

**Senator Ernst's**



**ENTREPRENEUR**  
**EXPO**



**Made in Iowa: Ready for the Mission**

**Tuesday, June 30, 2026**  
**8:00 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.**

Iowa State University  
Scheman Building  
1805 Center Drive, Ames, IA 50011

JONI ERNST, IOWA, CHAIR  
EDWARD J. MARKEY, MASSACHUSETTS, RANKING MEMBER

JAMES E. RISCH, IDAHO  
RAND PAUL, KENTUCKY  
TIM SCOTT, SOUTH CAROLINA  
TODD YOUNG, INDIANA  
JOSH HAWLEY, MISSOURI  
TED BUDD, NORTH CAROLINA  
JOHN R. CURTIS, UTAH  
JAMES C. JUSTICE, WEST VIRGINIA  
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MARIA CANTWELL, WASHINGTON  
JEANNE SHAHEEN, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
CORY A. BOOKER, NEW JERSEY  
CHRISTOPHER A. COONS, DELAWARE  
MAZIE HIRONO, HAWAII  
TAMMY DUCKWORTH, ILLINOIS  
JACKY ROSEN, NEVADA  
JOHN W. HICKENLOOPER, COLORADO  
ADAM B. SCHIFF, CALIFORNIA

MEREDITH WEST, REPUBLICAN STAFF DIRECTOR  
SEAN MOORE, DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

**United States Senate**

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6350

TELEPHONE: (202) 224-5175



**Joni K. Ernst**

U.S. SENATOR

CHAIR, U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON SMALL  
BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Dear Friends,

Welcome to my fourth annual Entrepreneur Expo! Whether you represent a startup venture or are a seasoned entrepreneur, my goal is to connect you to the wide range of opportunities available in the government contracting landscape. Today's program is designed to link you with the tools, resources, and strategic partners to support your endeavors in the federal and state marketplaces, while highlighting pathways for engagement in research and development initiatives. I hope you take full advantage of the conversations and sessions to explore new avenues for your business' growth.

Iowa's entrepreneurs and small business owners produce some of the greatest technological advancements in the world – and government agencies, prime contractors, and private investors have so much to gain by tapping into the innovations from our state. The critical conversations we'll have today about your products, services, and ideas can help address our defense industry's most pressing challenges. America's national security and defense preparedness rely on the advancements from Iowa's small business community.

Please join me in thanking our gracious host and my alma mater, Iowa State University, and our terrific state partners for the opportunity to gather, spark innovation, and show what's possible here in the heartland. Today and every day, I am so proud to represent our great state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joni Ernst".

Joni K. Ernst  
Chair

# EXPO Schedule

**8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.**

**Attendee and Exhibitor Registration**  
Ground Floor Lobby

**9:00 a.m. – 9:20 a.m.**

**Welcome and Opening Addresses**  
First Floor, Summit Ag Hall

**David Cook**  
President  
Iowa State University

**Senator Joni Ernst**  
Chair  
U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business & Entrepreneurship

**Jeremy Hayes**  
Chief Policy Officer  
Defense Innovation Unit

**Master of Ceremonies: Carrie Koelker**  
Iowa State Senator  
District 33

**9:20 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.**

**Competing to Win: Entrepreneurship and America's Security Future**  
First Floor, Summit Ag Hall

**Senator Joni Ernst**  
Chair  
U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business & Entrepreneurship

**Josh Carter**  
Associate Administrator  
Office of Investment and Innovation, U.S. Small Business Administration

**Drew Oetting**  
Co-Founder and President  
BVC

**10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.**

**Networking Opportunity with Exhibitors**  
Second Floor Lobby

Meet and mingle with federal and state agencies, local resource partners, lenders and investors, and prime contractors. Please refer to page 8 for the full list of participating exhibitors.

