



2016 Stellar Communities Designation Program Pre-Letter of Interest (LOI) Information

I.) Introduction

Applying for the 2016 Stellar Communities Designation Program is an outstanding opportunity for Indiana communities. Indiana cities and towns that elect to participate in the program often share similarities along a number of dimensions including:

- Community and market conditions
- Demographics
- Social and economic circumstances of residents
- Social capital stock and;
- Organizational capacity

Communities often also share common issues which range from diminishing populations and median household incomes, increases in poverty, aging and obsolete housing stock as well as declining downtowns. Which is why the Stellar Communities Designation Program was created to focus on how state governmental agencies can help support Indiana cities and towns.

Through the program, your community has the chance to develop a strategic plan with guidance from a host of state agencies under the guidance and support of Indiana's Lt. Governor Sue Ellspermann. This plan will set your community on the path for future economic growth and success. Below you will find some important information and guidance as you prepare your Letter of Interest (LOI).

II.) General Requirements

- Open to incorporated Indiana communities of any size that are not entitled to direct CDBG funding through U.S. HUD
- A local unit of government that resides in a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), must meet the eligibility requirements below:
 - If the community falls within an MPO's Planning Area, they must have a letter of recommendation from the MPO for the proposed projects
 - If the community falls within an MPO urbanized area, they must have approval from the MPO for the proposed projects. If selected, any funding for the proposed projects must be financed by the MPO
- Must have a recent comprehensive plan (7-yrs)
- Must have documented and demonstrated capacity to complete proposed activities—including the ability to submit a response to a request for proposal
- Must be in good standing with partner agencies
- The authorization to submit certification form must be signed by the chief elected official
- Must submit the Stellar Communities information sheet, an 8 ½ by 11 map of projects in your community, and project matrix with the letter of interest

III.) 2016 Stellar Communities Designation Program Important Dates

- January 13, 2016 – Webinar
- January 27, 2016 – Informational Workshop
- March 11, 2016 – Letter of Interest (LOI) is due*
- April 5, 2016 – Finalist Announcement
- April 21, 2016 – Finalist Workshop
- July 1, 2016 – Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) is due
- July 2016 – Finalist Site Visits
- August 2016 – Stellar Communities Designation Announcement

**Electronic submissions only via FTP site. Contact stellarcommunities@ocra.in.gov to set up a user name and password even if you have an existing account.*

IV.) Letter of Interest (LOI) Criteria

- Description of target area
- Description of local and regional impact
- Demonstrated reasonableness of project scope
- Demonstrated feasibility of proposed projects
- Demonstrated leadership capacity
- Demonstrated community engagement
- Demonstrated ability to maintain Stellar projects
- Description of how designation will be used to market community to attract residents and businesses
- For previous program finalists, how the previous SIP has been implemented and justify the need for updates to the SIP
- MPO acknowledgement if necessary

V.) Letter of Interest Submission Packet Requirements

In order to be considered for the 2016 Stellar Communities Designation Program the following five documents must be submitted by March 11, 2016 at 5:00 pm EST along with the LOI:

1. The Authorization to Submit Certification Form signed by CEO
2. The Stellar Communities information sheet, 8 ½ by 11 map of projects in your community
3. The Stellar Communities LOI project matrix, which includes: project name, project description, project outcomes, proposed local/private project costs, proposed Stellar Community Designation Program project cost, and proposed total project cost
4. A copy of the adoption resolution for the comprehensive plan
5. A legible 8 ½ by 11 map of your community with target area boundaries and projects identified.

VI.) Facts about the Stellar Communities Designation Program

It is important for you to understand during the Pre-Letter of Intent (Pre-LOI) stage what the Stellar Communities Designation Program is. Just as important, is to understand what the Stellar Communities Designation Program is not when communicating this with residents and key community stakeholders.

What the Stellar Communities Designation Program is:

- Multi-agency partnership designed to recognize Indiana’s communities that have identified comprehensive community and economic development projects and activities as well as next steps and key partnerships within the community.
- A program that can help your community develop a strategic plan for future economic growth.
- Through annual designation, the Stellar Communities program provides resources for transformative quality of place community improvements by:
 - Utilizing previous planning efforts
 - Leveraging existing assets
 - Fostering regional investments; and
 - Stimulating continued growth for long-term relevance.

What Stellar Communities Designation Program is not:

- It is not tied to the Indiana Regional Cities Initiative. The Regional Cities Initiative sets a framework for neighboring communities across the state to work together to develop regional visions that are supported by compelling strategic plans focused on quality of place. The initiative is dedicated to assisting each region develop a positive and unique national brand.
- While participating in the Stellar Communities Designation Program and receiving the final designation puts you in position to receive grant funding from the state agencies involved in the program, it does not guarantee it. Communities – both who do and do not receive a designation – will still need to apply for funding for the projects outlined in their plans.
- There are no “winners” and “losers”. Not receiving the Stellar Communities Designation does not mean your community has failed. The process resulting in a plan and technical assistance opportunities strengthen relationships with multiple State agencies. Communities can use the plan to apply for annual competitive funding rounds.

VII.) Identifying Partnerships

It is important during the Pre-LOI stage to identify partnerships and members of your Stellar Team. These individuals and organizations will help to build additional community capital and support. By establishing and strengthening social capital ties with local and regional outside institutions, local government officials and administrators can expand their capacity and further accomplish the goals set forth in their Strategic Improvement Plan (SIP).

