

A podcast from the Ames Regional Economic Alliance

# AREA POD



PERSONAL STORIES, PROFESSIONAL JOURNEYS.

*Presented by*



**FLYNN  
WRIGHT**

## **The 32nd Annual Communicator Awards**

**Category:** Podcast Series - Business



PERSONAL STORIES, PROFESSIONAL JOURNEYS.

## ABOUT:

The Ames Regional Economic Alliance, located in Ames, Iowa, launched the AREA Podcast, a new communications platform for the organization dedicated to sharing the personal stories and professional journeys of leaders across our region. Season 1 of the AREA Podcast took place in 2025 with 16 total episodes.

The AREA Podcast features in-depth conversations with business leaders, entrepreneurs, and community stakeholders, covering topics such as leadership, innovation, and economic development initiatives shaping the future of Ames and the surrounding region.



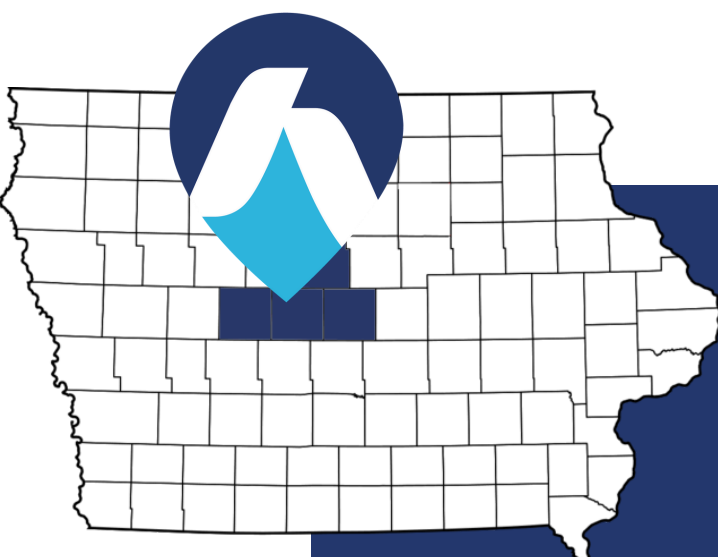
## DISTRIBUTION:

The AREA Podcast is available on major streaming platforms, including [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), [Amazon](#), [iHeartRadio](#), and [Podbean](#). Listeners can also watch video versions of each episode on the [Alliance YouTube channel](#).



## ABOUT THE AMES REGIONAL ECONOMIC ALLIANCE:

The Ames Regional Economic Alliance, known as the Alliance, works to promote economic growth and community development across Boone, Greene, Hamilton, and Story counties in Central Iowa. As the premiere economic development organization in the region, they support area businesses through Chamber programming, developing young professionals, and operate a range of additional community affiliate organizations.





## DEVELOPMENT

Development of the AREA Podcast started in early 2025 by outfitting the designated studio space with equipment, lights, and test-running the format of the show in both audio and video formats. All of the episodic graphics and introduction to the show were created during this time.

For years prior, the Alliance has expanded its storytelling across the region to include several social media accounts and websites, an email list serve, and their flagship quarterly publication, Traction magazine, that is produced in-house and has a distribution of 21,000. The AREA Podcast is a compliment to those efforts.



### What's in the name?

Each word in the organizational name has a purpose in explaining the organization.

- Ames - geographic marker
- Regional - scope of work
- Economic - type of work
- Alliance - call to action to come together

Together, the acronym forms **AREA**, a word that is used in our storytelling and was perfect to integrate into the podcast.

## ABOUT THE HOST:

As a communications professional for over 21 years, Eric has been able to take a creative approach to tell engaging stories through a variety of mediums. He has extensive experience managing several social media accounts and website maintenance. He has launched, written, and designed three separate award-winning, quarterly publications, as well as two video podcasts. He leans heavily on his skills in video, photography, design, and writing in order to enhance the brand he is representing. Eric has five documentary film credits to date and earned his Masters of Education degree from Iowa State University.

