



## Frequently Asked Questions about the Hometown Collaboration Initiative

### **Q1: What are the differences between the legacy program known as the HomeTown Competitiveness Program (HTC) and the new Hometown Collaboration Initiative Pilot Program?**

The goals of the HomeTown Competitiveness Program (HTC) and Hometown Collaboration Initiative (HCI) are similar. Both programs were designed to improve the quality of life in small communities through strategic economic and community development. However, there are several key differences in the structure of the legacy HTC program and the new HCI pilot program.

The former HTC program was structured so that communities pursued a number of activities simultaneously including: conducting a community-wide survey to gain insights on the issues on the mind of local residents, launching a youth entrepreneurship program, training a new group of local leaders, and expanding community philanthropy. In contrast, the new HCI program is structured so that communities first spend time building a solid foundation by developing the collaboration and leadership skills of a coordinating team. Then, communities can choose one of three building block topics (leadership, collaboration, or placemaking) to focus on. This more step-by-step approach allows a community to better focus their assets and resources while taking a deeper dive into addressing underlying challenges in each topic area.

### **Q2. The HCI program is based on the Asset Based Community Development approach, Are there examples of success stories of this approach working in communities?**

Both Purdue's Center for Regional Development and Ball State's Building Better Community Program has helped communities embrace Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approaches. Two of the more prominent national efforts include Strategic Doing and Stronger Economies Together, two programs that are part of the work of the Purdue Center for Regional Development. Ball State University's Building Better Communities incorporates Appreciative Inquiry and Simplex/Simplexity Creative Problem Solving. To learn more about these or other successful ABCD-related efforts, contact Bo Beaulieu at [ljb@purdue.edu](mailto:ljb@purdue.edu) or Sharon Canaday at [stcanaday@bsu.edu](mailto:stcanaday@bsu.edu).

### **Q3. The application says the HCI is open to any community of 25,000 or less. How does the HCI program define community?**



The Hometown Collaborative Initiative uses a place-based definition of a community. For purposes of HCI, a community is a specific geographic area such as a city, town, or county in Indiana that has a population of 25,000 or less. It is acceptable for cities or towns that are located near one another and that want to work together to apply for HCI, as long as their combined population do not exceed 25,000 residents.

**Q4. What is the role of the community coach and how is it different from the role of a subject-matter person?**

Throughout the Hometown Collaboration Initiative program, a single community coach will guide a community. The community coach is highly trained in community development and is familiar with your community. Emery, Hubbell and Polka in their 2011 publication state that the community coach: (a) helps your team see the big picture, (b) promotes collaboration, (c) helps you identify other individuals that should be invited to be part of your planning and/or implementation strategies, (d) asks clarifying questions about the activities being proposed by the local HCI team, (e) helps you focus on what is achievable and (f) guides you on how best to communicate your work to key local and external audiences. Subject-matter persons, on the other hand, have specialized information and knowledge on various community or economic development topics that they will share during the three phases of HCI.

**Q5. What are the similarities and differences between the Community Readiness Initiative (CRI) and the Hometown Collaboration Initiative (HCI)? Which one is right for my community?**

Both the Hometown Collaboration Initiative (HCI) and the Community Readiness Initiative (CRI) focus on a community's sustainable growth in building places of choice for people and businesses, and complement one another. A community does not need to engage in one initiative before the other, but should evaluate their capacity and readiness for change before deciding which initiative to engage in.

The Hometown Collaboration Initiative (HCI) is a program that empowers communities of 25,000 people or less to identify and weave existing economic and community assets to develop and energize community-wide leadership and engagement, focus on economic development strategies, and enhance their attractiveness as places to live and enjoy. Community buy-in and action are foundational pieces to prioritizing where your community needs to focus its resources to build a sustainable future focused on addressing issues and opportunities.



The Community Readiness Initiative (CRI) provides communities with civil leadership (public sector) and civic leadership (private, non-profit, and community) alignment with a better understanding of their environment, based on the reality of objective data-driven analysis. This high impact evaluation process is designed to foster policy making for positive, productive growth in communities.

**Q6. My community needs to strengthen its leadership, so is the Leadership block the best choice for my community?**

It is important to understand that every community participating in the HCI program will learn and apply a variety of leadership and collaboration strategies, regardless of what specific building block it decides to pursue. As part of the foundation portion of HCI, the team coordinating the HCI will learn some important leadership skills. If the team decides that the biggest challenge facing the community is the limited pool of people who are willing to step forward to work on community improvement efforts, then a leadership development program may be the right building block to pursue. At the same time, if the group decides to focus on efforts to expand their economy or promote placemaking activities, then each of these efforts will help enhance the leadership skills of those individuals actively involved in either of these important undertakings. So, no matter what building block the community pursues, leadership development will take place.

Finally, the pathfinder project (carried out as part of the Capstone phase of HCI) will provide additional opportunity for HCI community teams to apply the leadership and collaboration skills they've learned over the course of the HCI program.

**Q7. The different departments, groups, and organizations in my community don't collaborate well, does that make us a strong candidate to learn and grow through the Hometown Collaboration Initiative?**

Ideal candidates for the Hometown Collaboration Initiative are communities that have some history of working together on community opportunities and challenges. At the same time, HCI might be the right program for communities that are committed to getting things done but are struggling to find the right approach for moving forward. If the willingness to work together is evident (even if past community collaborations have not been as strong as local people would have liked), then HCI may be a good fit for these communities. We encourage you to examine the application form and study how proposals will be scored. This should



provide you with a good idea of the community features we are looking when the HCI applications are reviewed.

**Q8. We have an existing organization in our community that we feel could serve as the HCI Coordinating Team. Is this acceptable?**

It is important to start fresh when it comes to the HCI, so it is essential to consider organizing a new team, but drawing on the skills and knowledge of people who are part of other important local organizations. To ensure long-term success, HCI must become part of the fabric of the entire community. This means that forming a new team, made of a representative mix of people and organizations in the community, is a smart way to launch the HCI in your community.

**Q9. May our community pursue more than one of the three building blocks?**

A community may only go through one building block at a time. This allows a community to better focus its assets and resources. However, a community may have the option to apply for another block in a subsequent program year.