# EXPO Schedule

**11:00 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.**

**Breakout Sessions #1**

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**Navigating Capital Access: Tools for Small Business Growth**  
Second Floor, Room 250

**Lisa Maas**  
Director of Government Guaranty Lending  
Northwest Bank

**Austin Strawhacker**  
State Director  
America's Small Business Development Center - Iowa

**Understanding CMMC: Cybersecurity Requirements for Federal Contractors**  
Second Floor, Room 262

**Melissa Burant**  
Supply Chain Project Manager, Cybersecurity Lead  
Center for Industrial Research and Service (CIRAS), Iowa State University

**11:50 a.m. – 12:35 p.m.**

**Breakout Sessions #2**

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**Small Business Pathways in the Defense Innovation Ecosystem**  
Second Floor, Room 250

**CDR Chip Laingen (Ret.)**  
Executive Director  
Defense Alliance

**COL Yvonne Miller (Ret.)**  
Minnesota National Security Ecosystem

**Subcontracting Success: Building Partnerships in the Federal Market**  
Second Floor, Room 262

**Melissa Burant**  
Supply Chain Project Manager, Cybersecurity Lead  
CIRAS, Iowa State University

**Julie Fagle**  
Government Contracting Specialist  
APEX Accelerator, CIRAS, Iowa State University

**Amber Hanlon**  
Programs Director  
Small Business, Collins Aerospace

**Beth White**  
Acting Director  
Office of Small Business Programs, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

## Speaker Bios



### HOST

**Senator Joni Ernst**, a native of Red Oak, Iowa, has dedicated her life to her state and country, having served in the military for over 23 years and now representing Iowans in the United States Senate. Her priorities include working to grow a strong economy; standing up for Iowa farmers, families, and small businesses; holding Washington accountable; ensuring a strong national defense; and supporting America's veterans.



**Jeremy Hayes** is a senior national security advisor with 25 years of experience in defense policy, government relations, and legislative affairs. Proven track record of authoring and enacting impactful legislation, leading congressional outreach, and driving defense acquisition modernization and reforms. Expertise in military appropriations and government contracting policy while serving in both the legislative and executive branches. Worked for numerous Senators and served on the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) as a professional staff member with oversight of defense IT modernization, business systems, and financial management. U.S. Army combat veteran with service in Afghanistan. Current TS/SCI Clearance.



**Josh R. Carter** serves as the Associate Administrator in the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) Office of Investment and Innovation, where he oversees the administration of the Small Business Investment Company (SBIC)—which has \$54 billion in combined public and private capital—and, the Small Business Investment Research/Small Business Technology Transfer (SBIR/STTR) programs—America's non-dilutive seed fund ("America's Seed Fund")—that invests ~\$5 billion a year to early-stage, high-growth, technology and science. Prior to SBA, Josh co-founded and served as Co-Chief Investment Officer at Sepio Capital, a multi-family office and institutional investment firm based in Salt Lake City, Utah. Before that, Carter was a senior portfolio manager and institutional consultant at Bank

of America Merrill Lynch. Carter also held several roles at Goldman Sachs, including proprietary trader, senior equity research analyst, and financial analyst. Carter holds a degree in Social Studies cum laude from Harvard University and an MBA from The Wharton School. He is also a CFA and CAIA Charterholder.

## Speaker Bios



**Drew Oetting** is co-founder & President of 8VC, which incubates and makes early-stage investments into the top entrepreneurs building technology to solve problems in our economy's most important industries. Drew began his career as chief of staff to Joe Lonsdale. Together they have co-founded and invested in hundreds of companies including Palantir, Anduril, Guardant Health, Ramp, X.ai, Cognition, Saronic, Quince, Epirus, Addepar, Resilience Bio, Deliverr, and Chaos Industries. Outside of work, Drew serves as a Trustee for The Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship and The Optimist Fellowship at his alma mater, Claremont McKenna College. He also serves as a principal sponsor of The Andy Roddick Foundation, Iowa Healthy Kids, The Cicero Institute, and The University of Austin (UATX).

Drew studied math and economics at Claremont McKenna College. He lives in Austin, Texas, with his wife, Sarah, and is originally from Iowa City, Iowa.



**Dr. David Cook** is the 17th president of Iowa State University and has more than 25 years of leadership experience at research-intensive universities around the Midwest. An Ames native and Iowa State alumnus, Dr. Cook has a long track record in strategic planning, government relations, and financial stewardship. He is passionate about student success and workforce development, research and innovation, fostering industry partnerships, and advancing Iowa State's land-grant mission to serve the state of Iowa and beyond. Prior to his role at Iowa State University, Dr. Cook served as president of North Dakota State University, held executive roles at the University of Kansas School of Medicine. He currently serves on several

boards, including the Big 12 Conference, America's Cultivation Corridor, Bankers Trust, and the World Food Prize Foundation. Dr. Cook graduated from Iowa State University with a bachelor's degree in political science and speech communication, and obtained his master's and Ph.D. in organizational communication from the University of Kansas.

