

Tactical Urbanism Grant Program in Indiana

By: Pete Fritz, FAICP, PLA



SUMMARY

In the spring and summer of 2019 and 2020 the Indiana Department of Health, Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity created a grant program to fund tactical urbanism demonstration projects working with communities across the state to create better access to public places to be physically active. The tactical urbanism demonstration grants included quickly implemented, low-cost projects that have proven to be a critical spark for successful long-term community change. This program provided funding to build short-term, low-cost demonstration projects that create long-term momentum to improve the built environment supporting physical activity (such as safe walking and bicycling) for residents of all ages.

The program includes a kickoff tactical urbanism project workshop for the grantees each year with an educational session along with project planning and implementation discussions with the grantee teams. Ongoing technical assistance is provided by IDOH staff to the grantees as they implement their projects.



Big Car Collaborative

CHALLENGE

Communities across Indiana struggle to provide their citizens safe access for walking and bicycling to everyday destinations such as parks, schools, libraries and worksites. The unintended consequences of not providing safe and active routes to these destinations is that residents are not achieving the 150 minutes of physical activity they need each week as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

For more information about the tactical urbanism grant program, visit DNPA's website at www.in.gov/health/dnpa.

"Since the project's completion, it has become evident that there is a need for similar traffic calming installations throughout Indianapolis. We have heard from four local businesses and organizations interested in using our tactical urbanism toolkit for future experiments in their neighborhoods and we are excited that this project will continue through a lending library of tools and multi-use materials."

-Big Car Collaborative

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SOLUTION

DNPA designed a mini grant program targeted to communities, schools and not-for-profit groups to assist in the development of short-term, low-cost constructed demonstration projects that created safe access to everyday destinations for walking and biking. Key expectations for the demonstration projects included:

- They must be quickly implemented, typically over the summer.
- They must support a range of active transportation options in the community.
- Special consideration will be given to projects that enhance access to parks, playgrounds, schools, childcare settings, shopping areas, transit stops and other areas children visit often.
- They must include innovative public engagement as part of the planning and implementation process.
- They must include an evaluation documenting successes and challenges along with future planned long-term changes.

RESULTS

The two rounds of the funding in 2019 and 2020 went to nine grantees with projects including artistic crosswalk treatments, traffic calming improvements, temporary street closures and pop-up bike lanes. Most of the demonstration projects remained in place through the summer and into the winter months. Each of the grantees have implemented permanent changes that have occurred due to the improvements brought about by their demonstration projects. For example, Fort Wayne temporarily closed a section of roadway in a neighborhood to encourage residents to use the area as public open space to be more active during the COVID-19 pandemic. The residents liked the street closure so much that the roadway is now permanently closed with future improvements planned to accommodate outdoor activities for the neighborhood.

FUNDING

This project is supported by the Indiana Department of Health, Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity, in collaboration with Maternal and Child Health Title V funding.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

The COVID-19 pandemic in Indiana has brought new challenges and opportunities to this program moving forward. Program grantees have discovered innovative ways to safely engage the public and implement their projects, despite serious limitations brought on by the pandemic. This program is well-suited to demonstrate creative solutions and quickly respond to public demands for increased access for safe places to be active. This program is continuing to offer grants to communities through 2021 and ongoing funding is anticipated to meet increasing demand for this type of public health intervention.



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Photo courtesy of Nathan Miller