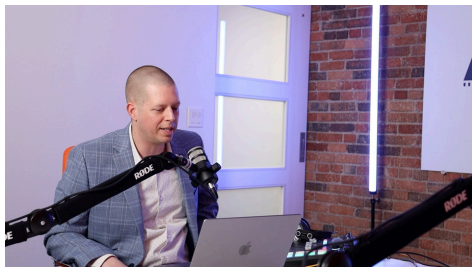


**ERIC SMIDT**

Vice President, Marketing & Communications

## THREE CAMERA SET UP:

The podcast was always going to be available through video, increasing the production value of the product. A three-camera video set up is available for each episode.



## EPISODE GRAPHIC:



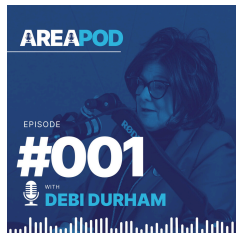
A vibrant, cohesive set of graphics for the AREA Podcast was created to support episodic promotion across digital platforms. Each episode features custom visuals that highlight the guest and topic while maintaining a consistent, recognizable brand. Bold colors, clean typography, and strong imagery help episodes stand out in social feeds, build audience recognition, and extend the reach and impact of each release.

## SEASON 1 GUESTS:

A key differentiator of the AREA Podcast is the intentional curation of guests who represent exceptional leadership, innovation, and influence across the Ames region and beyond. Season 1 featured an impressive lineup, including Reynolds Cramer, CEO of Fareway Stores; President Wendy Wintersteen, Iowa State University; Amber Deardorff, president of Mary Greeley Medical Center, among other respected leaders.

By thoughtfully selecting guests with unique perspectives and real-world impact, the podcast delivers meaningful conversations that elevate regional stories, provide valuable insights, and position the AREA Podcast as a trusted platform for leadership-driven dialogue.

- **#001 - Debi Durham**, Director, Iowa Economic Development Authority
- **#002 - Rick Sanders**, President, Iowa State University Research Park
- **#003 - John Wyffels**, President, Wyffels Hybrids
- **#004 - Jill Klindt**, Chief Financial Officer, Workiva
- **#005 - Rob Denson**, President, Des Moines Area Community College
- **#006 - Ryan Newstrom**, Owner, Cornbred Barbecue
- **#007 - Elli Jennings**, Re/Max Real Estate
- **#008 - Reynolds Cramer**, CEO, Fareway Stores
- **#009 - CJ Warner**, Energy Executive, Chevron
- **#010 - David Spalding**, Vice President of Economic Development, Iowa State University
- **#011 - Amber Deardorff**, President & CEO, Mary Greeley Medical Center
- **#012 - Paul Schlueter**, President, Flynn Wright
- **#013 - Kevin Dresser**, Head Coach, Iowa State University Cyclones Wrestling Program
- **#014 - Emily Schmitt**, Chief Administrative Officer, Sukup Manufacturing
- **#015 - Dr. Wendy Wintersteen**, President, Iowa State University
- **#016 - Valerie Grubb**, Keynote speaker and author



# PODCAST LAUNCH

The launch of the AREA Podcast was the result of intentional planning and preparation to ensure a polished debut. Prior to release, a dedicated studio space was fully equipped and tested, establishing a professional environment for recording high-quality conversations. Vibrant, on-brand graphics were designed in advance to support episodic promotion, and a strong lineup of initial guests was secured to set the tone for thoughtful, engaging dialogue. This groundwork allowed the podcast to launch with clarity of vision, consistent branding, and compelling content from the very first episode.

