



Indiana Main Street

PROGRAM GUIDE & HANDBOOK

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Commonly Used Indiana Main Street Abbreviations

Aspiring – Aspiring Indiana Accredited Main Street

BOD – Board of Directors

BSU – Ball State University

CDBG – Community Development Block Grants (federal funding for community development)

CL – Community Liaison (local point of contact for IMS/OCRA)

COB – Close of Business (4 p.m. EST for Indiana Main Street staff)

CP – Coordinating Program (state-level Main Street coordinating entity)

DHPA – Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology (Indiana DNR)

ED – Executive Director

EDC – Economic Development Commission (local commission overseeing economic development)

GA – Grant Administrator (individual responsible for managing grant compliance)

IAMS – Indiana Accredited Main Street

ICI – Indiana Communities Institute (Ball State University institute supporting community development)

IEDC – Indiana Economic Development Corporation (state economic development agency)

IHCDA – Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority

IMS – Indiana Main Street (state of Indiana's Coordinating program under Main Street America)

ISBDC – Indiana Small Business Development Center (IEDC-supported business assistance)

IUCRE – Indiana University Center for Rural Engagement

LEDO – Local Economic Development Organization

LOI – Letter of Intent (preliminary statement of interest, often in grant processes)

LP – Local Program (local Main Street organization)

LUG – Local Unit of Government (city, town, or township government)

MOU – Memorandum of Understanding (formal agreement between parties)

MSA – Main Street America (national Main Street program)

MSRP – Main Street Revitalization Program Grant (OCRA grant supporting Main Street improvements)

NAMS – Nationally Accredited Main Street

OCRA – Office of Community and Rural Affairs (state agency overseeing IMS)

ODAN – OCRA Downtown Affiliate Network (affiliate tier of Indiana Main Street)

OEI – Office of Entrepreneurship and Innovation

PCRD – Purdue Center for Regional Development

PHP – Preserving Historic Places Conference

PL – Planning Grant (grant supporting planning-related activities)

PreservINg – PreservINg Main Street Grant (grant supporting Main Street revitalization)

RDC – Redevelopment Commission (local commission managing redevelopment areas)

RFP – Request for Proposal (solicitation for project bids or services)

ROI – Return on Investment (evaluation of financial benefit compared to cost)

SBOA – State Board of Accounts (state agency responsible for audits and financial compliance)

SHPO – State Historic Preservation Officer (Indiana DNR role overseeing historic preservation compliance)

TIF – Tax Increment Financing (economic development funding mechanism)

Indiana Main Street History

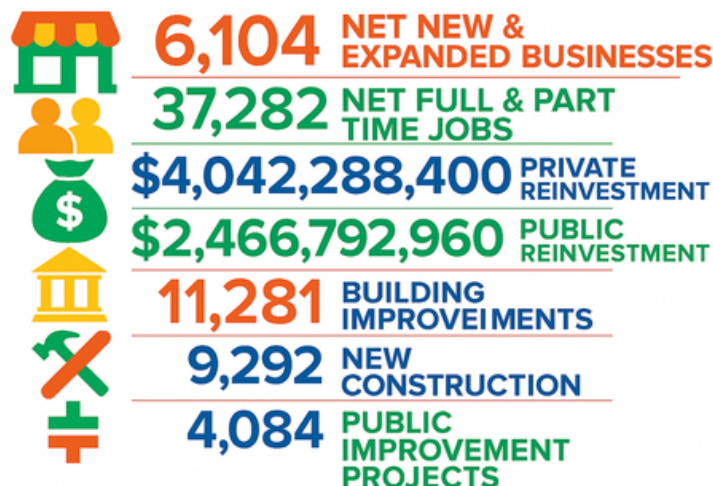
Since 1985, the Indiana Main Street (IMS) Program has helped communities revitalize the economy, appearance, and image of their downtown commercial districts using the Main Street America's proven Main Street Approach. This approach is a comprehensive, incremental strategy for revitalization rooted in each community's unique heritage and local strengths.

By leveraging local resources and leadership, the state program supports communities in developing and implementing their own strategies to stimulate long-term economic growth and build pride in the heart of their downtown or commercial core.

In 2005, IMS transitioned to the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA), where it continues to be administered today. IMS provides communities with access to information, technical assistance, strategic guidance, and tools that support effective downtown revitalization. It also serves as a clearinghouse for the latest methods, resources, and best practices in downtown development. General information, project development support, and other materials are available to help communities strengthen their revitalization work.

While the state program is a partner in this process, true success is rooted in local commitment, leadership, and follow-through. The support IMS provides to designated local programs has contributed to substantial investment and bottom-up economic growth across Indiana's Main Street districts.

As of December 2025, Indiana Main Street communities have achieved:



Indiana Main Street Levels

Throughout 2019, OCRA instituted a moratorium to evaluate the scope and mandate of the Indiana Main Street program. During this time, OCRA paused accepting new applications for Main Street designation until the review was completed. Feedback meetings were held with Main Street America, the Indiana Main Street Council (dissolved in 2026), and OCRA staff throughout the moratorium. In November 2020, OCRA announced program updates designed to provide additional value to both new and existing Main Street organizations. A key outcome of this improvement process was the creation and implementation of a new Accreditation Levels System.

As part of this system, Indiana Main Street introduced the Aspiring-IAMS level—a one- to three-year capacity-building tier designed to help communities strengthen their readiness for full Main Street participation. This level supports communities seeking to advance from the OCRA-Downtown Affiliated Network (ODAN) to Indiana Accredited Main Street (IAMS) by offering hands-on training, structured guidance, and capacity-building support. The goal is to equip emerging programs with the skills, organizational structure, and foundational practices needed for long-term success.

The Indiana Main Street Program now accepts applications for four levels, all beginning at the ODAN level and progressing toward the Nationally Accredited Main Street (NAMS) level. Applications are accepted once a year. A brief description of each level is provided below:

- **OCRA's Downtown Affiliate Network (ODAN):**
 - Organizations applying to enter the Indiana Main Street program whose current capacity and/or resources are not yet sufficient to implement the Four-Point Approach™ holistically.
- **Aspiring-Indiana Accredited Main Street (Aspiring):**
 - Organizations actively building capacity to move from ODAN to IAMS.
- **Indiana Accredited Main Street (IAMS):**
 - Organizations applying to join the program that are implementing the National Main Street Four-Point Approach™ but may lack a paid staff member and/or a paid membership with the Main Street America.
- **Nationally Accredited Main Street (NAMS):**
 - Organizations applying to enter the Indiana Main Street program that already meet all Accreditation Standards set by the Main Street America.

All communities should discuss the application process and expectations for each level with their OCRA Community Liaison before committing.



The Main Street Approach

For more than 40 years, Main Street America has led a nationwide network of over 2,000 historic downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts, collectively known as Main Streets. These communities share a deep commitment to creating vibrant, people-centered places to live, work and play. The individuals who power the Main Street network are passionate advocates, dedicated volunteers, influential stakeholders and community organizers who work every day to strengthen their communities by driving reinvestment, creating jobs and fostering local pride.

Main Street revitalization blends both science and art. Communities must first understand their local economy, its key drivers and its regional context — the science. They must then bring their unique sense of place to life through storytelling, preservation of historic structures, inclusive civic engagement and thoughtful marketing — the art. To support this work, the Main Street America provides a comprehensive revitalization framework, the Main Street Approach, which helps communities leverage both the art and science of downtown transformation to enhance quality of life for all.

The Main Street Approach is most effective in places where residents have strong emotional, social, and civic connections and are motivated to participate in community improvement. It works best where existing assets — such as historic buildings and locally owned businesses — can be strengthened and showcased. The approach encourages communities to take strategic steps toward long-term change while also implementing short-term, low-cost, place-based activities that bring people to the commercial core and build excitement and momentum. Across the country, small-town downtowns and urban neighborhoods alike are revitalizing their community centers using Main Street principles.

Ultimately, these community-driven efforts create places characterized by strong social cohesion and economic opportunity — places that nurture innovation and possibility and bring together people of diverse backgrounds to shape a shared future.

THE REFRESHED MAIN STREET APPROACH

It is useful to view the Main Street Approach as three interconnected components: community visioning and market understanding (the inputs), transformation strategies implemented through the Four Points (the process), and implementation and measurement (the outcomes).

IDENTIFY THE COMMUNITY VISION FOR SUCCESS

The Main Street Approach begins with establishing a shared vision for success that is grounded in a thorough understanding of the district's market realities and shaped by broad community engagement. This community-driven process brings together diverse stakeholders from all sectors, encouraging them to play an active role in revitalization. This foundational step helps articulate the community's identity, expectations, and aspirations while assessing both real and perceived needs and opportunities. It also ensures that the resulting vision reflects the full diversity of the community.

CREATE COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION STRATEGIES

A vision of success on its own is not enough. Communities must work together to identify key priorities — known as Transformation Strategies — that provide clear direction for revitalization efforts. Most communities find that one to three Transformation Strategies are sufficient to guide progress toward their vision. These strategies encompass both long-term and short-term actions that collectively move the community closer to achieving its goals.



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Some “ready-to-use” strategies, known as Catalyst Strategies, fall into two broad categories: those focused on a specific customer segment and those centered on an industry, product, or service segment. Catalyst Strategies are off-the-shelf Transformation Strategies that can be adapted to a wide range of communities. Many work at any price point (such as Apparel or Home Furnishings), while others are organized around existing institutions (such as College Town or Military Installation). All can be further customized to meet local needs.

Catalyst Strategies Include:

Agricultural Economy	Apparel	Arts	Tourists & Tourism
College Town	Convenience Goods & Services	Dining & Entertainment	Sports & Recreation
District Workers & Residents	Elderly-Friendly & Aging In Place	Ethnic Specialities	Millennials
Family-Friendly, Family-Serving	Food	Green Products & Services	Military Installations
Health & Wellness	Home Furnishings	Knowledge Economy	Manufacturing

Work on these strategies should be carried out through the four key areas that Main Streets have used as their guiding framework for more than 40 years: Economic Vitality, Promotion, Design, and Organization — collectively known as the Main Street Four Points.

Transformation Strategies are developed through surveys, data analysis, focus groups, and discussions conducted by Indiana Main Street staff and Main Street America staff. This process provides local programs with independent, research-based transformational goals tailored to their communities. These strategies are not required during the early phases of accreditation of a Main Street program, allowing communities time to build capacity and begin making incremental changes before adopting more advanced strategic initiatives.

THE FOUR POINT APPROACH

ORGANIZATION

A sustainable Main Street revitalization effort depends on a strong organizational structure. This point emphasizes mobilizing all available resources — partners, funding, volunteers, and community support — to effectively implement the district's Transformation Strategies. Strong organization ensures the program has the leadership, communication systems, and collaborative relationships needed to maintain momentum and advance revitalization year after year.

ECONOMIC VITALITY

Economic Vitality focuses on strengthening a community's economic foundation by encouraging strategic investment, supporting small businesses, and expanding local entrepreneurship. It emphasizes leveraging unique local assets, fostering collaboration, and advancing equity and inclusion. The goal is to build long-term local wealth and develop a diverse, resilient economic base that can adapt to changing conditions while ensuring that all residents benefit from revitalization efforts.

DESIGN

A focus on Design supports a community's transformation by enhancing the physical elements of downtown and highlighting the unique assets that distinguish the commercial district. Main Streets strengthen their appeal to residents and visitors through pedestrian-friendly streets, the integration of public art in unexpected places, effective visual merchandising, adaptive reuse of older and historic buildings, efficient building design, transit-oriented development, and other strategies that elevate the overall look, feel, and functionality of the district.

PROMOTION

Promotion within the Main Street framework takes many forms, but its core goal is to position the downtown or commercial district as the heart of the community and a hub of economic activity, while creating a positive image that highlights the area's unique character. This can include celebrating cultural traditions, showcasing significant architecture and history, encouraging cooperative marketing among local businesses, offering coordinated specials and sales, supporting buy-local initiatives, and hosting events that shift perceptions and demonstrate the district's value to residents, investors, businesses, and property owners. Effective Promotion reinforces why the Four Points work and illustrates how successful revitalization happens. It strengthens the district's reputation as the center of local life — where people shop, work, gather, celebrate, and invest — and supports the other Main Street pillars of Organization, Economic Vitality, and Design.

IMPACT AND MEASUREMENT

To succeed, Main Street programs must demonstrate visible results — outcomes that come from completing both short- and long-term projects that contribute to meaningful community change. Shorter term activities focus on highly visible improvements that signal progress, build confidence in the revitalization effort, encourage community buy-in and mobilize volunteers. Placemaking strategies, those *lighter, quicker, cheaper* actions, are especially valuable for energizing the community and showcasing early momentum.

While these visible, short-term wins are essential, Main Street programs must also remain committed to longer term projects that serve as the foundation for lasting transformation. Identifying clear milestones for complex, multi-year initiatives helps maintain a sense of forward movement and reinforces the importance of sustained attention to revitalization goals.

Alongside implementation, measuring progress is equally critical. Successful Main Streets are built on a commitment to evaluating outcomes. In an environment where public resources are limited and competition for private investment is strong, programs must demonstrate that resources are being used effectively and that revitalization efforts are producing measurable change — new jobs, new businesses, rehabilitated buildings and other key indicators of success.



THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Main Street America's decades of experience revitalizing commercial corridors across the country consistently demonstrates that the Main Street Approach is a proven framework for helping communities succeed in their redevelopment efforts. Building on this framework, the following principles serve as a set of core values that help staff and volunteers articulate a Main Street program's mission and direct their energy effectively. These principles are straightforward, common-sense tools that can be adapted to reflect each community's priorities and needs.

Comprehensive

All the factors that influence a downtown's health are deeply interconnected. No single strategy, whether major public improvements, attracting name-brand businesses or hosting promotional events frequently, can revitalize a Main Street district on its own. Sustainable, long-term revitalization requires a comprehensive approach that coordinates activities across all Four Points of the Main Street framework. True transformation occurs through many aligned efforts carried out over time, not through one major project or a quick fix. When each point reinforces the others, the district gains the momentum necessary for lasting success.

Incremental

Crawling and baby steps come before walking, and the same is true for Main Street revitalization. Successful programs begin with simple, visible activities that signal to the community that new things are happening in the district. As public confidence grows and participants deepen their understanding of the revitalization process, the program becomes increasingly capable of tackling more complex challenges and larger projects. This steady, incremental approach leads to meaningful, long-lasting change. Small wins early on build momentum, strengthen trust and ultimately inspire the larger investments that transform the district over time.

Community Driven

Main Street revitalization is fundamentally community-driven. Stakeholder feedback should inform every program, project and decision, ensuring the work reflects local priorities and values. At the same time, Main Street cannot succeed in isolation. Its role is to bring people together – residents, business owners, property owners, volunteers and partners – to collaborate on initiatives that strengthen the district. By engaging the community in both planning and implementation, Main Street builds shared ownership, collective pride and a revitalization effort that truly belongs to the people it serves.

Partnerships

Both the public and private sectors have a vital interest in the district's success and must work together to achieve the common goals of Main Street revitalization. Each sector has an important role to play and both must understand each other's strengths and limitations in order to build an effective partnership. These partnerships must also be inclusive, engaging the entire community in envisioning the district's future and ensuring that everyone benefits from its success.

Asset-based

Every Main Street district has assets that can serve as the foundation for revitalization. Identifying and leveraging these existing strengths is essential. Many districts contain distinct historic buildings that create a strong visual identity, and most have at least a few successful businesses that can act as anchors for expanding the mix of products, services and activities. Other valuable assets may include a concentration of workers or residents, proximity to major attractions, access to highways, unique building types, the presence of a college or university or a strong local culture of entrepreneurship. Equally important, every Main Street district has a history deeply rooted in its community – a narrative that can guide and inspire its continued evolution. When these assets are recognized and strategically utilized, they become powerful drivers of long-term revitalization.

Quality

Emphasize quality in every aspect of the revitalization program. This applies to all elements of the process, from storefront design and promotional campaigns to building rehabilitation and public amenities. Poor quality reinforces negative perceptions of the district. *High quality* does not mean *high cost*; rather, it reflects careful planning, thoughtful execution and attention to detail.

Change

At first, few people believe that Main Street revitalization can truly succeed. Changes in attitudes and practices are gradual, but steady, and public support grows as the program develops and consistently achieves its goals. Change also requires adopting better business practices, rethinking long-held assumptions and improving the physical appearance of the commercial district. A carefully planned Main Street program helps shift public perceptions and behaviors, building the broad support needed to sustain long-term revitalization.

Implementation-Oriented

To succeed, Main Street programs must demonstrate visible results, outcomes that come from completing projects. Frequent, noticeable improvements signal that revitalization is underway and making progress. Early on, small, achievable projects help build confidence in the program and set the stage for tackling larger initiatives as the effort matures. This steady stream of revitalization activity strengthens public trust and generates increasing levels of community support and participation.

Economic Development Philosophy

A Main Street program can, in many ways, function like a nonprofit commercial developer. Private, for-profit developers typically focus on four core tasks: property development and management, marketing, leasing, and managing human and financial resources. Within the Main Street Four-Point Approach, each point contributes to all four tasks, but each plays a lead role in one area:

- Design leads efforts to enhance the physical environment and strengthen built assets.
- Promotion leads in communicating the district's story and driving activity.
- Economic Vitality leads in supporting entrepreneurs and strengthening the economic base.
- Organization leads in building partnerships, securing resources, and developing capacity.



As a grassroots, volunteer-driven nonprofit, a Main Street program carries out this work through teams aligned with the Four-Point Approach®. Each team must embrace its development role to support effective, asset-based economic development. The emphasis on entrepreneurs — rather than just business owners — is purposeful. Entrepreneurs are continually improving and adapting their businesses, while some traditional business owners may be content with day-to-day operations. Thriving historic commercial districts rely on entrepreneurs who innovate in response to a changing marketplace.

To attract these entrepreneurs, as well as investors who can bring a district's vision to life, communities must present a compelling picture of a vibrant, fully functioning downtown marketplace. Each of the Four Points contributes to this vision by strengthening the economic value of both the district and the broader community.

At its core, Main Street is a powerful economic development engine — rooted in local assets, community leadership, and long-term investment. Unlike traditional economic development strategies that often focus on recruiting large employers, Main Street strengthens the economic fundamentals already present in a community's historic commercial district. This approach builds a resilient, diverse, and locally controlled economy.

Main Street acts like a nonprofit commercial developer by coordinating the four central tasks of commercial development — property development and management, marketing, leasing, and resource management — through the Four-Point Approach. Design improves the district's physical assets and supports reinvestment. Promotion markets the district's identity, attracts customers, and increases activity. Economic Vitality supports and grows local entrepreneurs and businesses. Organization builds the partnerships, funding, and volunteer base needed to sustain development over time.

This structure firmly positions Main Street within the field of economic development because it creates the conditions businesses need to succeed: a strong market identity, quality spaces, supportive systems, and an engaged consumer base. By focusing on entrepreneurs, Main Street fosters a culture of innovation and adaptability — critical for today's competitive environment. Entrepreneurs reinvest, experiment, and grow, creating jobs, filling storefronts, and diversifying the business mix.



Main Street's asset-based approach also leverages local strengths — historic architecture, walkability, cultural heritage, and local talent — turning them into economic advantages. These assets differentiate communities in a crowded marketplace and attract residents, visitors, and investors seeking authentic places.

By cultivating an environment where small businesses can thrive, properties are maintained and reinvested in, and partners work together, Main Street generates measurable economic outcomes: increased property values, higher sales, new businesses and jobs, building rehabilitations, and strengthened investor confidence.

In short, Main Street is economic development. It doesn't chase growth — it builds it from the ground up. By aligning community vision, physical improvements, business support, and collaborative partnerships, Main Street programs create vibrant, resilient downtowns that anchor long-term local prosperity.

