



## READY COMMUNITIES - IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS ROUND III GUIDELINES

### Objective:

Ready Communities Implementation Grants fund projects or programs strategically designed to positively impact quality of place in the Indiana Uplands region. Projects or programs must improve regional capacity to attract and retain workforce by either creating accessible amenities/programs or enhancing the existing attributes that make the region an attractive place to live, work, and play.

### Prerequisites:

Implementation grants are available to applicants from the 11 counties of the Indiana Uplands. Grant proposals must align with strategic priorities identified in quality of place and workforce attraction plans. Finalized plans for each of the 11 counties are available at <https://regionalopportunityinc.org/ready-communities/plans/>

Round III will begin with an informational grant workshop on **Tuesday, March 17, 10am-12pm**. This workshop will also walk participants through the application process and identify desired outcomes of potential projects. ROI staff will also help participants craft strong, clear, focused, and aligned applications.

In response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and in the interest of the health and safety of our communities, we have decided to conduct this grant workshop as a Zoom meeting (video conferencing). Information on how to access the Zoom meeting will be available via the ROI website: <https://regionalopportunityinc.org/ready-communities/>

To be eligible, applicants must submit a Letter of Intent (LOI). Letters must be submitted via ROI's grant portal and are due **Monday, May 4**. ROI will invite applicants to submit full project proposals based on their LOIs.

### Letter of Intent Application Instructions:

Letters of Intent must be submitted online via ROI's grant portal no later than end of day, **Monday, May 4**. Applicants who have not used this grant portal previously will be prompted to create an account. You can access the portal starting on March 3 here: <https://roigrants.communityforce.com/Funds/Search.aspx>. Applicants will upload their letters, which should be **no more than two pages** and submitted on letterhead.

Letters must include:

- Project or program description. Please indicate how dollars requested will advance the Ready Communities Initiative and fulfill strategic priorities from the county's Quality of Place and Workforce Attraction Plan
- Anticipated outcomes and strategies for measuring them
- Timeline for the proposed project and for measuring results

Applicants will need to provide additional information in the form when submitting LOIs:

- Name and title of contact person
- Mission statement of the organization
- Amount of funding requested between \$100,000 and \$250,000 (you may estimate)
- Verification of tax-exempt status (i.e., copy of IRS Letter of Determination) OR verification of sponsorship by a tax-exempt organization and ROI approval to apply. Please review the list of eligible organizations below.

### **Full Grant Application Instructions:**

ROI will review letters of intent and invite select applicants to submit full applications. These applications will also be submitted through ROI's grant portal. Full grant applications will be due **Wednesday, July 1**. The applications will then be reviewed and evaluated. Finalists may be asked to make a presentation to the evaluation committee. Presentations will occur in August.

### **Funding Available and Funding Decisions:**

In Round III of Ready Communities Implementation grants, up to \$1.14 million will be available in grant funding. Grants will be available in amounts from \$100,000 to \$250,000 per grant. Multi-county proposals may be eligible for larger grant amounts at the discretion of the ROI Board of Directors.

Round III grants will be announced in **August 2020**. All grant funds must be expended and grant-funded work completed within **24 months** of the start date specified in the grant agreement.

### **Eligible Applicants:**

The following kinds of organizations are eligible to apply:

- Incorporated cities and towns
- County commissions and councils
- Nonprofits, including foundations, agencies, and hospitals
- Public educational institutions, including pre-K, K-12, and post-secondary
- Faith-based organizations
- Main street organizations
- Chambers of commerce and economic development organizations that have an affiliated 501(c)(3)

Eligible applicants include organizations that meet the definition of exempt entities as defined by Internal Revenue Code ("Code") section 501(c)(3) and those treated as a public charity described in Code section 170(b)(1)(A). Other exempt organizations that do not possess 501(c)(3) status (such as organizations described in Code sections 501(c)(4) or 501(c)(6)) may be eligible for funding, but will be subject to an enhanced level of due diligence and expenditure responsibility to ensure such grants are used exclusively for charitable purposes. Please contact ROI to confirm your organization's eligibility.

**Local Match:**

There is a local match requirement of at least 10% for all grants. These local sources may be cash, and in-kind, however in-kind funding may not account for more than half the local match.

**Limit on Planning Funds:**

Funds for planning or studies are limited to 10% of the grant request, and proposed planning must be instrumental to successful implementation of the proposal.

**Evaluation Criteria**

Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria, in order of importance:

1. Capacity to advance prosperity in the region
2. Relevancy to county plan and desired outcomes identified in the *Strategic Plan for Economic and Community Prosperity in Southwest Central Indiana*
3. Potential for significant impact on workforce development and attraction
4. Sustainability of project/proposal, where appropriate
5. Leveraging of additional funding sources and partnerships
6. Thoughtful budget development
7. Applicants' capacity to execute project or program, with a focus on community buy-in

Successful applications will also identify how project impact will be measured, how indicators will be used to determine project success, and how the project outcomes will benefit both the community and the larger Indiana Uplands region.

**Eligible Projects:**

The Ready Communities Initiative supports innovative and transformative programs/projects that improve regional quality of place and workforce attraction opportunities while adhering to eligibility and funding limitations. Projects and programs should be aligned with both the *Strategic Plan for Economic and Community Prosperity in Southwest Central Indiana* (found at <https://regionalopportunityinc.org/about/swci-strategic-plan/>) and the county's Quality of Place and Workforce Attraction plan (see Prerequisites section for link).

Eligible quality of place proposals must align with one or more of the following categories:

- **Aesthetics and Beautification Enhancements**

Examples: Place branding, public art, streetscape beautification, park enhancements, main street type investments

- **Connectivity Infrastructure Development**

Examples: Bike & pedestrian paths, trail enhancements, walkability improvements, public broadband or Wi-Fi, public transit or other transportation needs

- **Community Cohesion & Support**

Examples: Childcare facilities, workforce training centers, public spaces, innovation spaces, farmer's markets