



2016 Stellar Communities FAQ

1. Which communities are eligible to apply for the program?
 - a. Any incorporated Indiana community of any size that are not entitled to direct CDBG funding through U.S. HUD are eligible to apply. A listing can be found on the Stellar Communities website.
 - b. The community must have a comprehensive plan that has been created or updated within the past seven years.
2. Is population a consideration with the program?
 - a. Yes, there are two divisions for the program. Division I includes communities above 6,000 in population and division II includes communities 6,000 and below in population.
 - b. Three finalists and one designee from each division will be selected as long as eligible and qualified letters of interest and strategic investment plans are received
3. How were the divisions determined?
 - a. The two divisions are based on the 2010 Census Population. To determine the appropriate division for a community, please go to <http://www.in.gov/ocra/2601.htm> and choose "2015 Stellar Community Division List."
 - i. The initial analysis compared cities and towns.
 - ii. The two divisions were determined by analyzing trends to determine if certain types of communities might be at a competitive disadvantage.
 - iii. The analysis included 2010 census population, budgeted expenditures, budgeted expenditures per capita, expected revenue and expected revenue per capita.
 - iv. The analysis revealed that of the 47 communities with a population of 6,000 or greater, 21 (45%) had received a planning grant to complete a Stellar Strategic Investment Plan. Out of these 21 communities, 7 were designated as a Stellar Community.
 - v. The 454 communities with a population of less than 6,000 only 5 (1.1%) had received a Stellar Strategic Investment Plan and 1 was designated as a Stellar Community.
 - vi. The analysis concluded that creating two divisions based on 6,000 population was an appropriate method in creating two competitive divisions.

4. Are there any special instructions for communities located in a metropolitan planning organization?
 - a. MPO communities will not be required to have a commitment for transportation funding from INDOT or their MPO to submit an LOI since the community may have other sources to address transportation issues that they have identified. Communities submitting LOIs must include transportation issues but each community must define the issues and the method of addressing them. If you plan to attend tomorrow and don't have a commitment from your MPO, you should plan on meeting with the State Team following the adjournment of the workshop to discuss the transportation component of your LOI.
 - b. If the community falls within an MPO's Planning Area, they must have a letter of recommendation from the MPO for the proposed projects
 - c. 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.
5. Which programs will a community be ineligible to apply for funding during the 3-year SC period?
 - a. IHCDA-
 - i. A designated Stellar Community is ineligible to compete in the OOR rounds during the 3-year period since it has access to non-competitive OOR funding (outlined in the chart under question #2 below).
 - ii. A County is eligible to apply for CDBG Owner Occupied Rehab (OOR) through IHCDA's competitive OOR rounds, but the application would have to exclude homes inside the jurisdiction boundaries of the designated Stellar Community.
 - b. OCRA-
 - i. Communities will not be eligible to apply to any OCRA grant programs including CDBG, Place Based Investment Fund, Historic Renovation Grant Program, and Downtown Enhancement Grant during a 3-year period following designation.
 - ii. They will still be eligible for the Community Enhancement and Economic Development loan program and non-grant programs such as Hometown Collaborative Initiative, Community Entrepreneurship Initiative, Workforce Development Program, and Community Readiness Initiative.
 - iii. Any new programs created by OCRA will have a determination made of eligibility for Stellar Designees at the time of creation and roll out.
 - c. INDOT-
 - i. Communities that fall outside of any MPO Urbanized Area will not be eligible to apply to INDOT for the Rural Federal Aid Program during a 3-year period following designation.
 - d. SC Partners-
 - i. Designated communities will not be restricted from any other partner agencies' programs.

6. What are the funding amounts available from each partner agency?
 - a. Designated Stellar Communities may be eligible to apply up to the following amounts.
 - b. However, a designated Stellar Community is not guaranteed they will receive the maximum amount available.
 - c. Additional funding sources may be identified by Stellar Communities partners that are not set-aside or identified in the following matrix:

Program	OCRA	INDOT	IHCDA
CDBG	\$2,000,000		\$250,000
Historic Renovation Grant Program	\$100,000		
Rural Federal Aid Program		\$1,500,000	
HOME Investment Partnerships Program			\$500,000
Rental Housing Tax Credits			\$1,200,000
Indiana Affordable Housing & Community Development Fund			\$500,000

7. Are project limits in place for the available funding?
 - a. Except when required by federal regulation, typical per project limits used by the partner agencies will not apply for the Stellar Communities Program.
 - b. OCRA CDBG programs will still be looking at a \$5,000 per beneficiary amount.
8. Can a community include two multifamily affordable developments in their SIP for the QAP Stellar Set-Aside?
 - a. Yes, a community can include two multifamily affordable developments in their SIP. However, the community would need to identify one of the projects in their SIP that would be eligible for the QAP Stellar Set-Aside and the other would be a complimentary development that would compete in the other Set-Asides (non-Stellar) or realized through another funding source entirely.
9. What is the time frame for project completion?
 - a. All projects including complimentary projects should be expected to be completed within a 3-5 year timeframe after the Stellar Communities designation.
10. Should we identify matching funds from our community in the LOI and SIP?
 - a. Yes, each project should include the local funding from the community along with a gap in funding (if it is known).
11. Which documents should be included with the LOI packet?
 - a. The Authorization to Submit Certification Form signed by the chief elected official
 - b. The Stellar Communities information sheet
 - c. The Stellar Communities LOI project matrix
 - d. A copy of the adoption resolution for the comprehensive plan
 - e. A legible 8 ½ by 11 map of your community with target area boundaries and projects identified.