Economic development should be understood as qualitative as well as quantitative. Main Street's purpose is not simply to make a community bigger; it is to make the community better. Main Street focuses on strengthening quality of place, enhancing local identity, and improving the overall experience of living, working, and investing in the community.

WHY IS DOWNTOWN IMPORTANT?

It is essential for anyone involved in downtown or commercial corridor revitalization to understand the value of a strong, vibrant downtown. Here are several key reasons why downtown matters:

- Your business district is, or has the potential to be, a major employment center. Even in small communities, downtown often represents the largest concentration of jobs.
- As a business center, downtown plays a significant economic role. It may house the highest concentration of businesses in the community and often serves as an incubator for new enterprises — the future successes that start small but grow over time.
- Most downtown businesses are independently owned. They support local families who, in turn, support local schools and community activities. Locally owned businesses keep profits circulating within the community.
- Downtown reflects how your community sees itself. This perception is an important factor in business retention and recruitment. When companies consider your community for future investment, they look closely at quality of life. A vibrant, active downtown signals community pride and success; a neglected downtown communicates disinterest and decline.
- Downtown represents a significant portion of your community's tax base. When the district struggles, property values fall — shifting the tax burden to residents and businesses in other parts of town.

- The business district remains an essential center for shopping and services. While it may not be the dominant shopping hub it once was, downtown still offers unique retail options and important professional services such as attorneys, physicians, accountants, insurance agencies, and financial institutions.
- Downtown is the historic heart of the community. Many buildings are architecturally or historically significant and tell the story of your community's development and heritage.
- Downtown represents a major public and private investment. Re-creating the infrastructure and buildings already in place would be enormously expensive. Neglecting downtown wastes those past investments and undermines future economic opportunity.
- Downtown is often a major draw for visitors. Travelers seek authentic, one-of-a-kind places – and there is no other downtown quite like yours.
- Downtown typically serves as a government center. City hall, the county courthouse, and the post office are often located there, creating a convenient “one-stop shop” for public services.



BENEFITS OF DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

WHY DO YOU WANT A MAIN STREET IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

Main Streets have a powerful impact on communities across the nation, but the benefits can look different depending on a person's occupation, role, or circumstance. By considering a variety of perspectives, we can better understand the wide-ranging value a Main Street district brings to a community. Below are some of the key benefits of having a strong Main Street:

BENEFITS FOR PROPERTY OWNERS

- Increased occupancy rates
- Rent stability
- Increased property values
- Greater district stability
- Reduced vandalism and improved crime deterrence
- Access to assistance with tax credits, grants, loan programs, design guidance, and cooperative maintenance
- Stronger communication and collaboration with other property owners
- Improved overall district image
- Opportunities for new uses, including upper-floor redevelopment

BENEFITS FOR SERVICE BUSINESS OWNERS

- Enhanced image and reputation
- Increased pride in place and business identity
- New, renewed, and repeated exposure to customers
- A broader variety of services in the district
- A healthier local economy that generates more business opportunities
- Increased competition, encouraging stronger and more innovative business practices
- Ability to capture market “leakage” and retain local spending
- Increased population and new customer opportunities
- Improved district image, creating new markets and customer interest

BENEFITS FOR RETAIL BUSINESS OWNERS

- Increased sales
- Improved business image
- Increased business value
- Stronger coordination between local businesses and franchises
- Improved quality of business life
- Access to educational opportunities such as seminars and workshops
- Increased customer traffic
- Support through district-wide marketing strategies, including promotion and advertising
- A healthier and more balanced business mix
- Attraction of new customer groups to the downtown

BENEFITS FOR LOCAL RESIDENTS AND CONSUMERS

- Increased community pride
- A venue where community needs and concerns can be addressed
- An enhanced marketplace with better shopping options and the benefits of supporting local businesses
- A stronger sense of pride in the downtown district
- More social and cultural activities
- Opportunities that encourage young people and families to stay in the community
- A strengthened sense of hometown identity and belonging
- Preservation of historic architecture and community heritage
- Opportunities to participate and volunteer in meaningful local efforts
- Improved communication through newsletters and community updates
- A stronger platform for representing community interests
- Increased home values



BENEFITS FOR CITY GOVERNMENT

- Increased tax base
- Growth in tourism
- Increased property values
- More employment opportunities
- Clearer community goals and vision
- A healthier and more resilient local economy
- Improved availability and quality of city services
- A more positive perception of downtown and the broader community
- Stronger relationships between city hall and the private sector
- A larger volunteer base to support city initiatives
- Enhanced industrial recruitment opportunities
- Support in building consensus and reducing political pressure on key issues
- Momentum for public improvement projects
- Educational resources for city leaders on planning and economic development

BENEFITS FOR UTILITY COMPANIES

- Additional business opportunities
- Longer operating hours among commercial customers
- More employees working within the district
- Healthy, growing businesses that feel more confident increasing their utility usage
- A stronger local economy that supports community growth
- Improved public perception and reduced negative stereotypes
- Opportunities to demonstrate or pilot new products
- Higher-quality public improvements within the downtown district

BENEFITS FOR COUNTY GOVERNMENT

- Strengthened public relations for the county
- A vibrant, viable downtown that increases the county's tax base
- A positive ripple effect benefiting surrounding communities and the wider region
- A strong downtown that attracts industry and countywide businesses
- A collaborative partnership with city government
- Increased county and community pride
- Preservation of local heritage and historic assets
- A proactive alternative to creating a redevelopment district
- Enhanced quality-of-life benefits, including those important to county employees
- Assistance in addressing parking and related infrastructure issues

BENEFITS FOR FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

- Support for Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) requirements
- Increased potential for loans, deposits, and financial services (such as bank cards and advisory services)
- Improved public image and strengthened goodwill
- A stable, thriving community that supports long-term bank sustainability
- A central, active downtown location that is more cost-effective and efficient for operations

BENEFITS FOR PRESERVATIONISTS

- The Main Street Approach® reinforces shared preservation goals
- Increased opportunities for education, outreach, and advocacy
- Greater public awareness and enhanced credibility for preservation efforts
- Improved overall public image of preservation within the community
- Stronger economic feasibility that supports the restoration and reuse of historic structures

CRITERIA FOR NATIONALLY ACCREDITED MAIN STREETS

National Main Street America Accreditation (NAMS) is awarded exclusively to local Main Street programs that meet a defined set of performance standards demonstrating they operate a strong, sustainable, preservation-based economic revitalization program. These standards are evaluated annually and represent the highest level of recognition within the Main Street America network.

The points below serve as a roadmap for your program and provide targets for stronger, more effective performance. Indiana Main Street programs must meet all six criteria to receive and maintain their status as a Nationally Accredited Main Street Program (NAMS). Achieving and maintaining this designation requires significant dedication from the community, and with it comes the honor of using the title “Nationally Accredited Main Street.” Communities must be evaluated annually — including a bi-annual site visit with local stakeholders — and accreditation is granted only to communities with Main Street Designation that fully participate in the state network. Main Street America has six standards that every Main Street are to demonstrate achievement in.



1. **Broad-Based Community Support:** Successful, sustainable revitalization is built on a community-wide effort that brings together the public and private sectors with a shared sense of ownership and commitment to the downtown or commercial district.
2. **Inclusive Leadership and Organizational Capacity:** Thriving communities rely on strong leadership at every level, from dedicated volunteers to professional staff who contribute their time, talent, and passion to the revitalization effort.
3. **Diverse Funding and Sustainable Program Operations:** A successful Main Street program must have the financial resources necessary to carry out its work and support long-term organizational sustainability.
4. **Strategy-Driven Programming:** The Main Street Approach is rooted in intentional, strategy-driven work. Change is a core principle, and successful programs implement initiatives that directly support their locally developed transformation strategies.

5. **Preservation-Based Economic Development:** Strong Main Street programs leverage and preserve their district's unique historic and cultural assets as the foundation for economic revitalization.

6. **Demonstrated Impact and Results:** Accredited Main Street communities contribute to a national network with a proven record of generating economic return. Programs must show measurable outcomes that strengthen their district's position in a competitive marketplace.

Accredited programs are selected by the local Coordinating Program, Indiana Main Street, under the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs, using the accreditation standards outlined above, along with the following baseline requirements:



- A Board of Directors formed by a representative base of the district stakeholders and community members, dedicated to leading the district's Main Street program.
- Detailed work plans that outline programming across the Main Street Four Points.
- A dedicated budget for the district's revitalization programming and the Main Street program's operations.
- Demonstrated support from municipality for the Main Street program. This can include leadership participation, funding, in-kind and philosophical support.
- Ability to report reinvestment statistics reported as required by coordinating program (quarterly and annually).
- Active nonprofit tax filing status - 501(c)(3).
- Be a member in good standing with Main Street America and Indiana Main Street with use of the Main Street America logo and Indiana Main Street logo on it's webpage and/or social media.
- Communities over 5,000 in population must employ a Full Time Equivalent program director. Communities under 5,000 in population must employ a 20-hour minimum per week program director.
 - Equivalent meaning two or more people working 40 hours a week total.
- Identified Transformation Strategy to direct the work of the program, based on community input and market understanding.
- Detailed work plans aligned with the selected Transformation Strategy from IMS/MSA.
- Annual reporting completed and submitted in annual reporting to the coordinating program and published to local community.

RE-ACCREDITATION

All Main Street organizations undergo an annual re-accreditation process to ensure they continue to meet the standards and expectations set forth by both Indiana Main Street and Main Street America. Accreditation is not permanent; is subject to change each year but it is based on demonstration of performance, active participation, and adherence to required criteria and standards.

Purpose of Re-Accreditation

The re-accreditation process:

- Confirms the organization is operating with best practices in revitalization
- Ensures compliance with statewide and national standards
- Reinforces organizational accountability and sustainability
- Provides recognition of excellence within the Main Street network
- Helps maintain credibility with stakeholders, funders, and local government

Accreditation is a mark of quality and professionalism, reflecting the organization's commitment to the Main Street approach.

Because expectations differ at each tier, organizations must review their specific requirements annually to ensure they are in full compliance before submitting materials for re-accreditation.

Annual Review and Submission

The re-accreditation process typically involves:

- Completing required documentation and forms
- Providing evidence of activities, outcomes, and compliance
- Submitting annual data and reports

Participating in evaluations, interviews, or site visits if required

Organizations should maintain accurate records throughout the year to make the re-accreditation process efficient and ensure all standards are fully supported with documentation.

Importance of Maintaining Accreditation

Re-accreditation strengthens the organization's reputation and demonstrates its continued effectiveness in downtown revitalization. Maintaining accreditation is especially important when:

- Applying for grants
- Seeking sponsorships
- Requesting local government support
- Developing partnerships with other agencies
- Demonstrating accountability to the community

Accredited Main Streets are viewed as reliable, professionally managed, and committed to long-term community improvement.



ODAN Re-Accreditation

Organizations participating at the ODAN level must complete an annual re-accreditation process to remain in good standing with Indiana Main Street (IMS). This process ensures that each organization continues to demonstrate alignment with both state and national Main Street principles, maintains strong community engagement, and upholds the standards necessary for success in the Main Street program.

Annual Review Process

All required reporting for re-accreditation must be submitted to Indiana Main Street by December 15 each year. After reviewing the submitted materials, IMS staff will schedule a feedback meeting with the organization. This meeting may take place either via Microsoft Teams or through an in-person site visit, depending on need and availability. Feedback meetings provide an opportunity for clarification, evaluation, and constructive guidance on strengthening program performance.



ODAN Accreditation Standards

To successfully maintain ODAN accreditation, organizations must meet the following standards each year:

- Committee Structure and Activity
 - Demonstrate active committees representing at least two of the Four Points. Committees must show evidence of meaningful work and progress in their respective focus areas.
- Active and Diverse Board
 - Maintain an engaged board of directors that includes representation from diverse organizations and stakeholder groups within the community.
- Professional Conduct
 - Board members and staff must adhere to a professional code of conduct in all interactions with local officials, business owners, and community representatives. Respect, ethics, and professionalism are required at all times.
- Recognized Nonprofit Status
 - Maintain an independent, recognized 501(c)(3) organization. The organization must not charge membership fees as part of its funding model.
- Broad-Based Community Support
 - Demonstrate support from both the public and private sectors through financial contributions, sponsorships, or documented in-kind donations.
- Ongoing Communication
 - Maintain regular communication with Indiana Main Street staff and local government officials to ensure alignment, support, and transparency.
- Training Requirements
 - Attend all required Indiana Main Street trainings annually.
 - At least one representative (board or staff) must attend one IMS training or Main Street America training each year.
 - Newly hired staff must attend all seven IMS onboarding webinars and one in-person IMS training.

- The following list represents the minimum required documentation that must be submitted to Indiana Main Street each year as part of the ODAN re-accreditation process. Organizations are encouraged to maintain these records throughout the year to ensure timely and accurate submission.
 - Submit the following items each year:
 - Mission and vision statements
 - Work plans for active committees
 - Evidence of historic preservation work completed annually
 - Board meeting minutes
 - Board and committee rosters
 - Return on Investment (ROI) data
 - Financial documentation
- IRS Compliance
 - File all applicable IRS forms each year and maintain compliance with federal nonprofit reporting requirements.
- Brand and Logo Use
 - Adhere to approved branding guidelines when using ODAN, Indiana Main Street (IMS), and/or OCRA logos on all marketing and promotional materials.



Aspiring-IAMS Re-Accreditation and Advancement to Indiana Accredited Main Street

Organizations participating at the Aspiring level must complete an annual re-accreditation process to remain in good standing with Indiana Main Street or to advance to the Indiana Accredited Main Street level. This process ensures that each organization demonstrates alignment with state and national Main Street principles, maintains active community engagement, and builds the organizational capacity necessary for full accreditation.

Annual Review Process

Aspiring-IAMS organizations must submit required reporting to Indiana Main Street each quarter, on the following dates:

- April 15
- July 15
- Oct. 15
- Dec. 15

In addition, organizations must complete a formal self-assessment and participate in an accreditation visit conducted by Indiana Main Street staff and Office of Community and Rural Affairs representatives.

After reviewing submitted materials and interviews at a formal evaluation site visit, IMS staff will schedule a feedback meeting and provide a written feedback document. These resources help the organization strengthen operations, prepare to advance to the IAMS level, or maintain compliance for the maximum three-year period allowed at the Aspiring-IAMS level. Feedback meetings may occur via Microsoft Teams or through an in-person site visit.

Accreditation Standards to be maintained by Aspiring-IAMS

Aspiring-IAMS organizations must meet the following standards each year:

- Committee Structure and Activity
 - Demonstrate active committees representing all four Main Street points: Organization, Design, Economic Vitality, and Promotion.
 - Committees must show evidence of meaningful, mission-aligned work.
 - The Four-Point Approach must be clearly reflected in staff and committee activities.
- Active and Diverse Board
 - Maintain an engaged board of directors with diverse representation across community organizations, business sectors, and stakeholder groups.
- Professional Conduct
 - Board members and staff must adhere to a professional code of conduct when interacting with local officials, businesses, and community members.
 - Respect, ethics, and professionalism are required at all times.
- Recognized Nonprofit Status
 - Maintain an independent, recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.
 - Membership fees may not be used as a funding mechanism.
- Historic Preservation Commitment
 - Demonstrate promotion, encouragement, and support of historic preservation values and activities.
- Broad-Based Community Support
 - Show evidence of financial or in-kind support from both public and private sectors.
- Accreditation Requirements
 - Aspiring-IAMS organizations must meet all baseline requirements set by Main Street America annually.
 - Progress requirements include with all baseline requirements:
 - Year 1: Score at least 2 out of 5 on two accreditation standards.
 - Year 2: Score at least 2 out of 5 on four accreditation standards.
 - Year 3: Score at least 2 out of 5 on all accreditation standards.
 - These benchmarks ensure steady progress toward full IAMS accreditation.
- Ongoing Communication
 - Maintain consistent, proactive communication with IMS staff and local government partners.



- Funding Expectations
 - Establish and maintain a stable, long-term funding strategy.
 - The Board of Directors must serve as the primary fundraising body for the organization.
- Training Requirements
 - Aspiring-IAMS organizations must meet the following training standards:
 - Attend all required Indiana Main Street trainings annually.
 - A representative must attend all seven Aspring-IAMS webinars and the in-person training held in the Spring
 - All board and staff members must attend one IMS training or Main Street America training each year.
 - Newly hired staff must attend all seven IMS onboarding webinars and one in-person IMS training.
 - Training ensures that organizational leadership remains informed, equipped, and capable of carrying out Main Street principles effectively.
- Annual Report Submission
 - Organizations must provide an annual report to the local unit of government. This report should clearly demonstrate the organization's impact, activities, accomplishments, and community value.
- Required Documentation to IMS
 - The following minimum documentation must be submitted to IMS quarterly and annually as part of the Aspiring-IAMS/IAMS re-accreditation process:
 - Work plans for each activity and committee
 - Committee summary minutes
 - Board meeting minutes
 - Board and committee rosters
 - Return on Investment (ROI) data
 - Marketing proof (e.g., ads, social media posts, newsletters)
 - Organization photos documenting events and district improvements
 - Financial documentation, including budgets and year-end financials
 - Aspiring-IAMS organizations agree to utilize the Maestro reporting system and must upload all required materials by each deadline set forth annually.
- IRS Compliance
 - Organizations must file all applicable IRS forms each year and remain in compliance with federal nonprofit reporting standards.
- Brand and Logo Use
 - Organizations must adhere to all approved branding guidelines when using Aspiring-IAMS, Indiana Main Street (IMS), and/or OCRA logos on any marketing material, promotional content, or public communication

IAMS Re-Accreditation

Organizations participating at the Indiana Accredited Main Street level must complete an annual re-accreditation process to maintain good standing with Indiana Main Street. This process ensures ongoing alignment with state and national Main Street principles, sustained community engagement, and the organizational capacity necessary for full accreditation.

Annual Review Process

- IAMS organizations are required to submit quarterly reports to Indiana Main Street on the following dates:
 - April 15
 - July 15
 - Oct. 15
 - Dec. 15
- Organizations must also complete an annual self-assessment and participate in an accreditation visit conducted bi-annually by IMS staff and representatives from the Office of Community and Rural Affairs.
- Following review of submitted materials and information gathered during the accreditation visit, IMS staff will schedule a feedback meeting and provide a written feedback report. These resources are intended to support organizational improvement. Feedback meetings may be held virtually via Microsoft Teams or through an in-person site visit.

Accreditation Standards for IAMS

- Each year, IAMS organizations must meet the following standards:
 - Committee Structure and Activity
 - Maintain active committees representing all four Main Street points: Organization, Design, Economic Vitality, and Promotion.
 - Committees must provide evidence of meaningful, mission-aligned work.
 - The Four-Point Approach must be clearly reflected in staff and committee operations.
 - Active and Diverse Board
 - Maintain an engaged board of directors with broad representation across community organizations, business sectors, and stakeholder groups.
 - Professional Conduct
 - Board members and staff must uphold professional conduct at all times when interacting with local officials, businesses, and community members.
 - Respect, ethics, and professionalism are required.
 - Recognized Nonprofit Status
 - Maintain an independent, recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.
 - Membership fees may not be used as a funding mechanism.
 - Historic Preservation Commitment
 - Demonstrate promotion, encouragement, and support of historic preservation values and activities.
 - Broad-Based Community Support
 - Provide evidence of financial or in-kind support from both the public and private sectors.
 - Accreditation Requirements
 - Meet all baseline requirements established annually by Main Street America.
 - Score at least 2 out of 5 on all accreditation standards set by Main Street America.
 - Ongoing Communication
 - Maintain consistent and proactive communication with IMS staff and local government partners.