For example, in Greencastle, DePauw University paid for a portion of the engineering out of their own pocket for the Anderson Street project leveraging the funding from the state agencies within the Stellar Communities Designation Program areas, while local businesses provided a portion of the match for façade improvements. Another example is in Princeton where the mayor was able to leverage the city’s local businesses (Toyota and OnSite OHS) into larger forms of community investment. Examples of previous designees’ partnerships can be found at <http://www.stellarindiana.org/>.

While partnerships have proven to be a helpful mechanism to leveraging opportunities and obtaining other community investments, they are also critical to acquiring community buy-in. Engaging strategic partners and having them be a part of your Stellar Team will ensure that the community is fully aware of your participation in the Stellar Communities Designation Program.

VIII.) Engaging the Community and Media

While partnerships will go a long way in helping to develop community buy-in, it is also critical to keep both community members and the local media updated and informed about the process. By electing to participate in the 2016 Stellar Communities Designation Program you are making a concerted effort with support of state governmental agencies to move your community forward. As such, it is important that this positive story be told. Further guidance regarding strategies and best practices on engaging the community and media will be provided in the Post-LOI information. These strategies include: public meetings, engaging with the local media and using social media (i.e. Facebook and Twitter)

IX.) Funding for the Stellar Communities Designation Program:

- Funding for the Stellar Communities Designation Program comes from multiple existing federal and state funding sources.
- Proposed projects involve both public and private dollars.
- The projects are proposals and no specific funds are guaranteed--- designated communities meet with representatives from the state agencies and discuss details of the proposed projects including feasibility, available funding, timeframes and partner participation.
- Technical assistance is provided to communities.

X.) Partner agencies:

Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs



The Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs works with local, state and national partners to provide resources and technical assistance to aid communities in shaping and achieving their vision for economic development.

OCRA Contact Information:

Matt Crouch

Senior Program Manager

mccrouch@ocra.in.gov

Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority



To provide housing opportunities, promote self-sufficiency, and strengthen communities by creating and preserving housing for Indiana most vulnerable population, enhance self-sufficiency initiatives in existing programs, promote a value driven culture of continuous improvement, and promote place-based initiatives that will allow Hoosiers opportunities to improve their quality of life.

IHCDA Contact Information:

Carmen Lethig
Placemaking Manager
clethig@ihcda.in.gov

Indiana Department of Transportation



INDOT will plan, build, maintain and operate a superior transportation system enhancing safety, mobility and economic growth.

INDOT Contact Information:

Stephani Vermillion
Senior Auditor
svermillion@indot.in.gov

Indiana Office of Small Business and Entrepreneurship



OSBE creates a positive and measurable impact on the formation, growth, and sustainability of Indiana's small businesses by providing entrepreneurs expert guidance and a comprehensive network of resources.

OSBE Contact Information:

Jacob Schpok
Director
jschpok@osbe.in.gov

Indiana Office of Tourism Development



IOTD is dedicated to enhancing the economic vitality of Indiana, its destinations and tourism-related assets through leadership, resource support, strategic planning and marketing expertise.

IOTD Contact Information:
Mark Newman
Director
mnewman@visitindiana.com

Department of Natural Resources



To protect, enhance, preserve, and wisely use natural, cultural, and recreational resources for the benefit of Indiana's citizens through professional leadership, management, and education.

DNR Contact Information:
Chris Smith
Deputy Director
csmith@dnr.in.gov

Indiana Finance Authority



Our mission is to oversee State-related debt issuance and provide efficient and effective financing solutions to facilitate state, local government and business investment in Indiana.

IFA Contact Information:
Andy Seiwert
General Counsel
Aseiwert@ifa.in.gov

Indiana State Department of Health



The Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) promotes and provides essential public health services to create a healthier and safer Indiana. The Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity (DNPA) addresses the problems of poor nutrition, sedentary behaviors, and obesity and other chronic diseases in Indiana.

ISDH Contact Information:

Eden Bezy
Director, Nutrition and Physical Activity
ebezy@isdh.in.gov

Serve Indiana



Advance service and volunteerism by informing, connecting, and promoting opportunities and resources that enrich the lives of Hoosiers.

Serve Indiana Contact Information:

Debbie Pidgeon
Executive Director
dpidgeon@ofbci.in.gov

Indiana Arts Commission



The Arts Commission advocates arts development opportunities across the state, and stewards effective use of public and private resources for the arts. It stimulates public interest in, and participation with, Indiana's diverse arts resources and cultural heritage. The Arts Commission works to enhance public awareness of the arts, life-long learning opportunities, and arts education programs. Governed by a 15-member board of gubernatorial appointees, the IAC serves all citizens and regions of the state.

IAC Contact Information:

Lewis Ricci
Executive Director
lricci@iac.in.gov

Indiana Bond Bank



The primary mission of the Indiana Bond Bank is to assist local government in obtaining low-cost financing for their operations. To achieve our mission, the Bond Bank has developed several programs tailored to specific financing needs. I encourage you to find out more about these programs offered by the Indiana Bond Bank.

Indiana Bond Bank Contact Information:

Ron Mangus

Deputy Director

rmangus@inbondbank.com

XI.) Stellar Communities Designees:

For more information about the designees projects, visit www.in.gov/ocra/stellar.

2015

- North Liberty
- Crawfordsville

2014

- Huntingburg
- Wabash

2013

- Bedford
- Richmond

2012

- Princeton
- Delphi

2011

- North Vernon
- Greencastle

For more information or questions about the 2016 Stellar Communities Designation Program please visit: <http://www.in.gov/ocra/stellar.htm> or contact: stellarcommunities@ocra.in.gov.