was reported that, in limited circumstances, county recorders could be named the “deed or transfer filer” and be required to file a report. This rule was set to go into effect on March 1, 2026. Dillon Malone offered to be a point of contact should counties or individuals need more information.

Policies and Procedures

Financial Procedures – Chapter 1

The Committee reviewed proposed policies recommended by the ESS Finance Subcommittee. This recommendation was initiated by a working group established by the Iowa County Recorders Association to review the 28E Agreement and ESS Policy and Procedures. Discussions about these changes were conducted in 2025 by the Finance Subcommittee and the ESS Coordinating Committee. Committee members sought and gathered feedback from the recorders in their respective districts. The final recommended policy changes included refined definitions, the election of ESS officers in January of each year, designating the ESS Coordinating Committee Secretary/Treasurer and ICRA Treasurer as standing members of the Finance Subcommittee, setting term limits, and other procedural changes.

It was also noted that policies could be reviewed in the future if needed to align with any potential changes in legislation or feedback from the new Executive Director.

Julie Haggerty moved to approve the proposed financial procedure changes, and Jesse Huisman seconded. The motion was approved.

Project Updates

Software Developer Onboarding

The Project Manager updated the Committee on the onboarding of the recent Software Developer hire, Connor Linn. Initial onboarding was held at the Iowa Land Records office with all ESS team members present. Since that time, he has begun transitioning into development tasks in coordination with the team. Plans are in place to introduce Connor Linn at the next ESS Coordinating Committee meeting.

WordPress Updates

Since the approval of a working agreement with Visionary, the Iowa Land Records website refresh project has officially launched. Visionary is currently conducting an accessibility assessment and comprehensive audit of the website’s public-facing content housed in WordPress. The Committee was reminded that while the Iowa Land Records core applications: Search, E-Submission, payment processing, and administrative systems operate within a secured central authentication system, the public-facing webpages were not part of ILR services or assets until it was introduced in 2019. The vision for the first-generation website was to provide general information about ILR, enable users to apply for an account, share training resources, and provide county contact information through a County Recorder directory. The website has not undergone a detailed content review or layout update since it was first introduced over six years ago.

Currently, the project is in the audit and planning phase, with development expected to begin in early spring. A partial payment was issued to Visionary to initiate the project. Reserve funds have been allocated for the update. Additional information will be provided to the Committee as work continues, including an opportunity for recorder feedback on the future design of the ICRA Hub, resources and other layout considerations.

Cost Sharing Credits and Maintenance Invoices

The Accounting Coordinator provided an update on cost-sharing credits and maintenance invoices. County E-Submission ratios were calculated for the year in January with invoices sent to participating counties on January 20, 2026. The due date is July 31, 2026. Currently, only 20 counties have outstanding balances. The invoice date and due date are set in consideration of varying county budget schedules.

CESAPI and CUAPI Update

The Committee was informed that most local service providers have completed updates to the E-Submission API, however, there is one provider who has not yet completed the task. ESS has maintained contact with the provider and is offering support as needed. The County Upload API is currently in progress and will likely need to be re-evaluated later.

POS Update

The Accounting Coordinator provided two updates regarding payment troubleshooting on the POS system and USAePay payment processing. At the start of the year, several county POS machines began reporting transactions one day later than expected. Transactions are typically received the following day for processing, but these machines were delayed by an additional day. After investigating, the issue was caused by those machines' dates changing to be an hour behind. The machines affected have since been updated. ESS will continue to monitor reporting activity and provide updates as needed.

The Committee was also informed of a payment processing issue that occurred in the last few months of 2025 involving USAePay, the primary E-Submission payment system gateway. Users intermittently received an error message affecting both ACH and credit card transactions. When the error occurred, payments didn't settle, and in turn, our system would attempt to charge the following day. In some cases, the original transaction would settle a few days later, resulting in duplicate charges to the customer and double payments to counties. ESS and Professional Solutions worked with USAePay to resolve the issue, which has since been corrected. It was noted that communications and troubleshooting with USAePay were challenging, prompting a representative from Professional Solutions to suggest the exploration of alternatives to the USAePay system. Updates on the matter will be provided to the committees as options are explored.

Linux OS Migration

An update was provided by the Project Manager on the development and technical support services related to the ongoing Linux migration project. As previously authorized, collaboration with former technical lead Kelly Wallace continues. The development team is currently reassessing its project plan and timeline to ensure continuity and stability as responsibilities transition with the new development team hire. While the project timeline has extended beyond initial expectations, contract hours utilized remain below projections and within the approved budget. Additional updates will be provided as the migration progresses.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned. The next meeting of the ESS Coordinating Committee is scheduled for a special meeting on March 11, 2026, with the next regular meeting set for May 14, 2026.