- Funding Expectations
 - Establish and maintain a stable, long-term funding strategy.
 - The Board of Directors must serve as the organization's primary fundraising body.
- Training Requirements
 - IAMS organizations must meet the following training standards:
 - Attend all required Indiana Main Street trainings each year.
 - All board and staff members must attend at least one IMS or Main Street America training annually.
 - Send a representative each year to a Community Exchange
 - Send a representative annually to either the Main Street America NOW Conference or the Indiana Landmarks Preserving Historic Places Conference.
 - Newly hired staff must attend all seven IMS onboarding webinars and one in-person IMS training.
 - Training is intended to ensure organizational leadership remains informed, prepared, and capable of effectively implementing Main Street principles.
- Annual Report Submission
 - Organizations must submit an annual report to the local unit of government that clearly outlines organizational impact, activities, accomplishments, and community value.
- Required Documentation to IMS
 - The following documentation must be submitted to IMS quarterly and annually as part of the IAMS re-accreditation process:
 - Work plans for all activities and committees
 - Committee summary minutes
 - Board meeting minutes
 - Board and committee rosters
 - Return on Investment data
 - Marketing materials (e.g., advertisements, social media posts, newsletters)
 - Organizational photos documenting events and district improvements
 - Financial documentation, including budgets and year-end financials
 - IAMS organizations must use the Maestro reporting system and upload all required materials by the deadlines established each year.
- IRS Compliance
 - Organizations must file all required IRS forms annually and maintain compliance with federal nonprofit reporting standards.
- Brand and Logo Use
 - Organizations must follow all approved branding guidelines when using IAMS, IMS, and/or OCRA logos on marketing materials, promotional content, and public communications.



NAMS Re-Accreditation

Organizations participating at the Nationally Accredited Main Street (NAMS) level must complete an annual re-accreditation process to maintain good standing with Indiana Main Street (IMS) and Main Street America (MSA). This process ensures continued alignment with both state and national Main Street principles, sustained community engagement, and the organizational capacity required for full accreditation. NAMS organizations are subject to standards and formal agreements established by Indiana Main Street and Main Street America, and must adhere to all requirements set forth by both entities.

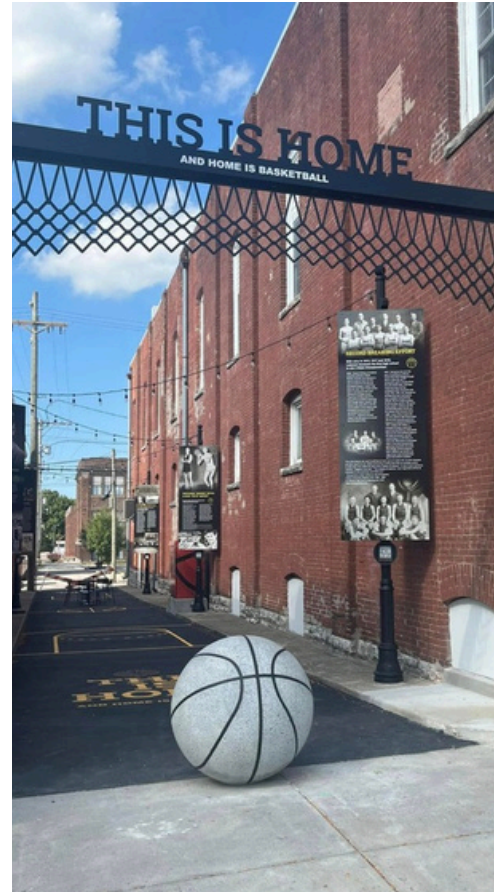
Annual Review Process

- NAMS organizations are required to submit quarterly reports to Indiana Main Street on the following dates:
 - April 15
 - July 15
 - October 15
 - December 15
- Organizations must also complete an annual self-assessment in the Main Street America reporting portal and participate in a bi-annual accreditation visit conducted by IMS staff, Main Street America staff or representatives from the Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA).
- Following review of submitted materials and information gathered during the accreditation visit, IMS staff will schedule a feedback meeting and provide a written feedback report. These resources are intended to support organizational improvement. Feedback meetings may be held virtually via Microsoft Teams or through an in-person site visit.

Accreditation Standards for NAMS

- Each year, NAMS organizations must meet the following standards:
 - Committee Structure and Activity
 - Maintain active committees representing all four Main Street points: Organization, Design, Economic Vitality, and Promotion.
 - Committees must provide evidence of meaningful, mission-aligned work.
 - The Four-Point Approach and Transformational Strategies must be clearly reflected in staff and committee operations.
 - Active and Diverse Board
 - Maintain an engaged board of directors with broad representation across community organizations, business sectors, and stakeholder groups.
 - Professional Conduct
 - Board members and staff must uphold professional conduct at all times when interacting with local officials, businesses, and community members.
 - Respect, ethics, and professionalism are required.
 - Recognized Nonprofit Status
 - Maintain an independent, recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.
 - Membership fees may not be used as a funding mechanism.
 - Historic Preservation Commitment
 - Demonstrate promotion, encouragement, and support of historic preservation values and activities.
 - Broad-Based Community Support
 - Provide evidence of financial or in-kind support from both the public and private sectors.
 - Accreditation Requirements
 - Meet all baseline requirements established annually by Main Street America.
 - Score at least 3 out of 5 on all accreditation standards set by Main Street America.

- Ongoing Communication
 - Maintain consistent and proactive communication with IMS staff and local government partners.
- Funding Expectations
 - Establish and maintain a stable, long-term funding strategy.
 - The Board of Directors must serve as the organization's primary fundraising body.
- Training Requirements
 - NAMS organizations must meet the following training standards:
 - Attend all required Indiana Main Street trainings each year.
 - All board and staff members must attend at least one IMS or Main Street America training annually.
 - Send a representative each year to a Community Exchange
 - Send a representative annually to either the Main Street America NOW Conference or the Indiana Landmarks Preserving Historic Places Conference.
 - Newly hired staff must attend all seven IMS onboarding webinars and one in-person IMS training.
 - Training is intended to ensure organizational leadership remains informed, prepared, and capable of effectively implementing Main Street principles.
- Annual Report Submission
 - Organizations must submit an annual report to the local unit of government that clearly outlines organizational impact, activities, accomplishments, and community value.
- Required Documentation to IMS
 - The following documentation must be submitted to IMS quarterly and annually as part of the NAMS re-accreditation process:
 - Work plans for all activities and committees
 - Committee summary minutes
 - Board meeting minutes
 - Board and committee rosters
 - Return on Investment data
 - Marketing materials (e.g., advertisements, social media posts, newsletters)
 - Organizational photos documenting events and district improvements
 - Financial documentation, including budgets and year-end financials
 - NAMS organizations must use the Maestro reporting system and upload all required materials by the deadlines established each year.
- IRS Compliance
 - Organizations must file all required IRS forms annually and maintain compliance with federal nonprofit reporting standards.
- Brand and Logo Use
 - Organizations must follow all approved branding guidelines when using IAMS, IMS, and/or OCRA logos on marketing materials, promotional content, and public communications.



- Office Space
 - Organizations must maintain a dedicated office space with established office hours and the equipment necessary to support program operations. This office space should be located within the Main Street district.
 - The office must be easily accessible and welcoming to the public. While security is essential, measures such as requiring visitors to ring a doorbell or present identification for entry into the building can create barriers and discourage community engagement. Programs should balance security needs with an environment that remains open, inviting, and accessible.
- Staffing Requirements
 - NAMS organizations serving a population over 5,000 must employ staff equivalent to 40 hours per week.
 - NAMS organizations serving a population under 5,000 must employ staff equivalent to 20 hours per week.
 - All staffing changes must be reported to Indiana Main Street (IMS) within 2 weeks of hiring/leave of employment by the board President or hiring committee chair.
 - NAMS organizations are responsible for carrying out job descriptions, performance evaluations, and all related human resources duties for Main Street staff, regardless of whether funding for those positions is provided directly by the organization or secured through external partners.
 - Interim directors should only be considered for 4-6 months at maximum and will need to comply with all training and requirements set forth by Indiana Main Street.
- Social Media Expectations
 - Organizations must actively contribute to the IMS Network Facebook page to support peer learning, mentorship, and collaboration across the Main Street network.
- Transformational Strategies
 - NAMS organizations are required to maintain a transformational strategy developed by Main Street America and/or Indiana Main Street.
 - Organizations must actively participate in implementing the strategy and carry out actions aligned with its goals.
 - All transformational strategy activities must be documented within organizational work plans.
- Training Requirements
 - NAMS organizations must meet the following training standards:
 - Attend all required Indiana Main Street trainings each year.
 - All board and staff members must attend at least one IMS or Main Street America training annually.
 - Send a representative each year to a Community Exchange
 - Send a representative annually to either the Main Street America NOW Conference or the Indiana Landmarks Preserving Historic Places Conference.
 - Newly hired staff must attend all seven IMS onboarding webinars and one in-person IMS training.
 - Training is intended to ensure organizational leadership remains informed, prepared, and capable of effectively implementing Main Street principles.
- Annual Report Submission
 - Organizations must submit an annual report to the local unit of government that clearly outlines organizational impact, activities, accomplishments, and community value.

- Required Documentation to IMS
 - The following documentation must be submitted to IMS quarterly and annually as part of the NAMS re-accreditation process:
 - Work plans for all activities and committees
 - Committee summary minutes
 - Board meeting minutes
 - Board and committee rosters
 - Return on Investment data
 - Marketing materials (e.g., advertisements, social media posts, newsletters)
 - Organizational photos documenting events and district improvements
 - Financial documentation, including budgets and year-end financials
 - NAMS organizations must use the Maestro reporting system and upload all required materials by the deadlines established each year.
- IRS Compliance
 - Organizations must file all required IRS forms annually and maintain compliance with federal nonprofit reporting standards.
- Brand and Logo Use
 - Organizations must follow all approved branding guidelines when using IAMS, IMS, and/or OCRA logos on marketing materials, promotional content, and public communications.

These re-accreditation standards are subject to change. Organizations should consult their current IMS and Main Street America agreements for the most up-to-date requirements.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Main Streets continually evolve as economic development practices, community needs, and best-practice standards change. To remain effective, Main Street organizations are required to participate in ongoing continuing education that supports the needs of Indiana communities.

Main Street Monday

It is important to stay current with Main Street Monday, the weekly communication channel for Indiana Main Street. This resource includes registration links for:

- Webinars
- In-person trainings
- Community Exchanges
- Conferences
- Other professional development opportunities

Each year, be sure to share the Main Street Monday subscription link with all new board and committee members:

<https://bit.ly/MSM-SignUp>

Recorded Webinars

Recognizing that Main Streets are largely volunteer-driven, Indiana Main Street records all webinars for convenient access. These recordings also count toward continuing education requirements.

Webinar archive link:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLWuvYyJVLEX7I260TUUioe39XEPI5Rjg9>

Main Street America – Main Street Academy

Main Street America provides an additional platform for professional development through the Main Street Academy. All trainings, courses, and educational opportunities within the Academy count toward continuing education requirements and offer valuable insights into national Main Street best practices.

Technical Assistance

Continuing education credit is also awarded when Indiana Main Street staff or Main Street America staff provide technical assistance visits — excluding site visits or accreditation reviews. These sessions offer specialized, community-specific guidance that supports ongoing growth and improvement.

All technical assistance provided by Indiana Main Street is offered free of charge to every state-recognized Main Street organization. Local Main Street programs are encouraged to reach out to indianamainstreet@ocra.in.gov to take advantage of this free service. There are also many opportunities for Main Street America to provide technical assistance at no cost, coordinated at the discretion of Indiana Main Street.

Ball State Indiana Communities Institute

The Ball State Indiana Communities Institute offers several educational opportunities that support continued learning for Main Street organizations. Two courses currently count toward annual continuing education requirements:

- Indiana Economic Development Course (4-day program)
- Indiana Community Development Course (3-day program)

While the Institute offers additional trainings and programs, only these two courses qualify as continuing education at this time. Participation in these courses provides valuable insights into community and economic development strategies relevant to Main Streets.

It is important to note that these courses do not replace the requirement of attending at least one Community Exchange or one conference each year. Organizations must meet all continuing education components to remain compliant and stay informed about best practices in the Main Street network.



INDIANA MAIN STREET

APPLICATION PROCESS & CRITERIA

Below is the process for submitting an application to become designated by Indiana Main Street. The Indiana Main Street Program (IMS) is part of the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA). As a trademarked program under the Main Street America, a community or district may not refer to itself as an “Indiana Main Street,” nor may it employ an “Indiana Main Street Manager/Director,” without submitting an application and receiving official designation from OCRA.

Communities are encouraged to begin organizing and implementing the Four-Point Approach® before applying for designation. Once approved, designation by IMS both permits and requires the community to use IMS branding and program affiliation. Remember IMS is here to support you through this progress. Please consult IMS staff with any questions or concerns before implementation.

All communities applying to become an Indiana Main Street program begin at the OCRA Downtown Affiliate Network (ODAN) level and then advance through the levels as they meet specific criteria and demonstrate the capacity to maintain the responsibilities of the next designation.

ODAN Application Process and Criteria

As ODAN communities are in the early stages of development and capacity-building, they are only required to begin working in a minimum of two of the Four-Point Approach® pillars. It is strongly recommended that Organization be one of these pillars, as a functional operations team is essential for building a successful and sustainable Main Street program.

Communities begin the process by attending a Main Street 101 session in early summer of the application year. This session, hosted by Indiana Main Street staff, provides an overview of the Main Street Approach® and details the application process.

Later in the summer, communities submit a Letter of Intent, signed by board members, to formally indicate their interest in applying. This notice helps IMS staff and OCRA Community Liaisons understand the community’s readiness and commitment.

The next step is a forms submission confirming whether the foundational requirements have been met or are actively in progress as part of the application process.

These foundational requirements are:

- Be an independent 501(c)(3) organization with active nonprofit tax status, or have a nonprofit application in progress.
- Maintain an active Board of Directors responsible for leading the district’s Main Street program.
- Demonstrate the presence of historic fabric within the downtown district.
- Hold a public meeting to explain the Main Street Approach® and share the organization’s mission and vision.

- Provide a letter of support or a formal resolution from the community's chief elected official.
- Attend an MS101 information session during the current application year.
- Submit the session date, location, and names of all attendees.
- Demonstrate the capacity to track key reinvestment statistics throughout the year and report them annually.
- Demonstrate a commitment to operating under a dedicated budget for downtown revitalization.
- Show willingness to complete work plans outlining programming across the Four-Point Approach®.



If the Letter of Intent and foundational requirements are met, communities will be invited to complete an application to become an ODAN. The application requires the submission of the following items at minimum:

- Organization website link
- Organization Facebook page and/or other social media platforms
- Mission statement
- Vision statement
- By-laws
- Policies and procedures manual
- Board of Directors roster
- Committees roster
- Volunteer recruitment plan
- Map of the proposed district
- Documentation from SHAARD demonstrating historic buildings in the district
- Municipal support plans
- Public meeting minutes
- Letters of support from the local unit of government
- Letters of support from local businesses
- Business inventory
- Property inventory
- Information on historic preservation work underway or completed
- Nonprofit documentation (or proof of application in progress)
- Program budget
- Fundraising work plans
- Banking practices
- Insurance information
- Annual work plans
- "Feel-good" stories or success highlights that represent the district's strengths



ASPIRING-IAMS APPLICATION PROCESS & CRITERIA

Applications for Aspiring-IAMS open in late summer. However, any ODAN community interested in applying should begin discussions with their OCRA Community Liaison during the winter prior to the application year to ensure they receive guidance and support throughout the process.

ODAN communities preparing to apply should also attend a Main Street 101 session again, even if they have attended in the past. These sessions offer updated tips, clarifications, and improvements to the application process that Indiana Main Street incorporates each year.

Applicants interested in participating in the Aspiring-IAMS Capacity-Building Program should be communities that already have, or are actively developing, the capacity to implement all four pillars of the Main Street Four-Point Approach® and meet the Baseline Requirements of the Indiana Accredited Main Street Standards.

ODANs seeking to apply should:

- Maintain ODAN status for at least one year
 - This ensures that communities have dedicated time to build structure, capacity, and operational alignment with the Main Street Approach®.
- Meet all Main Street America Baseline Requirements except the following:
 - Indiana Accredited Main Streets are not required to employ paid staff or to identify and implement Transformation Strategies. These elements are required for Nationally Accredited Main Streets, but not at the Indiana Accredited or Aspiring levels.
- Complete the Self-Assessment Benchmark Report
 - This tool helps communities identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improvement before applying. The completed self-assessment is included as part of the formal application and serves as a readiness indicator for IMS staff.

IAMS APPLICATION PROCESS AND CRITERIA

Aspiring-IAMS is a capacity-building phase. Communities in this tier are evaluated annually to ensure they are meeting all baseline requirements and the standards set by Main Street America. A community may remain in the Aspiring-IAMS level for one to three years.

After this period, communities will either:

- Advance to Indiana Accredited Main Street if they demonstrate the required capacity, structure, and readiness, or
- Be advised that they are not yet ready to move forward and should return to ODAN status to regroup, strengthen capacity, and reapply in a future cycle—often after expanding their volunteer base or enhancing organizational systems.

Indiana Main Street's goal is to support each community's success at the level that best fits its current capacity and readiness. Not every community will become a Nationally Accredited Main Street, and that is perfectly acceptable. What matters most is placing communities at the level where they can be successful, sustainable, and impactful right now.

NAMS APPLICATION PROCESS AND CRITERIA

Communities that have been an Indiana Accredited Main Street for at least one year may submit a Letter of Intent in early fall to Indiana Main Street to indicate their desire to pursue Nationally Accredited Main Street status.

After the Letter of Intent is received, the community will undergo an evaluation site visit. During this visit, the community must:

- Demonstrate completion of all Main Street America baseline requirements, and
- Achieve a rating of “satisfactory progress” on all standards established by Main Street America.
- Only communities that meet these expectations are eligible to advance to National Main Street Accreditation.



HELPFUL APPLICATION TIPS

- Maps should be clear, easy to read, and include well-defined district boundaries.
- Districts must be walkable, located within the traditional central business district, and contain historic buildings/fabric.
- Use the correct and most current application link available on the IMS website.
- Talk with your OCRA Community Liaison and IMS staff. We are here to help — no question is too small!
- Use the templates provided by IMS. These templates are designed to ensure all required information is included.
- Complete the entire application thoroughly.
- Submit all documents to IMS in PDF or JPG format.
- Label all pictures for clarity. Including photos of people is especially helpful in demonstrating community support.
- Letters of support from local elected officials must be submitted on official letterhead.
- Do not handwrite applications or any supporting documentation, as handwritten materials are often difficult to read.
- Do not wait until the last minute to review the application. Completing it should be a thoughtful, time-intensive process led by the full board.

STEPS FOR FORMING A MAIN STREET PROGRAM

Contact your OCRA Community Liaison

1. OCRA Community Liaisons and IMS staff are here to help the whole way from application through being a main street for over 40 years. We are here to provide assistance and resources for your community.

Assemble a core team to speak with downtown businesses and property owners about forming a downtown organization. Engage the City, Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Commission, and other local partners to gather input and build support.

Identify potential board members and supporters. Form an interim Board of Directors (always keep odd numbers of board members).

1. Local Elected officials are great members for the Main Street board to keep open communication. However, they should remain as ex-officios (non-voting) so that they are permitted to vote as local elected officials concerning matters that relate to Main Street.

Select an organization name. Choose something simple, clear, and professional. Save creative or catchy language for taglines or promotions.

1. Determine your district boundaries/primary focus area. Focus on where efforts will have the greatest impact. IMS typically defines a district as:
 - a. A traditional business district and center of socio-economic activity
 - b. A cohesive core of historic and/or older commercial and mixed-use buildings
 - c. Buildings arranged side-by-side, fronting the sidewalk along a main street
 - d. Compact, walkable, and pedestrian-oriented

Draft Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation. OCRA has sample documents. IMS can review them, and you may also want an attorney to review.

File as an Indiana Domestic Nonprofit Corporation with the Secretary of State. Once approved, you will receive a Certificate of Incorporation.

1. File a Business Entity Report through the Secretary of State's online portal within a month of incorporating as an organization. This will become a biannual process.

