2026 Stellar Communities FAQ

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Eligibility Criteria

1. Which communities are eligible to apply for the program?

Any incorporated Indiana community of any size (county, municipality, city, town, township etc.) that is not entitled to direct Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding through U.S. HUD is eligible to apply. See list below:

There are 24 entitlement communities and 2 entitlement counties within the State of Indiana:

City of Anderson	**City of Hammond**
City of Ft. Wayne	**City of Indianapolis**
City of Kokomo	**City of Lafayette**
City of Jeffersonville	**City of LaPorte**
City of Bloomington	**City of Michigan City**
City of Caramel	**City of Mishawaka**
City of Columbus	**City of Muncie**
City of East Chicago	**City of New Albany**
City of Elkhart	**City of South Bend**
City of Evansville	**City of Terre Haute**
City of Gary	**City of West Lafayette**
City of Goshen	**Hamilton County**
City of Greenwood	**Lake County**

a. At the time of LOI submission, all participating communities must be in good standing with the State.

b. Communities NOT eligible to apply, due to participation in existing large-scale capacity building programs include:
   i. Auburn, Jay County, Kosciusko County, Mentone, Milford, Pierceton
   ii. Vincennes, Dubois County, Jasper
   iii. Franklin County, Brookville, Wayne County, Richmond, Dublin, Milton, East Germantown, Spring Grove, Cambridge City, Connersville
   iv. Fortville, Shirley, Greenfield, Hancock County
   v. Allen County, Grabill, New Haven, Woodburn, Monroeville, Leo-Cedarville
   vi. Plymouth, LaPaz, Culver, Bremen, Bourbon, Argos, Marshall County
   vii. New Castle
   viii. North Vernon

2. Are population divisions still a component of the program?

a. No, this requirement has been removed.

3. Is population a consideration with the program?

a. No, applicants may be comprised of communities of any population size.

b. In order for a community to receive any federal funding, a community must be a HUD non-entitlement.

4. **If I am a previous Stellar Designee, am I still eligible to apply?**
    a. Yes, previous Stellar Designees are eligible to apply. However, 2024 Stellar Communities are ineligible to apply.

5. **Which programs will a community be ineligible to apply for funding during the Stellar Community period?**
    a. IHCDA
        i. They will still be eligible for all other IHCDA resources.
    b. OCRA
        i. Communities who receive OCRA Stellar CDBG funding for projects in the SDP, will not be eligible to apply for any additional CDBG grants during the five-year period following designation; or until all their Stellar CDBG funded projects are in implementation. This means that the project has at least achieved release of funds (ROF) and has executed contracts in place.
        ii. Communities who DO NOT receive OCRA Stellar CDBG funding, are still eligible to apply for other CDBG program rounds.
        iii. Once a community becomes eligible to apply for competitive CDBG funding again, OCRA's standard points reduction policy will be in place for any projects of the same type as those funded with the Stellar CDBG funds.
        iv. For any new programs launched by OCRA, a determination of eligibility for Stellar participants will be made at the time of that program's creation and roll out.
    c. INDOT
        i. Communities that fall inside of Stellar Designations will not be eligible to apply to INDOT for the Rural Federal Aid Program during a three-year period following designation. However, if a community within the Designation does not receive these funds, they may enter INDOTs competitive application rounds. Local Units of Governments within the urbanized boundary of a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is not eligible for rural federal aid funding.
    d. Other Stellar Partner Agencies
        i. Designated communities will not be restricted from any other partner agencies' programs.

6. **Is a Community Foundation an eligible applicant?**
    a. Yes, a Community Foundation is an eligible applicant, if it represents the entirety of the community.
    b. If applying for CDBG funding, a partnering local unit of government must be the lead applicant on a CDBG project application.

7. **Is an RDA an eligible applicant?**
    a. Yes, a Regional Development Authority is an eligible applicant.

b. If applying for CDBG funding, a partnering local unit of government must be the lead applicant on a CDBG project application.

8. Is an EDO an eligible applicant?

a. Yes, an Economic Development Organization is an eligible applicant if it represents the entirety of the community.
b. If applying for CDBG funding, a partnering local unit of government must be the lead applicant on a CDBG project application.

9. If my community is participating in READI 2.0, can my community still apply?

a. Yes, we encourage you to apply.

Stellar Pathways Workshops

10. When are the Stellar Pathways Workshops?

There will be two 1-day Stellar Pathways Workshops held in downtown Indianapolis fall 2026.

11. Will food and drink be provided at the Stellar Pathways Workshop?

a. Yes

12. How many people from my community can attend a workshop?

a. For any single workshop, communities can send three to five people.
b. Communities can attend both workshops if interested. If seating becomes limited priority will be given to those attending only one workshop.

13. How do I register for the Stellar Pathways Workshop?

a. Registration for the Stellar Pathways workshops will open September 1, 2026 and will be found www.ocra.in.gov/stellar.

14. Who should be in attendance for the Stellar Pathways Workshops?

a. Priority is given to community organization CEOs, municipality leaders, community leaders, and county leader CEOs.