### MASTER OF CEREMONIES



**Carrie Koelker** is serving her second term representing Iowa's 33rd District in the State Senate. She serves as Vice Chair of the Commerce Committee and sits on the Appropriations, Rules and Administration, State Government, Ways and Means, and Workforce Committees. When the Senate is out of session, Senator Koelker works as the Vice President of Community Engagement for Travel Dubuque, helping promote the people and places of Iowa while supporting economic development. She is a board member of the Iowa Economic Development Authority, and Iowa Tourism Industry Partners. A lifelong Iowan, originally from Stanton, Senator Koelker is the mother

of four children and resides in Dyersville with her husband Jeff. She is a graduate of Iowa Lakes Community College.

## Breakout Sessions #1

11:00 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

### **Navigating Capital Access: Tools for Small Business Growth**

Second Floor, Room 250

Access to capital remains one of the most common challenges facing entrepreneurs and growing small businesses. This breakout session will help attendees identify funding needs, evaluate financing options, and pursue capital opportunities to support business growth. Representatives from the Iowa Bankers Association and Iowa's Small Business Development Center will discuss available loan programs, financial planning considerations, and strategies small businesses can use to strengthen funding applications and position themselves for long-term success.

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### **Understanding CMMC: Cybersecurity Requirements for Federal Contractors**

Second Floor, Room 262

This breakout session will provide small businesses with an overview of cybersecurity requirements needed to contract with the Federal government, with a particular focus on the Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC) program. Attendees will learn which businesses need certification, the different levels of compliance, and the steps required to begin the certification process. The session will also explore the practical costs, timelines, and resources available to help small businesses strengthen their cybersecurity protections and position themselves for government contracting opportunities.

## Breakout Sessions #2

11:50 a.m. – 12:35 p.m.

### **Small Business Pathways in the Defense Innovation Ecosystem**

Second Floor, Room 250

The Pentagon is transforming the defense innovation ecosystem to harness American innovation in the private sector. The Department's Chief Technology Action Group offers several pathways for small businesses to engage in providing solutions for national security priorities. In conjunction with Defense Alliance, this breakout session will introduce attendees to these programs, explain how businesses can identify opportunities aligned with their products or services, and offer practical guidance for navigating entry points into the federal defense ecosystem.

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### **Subcontracting Success: Building Partnerships in the Federal Market**

Second Floor, Room 262

Subcontracting offers small businesses a practical pathway to work with the federal government, while building valuable past performance and industry relationships. This interactive discussion will explain how subcontracting works, why relationship-building is critical to success, and where businesses can connect with prime contractors. Attendees will also gain actionable strategies and real-world perspectives to help businesses of all levels build meaningful connections and learn how working with larger companies can help businesses expand capabilities.

# Participating Exhibitors

Thank you to all of our partners for your commitment and support of Iowa's small businesses!

## Federal Agencies:

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### Ames National Laboratory

<https://www.ameslab.gov>

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### National Aeronautics and Space Administration

- Office of Small Business Programs  
<https://www.nasa.gov/osbp>
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### Nuclear Regulatory Commission

- Small Business Program  
<https://www.nrc.gov>
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### U.S. Air Force

- AFWERX  
<https://afwerx.com/about-us>
  - Office of Small Business Programs  
<https://www.airforcesmallbiz.af.mil>
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### U.S. Army

- Office of Army Prize Competitions and Army SBIR  
<https://armysbir.army.mil/topics/the-xtechphantum-competition>
  - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Office of Small Business Programs  
<https://www.usace.army.mil/Strategic-Partnerships/Small-Business>
  - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District  
<https://www.nwo.usace.army.mil>
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### U.S. Department of Agriculture

- National Institute of Food and Agriculture  
<https://www.nifa.usda.gov>
  - Iowa Rural Development State Office  
<https://www.rd.usda.gov/ia>
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### U.S. Department of Energy

- SBIR/STTR Programs Office  
<https://science.osti.gov/sbir>

# Participating Exhibitors

Thank you to all of our partners for your commitment and support of Iowa's small businesses!