Fill out and submit the NP-20 form with the Indiana Department of Revenue to receive a general Indiana Sales Tax exemption certificate.



9. Hold the first official board meeting to:
 - a. Adopt bylaws
 - b. Elect officers (President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer)
 - c. Establish a fiscal year
 - d. Select a bank and discuss financial arrangements
 - e. Authorize preparation and filing of IRS forms
 - f. Establish a mailing address or PO box
 - g. Conduct any other necessary business
 - h. The Secretary must take minutes.
10. File IRS Form SS-4 to obtain a Federal Employer Identification Number (EIN). At the same time, download the application for 501(c)(3) nonprofit designation. (Note: this classification does not allow the organization to collect or charge membership fees). Recommendation: seek legal guidance before completing these forms.
11. Check with your municipality to determine if any local filings or requirements apply.
12. Reserve or purchase an internet domain name and create social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, etc.).
13. Hold a public meeting to educate the community about downtown revitalization. IMS or your Community Liaison can present at this session. Notify local media beforehand and invite them to attend.
14. Develop a draft first-year budget and seek financial support from local stakeholders and partners. IMS has a template for Main Street budgets.
 - a. Open a bank account with 2-3 signers who are board members
 - b. Start soliciting donations to cover start up costs
15. Consult with insurance agents to obtain quotes and appropriate coverage, such as:
 - a. General liability
 - b. Directors & Officers (D&O)
 - c. Workers' compensation
 - d. Special event insurance
 - e. The National Trust Insurance Services offers policies for Main Street organizations (requires Main Street America membership).
16. Hold a board goal-setting session to create a 12-18-month workplan.
 - a. Establish a mission statement, goals, and objectives
 - b. Form teams based on the Main Street structure
 - c. Have each team brainstorm activities to achieve goals
 - d. Early efforts should be visible, tangible, affordable, and realistic-but not too small.
17. Publicize your efforts. Send press releases to local media and consider letters to the editor for added visibility.
18. Apply for Indiana Main Street designation through your OCRA Community Liaison.
19. Celebrate your IMS designation! A celebration brings visibility, builds momentum, and recognizes all the work invested.
20. File your 990 tax return form by the 15th day of the 5th month following the end of your organization's stated fiscal year - repeat this annually.

Starting a Main Street takes passion and drive above all else - to make the paperwork a smooth process, please follow the Starting a Main Street Workplan from IMS. It provides an order to filling out the forms along with links, costs, and practical notes. To receive a copy of this work plan or any other of the many Main Street Templates, reach out to IndianaMainStreet@OCRA.IN.gov.

NONPROFIT FILING REQUIREMENTS

INDIANA

After a nonprofit organization is legally established, it must meet ongoing reporting requirements for the following agencies:

- Indiana Secretary of State
- Indiana Department of Revenue
- Internal Revenue Service

Reporting Requirements – Indiana Secretary of State

All nonprofit corporations—both domestic and foreign—are required to file a business entity report every two years. The filing fee is \$22.00 (2026) if done online, and the report must be submitted during the month the organization was originally formed. Failure to file the required report will result in the organization being administratively dissolved or revoked.

Business entity reports can be filed online at: inbiz.in.gov/business-filings/business-entityreport

To remain eligible for state or federal grants, an organization must be current on all business entity reports. Continued failure to file will result in administrative dissolution, meaning the organization ceases to legally exist. Grant administrators typically verify this status early in the review process.

Failing to complete basic filing requirements can raise significant concerns about an organization's capacity, governance, and professionalism.

Reporting Requirements – Indiana Department of Revenue

Indiana nonprofit corporations must file Form NP-20R with the Indiana Department of Revenue every five years, beginning in 2024. This filing is due on the same date as the organization's federal Form 990, which is May 15. Failure to file Form NP-20R will result in the loss of the organization's state sales tax exemption.

The initial filing schedule is based on the last two digits of the organization's Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN):

- FEIN ending in 00–24: First NP-20R was due May 15, 2024
- FEIN ending in 25–49: First NP-20R was due May 15, 2025
- FEIN ending in 50–74: First NP-20R was due May 15, 2026
- FEIN ending in 75–99: First NP-20R is due May 15, 2027

For nonprofits formed after 2022, the initial NP-20R filing is due five years after the year of formation, with subsequent filings required every five years thereafter.

Reporting Requirements – Internal Revenue Service

501(c)(3) organizations (excluding houses of worship) with annual income over \$50,000 are required to file Form 990 or Form 990-EZ each year. The filing deadline is May 15 annually. There is no fee for filing Form 990.



Form 990 is a public document. By law, an organization must make its Form 990 available upon request.

Copies may also be viewed or downloaded free of charge at <https://apps.irs.gov/app/eos/>. Repeated failure to file Form 990 can result in the automatic revocation of an organization's federal tax-exempt status. Tax-exempt organizations must also make their IRS information returns available to the public in accordance with federal law.

Nonprofit Corporations

All Main Street organizations are required to obtain 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status from the IRS. To qualify, an organization must meet specific organizational and operational criteria established by the IRS.

IRS Publication 557 The current edition, Publication 557 (Rev. Jan. 2025), Tax-Exempt Status for Your Organization, explains eligibility, application procedures, and compliance requirements for 501(c)(3) and other exempt organizations. It is accessible online at [IRS.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p557.pdf](https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p557.pdf).

Workshops and Online Training: The IRS offers virtual workshops tailored to small- and mid-sized tax-exempt organizations. These live and on-demand training sessions, hosted through the Stay Exempt platform, cover topics such as applying for 501(c)(3) status, maintaining tax-exempt status, employment tax concerns, required disclosures, Form 990 filing, unrelated business income, and political campaign rules. Materials are available on [irs.gov/charities-non-profits](https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits).

Employment Filings and Taxes

Nonprofit corporations have the same employer responsibilities as any other organization. This includes accurately reporting wages and withholding required federal, state, and Social Security taxes. These obligations apply even though 501(c)(3) organizations are generally exempt from income tax—their employees are not.

Federal and state withholding payments may be required monthly or quarterly, depending on payroll size and applicable regulations. Nonprofit employers are subject to all standard employment laws, reporting obligations, and tax requirements governing other employers.



OPERATING DOCUMENTS FOR MAIN STREETS

A Nonprofit Organization Must Operate as a Business and Abide by All Federal, State, and Local Laws

Articles of Incorporation

The Articles of Incorporation establish the primary rules governing the management and structure of a nonprofit corporation. They are filed with the Secretary of State and submitted to the Internal Revenue Service when applying for tax-exempt status.

Drafting Articles of Incorporation

To form a nonprofit corporation in Indiana, Articles of Incorporation must be filed. Under IC 23-17-3-2, the Articles of Incorporation must include:

- The name of the corporation, which must include "Corporation," "Company," "Incorporated," "Limited," or an approved abbreviation
- A statement indicating whether the corporation will be a public benefit, religious, or mutual benefit corporation
- The name and address of the Registered Agent
- The name and address of all incorporators
- A statement indicating whether the corporation will have members (for our purposes the voting board of directors).
- A statement describing how assets will be distributed upon dissolution, as required by IC 23-17-22-5



The appropriate Indiana Secretary of State forms for establishing an Indiana nonprofit corporation can be found at inbiz.in.gov/businesss-filings/registration

If you plan to apply for federal tax exemption from the IRS as a charitable organization, your Articles of Incorporation must include both a required purpose clause and a dissolution clause consistent with IRS guidelines. The IRS website (irs.gov) provides detailed information on 501(c)(3) qualifications, including sample Articles of Incorporation. To access these resources, select "Charities and Nonprofits" and then navigate to "Life Cycle of a Public Charity."

Articles of Incorporation function as the nonprofit corporation's foundational governing document. They establish the organization's legal identity and outline essential structural and compliance elements. In Indiana, Articles may be filed online or by mail using State Form 4162 (Domestic Nonprofit Corporation). While the form is straightforward, organizations intending to obtain federal tax-exempt status under 501(c)(3) must include specific IRS-required provisions to qualify.

The IRS provides required language, instructions, and sample Articles in Publication 557 (Rev. January 2025). Since state requirements vary, the IRS samples must be adapted to meet Indiana's nonprofit formation rules under the Indiana Nonprofit Corporation Act of 1991. Below is a list of information commonly required by states and the IRS, updated to current guidance:

Name of the Nonprofit Organization

The Articles must include the full legal name of the corporation. Indiana requires that the name contain "Corporation," "Incorporated," "Limited," "Company," or an accepted abbreviation. Names must be distinguishable from existing Indiana entities to satisfy state law.

Name and Address of Registered Agent

Indiana requires nonprofits to appoint a registered agent with a physical street address in the state, P.O. boxes are not permitted. The agent may be an officer, Indiana resident, or commercial registered agent. The registered agent receives service of process, official notices, and annual reports.

Principal Office Address

Indiana may also require listing the nonprofit's principal office address, which can differ from the registered agent's address.

Duration of the Nonprofit Corporation

If the organization does not have a defined end date, list the duration as "perpetual" in the Articles, consistent with standard nonprofit practice and Indiana filing norms.

Name of Incorporator(s)

Indiana requires the name and signature of the incorporator — the person filing the Articles. Some states require an address, and Indiana's form provides space for additional incorporators if needed.

Name and Address of Director(s)

Indiana requires at least three directors for a nonprofit corporation under state law, but directors do not have to reside in Indiana. Some states require listing directors in the Articles; in Indiana, this is optional but permitted.

Statement of Purpose

To obtain 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, the Articles must include IRS-specific language. Publication 557 provides the required wording, such as: "Said corporation is organized exclusively for charitable, religious, educational, and scientific purposes, including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code..." Indiana's Articles form also reminds filers that IRS-specific language is mandatory for federal approval. Some states ask additionally for a Statement of Lawful Purpose or a more specific programmatic purpose. These remain optional in Indiana but may be helpful depending on organizational mission.

Additional Provisions Supporting Nonprofit Status

To ensure the nonprofit qualifies for federal tax exemption, the Articles must include:
No Private Inurement Clause "No part of the net earnings of the corporation shall inure to the benefit of any private individual..." This language is required by the IRS to demonstrate the organization operates for public, not private, benefit.

Prohibition on Political Activity

"No substantial part of the activities of the corporation shall consist of carrying on propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation... and the corporation shall not participate in any political campaign..." This aligns with 501(c)(3) restrictions and is required in the organizing document.

Dissolution Clause

Upon dissolution, assets must be distributed to another 501(c)(3) organization or government entity for a public purpose. This clause is mandatory to qualify for tax-exempt status.



Bylaws

Bylaws serve as the governing documents for the organization's Board of Directors and outline how the board conducts its business. They define the board's structure, roles, responsibilities, and operating procedures.

Recommended Bylaw Components

Bylaws should be annually reviewed and updated. Key components include:

- General Information
 - Organization Identity and Purpose
 - Legal name of the organization
 - Office locations (if applicable)
 - Mission and vision statement
 - Reference to the Main Street Approach™
 - Defined Main Street district or service boundaries

- Board of Directors, Officers, and Teams
 - Board size
 - Officer positions
 - Roles and responsibilities of officers, board members, and volunteers
 - Eligibility requirements (appointees, designated organizational representatives, etc.)
 - Terms and term limits
 - Election procedures
 - Removal and vacancy processes
 - Participation expectations (e.g., 75% meeting attendance, committee leadership, volunteer hour expectations)
- Committees
 - Committees aligned with the Four-Point Main Street Approach
 - Committee definitions and formation processes
- Meetings
 - Meeting frequency
 - Use of Robert's Rules of Order
 - Quorum definition
 - Voting procedures
 - Special meeting protocols
- Financial Management
 - Fiscal year definition
 - Budget approval process
 - Financial oversight responsibilities
 - Audit requirements
- Conflict of Interest
 - Disclosure requirements
 - Recusal procedures
 - Annual conflict-of-interest statements
- Indemnification
- Amendments
 - Process for changing bylaws
 - Required notice and voting thresholds
- Dissolution Clause
 - Requirement that assets be distributed to another nonprofit or government entity upon dissolution



Sustainability Considerations

- Term limits structured so no more than one-third of the board turns over annually.
- Holistic board composition that includes individuals with a vested interest in downtown.
- Leadership development processes to transition board members into officer roles.

Policies and Procedures

This is a comprehensive book that supports the by-laws and works to clarify roles and responsibilities of all members of the organization. Policies and Procedures handbooks should be reviewed annually and updated as needed.

Recommended Policies and Procedures Components

- Organization Overview
 - Organization Structure
 - Strategic Goals
 - District Map
 - Demographics of area
- Governance Policies
 - Board Roles and Responsibilities (Specifics)
 - Officer duties
 - Board Recruitment
 - Voting Procedures
 - Committee Structure
 - Committee Participation
 - Conflicts of Interest
 - Filed with State Board of Accounts and at local program
 - Make available upon request to IMS staff
 - Confidentiality and Whistleblower
 - Document Retention
 - Succession Planning
- Volunteer Opportunities
 - Volunteer Recruitment Plans
 - Screening/Background Checks
 - Orientation and training
 - Volunteer Expectations
 - Supervision structure
 - Liability Waivers
 - Safety Procedures
 - Recognition
 - Confidentiality
- Fundraising and Donor Policies
 - Ethical Standards
 - Gift Acceptance
 - Donor Privacy
 - Acknowledgements
 - Sponsorship Procedures
 - Grant Application Procedures
 - Donor Database
- Financial Controls
 - Budget Development
 - Policies for expenses
 - Cash Handling
 - Separation of duties
 - Banking Procedures
 - Credit Card Usage
 - Contract Approval
 - Tax Reporting
 - Reserve/Rainy Day Fund
 - Fundraising Handling
 - Fraud Prevention
 - Recordkeeping



- Staffing/HR Policies
 - Equal Employment Opportunity
 - Anti-harassment and Anti-discrimination
 - ADA accommodations
 - Recruitment & hiring process
 - Background checks
 - Compensation policy
 - Work schedules and attendance (in-person, hybrid, remote)
 - Timekeeping and overtime
 - Leave policy (vacation, sick, FMLA, bereavement, jury duty)
 - Benefits
 - Evaluation Process
 - Discipline Procedures
 - Workplace safety
 - Drug-free policy
 - Employee Records
 - Technology
 - Social Media
 - AI and data usage
 - Website
 - Training and Professional Development
- Legal and Compliance Policies
 - IRS
 - Secretary of State Registration
 - Insurance Requirements
 - Risk Management
- Communication Policies
 - Internal and External
 - Branding Standards
 - Media Spokesperson
 - Crisis Management
 - Website and Social media guidelines
 - Photography/Video Consent
 - Technology and Data Security
 - Password Requirements
 - Device Management
 - Technology Use
 - Email Retention
 - Cybersecurity Procedures
 - Confidential Information Handling
- Facilities & Safety Policies
 - Building access/security
 - Emergency Preparedness
 - Fire Safety
 - Incident Reporting
 - Workplace Violence Prevention
 - Travel Procedures
 - Environmental Safety Standards



Insurance Requirements

Nonprofits must maintain adequate insurance to protect the organization, its staff, volunteers, and assets. As a best practice, organizations should obtain quotes from multiple insurance providers before selecting coverage. Policies should include Employment Practices Liability coverage, which protects against claims related to hiring, termination, or workplace practices.

Depending on the nature of the organization's activities, additional coverage enhancements may be necessary—particularly for exhibit booths, festival equipment, and other specialized property used for events or programming.

Workers' Compensation Insurance

Provides medical expense coverage for employees injured in the course of employment. For more information, contact the Indiana Workers' Compensation Board.

General Liability Insurance

Covers third-party property damage and bodily injury claims related to daily operations and organizational premises. Some insurers include special event coverage; others may require separate policies depending on event type.

Umbrella Liability Insurance

Provides additional coverage above general liability, auto liability, workers' compensation, and special event policies. Main Street America recommends this coverage for all Main Street organizations.

Directors & Officers (D&O) Insurance

Covers non-bodily injury claims related to wrongful acts such as errors, omissions, misleading statements, negligence, or breach of duty. This insurance protects the personal assets of board members and helps ensure individuals feel comfortable serving on the board.

Volunteer Accident Coverage

Provides accidental death, dismemberment, and medical expense benefits for volunteers injured while serving.

- Volunteer waivers should still be used but do not replace the need for accident coverage.

Special Event Liability Insurance

Protects against third-party property damage and bodily injury claims arising from sponsored or hosted events. Even with coverage, organizations must actively reduce liability exposure through vendor contracts, insured contractors, safety protocols, and compliance with state requirements for event activities.

Automobile Liability Insurance

Covers incidents involving employees or volunteers driving on behalf of the organization.

Property or Renters Insurance

Covers organizational property, contents, buildings, and business income from losses such as fire or theft.

Board Meetings and Agendas

Indiana Main Street organizations are expected to operate with full transparency. To uphold this standard, all board meetings should follow Robert's Rules of Order, and meeting minutes must be made available to community members upon request.

Robert's Rules of Order is a widely recognized system of parliamentary procedure designed to bring structure, fairness, and efficiency to meetings. It provides a consistent method for boards and committees to introduce topics, discuss issues, make decisions, and maintain accurate records. By following these rules, every member has the opportunity to participate, discussions remain organized, and decisions are made through formal, documented votes.

Key principles include:

- Agenda structure – Meetings follow a standard order such as call to order, approval of minutes, reports, old business, new business, and adjournment.
- Motions – A member proposes an action ("I move that..."), which must be seconded before discussion can begin.
- Debate – Discussion occurs in an orderly fashion, with members speaking one at a time.
- Voting – The group votes to approve or reject motions, and the outcome is formally recorded.
- Minutes – Actions and decisions are documented accurately to support transparency and accountability.

Overall, Robert's Rules of Order ensures that meetings run smoothly, decisions are made democratically, and the rights of all members are protected.

Recommended Board Agenda:

Hoosier Main Street
Hoosier Town Hall, July 1, 2026 @ 5:30pm
Board Agenda

- Welcome
 - Call To Order
 - Motion and Time
 - Attendance
 - Additions or corrections to the agenda
- Secretary's Report
 - Motion and Approval
- Treasurer's Report
 - Motion and Approval
- Old Business
 - Maestro/ROI reminder
 - Event(s) Recap
- New Business
 - Staff Report (if applicable) or President's Report
 - Promotions Committee Report
 - Economic Vitality Committee Report
 - Design Committee Report
 - Organizational Committee Report
 - OCRA/IMS Update
- Additional comments/announcements from the district
- Adjournment
 - Motion and note next meeting date, time and location

Recommended Board Meeting Minutes:

Hoosier Main Street
Hoosier Town Hall, July 1, 2026 @ 5:30pm
Board Meeting Minutes

X Avery Callahan, President
X Jordan Whitmore, Vice President
X Rowan Ellington, Secretary
__ Marissa Hale, Treasurer
X Derek Winslow
X Talia Granger
X Nolan Shepherd

QUORUM: YES

- Call To Order
 - By Avery C @ 5:32pm
- Additions or corrections to the agenda-none
- Secretary's Report was read by Rowan for June 5, 2026 Minutes
 - Derek asked for any corrections: None received
 - Motion by Jordan to approve Approved Unanimously
- Treasurer's Report for close date of June 30, 2026 by Derek (Marissa absent)
 - Avery asked for any discrepancies none received
 - Motion by Talia to approve Approved Unanimously
- Old Business
 - Maestro/ROI reminder
 - Remember to update volunteer hours by Monday evening at 5pm for the past week as due. As committee chairs you are responsible.
 - All reporting is due to IMS by IMS by the 15th so please send corresponding documents to Megan by the 13th.
 - Event(s) Recap
 - We had 5,000 at our fireworks show last weekend. Great feedback from businesses after with increased foot traffic and sales recorded.
- New Business
 - Staff Report (if applicable) or President's Report
 - Updates were provided on upcoming events, volunteer recruitment efforts, and ongoing façade improvement applications.
 - Promotions Committee Report
 - Summary and future plans
 - Economic Vitality Committee Report
 - Summary and future plans
 - Design Committee Report
 - Summary and future plans
 - Organizational Committee Report
 - Summary and future plans
 - OCRA/IMS Update
 - Webinar Economic Vitality and how to effectively collect and use the data is on July 21st see Megan or the link in the Main Street Monday about registration
- Additional comments/announcements from the district
- Adjournment
 - Motion and note next meeting date, time and location

Back-Up Documentation

Organizations should maintain both hard-copy and electronic back-ups of all essential documents.