12. Is there a page limit for the LOI?
 - a. Yes, the LOI should not be more than five pages in length.
13. Should projects included in the LOI and SIP meet the available funding sources?
 - a. Projects included in the LOI and SIP should not be targeted to agency funding programs. Projects should reflect your community needs.

14. Will final design need to be completed for all projects included in the LOI and SIP?
 - a. Final design is not required. It is necessary to include some details in the scope, such as location, estimated number of facades, homes, etc. (if available).
15. How will the process for technical assistance be determined for partner agencies?
 - a. Communities are welcome to include projects for agency involvement in their LOI and SIP, but each partner will review projects for opportunities to provide assistance.
16. Do the LOI and/or SIP need to identify projects for every partner agency?
 - a. No, each partner agency does not need to be included in the LOI or SIP.
17. What is the evaluation process?
 - a. A committee comprised of representatives from each partner agency will review every LOI in comparison to criteria provided in the Call for Letters of Interest document for eligibility, completeness and quality.
 - b. The committee will reach a consensus based on their reviews to select up to three finalists per division.
 - i. All communities not selected as a finalist will be provided a conference call to discuss feedback from their LOI.
 - c. The committee will review each finalist's SIP in comparison to criteria provided in the Strategic Investment Plan document for eligibility, completeness and quality.
 - d. Committee members will also attend each finalist site visit.
 - e. The committee will reach a consensus based on their reviews to select a designee for each division.
 - i. All communities not selected as a designee will be provided an in-person meeting to discuss feedback from their SIP and site visit.
18. Has a study been completed to review the success of past participants in the SC program?
 - a. Yes, the Sagamore Institute is working on a study that utilizes a multi-method case study research approach, looking at the efforts of program partners and convening community partner organizations in the designated communities.
 - b. The report can be found at <http://www.stellarindiana.org/>.
19. How will infrastructure projects be viewed from a competitive standpoint?
 - a. Each community should include projects that fit the needs of their community. Infrastructure projects are not excluded from the program, but the community will need to illustrate how all the projects are tied together with past and future plans.

20. What are the requirements for the Strategic Investment Plan?

a. Required documents:

- i. Cover sheet on organizational letterhead that includes all relevant contact information (1-2 pages)
 - ii. Qualifications of the Applicant Organization and Community Capacity and engagement (1-2 pages)
 - iii. Expected project outcomes and the impacts on the targeted areas and region as a whole (1-3 pages)
 - iv. Project costs and the amount of required gap funding (1-2 pages)
 - v. Project goals and objectives (1 page)
 - vi. Target population (1-2 pages)
 - vii. Project activities (1-5 pages)
 - viii. Staff responsible for the project, including names and positions (1-2 pages)
 - ix. Full color map of the overall project target area:
 1. Past projects identified
 2. Current projects identified
 3. Proposed projects identified
 4. Complementary projects identified
 - x. Individual project maps including parcel-by-parcel and/or street-by-street description of activities.
 - xi. Project renderings if applicable.
 - xii. Detailed budget for each component of the project, including sources and uses.
 - xiii. Detailed timeline and benchmarks over the four year program period.
 - xiv. Demonstration of how the process will meet the timeline established by OCRA, INDOT and IHCDA.
 - xv. Completed Community Investment Plan Matrix and Information Sheet.
 - xvi. Completed Stellar Research Investment Spreadsheet.
 - xvii. Resumes of key project staff of the primary organization and Development Team
- b. Note: other items including letters of support, newspaper articles, etc can be included the SIP, but they will not factor into the final determination.

21. What is the structure for the finalist site visits?

- a. Welcome & Introductions (Community)
- b. Introductions (State Team)
- c. Overview of projects (Community)
- d. Q&A (Project Development Team and State Team)
- e. Break (no longer than 15 minutes)
- f. Site Tour
- g. Adjourn

22. What are ground rules for finalist site visits?

- a. Critical piece to this program
- b. No longer than 3 hours
- c. Keep relevant to projects in the SIP
- d. Complementary projects can be mentioned.
- e. No meals or reception
- f. Light refreshments as appropriate
- g. No gifts
- h. Community project focused
- i. Videos are not required