### U.S. Department of War

- Accelerate the Procurement and Fielding of Innovative Technologies (APFIT)  
<https://ac.cto.mil/apfit>
  - Office for Small Business Innovation  
<https://www.defensesbirsttr.mil>
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### U.S. General Services Administration

- Region 6 - Heartland  
<https://www.gsa.gov/about-us/organization/office-of-small-and-disadvantaged-business-utilization>
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### U.S. Navy

- Office of Small Business Programs  
<https://www.secnav.navy.mil/smallbusiness/Pages/About.aspx>
  - SBIR/STTR Program  
<https://www.navy.sbir.com>
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### U.S. Small Business Administration

- Iowa District Office  
<https://www.sba.gov/district/iowa>
  - Office of Advocacy  
<https://advocacy.sba.gov>
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### U.S. Space Force

- SpaceWERX  
<https://spacewerx.us>
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### U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM)

- SBIR/STTR Program  
<https://www.socom.mil/sof-atl/pages/sbir.aspx>

# Participating Exhibitors

Thank you to all of our partners for your commitment and support of Iowa's small businesses!

## State Resources:

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### America's Small Business Development Center - Iowa

<https://www.iowasbdc.org>

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### Ames Regional Economic Alliance

<https://amesalliance.com>

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### Iowa Department of Administrative Services

Central Services

<https://das.iowa.gov/vendors>

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### Iowa Department of Transportation

<https://iowadot.gov>

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### Iowa Economic Development Authority

<https://www.iowaeda.com>

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### Iowa National Guard

<https://www.iowanationalguard.com>

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### Iowa State University

Center for Industrial Research and Service (CIRAS) APEX Accelerator

<https://www.apexaccelerators.us>

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### Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE)

Iowa District

<https://www.score.org/ia>

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### Veterans Business Outreach Center

<https://nebbiz.org/vboc>

# Participating Exhibitors

Thank you to all of our partners for your commitment and support of Iowa's small businesses!

## Private Industry:

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### Black Hawk Economic Development, Inc.

<https://www.bhed.org>

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### Collins Aerospace

<https://www.collinsaerospace.com>

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### Iowa Business Growth

<https://www.iowabusinessgrowth.com>

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### InnoVenture Iowa

<https://innoventureiowa.com>

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### National Defense Industrial Association

Iowa-Illinois Chapter

<https://ndia-ia-il.org>

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### OneBrief

<https://www.onebrief.com>

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### Pivotal Business Partners

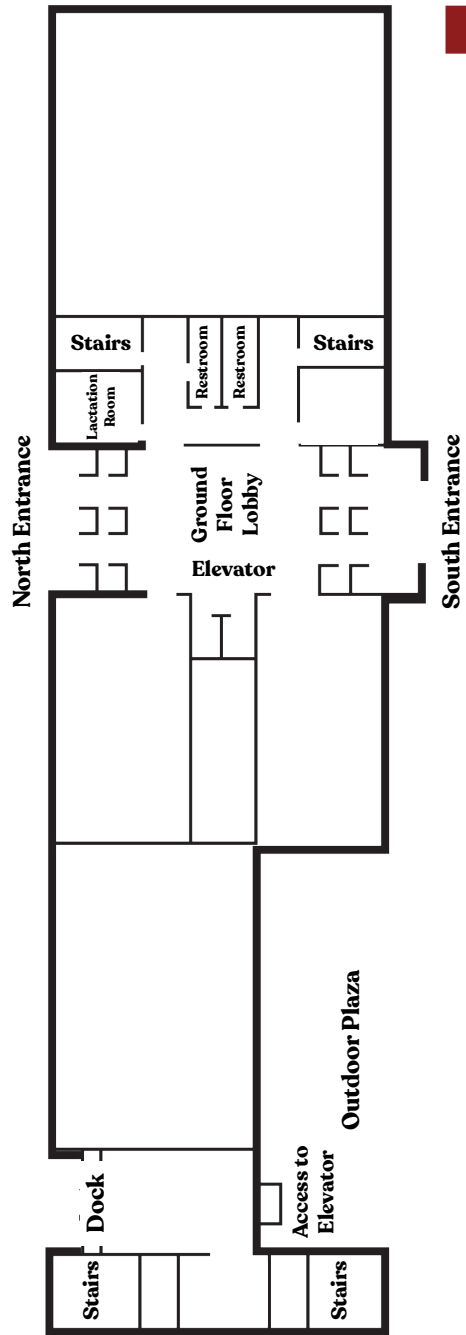
<https://pivotaliowa.com>

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### Technology Association of Iowa

