



## READY COMMUNITIES - IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS ROUND III FAQs (UPDATED APRIL 20, 2020)

### **What is the Ready Communities Initiative?**

The Ready Communities Initiative provides counties and communities the resources necessary to strategically plan for, develop, and implement projects and programs that build quality of place, grow regional capacity for workforce development and attraction, and improve the attributes and amenities that make the Indiana Uplands an attractive place to live, work, and play.

### **What is the specific goal of Ready Communities Implementation Grants?**

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 existing attributes.

### **Is my organization eligible for a Community Impact Grant?**

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.

### **Is collaboration across counties acceptable?**

Yes. We welcome organizations coming together to create a multi-county grant proposals. One organization must be the lead organization and will be the applying organization. All collaborating organizations must confirm their willingness and intent to participate.

### **How do those collaborating organizations demonstrate their commitment?**

Generally, this is most effectively accomplished by entering into a Memorandum of Understanding.

### **Is there a limit on the number of Letters of Intent that can be submitted?**

No. An organization may submit multiple Letters of Intent and/or be a co-applicant with multiple organizations. Multiple applications are also welcomed from the same county.

### **How does an eligible organization apply for funds?**

This grant opportunity uses a two-part proposal process. First, interested organizations are asked to submit a two-page (maximum) Letter of Intent to ROI. Following a review of Letters of Intent, selected organizations will be invited to submit full grant applications online.

### **How much funding is available?**

In Round III, a total of \$1.14 million is available.

### **What are the funding limits for Implementation Grants?**

Grants will be available in amounts from \$100,000 to \$250,000 per grant. Multi-county proposals may be eligible for larger amounts at the discretion of the ROI Board of Directors.

### **What should be included in my Letter of Intent?**

Letters of Intent (LOIs) should be no more than two pages in length and must be submitted on the organization's letterhead. The following should be included:

- 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 online 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.

### **What types of requests are considered?**

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 county's quality of place and workforce attraction plan (<https://regionalopportunityinc.org/ready-communities/plans/>) and the *Strategic Plan for Economic and Community Prosperity in Southwest Central Indiana* (<https://regionalopportunityinc.org/about/swci-strategic-plan/>).

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

ROI typically does not fund requests for general operating support or indirect costs. Direct costs for operating the project or program are eligible costs. General operating support for new or pilot programs may be considered for funding but may not be prioritized.

### **What is the difference between “direct costs” and “indirect costs”?**

Direct costs are the expenses required to execute a grant that are directly attributable and can be reasonably allocated to the project. Program staff salaries, travels expenses, materials, training, and consultants required to execute the grant are examples. *Costs that would not be incurred if the grant did not exist are often indicative of direct costs.*

Indirect costs are general overhead and administration expenses that support the entire operations of a grantee, and that may be shared across various projects or programs. Examples may include facilities expenses, e.g., rent, utilities, and equipment for the grantee’s headquarters. *Expenses that would be incurred regardless of whether the grant program is funded are often indicative of indirect costs.* Again, these types of expenses are generally not funded.

### **Does my project *have* to align with a county Quality of Place & Workforce Attraction plan?**

Yes. Outcomes of your proposal **MUST** align with the strategic priorities identified in one or more plans (for multi-county proposals).

### **What are the key criteria to be evaluated?**

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 by ROI
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

ROI will also consider whether there are more appropriate funding sources for the project proposal when evaluating submissions.

### **When is my Letter of Intent due?**

A two-page (maximum) Letter of Intent is due June 1, 2020. The online form to upload and submit LOIs will collect additional information (see above: “What should be included in my Letter of Intent?”).

### **How should Letters of Intent be submitted?**

Via ROI’s grant portal. Applicants new to this grant portal will be prompted to create an account. You can access the portal here:

<https://roigrants.communityforce.com/Funds/Search.aspx>.

### **Where do I obtain a full application?**

If you are invited by ROI to submit a full proposal for Round III funding, you will be provided instructions regarding how to access your online application. Full applications are due August 7, 2020.

### **What additional information will be required for the full application?**

When completing a full application, please be prepared to submit the following information and documentation:

- Organization's most recent IRS Form 990 or 990-N
- Project/Program narrative, focusing on how the program aligns with the county's quality of place and workforce attraction plan
- Project/Program budget, including information on local match funding and a plan for ongoing costs (if any)
- Project/Program partnerships and collaborations
- How the community has been engaged to tailor the project
- Information on how the project/program will be sustainable

### **How can I infuse innovation and transformation into program grants?**

As an organization focused on the long-term success of our region, ROI seeks to fund programs or projects that offer the potential for lasting change. We encourage our grant applicants to think imaginatively. Some ways to go about doing this are to:

- Engage your stakeholders in the process of exploring new directions and opportunities; involve people with a variety of perspectives that might lead to novel ideas or solutions
- Look for less conventional ways to address issues or seek opportunities
- Try a new approach that has not been implemented before but has potential
- Revamp a current project or build on programs in other communities that are effective
- Partner with another agency or organization

Taking these steps is **not** a requirement for implementation grant funding.

### **When will I find out if our proposal is accepted? When would funding be available?**

After submitting an LOI, organizations that are invited to submit a full application will be notified by June 29, 2020. Organizations selected for funding will be notified in September 2020. Funding will be available after a grant agreement is executed.

### **How are grant agreements and distributions handled?**

Before grant funding is available, the grantee and ROI will execute a grant agreement. The grant agreement will outline the reimbursement process. *ROI grants are distributed on a reimbursement basis.* Invoices submitted to ROI are generally paid within three weeks but may require four, on occasion.

### **How long will a grantee have to spend grant funds?**

Implementation grants have a 24 month funding period.

### **What type of reporting is required?**

ROI will work collaboratively with each grantee to establish the expectations and the schedule for grant documentation, feedback, and evaluation. Depending upon the project or program, one or more intermediate reports may be required in addition to progress reports and the final report. Over the two year funding period, six reports would be typical. While the grant agreement will define the required components of grant reports, the following items are generally expected:

- Objectives met or unmet
- Tracking capacity metrics, such as new clients served or satisfaction surveys
- Community benefits from the grant program/project
- Financial results
- Sustainability of the project/program

ROI staff may visit the grant site to check on progress or experience the project in action. The grantee will be asked to provide pictures and copies of any publicity about the funded grant.

### **Who is on the grant selection committee?**

The Grant Evaluation Committee is comprised of ROI staff, ROI Board Members, and representatives from the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs, and the Southern Indiana Development Corporation. ROI is careful to monitor potential conflicts in selecting committee members. All evaluators are asked to complete both a conflict of interest and confidentiality statement.

### **Remind me again, what is the Round III timeline?**

Mon, Jun 1: Deadline to Submit Letter of Intent  
Mon, Jun 29: ROI Invites Candidates to Apply for Grants  
Fri, Aug 7: Grant Application Deadline  
Sep: Grants Awarded

### **Who should I contact with questions?**

Contact Larry Pejeau at [lpejeau@regionalopportunityinc.org](mailto:lpejeau@regionalopportunityinc.org) or call ROI at (812) 287-8116

### **Equal Opportunity in Grantmaking**

*No person in the United States shall, on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity (as defined in paragraph 249(c)(4) of title 18, United States Code), sexual orientation, marital or parental status, political affiliation, military service, physical or mental ability, or any other improper criterion be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity funded in whole or in part with funds made available by ROI, and any other program or activity funded in whole or in part with funds appropriated for grants, cooperative agreements, and other assistance administered by ROI.*