Store one complete back-up in a secure off-site location to protect against theft or disaster. Regularly back up other important documents (property inventories, volunteer contacts, vendor lists, festival files, etc.) and store off-site for safety.

IMS and MSA Agreements

IMS and MSA issue annual agreements that are required for accreditation. These agreements should be reviewed not only by the board president, who is responsible for signing them, but also by the full board and staff each year. Regular review ensures that everyone understands the obligations, expectations, and accreditation requirements associated with these agreements. Breach of the terms of these agreements could result in removal from the IMS or MSA program.

Obtaining an Entertainment Permit

An entertainment permit is required for any event featuring live music, dance, performance, cinema, carnival rides, or other amusements open to the public or charging admission. This includes events such as concerts, festivals, haunted houses, or karaoke—whether indoor or outdoor—where infrastructure like stages, tents, or bleachers are used.

In Indiana, state law (IC §22-14-3-3) mandates permits for regulated places of amusement or entertainment. Applicants are required to:

- Submit a sworn, written application on official forms
- Provide owner/operator contact details and facility descriptions
- Pass a fire safety inspection
- Pay required fees.

When applying through Indiana's Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) e-portal:

- Include facility details: owner, address, occupancy, floor plans
- Indicate events: type, dates, times, attendee estimates
- Upload structural info: stage layouts, tent anchoring specs, etc.
- Provide proof of exemption if applicable (e.g., 501(c)(3) status).

Annual permit fees are scaled by venue capacity. The permit is valid for one year and requires annual renewal. Scheduling an inspection is mandatory; submit the application at least two weeks before the event.

Liability insurance is commonly required by local jurisdictions for events with public entertainment and may be asked about during inspection. Events serving alcohol also require a separate liquor license. For music performances, performance rights must also be obtained from ASCAP/BMI/SESAC as needed.



CORE MAIN STREET PROGRAM COMPETENCIES

To support designated and selected Indiana Main Street communities in developing an active, comprehensive downtown revitalization program, the following list of foundational requirements and core competencies has been established. Each community will undertake projects tailored to local needs; however, certain essential tasks and project types have consistently contributed to the successful growth and long-term sustainability of Main Street organizations.

These competencies form the baseline of required activity. As organizational capacity increases, communities are encouraged to advance toward more complex and challenging initiatives. The competencies are organized according to the Main Street Four-Point Approach® and are detailed in the pages that follow.

A strong program foundation requires a highly engaged Organization Team, as many foundational tasks originate in this work area. Although organizational development is critical, the Main Street Approach® is comprehensive, and activities within Promotion, Design, and Economic Vitality are equally necessary to build a dynamic, results-oriented revitalization program.

Core competencies are interconnected and often build upon one another across categories. While communities may move through these tasks at their own pace.

Activities are grouped into foundational requirements and advanced competencies. Communities must first demonstrate a clear understanding and implementation of all foundational requirements before progressing to advanced competencies. This staged progression helps ensure a solid organizational base upon which a long-term, successful Main Street program can grow.

Organization

The Organization element of the Main Street Approach® focuses on building collaboration among a wide range of public and private sector groups, organizations, and stakeholders—strengthening the district’s civic value. The Organization Team plays a central role in keeping the board, committees, and staff functioning effectively by attracting both people and financial resources to the Main Street program.

To be successful, the Organization Team must take responsibility for managing the financial and logistical aspects of the nonprofit, including:

- Raising funds for both projects and administrative operations through donations and sponsorships
- Overseeing volunteer activities by recruiting, supervising, and recognizing volunteers
- Demonstrating the results of the Main Street program to downtown stakeholders and the broader community
- Managing finances and ensuring sound accounting procedures

Organization Foundational Requirements

- Establish an organizational structure, Articles of Incorporation, and Bylaws. This should include review, updates, and approval of the board on an annual basis.
- Develop accounting systems (annual review by a CPA is recommended) and implement a bookkeeping system.
- Complete all necessary registrations at the state, county, and city levels
- Establish bank and charge accounts
- Conduct annual work-planning sessions
- Develop a clear, shared mission and vision statement and write a formal mission and vision statement that are then reviewed, updated, and approved on an annual basis.
- Create a written work plan and obtain Board approval
- Develop an organizational logo and supporting materials (branding assets)
- Determine tax-exempt status and submit the appropriate IRS application
- Develop an annual budget and obtain Board approval
- Initiate an annual, signed agreement with local government
- Compile and submit a Board of Directors list and contact information to IMS
- Form teams or committees and hold regular meetings
- Develop and publish a regular newsletter
- Build and maintain a volunteer database



Organization Advanced Competencies

- Obtain payroll/employee identification numbers
- Hire an Executive Director (if applicable)
- Establish a Main Street office, including (if applicable):
 - Permanent location
 - Equipment
 - Furnishings
- Create and regularly update job descriptions for staff and volunteers
- Develop a long-term fundraising plan, including:
 - Methods for year-round donor communications
 - An informational brochure about the organization
 - A sustainable and diverse income base
 - A list of private contributors
 - At least one annual fundraising event
- Create and maintain an organizational mailing list that includes:
 - Downtown business owners
 - Downtown property owners
 - Local officials
 - Supporters

Promotion

The Promotion element of the Main Street Approach® focuses on marketing the district's assets to residents, visitors, investors, and other audiences. This includes special events, retail promotions, and activities that strengthen how the district is perceived—enhancing its social value and overall appeal. The Promotion Team is responsible for positioning downtown as the center of commerce, culture, and community life.

To be effective, the Promotion Team must move beyond generic or repetitive promotional ideas. Key responsibilities include:

- Identifying downtown assets — what makes your downtown unique and sets you apart from neighboring municipalities.
- Defining Main Street's market niche — its unique position in the regional marketplace.
- Creating a fresh, compelling narrative through campaigns and special events that draw people downtown
- Tell the story of the main street organization to all stakeholders and visitors.

Promotion Foundational Requirements

- Develop, approve, and publish a balanced annual calendar of promotional events that includes a mix of special events, retail activities, and main street initiatives.
- Evaluate promotional events, including attendance data and their effectiveness in meeting program goals
- Develop a media resource list and conduct outreach and media-relations activities, such as:
 - Press releases
 - Print media columns
 - Feature articles
 - Radio/TV interviews or talk show segments
 - Social media campaigns
 - Webpage for the main street linked to the local unit of government page and applicable partners.
- Initiate and complete at least one event

Promotion Advanced Competencies

- Conduct downtown advertising activities, such as:
 - Advertising (e.g., newspaper, radio, TV, direct mail)
 - Developing collateral materials (e.g., entrance signs, banners, shopping bags, buttons)
 - Expanding media relations (e.g., media kits, press releases, press receptions for major projects, interviews across media platforms)
 - Hosting events such as: downtown progress awards, ribbon-cuttings for new projects, “before and after” renovation displays
- Compile and analyze market place data including post event surveys.
- Write a positioning statement that clearly defines downtown’s identity and competitive advantage
- Create a downtown business directory

Design

The Design element of the Main Street Approach® focuses on enhancing the physical environment of the district to strengthen its overall place value. This includes renovating existing buildings, encouraging compatible new construction, improving signage and window displays, creating attractive and functional public spaces, and ensuring that planning and zoning regulations support Main Street revitalization efforts.

The Design Team plays a vital role in shaping the physical image of downtown as an appealing place for shoppers, investors, business owners, and visitors. To be successful, the team must encourage business owners, property owners, and civic leaders to adopt a cohesive and intentional approach to physical improvements throughout the district. This involves:

- Educating stakeholders about good design practices that enhance each business and the overall district
- Providing design assistance to encourage high-quality improvements to private properties and public spaces
- Guiding future development through thoughtful planning and regulatory recommendations
- Motivating others to invest in physical improvements by creating incentives and identifying priority projects

Design Foundational Requirements

- Evaluate existing physical assets such as buildings, streets, public signage, parking lots, and open spaces
- Inventory conditions across the physical environment
- Create a detailed and visually engaging map of downtown
- Develop, collect, and promote improvement incentives and assistance programs, including:
 - Real estate tax abatements
 - Loan programs
 - Grant programs
 - Design assistance
- Photograph downtown extensively — capturing before, during, and after images of rehabilitation projects and promotional events.
- Implement streetscape improvements
- Involvement in municipalities planning discussions and implementation.

DESIGN ADVANCED COMPETENCIES

- Conduct a traffic study
- Conduct a parking study
- Implement façade improvements
 - Undertake large-scale rehabilitation projects
- Involvement in planning and implementation of in-fill and building rehabilitation.
- Develop and promote improvement incentives and assistance, including:
 - A design guidelines/standards publication
 - Design assistance services
- Implement a formalized design review process supported by custom design guidelines
- Conduct a walking assessment of downtown streetscapes.



ECONOMIC VITALITY

The Economic Vitality element of the Main Street Approach® focuses on strengthening the district's existing economic base while expanding opportunities for compatible new uses — enhancing the overall economic value of the district. The Economic Vitality Team is responsible for identifying new market opportunities for the traditional commercial district, supporting the reuse of historic commercial buildings, and encouraging private investment in downtown properties.

To succeed, the team must develop a thorough understanding of the community's economic conditions and identify opportunities for incremental market growth. Specifically, the work involves:

- Building entrepreneurial economies by supporting small business development and innovation
- Strengthening existing businesses and recruiting new ones that align with the downtown market
- Encouraging infrastructure reuse by finding new economic uses for traditional Main Street buildings
- Facilitating development through financial incentives and access to capital for business growth and retail operations
- Monitoring progress by tracking economic performance indicators for the district



ECONOMIC VITALITY FOUNDATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- Complete and maintain a comprehensive building inventory for downtown, including:
 - Rental rates
 - Square footage
 - Age of building
 - Unique features
 - Physical condition
 - Ownership
 - Vacancy status
 - Tax information
 - Current photographs
- Complete and maintain a business inventory, including:
 - Number of businesses
 - Ownership
 - Products/services
 - Customer base
 - Sales volume
 - Sales patterns
 - Lease conditions
 - Availability (date/price)
- Track program impact by monitoring:
 - Changes in property tax revenue
 - Net new jobs
 - Net new businesses
 - Private investment totals
 - Volunteer hours contributed
- Create a new business owner orientation kit
- Develop a network of entrepreneurial development partners to support new and existing businesses (e.g., microenterprise organizations, Small Business Development Center, SCORE, local Chamber of Commerce)

ECONOMIC VITALITY ADVANCE COMPETENCIES

- Develop a downtown development vision and strategy, including:
 - Identification of target niche markets
 - Creation of a downtown clustering or leasing strategy
- Develop and promote economic development incentives, such as:
 - Business seminars
 - Loan pool programs
 - Grant programs
- Complete a comprehensive market analysis, including:
 - Surveys
 - Sales leakage assessment
 - Business recruitment plan
 - Business retention plan
 - Summary report
- Develop a small business recruitment packet and procedures
- Create and implement business retention programs
- Expand the organization's role to serve as, or partner with, a Community Development Corporation to support property development downtown
- Expand the organization's role to provide microenterprise development services, including microfinancing, credit building, and business training

MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS

A mission and vision statement are essential components of a strong and effective nonprofit organization. Here's why they matter:

Mission Statement

A mission statement explains what your organization does, who it serves, and why it exists. It provides clarity and focus, helping board members, volunteers, funders, and community partners understand the purpose of the organization. A clear mission guides decision-making, ensures programs align with organizational goals, and communicates the organization's core intent to the public.

Vision Statement

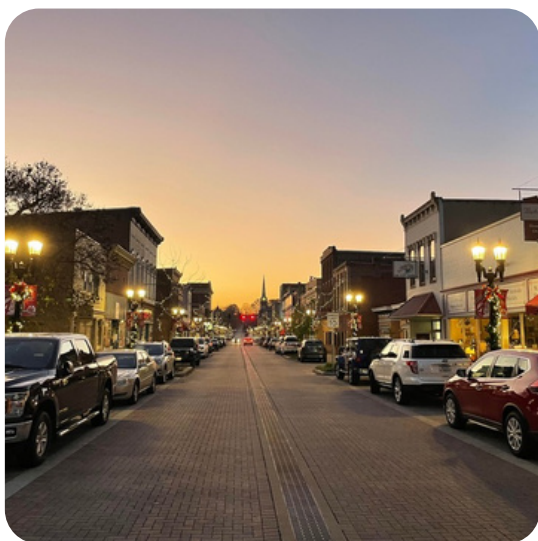
A vision statement describes the desired future your organization is working toward. It is aspirational and forward-looking. A strong vision inspires people, sets a long-term direction, and helps unify stakeholders around shared outcomes. It also serves as a benchmark for evaluating progress toward community transformation.

Together, the mission and vision:

- Keep the organization focused and accountable;
- Help guide strategic planning and daily decision-making;
- Support strong communication with the community;
- Align board, staff, and volunteers with common goals;
- Attract funders and partners who share your purpose;
- Provide a foundation for programs, initiatives, and evaluation.

In short, mission and vision statements give your Main Street organization both direction and inspiration — clarifying what you do today and where you aim to go tomorrow. The mission statement reflects the work of the organization, describing how you operate and the purpose you fulfill in the present. In contrast, the vision statement illustrates what the community will look like when that mission is fully achieved.

The mission statement is your right-now statement, while the vision statement is futuristic, painting a picture of the long-term impact your Main Street program strives to create.



MAIN STREET PROGRAM STRUCTURE

While the structure of each Indiana Main Street program may differ from community to community, IMS recommends the following framework when establishing your organization. Functionally, each team is composed of project-specific task forces or committees that operate independently, guided by team leadership and supported by staff (when applicable). All teams and task forces work under the strategic direction of the Board of Directors, which is accountable to the organization's stakeholders.

This recommended structure provides a clear and organized system that promotes efficiency, accountability, and long-term program sustainability.

Candidates to Consider for Your Main Street Organization

The following lists represent recommended types of individuals who may bring valuable skills, expertise, or perspective to your Main Street program. These suggestions are not exhaustive, nor are they limited to people working strictly within these fields. Communities are encouraged to recruit broadly and inclusively to build strong, diverse teams that reflect their district's needs and opportunities.

Organization Team

- Downtown merchants
- Downtown residents
- Media representatives
- Volunteer specialists
- Downtown property owners
- Civic group volunteers
- Accountants

Promotion Team

- Downtown merchants and employees
- Civic groups involved in the arts
- School board members
- Marketing and advertising professionals
- Teachers in marketing or design
- Graphic designers and artists

Design Team

- Architects
- Real estate agents
- Downtown property owners
- Community or municipal planners
- Historians
- Interior designers and florists
- Graphic designers and artists
- Architecture students
- Historic preservation professionals



Economic Vitality Team

- Merchants
- Realtors and/or mortgage brokers
- Downtown property owners
- Consumers
- Marketing professionals and teachers
- Developers
- Financial professionals (e.g., stock brokers)
- City economic development staff
- Economic development professionals
- Bankers
- Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
- Historic preservation professionals



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & VOLUNTEERISM

Main Streets are fundamentally rooted in grassroots community engagement. Their effectiveness depends on the active participation of local residents, businesses, and partners who share a commitment to the vitality of their downtown districts. Although Main Street programs collaborate closely with numerous community organizations, they remain independent entities guided by their own Boards of Directors. This independence ensures that each program's strategies, priorities, and initiatives reflect the unique identity, needs, and aspirations of its individual community.

The Role of Volunteerism

Volunteerism is central to the success and sustainability of Main Street organizations. The collective work of revitalizing a commercial district is both broad and multifaceted. It includes planning and coordinating events, supporting local businesses, cultivating partnerships, improving public spaces, and advancing long-term development strategies. Because of this wide scope of responsibility, volunteer support is not supplemental—it is foundational.

To maintain a vibrant and effective volunteer base, each Main Street organization should invest intentionally in three ongoing areas of volunteer management:

- **Recruitment:** Continually attracting individuals who bring diverse skills, perspectives, and energy to the organization. Recruitment should be aligned with current organizational needs and long-term leadership development goals.
- **Retention:** Creating an environment where volunteers feel valued, informed, and supported. Clear communication, meaningful roles, and opportunities for personal growth help retain engaged volunteers.
- **Recognition:** Routinely acknowledging volunteer contributions through formal and informal methods. Recognition reinforces the importance of volunteerism and strengthens community ownership of Main Street's mission.



Volunteer Life Cycle and Leadership Development

All volunteers naturally progress through a life cycle that includes introduction, increasing involvement, leadership roles, and eventual transition out of the organization. Recognizing this cycle helps Main Street programs plan for ongoing participation and avoid gaps in leadership. Well-managed volunteer transitions strengthen community resilience and ensure that knowledge is shared broadly rather than concentrated among a few individuals. As volunteers advance through the organization, they bring fresh ideas and new energy to Main Street activities, while outgoing volunteers often continue contributing in informal or advisory capacities.



Board Governance and Term Limits

Strong board governance is essential to the long-term health and stability of a Main Street program. Defined term limits are required for all board members to support leadership renewal, preserve organizational knowledge, and prevent burnout among long-serving volunteers. Term limits help ensure:

- Succession Planning: Regular opportunities for new leaders to step into governance roles.
- Continuity: Adaptability and consistent progress as new perspectives join the board.
- Sustainability: Reduced strain on individuals, balanced workloads, and healthier volunteer engagement overall.

Board term limits reflect the philosophy that Main Street organizations thrive when leadership evolves, volunteers remain energized, and shared responsibility is embraced across the community.

By prioritizing grassroots engagement, investing in volunteer management, and maintaining strong governance practices, Main Street organizations cultivate a collaborative, inclusive, and sustainable foundation for community revitalization. These principles support long-term success and ensure that Main Street remains a trusted, independent champion for local identity and economic vitality.



Paid staff in a Main Street

As the organization evolves, it may become necessary to transition from an exclusively volunteer-driven model to one supported by paid staff. This change is often prompted by increased program complexity, expanded community expectations, and the need for consistent administrative and operational oversight. While this transition represents a significant organizational milestone, the commitment to remaining deeply connected and engaged within the community remains central to our mission.

Role of the Board with paid Staff

When the Board of Directors begins considering the introduction of paid staff, it assumes formal responsibility for all Human Resources and supervisory functions. Regardless of the staffing structure chosen, Main Street employees will always report directly to the board.

The board's responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Hiring and onboarding staff
- Approving job descriptions and performance expectations
- Conducting performance evaluations
- Making decisions regarding disciplinary action and termination
- Approving paid time off and leave requests
- Setting salaries and overseeing annual salary reviews
- Ensuring compliance with employment laws and organizational policies
- Insuring compliance with Indiana Main Street policies (refer to Accreditation standards for NAMS)

It is essential that board members clearly understand these expectations before adding staff, as proper management and accountability are vital to the success of the organization.

Staff Attendance and Voting

To ensure consistent communication and alignment between staff and organizational leadership:

- Executive Directors are expected to attend all board meetings and relevant committee meetings. Their presence supports efficient information-sharing, project coordination, and timely decision-making.
- Staff may not vote at board meetings or committee meetings. Voting authority is reserved solely for board members and committee members in accordance with governance policies.
- Board members can not be related to staff/personnel.

This structure maintains the integrity of board decision-making while ensuring staff remain fully informed and engaged in organizational operations.

Funding for Paid Staff

Securing sustainable funding for paid staff should be a key objective of the staff member. Staff are encouraged to actively pursue sponsorships, donations, grants, and other revenue-generating opportunities that support their position and strengthen the organization's long-term financial stability. This proactive approach ensures that staffing aligns with the organization's mission, growth, and operational needs.