<https://www.technologyiowa.org>

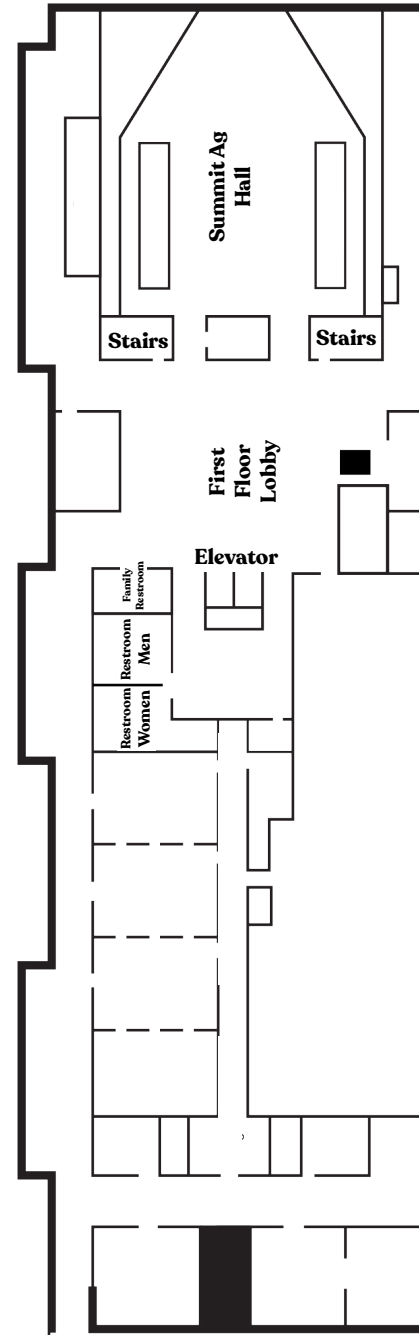
# EXPO Map Ground Floor



## Ground Floor

**Ground Floor Lobby:**  
Expo Registration and Check-In

# EXPO Map 1st Floor

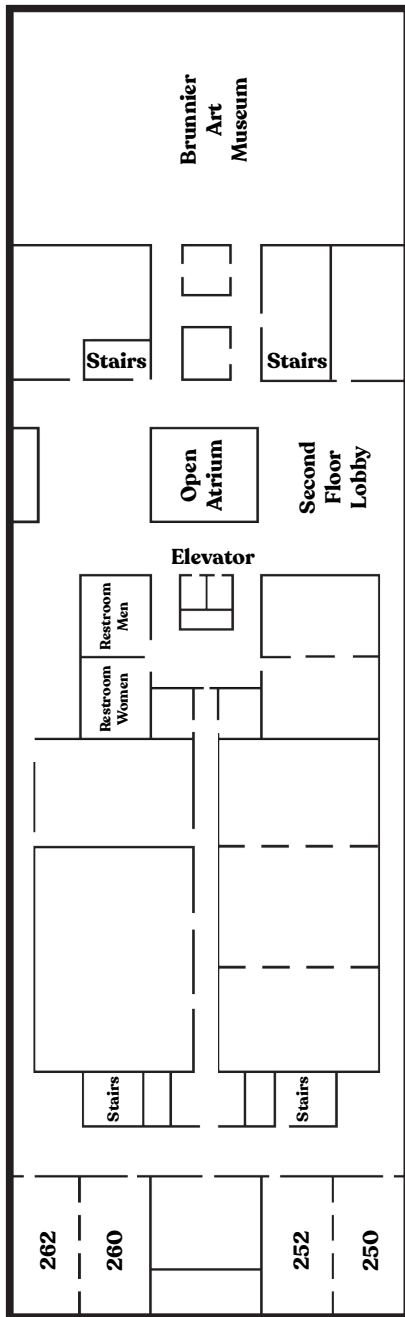


## First Floor

**Summit Ag Hall:**  
Opening Addresses  
Fireside Chat

**First Floor Lobby:**  
Exhibit Tables

# EXPO Map 2nd Floor



## Second Floor

**Room 250:**  
**Breakout Session #1**  
 Navigating Capital Access:  
 Tools for Small Business Growth

**Breakout Session #2**  
 Small Business Pathways in the  
 Defense Innovation Ecosystem

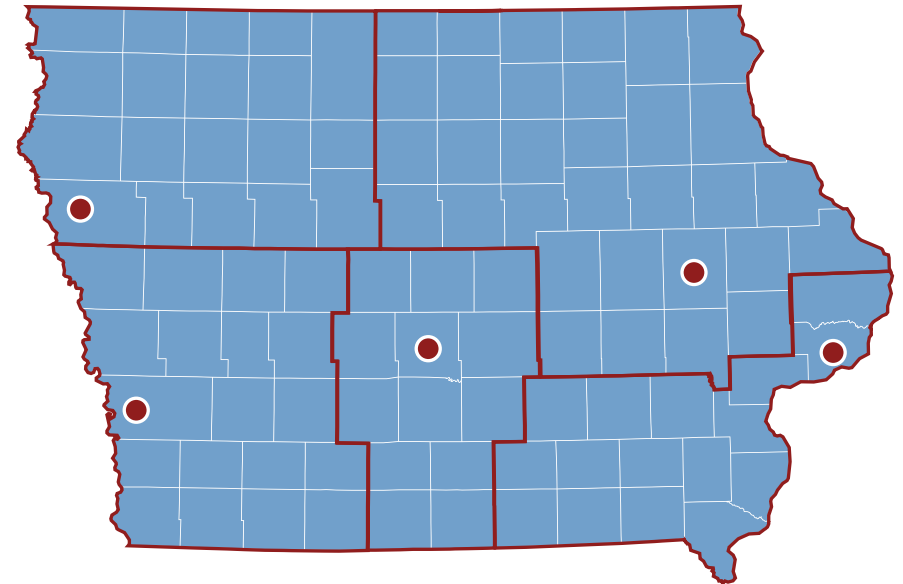
**Room 262:**  
**Breakout Session #1**  
 Understanding CMMC:  
 Cybersecurity Requirements for  
 Federal Contractors

**Breakout Session #2**  
 Subcontracting Success:  
 Building Partnerships in the Federal  
 Market

**Second Floor Lobby:**  
 Exhibit Tables



## Senator Joni Ernst's Office Locations



**SIoux CITY**  
 194 Federal Building  
 320 Sixth Street  
 Sioux City, IA 51101  
 (712) 252-1550

**COUNCIL BLUFFS**  
 2146 27th Avenue  
 Suite 500  
 Council Bluffs, IA 51501  
 (712) 352-1167

**DES MOINES**  
 733 Federal Building  
 210 Walnut Street  
