



NWI RDA Development Catalyst Grant

Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority • Program Overview

The Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA) is committing **\$250,000** to help local governments in Lake and Porter counties build the tools, plans, and frameworks needed to attract quality development, expand the tax base, and connect local priorities to the region's long-term vision. The Development Catalyst Grant funds the work that happens before the developer calls, so communities are positioned to compete when opportunity arrives.

Program Goals

- **Prepare communities for investment.** This program helps local governments create the policy frameworks, technical tools, analysis, and marketing materials needed to attract quality development in an increasingly competitive regional landscape.
- **Align local action with regional vision.** The strongest applications will connect local initiatives to RDA strategic priorities: Transit-Oriented Development, brownfield redevelopment, lakefront access, tourism infrastructure, and economic diversification.
- **Leverage every dollar.** RDA funds may serve as local match for qualifying federal and state grant opportunities, extending the reach of every award beyond the grant itself.

Regional Alignment

Projects in the following RDA strategic focus areas will receive strong consideration in scoring. Communities outside TDD boundaries are encouraged to apply and can demonstrate alignment through other regional priorities.

- **Redevelopment:** TOD opportunities, brownfield remediation, land assembly, and environmental studies
- **Commuter Rail:** Station area planning and TOD within or adjacent to TDD boundaries
- **Lakefront Communities:** Sewer extensions, at-grade crossings, and industrial site reclamation
- **National & State Parks:** Tourism infrastructure and lakefront access
- **Regional Airports:** Airport-adjacent development and cargo facility support

Funding Details

- **Total Available:** \$250,000 for FY2026
- **Award Range:** \$15,000 – \$75,000 per award
- **Local Match:** 10–50% required. Communities contributing higher match percentages receive favorable consideration. Match must be unrestricted cash funds; in-kind contributions are not eligible.
- **Match Leverage:** RDA funds may be used as local match for qualifying federal and state grant opportunities — including Lake Michigan Coastal Grant, NIRPC, OCRA, and community foundations — subject to RDA approval.

Eligible Applicants

All local government units in Lake and Porter Counties are eligible, including cities, towns, townships (with a letter of support from County Commissioners), and county governments. Joint applications from multiple jurisdictions are encouraged and will receive preference in evaluation. Nonprofit organizations are not eligible as lead applicants but may serve as project partners or consultants.

Ineligible Uses

- Direct capital projects, unless part of an approved match grant
- Legal fees and salaries
- Sub-granting of awarded dollars without prior RDA approval



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Eligible Activities • Evaluation & Scoring • Award Decisions

Eligible Activities

Funds must be used for activities that demonstrably prepare communities for development, investment, or infrastructure that will expand the local tax base. Eligible activities include but are not limited to:

- **Policy & Regulatory Preparedness: Zoning** code updates for TOD, mixed-use, or missing middle housing; comprehensive plan amendments; community-wide housing studies; development incentive policy frameworks including TIF, tax abatement, and facade programs; design guidelines for priority development areas; and HB 1001 compliance planning.
- **Marketing & Recruitment Materials: Development** pitch kits and site selector packages with GIS mapping, utility data, and development-ready site profiles; investor prospectuses for redevelopment areas or opportunity zones; brand identity and placemaking materials for station areas and downtown districts.
- **Technical Studies & Analysis: Market** feasibility studies for specific development types or areas; infrastructure gap analyses identifying barriers to development; fiscal impact modeling for proposed development scenarios; and TOD readiness assessments for communities with existing or planned rail stations.
- **Procurement Tools: RFPs** and RFQs for developer partnerships; master development agreements and public-private partnership frameworks; and preparedness materials for larger state or federal funding sources aligned with the RDA Strategic Plan.

Evaluation & Scoring

Applications are evaluated on a 100-point scale. A one-point bonus is awarded for every 5% of local match above the 10% minimum.

Criterion	Points	What reviewers are looking for
Strategic Alignment	30	Clear connection to one or more RDA strategic focus areas and defined need.
Tax Base Expansion Potential	25	Measurable link to fiscal growth; identified sites or opportunities
Capacity to Execute	15	Local commitment, match level, realistic timeline, identified partners
Regional Impact & Innovation	15	Benefits beyond municipal boundaries; multi-jurisdictional value
Leveraging & Sustainability	15	Unlocking additional investment; long-term value beyond grant period

+1 bonus point for every 5% of local match above the 10% minimum.

Evaluation Process

All applications move through a four-stage review process:

1. **Administrative Review:** Eligibility and completeness check by RDA staff and counsel
2. **Threshold Review:** Confirmation that all required materials are present and complete
3. **Committee Review:** Scored evaluation and funding recommendations by review panel
4. **CEO/Board Approval:** Final award decisions by RDA Board and Chief Executive Officer

Award Decisions

The RDA reserves the right to adjust award amounts based on available funding and application strength; request clarifications or modifications before final award; decline to fund all available dollars if applications do not meet quality standards; award partial funding with required scope adjustments; and recapture unexpended funds for other program uses.



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Application Requirements • Key Dates • FAQ

Application Requirements

The following documents are required with each application:

- Completed Application Form (provided by RDA and submitted via email to abytnar@rda.in.gov)
- Project Narrative, 2-page maximum: community context, proposed activities, connection to RDA Strategic Plan and TDD boundaries where applicable, tax base expansion strategy, and implementation timeline
- Budget Narrative and match documentation
- Local Government authorization letter confirming application and match commitment
- Budget Worksheet (RDA-provided template)

Optional but strongly recommended: letters of support from businesses, developers, anchor institutions, or regional partners; maps of the project area; previous studies demonstrating groundwork; and evidence of developer interest.

Grant Administration & Support

Communities must follow applicable procurement requirements; consultant selection must be competitive unless otherwise permitted by state law. All contracts require RDA acknowledgment language and are subject to RDA review. Awardees must execute a grant agreement within 30 days of award, submit quarterly progress reports, complete work within 6 months of contract execution, and submit final deliverables and financial reports within 30 days of project completion. Prior to application, one-on-one guidance by appointment, budget and timeline templates, and procurement assistance will be available. Awardees will have a dedicated RDA staff liaison plus access to the RDA consultant and staff team for technical resources throughout the grant period.

Key Dates

Application Acceptance Opens: April 24, 2026

Application Deadline: May 22, 2026

Award Notifications: To be announced

Grant Agreement Execution: Within 30 days of award notification

Project Completion Window: 6 months from contract execution; extensions available by request or built into initial award

Frequently Asked Questions

Can we apply for funds to support multiple activities?

Yes. Applications may include several complementary activities — a zoning update, developer pitch kit, and market study can all be part of a single project.

What if our community doesn't have a TDD boundary?

All communities in Lake and Porter Counties are eligible. TDD alignment receives favorable scoring, but applicants can demonstrate alignment through other regional priorities.

Can RDA funds be used as match for another grant?

Yes, subject to RDA approval. Your application must include a copy of the relevant program and an overview of the project the funding is being sought for.

Can we use the same consultants as a neighboring community?

Yes. Joint procurement across jurisdictions is a cost-effective approach and may strengthen your application.

What happens if we don't complete the work within 6 months?

Extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis or built into the initial award for projects with longer timelines.

Will funded projects be made public?

Yes. The RDA will publicize all awards and promote completed work as regional models. Final deliverables may be shared more broadly with permission.