[Link to the Press Release on the Alliance Website.](#)

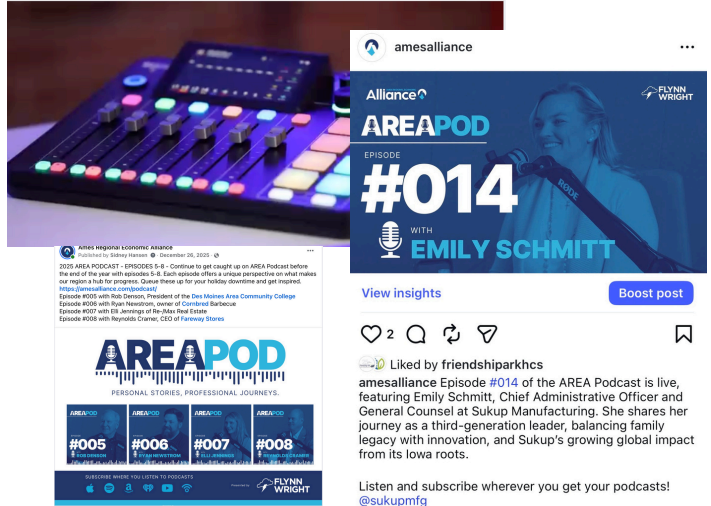
Ames Regional Economic Alliance  
March 3, 2025 · 0

The Ames Regional Economic Alliance is thrilled to introduce the AREA Podcast—a new platform showcasing the personal stories and professional journeys of leaders across our region.

Listen on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and other streaming platforms, with video episodes available on YouTube. Check out the trailer and subscribe—first episodes are coming soon!

The AREA Podcast is presented by Flynn Wright.  
<https://amesalliance.com/> / [ames-regional-economic-...](https://ames-regional-economic-.../)

Social media is a primary channel for episode promotion



## Post-Launch

Following the launch, promotion focused on building awareness and momentum across multiple platforms. Episodes were actively marketed through social media using custom graphics and video clips to capture attention and drive listenership. The podcast was also integrated into Traction magazine, extending its reach to established audiences and reinforcing the connection between the publication and the podcast. Together, these efforts created a coordinated promotional strategy that elevated the podcast's visibility and positioned it as a key storytelling platform for the Ames Regional Economic Alliance.



A podcast from the Ames Regional Economic Alliance

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PERSONAL STORIES. PROFESSIONAL JOURNEYS.

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The Ames Regional Economic Alliance launched the AREA Podcast in the first quarter of 2025, providing a new platform dedicated to sharing the personal stories and professional journeys of leaders across our region.

The AREA Podcast features in-depth conversations with business leaders, entrepreneurs, and community stakeholders, covering topics such as leadership, innovation, and economic development initiatives shaping the future of Ames and the surrounding region. From groundbreaking startups to legacy businesses, community builders to visionary thinkers—if it's making an impact, you'll hear about it here.

"Beyond the projects and policies, one of the most powerful tools we have is storytelling," said Dan Culhane, President & CEO of the Ames Regional Economic Alliance. "Sharing the successes of our businesses, the innovations happening across industries, and the personal stories of those who call this region home strengthens our community in ways data alone never could."

**The AREA Podcast is available on major streaming platforms, including Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Amazon. Viewers can watch a video version of each episode on the Alliance YouTube channel.**

**Debi Durham,**  
Director, Iowa Economic Development Authority

From attracting national brands to the region to supporting expansion projects, we talked to Iowa's biggest advocate about the importance of economic development across the state.

**Rick Sanders,**  
President, Iowa State University Research Park

Home to over 130 companies across 550 acres, the Research Park serves as a regional hub for innovation and plays a key role in developing CyTown at the Iowa State Center.

**John Wyffels,**  
President, Wyffels Hybrids

Now in its 3rd generation of leadership, being "fiercely independent" is at the core of Wyffels Hybrids, a family-owned business that is expanding west with a new facility in Ames.

**Jill Klindt**  
Chief Financial Officer, Workiva

Jill was a Week 1 employee at Workiva that now serves over 6,000 companies with their financial reporting and data compliance needs, including 80% of the Fortune 500.

**Rob Denson,**  
President, Des Moines Area Community College

From expanding academic programs to establishing new business partnerships, we talk with DMACC's longest-serving president about the ever-increasing role of community colleges.

**Ryan Newstrom,**  
Owner, Cornbred Barbecue

With over 250 national awards, including National District Champion, Cornbred is looking to "make Ames weird" with their incredible menu offerings and service.