 Des Moines, IA 50309  
 (515) 284-4574

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**  
 260 Russell Senate Office Building  
 Washington, D.C. 20510  
 (202) 224-3254

**CEDAR RAPIDS**  
 111 Seventh Avenue SE  
 Suite 480  
 Cedar Rapids, IA 52401  
 (319) 365-4504

**DAVENPORT**  
 201 West Second Street  
 Suite 806  
 Davenport, IA 52801  
 (563) 322-0677



## NOTES:

### Stay Connected with Senator Joni Ernst

I am working hard every day to ensure your voice is heard in the Senate, and my staff and I are here to help however we can. Please do not hesitate to contact one of my offices throughout Iowa or in Washington, D.C. if we can be of assistance. You can also visit us on the web at [www.Ernst.Senate.gov](http://www.Ernst.Senate.gov) to get help with an issue, schedule a tour in D.C., or sign-up for my newsletter.

### HELPING YOU

Here are a few of the many ways I am able to assist you:

- Assistance with federal agencies
- U.S. Service Academy nominations
- Tour requests of the U.S. Capitol and other D.C. attractions
- Internships in my Iowa and D.C. offices
- Purchase a flag flown over the U.S. Capitol

[www.Ernst.Senate.gov](http://www.Ernst.Senate.gov)