In addition to fundraising efforts, funding may also be obtained through partnerships with the local unit of government or other community organizations. These partnerships may contribute to staff wages, benefits, or administrative costs, providing valuable support as the organization expands its capacity. Regardless of how funding is secured, all Main Street staff remain directly accountable to the Board of Directors.

If any portion of staff compensation or benefits is supported through governmental or municipal funds, this support must be clearly documented in all financial statements. Accurate reporting is essential to maintaining transparency, meeting accounting standards, and honoring all compliance requirements related to public or partner funding.

Partnerships for Shared Staffing and Employment Benefits

The organization may also consider shared staffing arrangements with partnering organizations, such as local government offices or nonprofits. These arrangements can:

- Reduce benefit costs
- Streamline HR processes
- Allow staff to access broader employment benefits
- Under any shared arrangement:
 - The board retains full supervisory authority over Main Street staff
 - All municipal or partner support must be correctly reflected in financial records

Memorandum of Understanding

It is strongly recommended that the organization establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with any partner providing funding for paid staff. An MOU provides clarity regarding roles, responsibilities, expectations, and oversight between both entities. It also serves as an important tool for succession planning, ensuring continuity and reducing confusion when leadership transitions occur — either within the organization or within the partnering agency. A well-developed MOU supports smooth operations, strengthens accountability, and protects the long-term stability of staffing arrangements.

When developing an MOU, it should be clearly stated that the partner organization is supplying funding and, when applicable, benefits. However, the Main Street board must retain full authority over key employment functions, including job descriptions, performance evaluations, hiring and termination decisions, and communication related to Main Street employment.

MOUs are also recommended when partnering on programming costs to ensure clear expectations, responsibilities, and accountability between all participating entities. Examples of programming MOUs include:

- A cost-sharing agreement between Main Street and the local Unit of Government to fund an annual downtown festival.
- An MOU with the Chamber of Commerce outlining each party's financial contributions and promotional responsibilities for a joint business retention program.
- A partnership MOU with a Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) for shared expenses related to downtown marketing campaigns.
- An MOU with a university or nonprofit partner for jointly funded placemaking initiatives, such as public art installations or community engagement events.
- A multi-organization MOU to divide costs and responsibilities for hosting a regional training workshop or speaker series.

Purpose and Value of Paid Staff

Paid staff support the organization by managing daily operational responsibilities, maintaining communication with stakeholders, supporting committees, and implementing Main Street initiatives. Their work enables board members to focus more fully on governance, strategic planning, fundraising, and community partnerships.

Working collaboratively, staff and the board ensure that the organization's mission is upheld, programs are carried out effectively, and long-term sustainability is strengthened.

PROGRAM PARTNERS

A successful Main Street organization engages a wide range of community groups. Each group has its own interests in the downtown, and while their priorities may vary, they ultimately share the common goal of a thriving commercial district. By involving diverse stakeholders, the Main Street organization helps reinforce this shared goal and demonstrates that collaboration is essential for effective revitalization. In addition, by recognizing the unique strengths of each group, the organization can direct their efforts toward areas where they can be most effective and make meaningful contributions. These groups may support the Main Street effort through participation on the board or committees, or by partnering on programs and initiatives. Groups typically represented and involved in successful local Main Street organizations include:

PROPERTY OWNERS

Property owners have a direct stake in the success of the downtown because they literally own stake in the district. Many become active participants in revitalization efforts. Absentee owners, however, may have limited interest or engagement. Even so, they should be kept informed of ongoing activities and invited to participate as the program builds capacity and demonstrates leadership in guiding downtown's economic growth.

RETAIL AND SERVICE SECTOR BUSINESS OWNERS

Retail and service businesses form a vital part of the district's economic base, giving their owners a strong interest in the success of the Main Street program. These businesses often contribute most directly to promotional activities, though their participation in other aspects of revitalization is also important. It is worth remembering that the most valuable role any small business owner can play is maintaining a successful and well-presented business. Engagement strategies should therefore support these outcomes and make participation practical and meaningful.

City and County Government

City and county agencies play an essential role in downtown revitalization. Their involvement helps align Main Street goals with public planning, infrastructure, economic development, and regulatory processes. Partnering with local government strengthens the program's ability to implement long-term improvements, secure resources, and coordinate efforts across the community.

Consumers

Consumers ultimately benefit the most from a revitalized downtown that offers goods, services, and experiences that meet their needs. Even those who are not part of established community organizations often have a strong interest in supporting efforts to enhance the downtown's vitality. Their participation can help build a lively, welcoming environment that strengthens both the district and the broader community.

Chambers of Commerce

The Chamber of Commerce is an important partner in downtown revitalization due to its role in supporting commercial growth. Chambers can assist the Main Street effort by serving as a liaison to economic development agencies, helping existing businesses expand, recruiting new businesses, and sharing valuable information and resources. It is essential to remember, however, that the Chamber's mission is community-wide. Overemphasizing downtown-related activities may limit its ability to meet its broader organizational goals.

Civic Clubs

Civic clubs contribute significantly to enhancing community quality of life. Their involvement in the revitalization program can help make the downtown a more active and engaging place for local events, volunteer efforts, and community gatherings. By participating, these organizations support a stronger, more vibrant downtown environment.



HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORGANIZATIONS AND HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

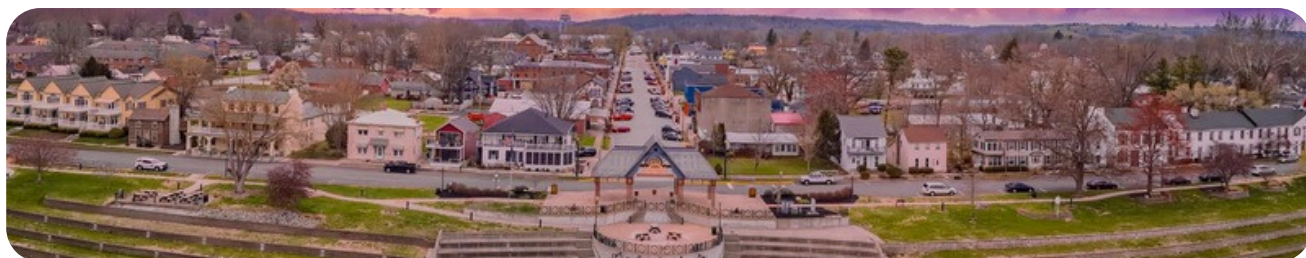
These organizations offer valuable expertise that supports downtown revitalization efforts. Their knowledge of local history, preservation practices, design guidelines, and historic rehabilitation can help ensure that improvements respect the district's heritage while strengthening its long-term viability. Their involvement contributes to informed decision-making and enhances the community's understanding of its historic assets.

SCHOOLS

Schools can support downtown revitalization in several meaningful ways. Engaging students introduces younger residents to the downtown area and helps them develop a sense of connection to their community. Schools can also encourage students to contribute positively to local quality of life through service projects or class-based initiatives. Additionally, offering students opportunities to apply academic skills in real-world settings can directly support Main Street projects and activities.

REGIONAL PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

These organizations provide valuable market data, technical expertise, and insight into regional trends affecting the downtown's market area. They can help identify resources, strengthen partnerships, and establish connections with regional, state, and national economic development agencies. Their involvement enhances strategic planning and supports informed decision-making.



FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Local financial institutions benefit from a revitalized downtown through increased lending opportunities, business growth, and overall community stability. Banks and credit unions can support the revitalization effort by assisting with loan packaging, participating in financial incentive programs, offering leadership, and developing innovative ways to encourage economic development. Many financial institutions also find that involvement in the Main Street program aligns with their responsibilities under the Community Reinvestment Act.

MEDIA

Downtown revitalization generates new jobs, investment, and economic activity — topics that are inherently newsworthy. As a result, media outlets often become strong supporters of Main Street efforts. Beyond promoting successes, they can share information about local market characteristics, helping the program better understand and respond to consumer needs.

The Main Street Approach can help strengthen relationships among community organizations by aligning their efforts within broader transformation strategies. Rather than expecting one organization to address all aspects of revitalization, the approach recognizes that meaningful change relies on collaboration across many partners. Viewing transformation strategies holistically, and engaging stakeholders beyond the Main Street board, enhances the likelihood of long-term success.

FUNDING GRANT OPPORTUNITIES



Federal Government Grants

Main Streets should consider grants as an important avenue for funding diversification. Broadening funding sources strengthens organizational stability, supports long-term planning, and reduces reliance on any single revenue stream.

Below is a list of potential funding sources for Main Street organizations. This list serves as a starting point, and each organization is encouraged to conduct additional research to determine whether these opportunities align with local needs, capacity, and project goals.

Important Note:

Indiana Main Street does not guarantee funding from any of the sources listed. Organizations should carefully review eligibility requirements, deadlines, and expectations before pursuing any opportunity.

Agency	Brief Description	Time Frame of Opening	Link
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)–Rural Business Development Grant	The program supports economic development and job creation by awarding grants to rural projects. Applicants compete in two categories—business opportunity and business enterprise—to fund business and community initiatives that benefit rural areas.	June	Link
National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) – Our Town Grants	We fund arts projects across many disciplines, including education, dance, design, folk and traditional arts, literature, museums, music, opera, theater, visual arts, media arts, and multidisciplinary works.	December–Program Information Spring–Opens August–Deadline	Link
National Park Service – Historic Preservation Grants	The State, Tribal, Local, Plans & Grants Division manages several Historic Preservation Fund–supported grant programs that assist with heritage and community preservation projects. Key programs include Save America’s Treasures, Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization, History of Equal Rights, and Underrepresented Communities grants.	Vary	Link

State Government Grants

Agency	Brief Description	Time Frame of Opening	Link
Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA)	The Main Street Revitalization Program (MSRP) supports rural communities by funding key infrastructure and placemaking projects that create vibrant, sustainable Main Street districts and improve overall quality of life.	2 Times/Year	Link
Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC)-READI	This strategy presents a strong, transformative proposal aligned with IEDC goals and will serve as the foundation for securing READI 2.0 investment commitments.	Vary	Link
Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA)-PreservINg	The program strengthens historic preservation, builds Main Street organizational capacity, and supports downtown revitalization. Selected communities receive training plus up to \$2 million in funding for preservation projects and operational needs through OCRA's CDBG program.	Summer of Odd Years	Link
Indiana Department of Natural Resources – Historic Preservation	The Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) is federal funding distributed by the National Park Service and administered in Indiana by the DNR's Division of Historic Preservation & Archaeology. It supports projects that advance the State's historic preservation and cultural resource management goals.	Early in the Year	Link
Indiana Arts Commission	Arts Project Support (APS) grants fund short-term, public-facing arts projects such as performances, exhibits, festivals, public art, planning activities, and arts programs for specific groups like youth or older adults.	Spring and Fall	Link
Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority (IHCDA)	CreAtINg Places is a crowdgranting program from IHCDA and Patronicity where communities raise funds online, and if they meet their goal, IHCDA matches the amount. This model boosts public involvement, funds local improvement projects, and builds community pride.	Revolving	Link

Local Government Grants

Agency	Brief Description
Redevelopment Commissions	Redevelopment Commissions (RDCs) can provide funding to nonprofits for projects that support community development, revitalization, or economic growth within designated areas. These funds typically help advance public goals such as improving infrastructure, supporting business districts, or enhancing Main Street initiatives.
Tax Increment Financing Project Support (TIF)	TIF can support nonprofits when their projects are located within a TIF district and contribute to community development or economic improvement. Instead of giving cash directly to the nonprofit, TIF typically funds eligible project expenses—such as infrastructure, site improvements, or public-benefit enhancements—that support the nonprofit's work and benefit the district. This allows nonprofits to advance projects without bearing the full cost, while the TIF district reinvests future tax revenue growth back into the area.
City/County Economic Development Funds	Local economic development funds can support a Main Street organization when its projects align with community revitalization and economic growth goals. These funds may help with downtown improvements, business district activation, infrastructure needs, or other initiatives that strengthen the local economy and benefit the Main Street district.
Local Tourism Boards	Local tourism boards can fund Main Street projects when they support visitor engagement, promote downtown attractions, or enhance the overall tourism experience. These funds often help with events, marketing, and improvements that draw more visitors to the district.
Community Foundations	Community foundations can provide funding to Main Street organizations for local projects that support community development, downtown revitalization, or charitable initiatives. These grants often focus on improving quality of life and strengthening local neighborhoods. Find your local Community Foundation

Corporate & Business-Sponsored Grants

Agency	Brief Description	Link
Duke Energy Foundation	The Duke Energy Foundation offers year-round grants up to \$20,000 to support community growth. Funding focuses on three areas: • Vibrant Economies: Workforce training, community revitalization, and economic recovery. • Local Resiliency: Disaster preparedness, extreme-weather mitigation, and environmental health. • Community Opportunity: Economic mobility programs, support for modern energy transitions, and reducing barriers for families in need.	Link
NIPSCO	Offers broader community grants aligned with pillars like safety, workforce development, environmental stewardship, STEM/energy education, and basic needs/hardship relief	Link
Bank & Financial Institution	Local banks can also be great partners for community development, placemaking, and educational support. Many banks offer: • Community development grants or sponsorships • Placemaking support such as downtown beautification, small-business corridor revitalization, or public-space improvements	
Health Care Organizations	Health Care can also be great partners for community development, placemaking, and educational support.	



YOU'VE BECOME STATE RECOGNIZED NOW WHAT?

Achieving state accreditation is a significant accomplishment. It affirms your commitment to the Main Street Approach, demonstrates organizational strength, and positions your program as a leader in downtown revitalization. Accreditation is not an end point — it's a launching pad for expanded impact, stronger partnerships, and long-term community transformation. Once accredited, here are important next steps to guide your continued progress:

Celebrate and Communicate Your Achievement

Accreditation should be shared widely within your community. Announce it through social media, press releases, newsletters, city council meetings, and partner organizations. Public recognition helps build trust and reinforces the value your program brings to local businesses, residents, and civic leaders. This celebration also boosts your team and volunteers, validating the hard work that led to accreditation.

Carry out the Plan

A downtown revitalization plan provides the foundation for effective, long-term work. Following the plan ensures your organization stays focused, strategic, and aligned with community goals. The plan should reflect your organization's size, capacity, and future ambitions. By taking deliberate action to implement the identified projects and initiatives, your organization delivers meaningful impact and advances the priorities your community has identified.

Review and Act on Accreditation Feedback

Accreditation comes with specific observations or recommendations. Use these insights to strengthen internal processes, address any gaps, and identify achievable goals for the coming year. Treat the feedback as a strategic roadmap for improvement rather than a checklist—something that can help shape board priorities, committee plans, and organizational development.

Leverage New Opportunities and Resources

Accredited Main Streets receive expanded access to training, grant opportunities, and specialized technical assistance from both Indiana Main Street and Main Street America. Accreditation signals that you have the capacity to manage projects and funds responsibly, something that funders value. Be proactive in seeking out these opportunities to maximize the benefits of accreditation.

Enhance and Expand Partnerships

Accreditation often strengthens credibility with local governments, chambers, redevelopment commissions, economic development organizations, and philanthropic partners. Use this moment to re-engage existing relationships and initiate new ones. Accreditation demonstrates that your program operates with structure, accountability, and professionalism — qualities that encourage deeper collaboration and investment.

Set Strategic, Future-Focused Goals

With accreditation achieved, this is an excellent time to revisit your work plan, establish measurable priorities, and position your program for long-term success. Evaluate your committees, refine project lists, and ensure alignment with community needs and vision. Consider implementing or updating a strategic plan to guide activities over several years.

Maintain Engagement with Indiana Main Street and Main Street America

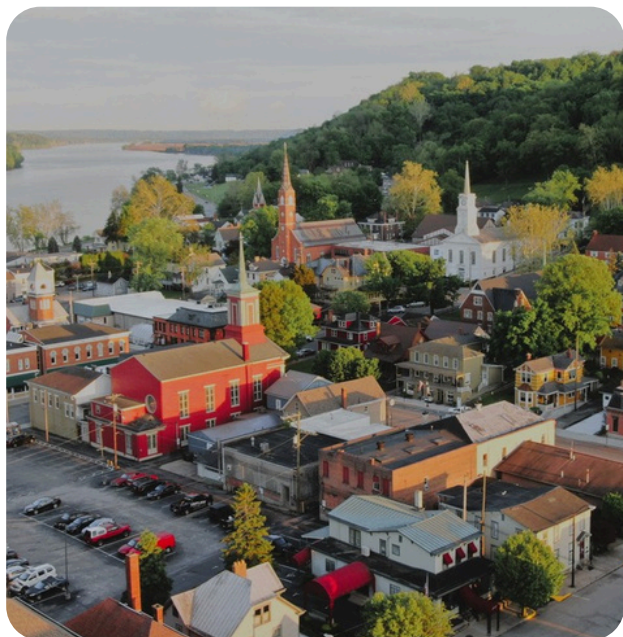
Accredited programs benefit from staying connected to statewide and national networks. Regularly attend trainings, participate in peer networking, and request technical assistance. These resources help maintain momentum, inspire innovation, and keep your organization aligned with national standards and best practices.

Prepare Thoughtfully for Reaccreditation

Accreditation is an ongoing commitment. Begin tracking documentation early; meeting minutes, budgets, work plans, volunteer hours, training logs, and project records. Regular upkeep ensures your program maintains standards year-round and prevents last-minute scrambling during the next review cycle. Reaccreditation becomes much easier when it is part of your culture of continuous improvement.

Accreditation Is a Beginning, not a Finale

State accreditation is proof that your Main Street organization is on the right path. Now is the time to build on that foundation — strengthening quality of place, deepening relationships, improving your downtown, and continuing to drive community-centered economic development. The next chapter is about growth, refinement, and creating visible, meaningful impact that your community can see and feel.



INDIANA MAIN STREET REINVESTMENT & RETURN ON INVESTMENT STATISTICS TRACKING INSTRUCTIONS

Tracking statistic, such as reinvestment, job creation, business development, and other key indicators, provides a concrete measure of your local Main Street program's progress. These metrics are essential for securing financial and programmatic support for ongoing revitalization efforts. Statistics should be incorporated into monthly Board meetings as part of the Executive Director's report and used during your program's "Main Street Minute" at public meetings with elected officials.

To ensure these statistics are meaningful and accurate, they must be collected consistently and reported to Indiana Main Street at the end of each quarter (for Aspiring IAMS, IAMS, and NAMS programs) or at the end of the year (for ODANs). Below are instructions on how to report several core metrics and where to locate the necessary information.

New Businesses

Report the total number of businesses operating within your defined Main Street district. Note any new businesses that have opened in the district, including startups and businesses that relocated from outside your community's city limits into the Main Street area.

Business Expansion and Relocation

List the number of businesses that have expanded or relocated within the Main Street district. This includes businesses moving from elsewhere within city limits into the district.

Business Closures

Report the number of businesses that closed within the Main Street district. This also includes businesses that moved outside the community or to another district.

JOBS CREATED

Report the total number of full-time and part-time positions employed by each business (counting full- or part-time equivalents). Businesses that expand or relocate within the district should only be counted as creating new jobs if they increased their number of employees following the move or expansion.

JOBS LOST

List the number of full-time and part-time positions lost due to business closures, consolidation, or downsizing. Jobs lost due to relocation out of the district should only be counted if the business reduced its total number of employees as part of the move.



PUBLIC INVESTMENT

Public investment refers to financial, physical, and strategic resources contributed by local, state, or federal governmental entities to strengthen the downtown district's long-term vitality. These investments support infrastructure, economic growth, placemaking, and overall quality of life.

