INDEPENDENT RESEARCH / BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE

Justin T. Thiltgen

Public-Sector Strategist | Independent Researcher | Organizational Leader

Justin T. Thiltgen is an Iowa-based public-sector strategist, independent researcher, and organizational leader whose career spans more than 25 years across government, political operations, nonprofit institutions, civic initiatives, and private-sector consulting. Throughout that work, a consistent focus has been understanding complex systems, connecting people and information, and helping institutions translate ideas and priorities into practical, informed action.

BACKGROUND & PERSPECTIVE

Born and raised in Iowa, Justin developed an early interest in government, politics, and grassroots organizing. He served as a page in the Iowa Senate in 1996 and, while studying geography at the University of Iowa, stepped away from his education in 1998 to join the Iowa Democratic Party's coordinated campaign during Tom Vilsack's successful gubernatorial election. That experience launched a decade of political and organizational leadership across Iowa, Oregon, Washington, Illinois, and Ohio, including presidential, congressional, and statewide campaigns. His responsibilities ranged from political research and electoral analysis to managing large professional teams, regional operations, organizational budgets, and statewide voter engagement programs.

Returning to Dubuque, Justin directed Dubuque 2.0, a community sustainability initiative of the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque. Working with public institutions, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and community leaders, he helped advance collaborative approaches to sustainability, public engagement, and technology. He coordinated a steering committee of more than 30 community leaders and authored three successful grant applications totaling more than $325,000.

From 2021 to 2025, Justin served in Grants & Strategic Partnerships for the City of Dubuque, researching and coordinating federal and state funding opportunities across infrastructure, transportation, community development, public safety, and environmental programs. His work involved interpreting complex program requirements, developing organizational tracking and reporting systems, and supporting interdepartmental coordination and decisions by municipal leadership.

Alongside these institutional roles, Justin has pursued independent consulting and research involving organizational strategy, public policy, information systems, risk management, and technology. His current work explores federal funding stewardship, institutional accountability, and the responsible application of artificial intelligence to research and decision support. Among these efforts is Patient-Side, an emerging framework examining how fragmented health information can be better organized and communicated while preserving evidence, uncertainty, patient perspective, and human judgment.

Justin's approach is grounded in a simple conviction: good decisions require reliable information, meaningful context, and an understanding of the people affected by them. Whether working with government, community organizations, or emerging technologies, he is particularly interested in the space between institutional intentions and their practical consequences.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Geography, with an emphasis in Social and Economic Geography, from the University of Iowa and has completed graduate coursework in Business Analytics at Loras College. His professional development includes the ICMA High Performance Leadership Academy, Leadership Dubuque, and programs involving civic leadership, communications, and organizational governance.

Above all, Justin is the proud father of twin daughters. Outside his professional pursuits, he enjoys cooking, gardening, camping, darts and pinball, and spending time with family and friends.

JUSTIN@JTHILTGEN.COM