**#001**  
DEBI DURHAM

**#002**  
RICK SANDERS

**#003**  
JOHN WYFFELS

**#004**  
JILL KLINDT

**#005**  
ROB DENSON

**#006**  
RYAN NEWSTROM

Apple, Spotify, Amazon, YouTube, and other streaming platforms logos.

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**#007**  
ELLI JENNINGS, Re/Max Real Estate

With a social media following in the tens of thousands, she has built a trusted brand by celebrating community, sharing authentically, and using digital platforms to connect with people in meaningful ways.

**#008**  
REYNOLDS CRAMER, CEO, Fareway Stores

With nearly 140 locations across the Midwest, Fareway continues to grow while staying true to its core values. We talk about leading through change, decision-making, and what it means to serve communities.

**#009**  
CJ WARNER, Energy Executive, Chevron Board of Directors

As a trailblazing energy executive with more than 40 years of experience and a current member of Chevron's board of directors, we dive into how the energy industry has changed, leadership lessons from the C-suite, and the evolving role of innovation in global sustainability.

**#010**  
DAVID SPAIDING, Vice President, Economic Development & Industry Relations, Iowa State University

We talk about how the university drives innovation through research and partnerships, connects with industry leaders to solve real-world challenges, supports entrepreneurs through programs like Cystartups and the ISU Pappagott Center for Entrepreneurship, and fosters economic growth across Iowa by preparing the next generation of business and community leaders. David also shares insights from his time on Wall Street and how that experience continues to shape his leadership at Iowa State.

**#011**  
AMBER DEARDORFF, President & CEO, Mary Greeley Medical Center

From intern to executive, she shares her 20-year journey through nursing and leadership at Mary Greeley. We talk about workforce culture, the future of healthcare, and staying grounded in a people-first mission shaped by local roots.

Apple, Spotify, Amazon, YouTube, and other streaming platforms logos.

# PODCAST EVALUATION



## Strategy Summary:

When launching the AREA Podcast, it was critical to approach the effort as a fully integrated initiative, ensuring all elements were aligned and ready before the first episode was released. Below is a summary of key strategies that guided the podcast's rollout and ongoing growth:

- Studio setup and technical readiness
- Guest curation and scheduling for initial episodes
- Podcast branding and graphic development
- Pre-launch social media promotion
- Website integration and hosting setup
- Episode announcements via email and social media
- Cross-promotion through Traction magazine
- Ongoing episodic marketing and content repurposing

Both quantitative and qualitative feedback indicate a strong and successful launch. Early listenership, engagement across social platforms, and positive response from guests and community leaders demonstrate the podcast's effectiveness as a storytelling and engagement tool. The AREA Podcast has quickly become a trusted platform for sharing regional perspectives, elevating leadership voices, and reinforcing the Alliance's role as a connector and convener across the region.

## Qualitative Responses:

I make a point to listen to every episode of the AREA Podcast. It gives me a deeper understanding of the people and ideas shaping our region, and I consistently walk away feeling more connected to the work happening across the Ames area.

- Luke - Community Member

The podcast has been a powerful way to hear personal stories behind leadership roles. The conversations go beyond titles and organizations, offering real lessons in leadership, decision-making, and community impact that resonate both personally and professionally.

- Sam - Member Business

## SEASON 1

Streams and downloads

# 4,101



## Social media snapshot (Meta):

### Episode #001

- **March 9, 2025 Launch:** 7.1k views, 4.0k reach
- **March 12 & 17, 2025 clips:** 2.2k views

### Episode #008

- **July 1, 2025 Launch:** 2.0k views, 1.2k reach
- **July 7 & 15, 2025 clips:** 4hrs 41 min watch time

### Episode #015

- **November 13, 2025 Launch:** 1.1k views
- **Nov. 24 & Dec. 2, 2025 clips:** 2hrs 25 min watch time

## Links:

[AREA Podcast Website](#)

[AREA Podcast on YouTube](#)

## Contact:

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