Common examples include:

- Infrastructure upgrades (streets, sidewalks, lighting, utilities, broadband)
- Streetscape enhancements (landscaping, seating, signage, public art)
- Historic preservation support (grants, tax credits, façade programs)
- Public facilities (parks, plazas, parking, restrooms, transit stops)
- Planning and technical services (zoning updates, design assistance, studies)
- Financial incentives (matching grants, low-interest loans, tax abatements)

PRIVATE INVESTMENT

Private investment includes money, labor, and improvements contributed by business owners, property owners, developers, and other private-sector partners. These investments reflect confidence in the downtown's future and often follow visible public investment or strong Main Street leadership. Typical examples include:

- Building rehabilitation and renovation (façades, interiors, code upgrades)
- Property purchases or redevelopment projects
- Equipment, fixture, and technology enhancements
- Tenant improvements
- Developer-led construction or adaptive reuse projects

Volunteers and Volunteer Hours

Report both the total number of volunteers and the total volunteer hours contributed. Include hours from board and committee members outside of formal meetings, hours spent preparing or concluding events, and hours contributed by partner organizations or individuals assisting with Main Street initiatives.

Programming

List all events and educational opportunities offered by the Main Street program. Record attendance figures and highlight milestones, such as record-breaking participation.

ANNUAL REPORTING ONE PAGER/BOOKLET

Annual reporting one pager/booklet is required only for Main Street organizations that have achieved Nationally Accredited Main Street status. However, all Main Street programs are strongly encouraged to complete an annual report at the beginning of each calendar year. The annual report serves as an essential tool for transparency, demonstrates measurable impact, and helps maintain strong relationships with stakeholders, funders, and the broader community.

Purpose of the Annual Report

The annual report provides a comprehensive overview of the organization's achievements, financial health, and community impact over the previous year. Its primary purposes include:

- Demonstrating the organization's Return on Investment
- Highlighting accomplishments, milestones, and measurable outcomes
- Recapping events, programs, and initiatives
- Showcasing success stories and community benefits
- Communicating organizational priorities and progress
- Reinforcing credibility, transparency, and accountability

The report serves as a formal record of progress and helps shape future planning, fundraising strategies, and partnership development.



Recommended Components of the Annual Report

While the exact format may vary by organization size and capacity, every annual report should include the following core elements:

- Executive Summary
 - A brief overview of the year's achievements, major milestones, and key messages.
- Return on Investment Data
 - Quantitative information such as volunteer hours contributed, grant dollars secured, private investment leveraged, property improvements, event attendance numbers, and other measurable outcomes.
- Program and Event Recap
 - Summaries of all major events, activities, and initiatives conducted throughout the year. This may include:
 - Promotional events
 - Economic vitality projects
 - Design improvements
 - Organizational development efforts
 - Partnerships formed with local businesses and community organizations

- Success Stories and Testimonials
 - Personal accounts from business owners, property owners, volunteers, and community members help illustrate the organization's impact. These narratives reinforce the organization's value and provide relatable examples of Main Street's contributions.
- Photographs and Visual Highlights
 - Images of events, revitalization projects, volunteers, and community activities add an engaging and emotional element to the report. Visuals help stakeholders better understand the work being done and its significance.
- Financial Overview
 - A summary of the organization's financial position, including revenue sources, expenses, and an explanation of how resources were allocated to serve the community. This supports transparency and responsible stewardship.
- Looking Ahead
 - A brief section outlining goals, priorities, and strategic initiatives for the upcoming year.

Distribution of the Annual Report

Once complete, the annual report should be shared broadly with all stakeholders to reinforce the organization's value and strengthen community investment. Recommended distribution includes:

- Board of Directors
- Volunteers and committee members
- Local business and property owners
- Donors and sponsors
- Local government officials
- State government officials
- Partner organizations
- The general public (via website, social media, or community presentations)

Widespread distribution helps demonstrate accountability and create a compelling case for continued or increased support. This is particularly important when seeking sponsorships, grant funding, or local government assistance.

Importance for Funding and Advocacy

A well-crafted annual report positions the organization as a credible, effective leader in community revitalization. It provides tangible evidence of impact and helps justify requests for financial support, partnership opportunities, and program expansion. For communities considering paid staff or increased budget allocations, an annual report can be a vital advocacy tool.



SAMPLES AND TEMPLATES

Main Street is a collaborative network of leaders who support one another in carrying out substantial community revitalization work. There is no need to reinvent the wheel — Indiana Main Street provides a wide variety of sample documents, templates, and trainings to support your program. This is not an exhaustive list. As a coordinating program, we maintain connections with partners across the United States; please reach out to us at indianamainstreet@ocra.in.gov if you need any of the documents below, additional resources or introductions.

Sample Documents

- Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) between municipalities and Main Street organizations
- Policies and Procedures manuals
- Bylaws
- Confidentiality Agreements
- Social Media Policies
- Main Street America Board Handbook
- Conflict of Interest Agreements
- Vacant Properties Ordinances

Templates

- Educational Tracking
- Annual Workplan Template
- Board Demographic Matrix
- Board and Committee Roster Template
- Business Inventory
- Volunteer Worksheet
- Board Agenda Template
- Board Minutes Template
- Budget Template
- Profit/Loss Template
- Property Inventory
- Task/Event Workplan Template



Trainings Offered

Technical assistance provided by Indiana Main Street for state-accredited programs is offered free of charge.

- Recorded webinars available on the [Indiana Main Street YouTube channel](#)
- Board Development and Governance
- Budgets and Financials
- Fundraising
- Workplanning
- Preservation and Façade Programs
- Volunteer Program Development and Recruitment
- Reporting and Maestro CM
- Relationship and Capacity Building
- BOOMS-Tracker
- Committee Building and the Four-Point Approach
- Marketing and Branding
- Return on Investment
- Nonprofit Management
- Grants
- Succession Planning
- HR 101
- Transformation Strategies
- “Main Street in Your Town/City”



POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

Main Street programs ideally strive for a three-part funding model: one-third municipal support, one-third sponsorships and donations, and one-third grant funding. While this balance is not always achievable, Main Street organizations work to diversify revenue streams to remain resilient during unforeseen challenges, such as weather disruptions that force the cancellation of outdoor events or public health emergencies that limit in-person gatherings. Below are examples of potential funding sources your Main Street may explore. And remember, never hesitate to ask — new opportunities often begin with a single question.

City/Town Government

City/Town government can serve as a key funding partner for Main Street programs, contributing to both basic operating expenses and project-specific initiatives. Funding may come from two primary sources: the general fund and special dedicated funds. Some dedicated funds have strict allocation requirements—for example, gas tax revenue must be used for street-related projects. City/town dollars may support downtown management, public improvements, public facilities, technical assistance, and, in some cases, promotional activities.

Corporate or Business Donations

Corporate donations vary widely in size and may include financial contributions, services, or equipment. Many corporations view support for community and economic development as an investment in the local environment where they operate. Their willingness to contribute is often tied to their current or anticipated presence in the community. Businesses typically evaluate donations based on the expected return on investment, which might include financial impact, positive publicity, community well-being, or overall economic growth.



Fundraising Events

Fundraising events can generate revenue for downtown management, promotions, public improvements, and public facilities. Unlike special events, fundraisers are designed specifically to produce income, occur regularly, and must be managed like a business venture. Clear goals, detailed plans, and a sound budget are essential—without careful preparation, a fundraiser may fail to achieve its financial objectives.

Sponsorships

Sponsorships provide strong financial support for special events and promotional activities. Vendors, suppliers, and media partners often offer products or services in exchange for recognition as event sponsors. Similar to corporate donations, businesses evaluate sponsorships based on return on investment rather than purely philanthropic motives.

Foundation Donations

Foundations provide grant funding for charitable, educational, cultural, religious, and other community-centered activities. Foundation grants are typically awarded from income generated through invested assets, and each foundation sets its own funding priorities, eligibility requirements, and restrictions. To qualify for foundation funding, an organization must have IRS-recognized tax-exempt status.

Depending on the foundation's focus, grant funds may support public improvements, public facilities, technical assistance, promotional initiatives, or downtown management activities. In addition to traditional grants, Community Foundations are also known to provide endowments to Main Street organizations. These endowments create a long-term sustainability mechanism, a "rainy-day fund," that helps stabilize the organization's financial future and supports continued revitalization work for years to come.

Grants

Grants are non-repayable funds provided by government agencies, foundations, corporations, and trusts, usually for a clearly defined project or purpose. Grants typically require compliance with specific guidelines and regular reporting to the funding entity.

Product Sales

Main Street programs can supplement their budgets by selling products related to the organization, community, or individual events. Common examples include apparel, posters, custom merchandise, or commemorative items such as engraved bricks for streetscape projects. Creativity can expand the range of options, but product sales require a clear strategy and sales plan. These efforts should be approached cautiously, as they are rarely sufficient to sustain a budget on their own.

Volunteers (In-Kind Services)

Volunteers are an often underutilized but highly valuable resource for many commercial revitalization efforts. Their contributions can offset costs that might otherwise exceed the organization's budget, allowing Main Street programs to accomplish far more with limited financial resources. Volunteers may assist with coordinated advertising campaigns, provide part-time office or clerical support, help solicit donations, participate in beautification efforts such as painting or clean-up projects, or contribute professional skills such as preparing financial statements, completing tax filings, designing logos, or producing newsletters. With thoughtful coordination, clear expectations, and meaningful motivation, volunteers can support nearly every aspect of your program's work.

Volunteers are crucial to the work that a Main Street program does. It is very important that a Main Street focuses every year on recruitment, retention, and recognition as core components of its ongoing work. Succession planning should also include annual strategies to recruit, retain, and recognize all volunteers involved in a Main Street program.

Service Fees

Service fees can provide a steady source of revenue for nonprofit organizations, though they are less commonly used within commercial revitalization work. Fees may be generated through professional services such as commercial building design assistance, parking management or enforcement, property management, real estate negotiations, retail promotion packages, advertising services, or business recruitment support. When structured effectively, service fees can become a dependable and self-sustaining revenue stream. However, they must be approached with caution. Some nonprofits establish fee-based services intending to subsidize their mission-driven work, only to discover later that these activities consume more resources than they generate.

Subsidy from Profitable Business

Some entrepreneurial nonprofit organizations develop for-profit subsidiaries or revenue-generating partnerships to help fund their core programs. In a commercial revitalization context, this could include a nonprofit partnering with a real estate development venture or leasing property to for-profit businesses to support downtown management activities.

Subsidies from profitable enterprises can provide ongoing and reliable support; however, they carry similar risks as service-fee programs. Nonprofits should carefully evaluate the financial viability and long-term implications before relying on these sources.



WORKPLANS AND ACTION

Main Streets thrive when board members, committees, and volunteers are active participants in the community. Because the goal is transformational change, success requires intentional planning and strategic objectives grounded in the SMART goal philosophy. These goals should guide the work of the entire organization, ensuring alignment and accountability. In keeping with the value of transparency, Main Street programs are encouraged to clearly communicate their goals and maintain detailed work plans to support succession planning, track progress, and strengthen internal and external communication.

SMART goals are a clear, structured way to create goals that are actionable and achievable. The SMART framework helps organizations—like Main Streets—set goals that are practical, measurable, and aligned with long-term outcomes.

Here's what SMART stands for:

S – Specific:

The goal should be clear and focused. It answers: What exactly do we want to accomplish?

M – Measurable:

The goal must include criteria to track progress. It answers: How will we know we succeeded?

A – Achievable:

The goal should be realistic and attainable with available resources. It answers: Can this be done with our current capacity?

R – Relevant:

The goal must align with the mission, vision, and strategic direction of the organization. It answers: Why does this goal matter for Main Street?

T – Time-bound:

The goal should include a deadline or timeframe. It answers: When will we accomplish this?

Development of Workplans

Strategic Goals or Transformation Strategies

Strategic goals are clear statements of purpose that can be assigned to individual teams, with each team ideally focusing on one primary goal that reflects its mission and area of responsibility. Once your organization is formally established as a Main Street program, you will advance to developing transformation strategies—recommended through guidance from Main Street America and/or Indiana Main Street. These strategies serve as catalysts for meaningful change, whether focused on consumer behaviors, market opportunities, or product-based development within the district.

Activities

Activities are specific projects with defined timeframes. Once completed, they represent tangible accomplishments such as hosting a holiday parade or completing a building inventory. Every activity requires its own Work Plan.

Tasks

Tasks are the individual steps required to complete an activity and form the structure of the Work Plan. Tasks are meant to be the building blocks of the work that needs to be accomplished to achieve a successful activity. This can also be a good place to brain-dump information from previous experiences, helping capture lessons learned, useful details, and practical insights that can strengthen planning for future activities.

Step-by-Step Work Planning Process

It is recommended that, in addition to a board retreat, an annual work-planning session be held to complete the organization's workplans for the year.

STEP 1: Hold a goal-setting/work plan session with the board of directors.

- Determine which area of concentration each issue falls under (Organization, Promotion, Design, Economic Vitality, etc.), and group similar issues together.
- Remove duplicates and determine priorities.
- Create objectives—each should begin with an action verb.
- Review your mission statement and strategic goals to ensure they still reflect the organization's direction and that each issue aligns with the mission and at least one strategic goal.



STEP 2: Conduct a team “activity planning” brainstorming session.

- List potential activities under each objective.
- Determine priority activities for each objective.
- Determine the measurable outcome for each of the activities listed.

STEP 3: Identify potential team members.

Based on the objectives for each team, the board should develop a list of individuals who could serve on or support those teams.

Step 4: Hold a Team Action-Planning Session.

- Identify and outline all tasks required to complete each planned activity.
- Estimate the amount of time needed for each task and determine the order in which tasks should be completed.
- For every task, be sure to define:
 - What is the task?
 - Who is responsible for completing it?
 - What are the costs and/or anticipated revenue associated with the task?
 - How much volunteer or staff time will be required?

Step 5: Complete an Annual Workplan (Templates Available)

- Using the committee structure and the list of tasks developed during the action-planning session, map out the months in which each task should be completed based on the estimated timeline.
- Ensure no committee or individual is overloaded or pushed beyond their capacity to manage all assigned activities.
- Adjust activities within the timeline so that work is evenly distributed across all 12 months, aligns with the current capacity of volunteers and staff, and supports the organization in achieving its desired outcomes.

Step 6: Complete Task/Event Workplans (Templates Available)

- Complete a task/event Workplan for each activity expected to begin within the next quarter at minimum. Strongly recommend an annual work planning session.
- For every task, be sure to define in addition to what is defined in Step 4:
 - When is each task due? Do not have tasks due date marked as “TBD” or left blank. Exact dates hold people accountable and helps the board manage the program.

STEP 7: Review the timeline regularly.

At each team meeting, refer to the Task/Event Workplan. Committees responsible for upcoming activities should complete or update their Workplan prior to the meeting. For recurring activities, previous Workplans may be reused and adjusted to reflect new volunteers, updated dates, or changing circumstances. Maintaining detailed notes and descriptions supports succession planning and ensures continuity within the organization.



MAESTRO USER GUIDE

Maestro is the organizational reporting platform used by all Aspiring, Indiana Accredited, and Nationally Accredited Main Street programs in Indiana. Use of this system is required at these levels to maintain accreditation. Maestro must contain complete, accurate data that is updated regularly to demonstrate to IMS, Main Street America, and local stakeholders the value and impact of Main Street in the community.

When fully and consistently completed, Maestro serves as a highly effective tool for tracking progress, reporting outcomes, and supporting funding requests. However, incomplete or outdated information can make it difficult to compile reports for local governments or other partners, potentially jeopardizing funding opportunities.

Maestro is utilized not only by local Main Street programs, but also by the coordinating program for statewide reporting, evaluation, and accreditation purposes.

Getting Started in Maestro

Once a community is awarded the Aspiring-IAMS designation, designated representatives will receive instructions via email on how to set up a Maestro account. The IMS application identifies who will be responsible for entering quarterly reporting, business inventory data, and property inventory data. It is important to follow the template provided by IMS during the application process, as this information supports accurate and efficient Maestro setup.

After the Aspiring community is fully established in Maestro, representatives must attend an in-person Maestro training and begin updating data regularly.

Account Notifications

Once your account has been created, follow the steps below to ensure you receive the appropriate system alerts and updates:

1. Select your profile picture located in the top right corner of the screen.
2. Click on your name to open your account settings.
3. Navigate to Email Preferences.
4. Under Notification Settings, ensure that Custom Notifications are enabled at minimum. This setting allows you to receive essential updates related to your account, assignments, and program activity.
5. Review additional notification options and adjust them as needed to support your workflow and communication preferences.

Training Resources

Maestro provides multiple training videos to help communities effectively navigate and utilize the software. While this handbook offers guidance for operating Maestro, it is highly beneficial for staff, board members, and volunteers to also view the available training videos. These videos provide visual demonstrations, best practices, and step-by-step instructions that complement the information in this manual and strengthen user confidence when engaging with the platform.

[Onboarding Videos](#)

[Understanding the Maestro Modules](#)

[Organization Settings](#)

[Involvements](#)

[Inputting Data](#)

[Adding Users](#)

Additional Support Resources

If your organization needs further assistance while using Maestro, you can access help directly through your account menu. Click on your account icon located in the top-right corner of the screen and select Get Help.

Within the Help Center, you will find:

Knowledge Hub

A comprehensive library of resources, guides, and explanations to help you navigate Maestro more effectively. The Knowledge Hub is an excellent place to learn more about features, troubleshoot basic issues, and find step-by-step instructions.

Report a Bug

If you encounter an issue during data entry or while using any part of the platform, select Report a Bug to notify The Relish Jar staff. Reporting bugs promptly helps ensure system reliability and allows the support team to address problems quickly.

These built-in resources provide ongoing support, ensuring your organization can use Maestro with confidence and resolve questions or issues as they arise.

Working in Maestro for Reporting to IMS

Aspiring-IAMS, IAMS, and NAMS communities must submit quarterly reports through Maestro according to the following schedule:

- Data from December 11 of the previous year through March 31 is due **April 15**
- Data from April 1 through June 30 is due **July 15**
- Data from July 1 through September 30 is due **October 15**
- Data from October 1 through December 10 is due **December 15**

It is recommended that organizations mark reporting deadlines on their calendars and/or establish work plans to ensure timely submission. IMS does not guarantee reminder notifications, and failure to submit required reports may impact a community's accreditation status.

All executive directors are assigned as the primary users responsible for entering reporting information. If staffing changes occur, including updates to staff email addresses or the need to add new users, IMS staff must be contacted to update Maestro access for reporting.

To access Maestro, users will log in at www.conductor.maestrocm.com. From the dashboard, users may navigate to their local program or Indiana Main Street. Quarterly reporting begins within the Indiana Main Street section of the platform.

Locating and Completing Program Reporting Work Plans in Maestro

All Main Street programs must locate their reporting work plan within Maestro. Each file is labeled by year, quarterly period, and community name, making it easy to identify the correct reporting period. Once you locate the appropriate work plan, click the pencil icon in the top-right corner to enter edit mode.

Within the Task section, you will find all required uploads that must be submitted for that reporting period.

Quarterly Required Uploads (subject to change):

- Indiana Main Street Reporting Document (includes social media impressions and website visits)
- Marketing materials with appropriate IMS logo(s)
- Organizational photo (showing programming activity in the district)
- Committee summary
- Board meeting minutes

Quarterly reporting also includes updating Return on Investment (ROI). This information is entered in the Maestro system under the local program section.

Additional Uploads Required in Quarter 1:

- Annual report
- Annual budget for the current year

Additional Uploads Required in Quarter 4:

- Profit and loss statement (covering January 1–December 10 of the current year)
- Updated Board and Committee roster for the following year
- Educational tracker



All uploaded files must be in PDF or JPG format to ensure easy downloading and review by IMS staff.

After completing all uploads, **click Save in the top-right corner**. Once saved, select the clock icon next to each task to mark it as complete.

Edit



File uploads



Task	Due	Budget	Notes
Organization RCR Updated Assigned to: [Name]	10/15/2026	Type: Expense Est: \$0.00 Actual: \$0.00	Update the following: Workplans, New, closed, or relocated businesses, Employee changes, Number of events and attendance, Public and private investment, Public improvements, Staff and volunteer hours, Internal MS or MSFA trainings attended
Upload the Indiana Main Street quarterly reporting document. Assigned to: [Name]	10/15/2026	Type: Expense Est: \$0.00 Actual: \$0.00	Contact Indiana Main Street at indianamainstreet@icma.in.gov for the template
Upload Atleast 1 image of marketing materials from the last quarter Assigned to: [Name]	10/15/2026	Type: Expense Est: \$0.00 Actual: \$0.00	This should be a way your organization did outreach. It can be a flyer for an event, a Facebook post for a workshop, a new marketing initiative.
Upload Atleast 1 organizational JPG photo from the last quarter Assigned to: [Name]	10/15/2026	Type: Expense Est: \$0.00 Actual: \$0.00	This should be a JPG of the work your organization did in the last quarter. It can be an event, a meeting, a community clean-up, etc. Pictures of People!
Upload your committee meeting minutes from the quarter or let us know what workplans we can review. Assigned to: [Name]	10/15/2026	Type: Expense Est: \$0.00 Actual: \$0.00	Committee Minutes can just be a summary of each committee meetings. Does not need to follow Robert's Rule of Order.
Quarter board meeting minutes Assigned to: [Name]	10/15/2026	Type: Expense Est: \$0.00 Actual: \$0.00	Upload the quarter meeting minutes. These minutes should include: date, time, location, attendance, etc.

Task

Complete

Maestro for the Local Program

Most of the daily work for a local Main Street program will be completed from the main Maestro page displayed under the organization's name. This guide follows the sequence of widgets located along the left-hand side of the Maestro interface. These sections should be updated regularly by Main Street staff, the board of directors, and, when appropriate, committee members to ensure accurate, current information is maintained. Maestro has also made a phone app available for ease of entry and for keeping track of important information while visiting properties and businesses on the Main Street.



Contacts

All staff, board members, committee members, and volunteers must be listed as contacts in the Maestro platform at a minimum. To add a new contact, click the plus sign located in the top-right corner of the page. To edit an existing contact, click the individual's name and then select the pencil icon in the top-right corner. Remember to **click Save** when your updates are complete.

Contact profiles should include First Name, Last Name, Email Address, and Phone Number at minimum. Additional information may be added at the discretion of the local Main Street program. Because a core component of Main Street work is building relationships within the community, including details such as birthdays, spouse names, home addresses, and social media accounts can help strengthen community connections and enhance organizational knowledge.

Access permissions for Maestro must be granted to designated users. At minimum, staff and board members should have user access. Refer to the [User Tiers guide](#) to determine which level of access is appropriate for each individual.

If a contact owns property within the Main Street district, this information should be recorded in the Properties Owned section. If the contact owns, manages, or works at a business within the district, this should be entered in the Businesses section.

Volunteer hours for board members, committee members, or volunteers may be logged within the contact record or in other sections of Maestro. This is especially important when work plans do not include board or committee minutes.

The Involvements section should be used to document each individual's role, such as Board Officer, Board Member, or Committee Member (including which committee they serve on).

Under Files, upload a photo of the individual. This helps IMS staff associate names with faces during accreditation reviews and communication.

Work Plans

Work plans must be created annually for every activity the Main Street organization undertakes. These plans should be reviewed and updated regularly during committee meetings and board meetings. Work plans are essential to the sustainability and long-term success of the organization, and IMS staff review them quarterly as part of the accreditation process.

To create a new work plan, click the plus sign in the top-right corner of the page. To duplicate an existing work plan from one year to the next, click the three dots on the right side of the work plan and select Clone. You may also click directly on a work plan to update it throughout the year.

All work plans should be labeled using the format: Year: Title. Assign a due date for completion and designate an Event Chair for the work plan. Add all team members involved in the project under Contacts.

The Involvement section can be used to track site visits, funds disbursed for grants, or other items that support succession planning. If the work plan is associated with an event, link the event within this section.

To support future continuity, upload key files such as Placer.ai data, invoices, photos, or other relevant documentation. These materials strengthen institutional memory and assist future board and staff members.

Work plan Tasks should be broken down into the simplest possible steps. Label each task clearly, assign it to an individual, and provide a due date. Enter estimated costs and revenue to support budgeting and succession planning. Use the notes section to keep detailed records that will help future leaders understand decisions and actions taken.

When a task is finished, click the clock icon to mark it as complete. Volunteer hours may also be added here. Completing tasks in Maestro helps improve communication, transparency, and efficiency within the organization. This is also a requirement for all Indiana Main Street levels.

Businesses

Business records in Maestro will be pre-loaded based on the inventory submitted during the application process by The Relish Jar. However, it is essential that this information is kept accurate and updated throughout the year to ensure continuity and support organizational reporting requirements.

To add a new business, click the plus sign in the top-right corner of the page. Each business record must be maintained regularly and should include, at minimum, the following information:

- Business Name
- DBA (Doing Business As) Name — required for grant documentation
- Type of business
- Phone number
- Email address
- Mailing address

Social media links and website URLs are recommended, as they help with business promotion and communication.

Return on Investment reporting requires that business opening, closing, and relocation dates be kept current. Employee Records, required for ROI, should be maintained and updated as needed. Note that employee numbers are only published in aggregate form. The detailed data remains internal within Maestro to ensure accurate recordkeeping.

When possible, record business owner demographics, as this information is valuable for identifying eligibility for specialized grant programs.

Under Business Location, enter the physical address of the business, which may differ from the mailing address.

Contacts for each business should include the owner, manager, and when possible, staff members. If the business owner also owns property in the Main Street district—including the building where the business is located—this must be updated in the Properties Owned section.

Because a core function of Main Street is business engagement, staff should track the last date of communication with each business owner. This information is entered in the Contact Reports section.

Finally, storing business hours is highly beneficial. Main Street staff often receive inquiries about when businesses are open, and consistent documentation helps identify patterns, such as widespread Monday closures, that may impact district vitality and community perceptions.

Property

Property records are initially pre-loaded into the inventory during the application process by The Relish Jar. To ensure accuracy, consistency, and reliable reporting throughout the year, it is essential that all property information is maintained and updated regularly.

Adding a New Property

To add a new property to the system, select the plus (+) icon located in the top-right corner of the page.

Required Property Information

Each property record must include, at minimum:

- Property owner
- Address
- Built date
- Lost/demolition date

Additional data points are strongly recommended, as they support mapping tools (such as BOOMS) and equip staff to respond effectively when business owners or property owners request detailed information. These fields include:

- Parcel number
- Land use
- Square footage
- Number of floors
- Residential units
- TIF district
- Zoning classification
- Sale/lease status
- Asking price
- Assessed value

Documenting the businesses located within each property is essential for tracking changes in occupancy, business turnover, and downtown activity.

Improvements

All improvements should be recorded as part of required ROI data. Private improvements made to a property should be noted promptly to support organizational reporting.

Units

Updates to units, particularly second- and third-story occupancy, should be maintained to reflect downtown housing growth, which is a priority for Main Street communities. Also, updating commercial units to know what businesses are within each property is essential for continuity.

Emergency Contact Information

For each property, identify and maintain the primary contact in the event of a natural disaster. This may differ from the property owner, so it is critical that this information is verified and kept current.

Involvements

Use the Involvements section to document the following:

- Public funding awarded to the property
- Grant opportunities connected to the property
- Specialized features such as commercial kitchens, ADA-compliant sidewalks, loading docks, and similar amenities

Registries

Registries should be used to record:

- Historic building designations
- Historic district status (local, state, or national)

Property sales

Property sale and transfers, which support annual tracking of ownership changes should be done.

Files and Documentation

Staff are encouraged to upload exterior and interior photographs of each property. These images assist prospective investors and stakeholders in evaluating properties prior to scheduling site visits.

Events

The Events module allows the organization to track key ROI data, such as the total number of events held each year, and supports long-term succession planning. Maintaining accurate event records ensures consistent reporting and helps preserve institutional knowledge.

Creating an Event

Before creating an event, the associated workplan must be completed. This ensures the event is properly aligned with organizational goals and the four-point approach.

To add a new event, click the plus (+) icon in the top-right corner of the Events page.

Required Event Information

Each event record must include the following for ROI and organizational reporting:

- Event title
- Four-point approach committee or category
- Event location
- Attendance total (entered at the conclusion of the event)
- Event Description

A clear event description should be provided to maintain consistent promotional messaging across the organization. This helps ensure staff and volunteers communicate uniformly about the event.

Event Dates and Shifts

Under the Dates section, staff may create volunteer or staff shifts if needed. This feature supports scheduling, coordination, and clear assignment of responsibilities.

Workplan Integration

Workplans link directly to the event, providing a seamless connection between planning and execution. This strengthens reporting and ensures that event activities align with strategic goals. Files and Documentation

Upload relevant files such as photos from the event, promotional materials, or layout diagrams. Photos are especially useful for reporting, marketing, and maintaining a visual history of organizational activities.

Volunteer

The Volunteer module functions similarly to platforms like SignUpGenius but keeps all volunteer data centralized within the Main Street system. This reduces duplication, supports accurate volunteer-hour tracking, and strengthens reporting for ROI and organizational impact.

Creating a Volunteer Opportunity

To create a new volunteer sign-up, click the plus (+) icon in the top-right corner of the Volunteers page.

Required Setup Steps

- Opportunity Name
- Provide a clear, descriptive name for the volunteer opportunity.
- Link to Event and Workplan
 - Connect the opportunity to the previously created event and associated workplan within Maestro. This ensures volunteer activities align with planning, goals, and ROI reporting.

Shifts

If the event includes multiple tasks or time blocks, enter the appropriate shifts. Shifts help ensure volunteers can sign up for specific responsibilities and allow accurate tracking of hours worked.

Opportunity Description

Include the event description and expand on it as needed to support volunteer recruitment. A detailed description helps potential volunteers understand their role and the importance of the event.

File Uploads

Upload any supporting files, such as:

- Photos of volunteers working at previous events
- Images or graphics intended for the sign-up page
- Any visual materials that help communicate the volunteer opportunity

Creating Tasks

For each volunteer opportunity, create specific jobs that include:

- The task name
- A detailed description of responsibilities
- The number of volunteers needed
- The applicable shift(s)

This structure allows volunteers to clearly understand expectations and select roles that match their availability.

Publishing the Volunteer Sign-Up

Once all information is entered:

- Return to the main Volunteer page.
- Select Copy Link.
- Publish or share the sign-up page through your preferred communication channels.

Reports

The Reports module allows the organization to generate comprehensive data summaries used for annual reporting, ROI analysis, stakeholder communication, and internal decision-making. Reports consolidate information from all modules, properties, events, volunteers, and more, into easily accessible formats.

Generating ROI Reports

To create a new ROI report:

- Select New Report from the top-right corner of the Reports page.
- Adjust the date range to reflect the desired reporting period.
- Open the dropdown menu under Reinvestment Statistics.
- Choose All to include every applicable data point.
- Click Run Report.
- Once the report is generated, you may download it as a PDF for convenient access, distribution, and inclusion in stakeholder presentations or the annual report.

Other Reports

The Search Filters feature allows you to tailor reports to meet specific stakeholder needs. Filters can refine data by date range, category, geographic area, or other relevant criteria. This flexibility makes it easy to produce customized summaries for partners, funders, board members, community groups, and other audiences.

Because the reporting options in Maestro are extensive, this handbook does not provide detailed instructions for every possible report configuration. Instead, organizations are encouraged to explore the reporting tools, experiment with different filters, and develop report formats that best support their local goals and data needs.

More

Rapid Reinvest:

The Rapid Reinvest feature provides a fast and efficient way to enter reinvestment and ROI data, especially useful during busy periods or when the primary reporting staff member is unavailable. This tool ensures that important information continues to be captured without delay.

Using Rapid Reinvest

Rapid Reinvest allows you to enter all potential ROI data in one location. Once entered, The Relish Jar processes and uploads the information for you, streamlining the reporting workflow.

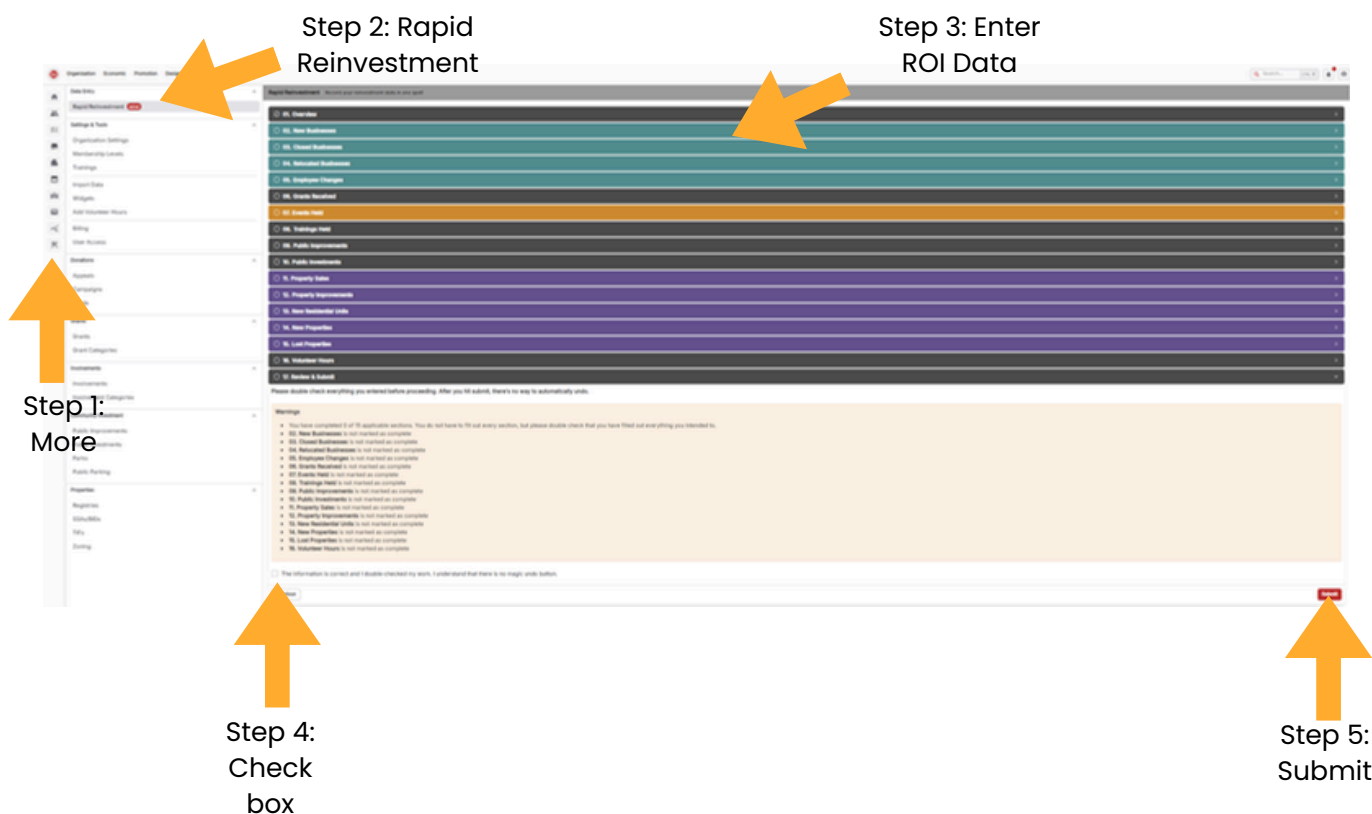
This feature is particularly helpful when:

- The organization is managing multiple activities at once.
- Immediate reporting is needed.
- The staff member normally responsible for reporting is out for an extended period.

Submitting Rapid Reinvest Data

After entering all necessary information:

- Click Review and Submit to finalize the entry.
- A confetti animation will appear across the page once the submission is complete.
- Important: The data does not save until you click Submit. Be sure to complete this step to ensure the information is captured in the system.



Settings & Tools

The Settings & Tools area provides additional functionality that supports efficient reporting, compliance, and record-keeping for Main Street organizations.

Trainings

The Trainings section allows you to record all trainings attended by staff, board members, and committee participants. Maintaining accurate training records is essential, as both staff and board members are required to complete trainings offered by Indiana Main Street or Main Street America.

Records should include:

- Training title
- Date attended
- Participant names
- Hosting organization (e.g., IMS or MSA)

Keeping this information centralized ensures the organization can demonstrate compliance and track professional development over time.

Add Volunteer Hours

Volunteer hours can be added in multiple areas throughout Maestro, including the Events and Volunteers modules. The Add Volunteer Hours option in Settings & Tools provides a convenient, centralized method for entering hours when needed.

Because volunteer hours contribute directly to ROI data and annual reporting, it is important to avoid double entry. Organizations should establish clear policies and procedures outlining where and when volunteer hours should be recorded to ensure consistency across staff and prevent duplication.

Grants

Tracking grant information is essential for any 501(c)(3) organization. Because grants often have varying reporting dates, requirements, and funding schedules, the Grants module provides a centralized location to maintain accurate and up-to-date records.

Using the Grants Module

When applying for a grant, enter the following information to ensure complete documentation and clear oversight of funding activity:

- Grant Name
- Description of the grant purpose or scope
- Notes, including current status in the grant process (e.g., drafted, submitted, awaiting award notice)
- Category, aligned with the Four-Point Approach
- Date Applied
- Date Awarded (if applicable)
- Amount Requested
- Amount Received

Recording all grant data in Maestro helps the organization track incoming funds, monitor award timelines, and maintain compliance with reporting requirements. This also supports annual reporting, financial planning, and long-term organizational sustainability.

Community Investment

Public Improvements

Public Improvements are a required component of ROI reporting and help demonstrate how tax dollars are reinvested within the Main Street district. Tracking these improvements provides insight into community development, infrastructure enhancements, and overall district vitality. Record all public improvements made within the district, including but not limited to:

- Streetscape improvements
- Sidewalk repairs
- Lighting upgrades
- Public art installations
- Infrastructure replacements
- Park or plaza enhancements

Understanding where public funds are spent helps the organization communicate impact to stakeholders, advocate for future investment, and maintain accurate historical records. **Private improvements** may also be tracked within this module; however, it is recommended to record private improvements at the individual property level rather than as bulk entries. Tracking improvements per property ensures more accurate ROI reporting and allows the organization to monitor reinvestment trends across the district.

Public Investments

Tracking Public Investments is a required component of ROI reporting and is essential for demonstrating how public funds support the Main Street district. These records help illustrate the value of local government partnerships, infrastructure investment, and community-driven improvements.

Public Investments should include any financial support provided by local units of government and related public entities. Examples include:

- Local government funding allocated for district improvements
- Dollars provided for specific projects or initiatives, along with their intended purpose
- Redevelopment Commission (RDC) contributions, such as funds issued for façade grants facilitated by the Main Street organization
- Any other public resources invested directly into Main Street programs or district enhancements

Maintaining detailed Public Investment records supports transparency, strengthens relationships with government partners, and provides critical data for annual reporting, advocacy, and long-term community planning.

Remember that private investment is tracked under each property as improvements. Any funds invested into a specific property should be recorded as property-level improvements to ensure accurate reporting and documentation of investment activity within the district.

WHAT'S NEXT

This handbook, developed by Indiana Main Street staff in partnership with the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs, is designed to support local Main Street programs from initial setup through the full lifecycle of program participation. Ongoing communication with the State Coordinating Program is essential for success as a recognized Indiana Main Street community. Our staff is committed to guiding you through each step of the process, and we strongly stand behind our mission to strengthen and empower local Main Streets across Indiana.

OCRA works with local, state and national partners to provide resources and technical assistance to aid communities in shaping and achieving their vision for community and economic development. This handbook serves as a comprehensive guide to Indiana Main Street's Coordinating Program policies, procedures, and expectations.

Because policies and best practices continue to evolve in response to an ever-changing environment, this handbook will be updated regularly. Users are encouraged to refer back to it often to ensure they are following the most current standards and recommendations.

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