Funding & Participating Agencies

15. What are the funding amounts available from each partner agency?

a. Each designated Stellar Pathways Community may be eligible to apply for up to half of the following amounts.
b. However, a designated Stellar Community is *not guaranteed* they will receive the maximum amount available.
c. Local match is required between 10-20% for total region depending on the funding set-asides.
d. The amounts shown below represent the total amounts available from each partner agency. Funding will be divided amongst Stellar designees.
e. Additional funding sources may be identified by Stellar Community partners that are not set-aside or identified in the following matrix:

Program	OCRA	INDOT	IHCDA	IDOH	DNR	IAC	IDDC
CDBG	$ million						
Strategic Development Plan	$200,000 OR $50,000 per finalist						
Rural Federal Aid Program		$3 million					
Health & Wellness Program				$75,000			
Home Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) Homebuyers vs. home renters			$3 million Housing Development Organization				
Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Historic Preservation Fund (HPF)					Bonus Points; 5% to LWCF Bonus Points; 20 to HPF		
Creative Convergence Workshop and Grants						Reserved spot in the Creative Convergence Workshop & grant opportunities up to $5,000 per designee	
Indiana Destination Marketing Package							Technical & advisory support

16. Are project limits in place for the available funding?

a. Except when required by federal regulation, typical per project limits used by the partner agencies will not apply for the Stellar Pathways Program.
b. The amount of OCRA Stellar CDBG funds granted will still be based on a $5,000 cost per project beneficiary.

17. What is the time frame for project completion?

a. All projects, including complimentary projects, should be expected to be completed within five years after the Stellar Pathways designation. All applications should be submitted within three years of designation.

18. If designated, how will funding be awarded?

a. Individual projects will be funded based on eligibility criteria. Projects will require an application, a review for eligibility and approval bythe applicable/relevant funding agency.

Office of Community and Rural Affairs

1. What is the funding type offered by the Office of Community and Rural Affairs?

a. Stellar funding offered by the Office of Community and Rural Affairs is from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), federal funding.

b. The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program provides annual grants on a formula basis to states, cities, and counties to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing, a suitable living environment, and expanding economic opportunities principally for low- and moderate-income persons. The program is authorized under Title 1 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, Public Law 93-383, as amended 42. U.S.C. 5301 et seq.

2. Who are eligible entities for the Community Development Block Grant?

a. Under the state CDBG program, only non-entitlement units of government (UGLG) are able to receive CDBG funds. Non-entitlement areas include small cities and towns with populations of less than 50,000 and counties with population of less than 200,000.

b. Entitlement communities are not eligible to receive CDBG funds from the state program.

These include:

City of Anderson
City of Ft. Wayne
City of Kokomo
City of Jeffersonville
City of Bloomington
City of Caramel
City of Columbus
City of East Chicago
City of Elkhart
City of Evansville
City of Gary
City of Goshen
City of Greenwood
City of Hammond
City of Indianapolis
City of Lafayette
City of LaPorte
City of Michigan City
City of Mishawaka
City of Muncie
City of New Albany
City of South Bend
City of Terre Haute
City of West Lafayette
Hamilton County
Lake County

c. Eligible local units of government are counties, cities or incorporated towns not located within an entitlement community. Unincorporated areas must apply through the county in which they are located.

3. What are the duties that local government units must fulfill under the State CDBG program?

a. Local units of government are responsible for:

i. Acting as primary applicant for CDBG funded projects

ii. Prioritizing the types of activities they apply for
iii. Handling local citizen participation
iv. Carrying out eligible activities
v. Complying with federal and state requirements

4. What projects qualify for CDBG funding under the Stellar program?

a. For a project to qualify for CDBG funding, the project must meet the following three criteria:
   i. Meet a National Objective
   ii. The project must have an eligible lead applicant permissible under the State's Community Development Block Grant Program
   iii. The project must be an eligible activity permissible under the State's Community Development Block Grant Program
   iv. The project must have eligible costs that can be covered with the State's Community Development Block Grant funds.

5. What are the national objectives of the Community Development Block Grants?

a. The national objectives are:
   i. Benefit to Low- and Moderate-Income (LMI) Persons
      1. Area Basis
      2. Limited Clientele/Presumed Class
      3. Housing
   ii. Prevention or Elimination of Slums and Blighted Conditions
      1. Area basis
      2. Spot Basis

6. What is the National Objective Benefit to Low- and Moderate-Income (LMI) Persons?

a. The National Objective Benefit to Low- and Moderate-Income (LMI) persons is divided into three categories:
   i. **LMI Area Wide (LMA):** A project may qualify if the activity is one that benefits all residents in a particular area, primarily a residential area, where at least 51% of the residents are low- to moderate- income persons. The benefit to LMI area wide is met by documenting that 51% or more of the persons who live in the project area qualify as being low- and moderate-income. This can be done using either HUD census data or by conducting an income survey.

   Examples of projects under LMA include public facilities activities, such as fire stations, water, sewer, and storm water projects, which provide benefits to all residents in the service area in a primary residential area.

   ii. **Limited Clientele criteria or presumed class** is a second way to meet the LMI benefit national objective. Limited clientele criteria require documentation on family size and income in order to show that at least 51% of the project's clientele are LMI;

   Presumed class projects serve a specific group of individuals in a community, but not necessarily the entire community. HUD has designated eight presumed classes which are determined to be composed of low- and moderate-income persons. These groups are:

Abused children	Severely Disabled Adults
Battered spouses	People experiencing homeless
Senior citizens (Age 62 or above)	Persons with HIV-AIDS
Illiterate Adults	Migrant Farm Workers

Examples of limited clientele/presumed class projects include childcare facilities, senior citizens centers, acquisition of a building to be converted into a shelter for the homeless, or rehabilitation of a center for training severely disabled persons to enable them to live independently.

iii. **LMI-Housing (LMH):** A project may qualify if the activity that is undertake is for the purpose of providing or improving permanent residential structures, which upon completion, will be occupied by a low-moderate income household. To meet the housing LMI national objective, structures with one unit must be occupied by a LMI household. LMI Housing require documentation on the household income.

7. What is the National Objective Prevention of Slum or Blighted Conditions?

a. Public and/or private facilities requiring improvements that aid in the prevention or elimination of slums or blighted conditions in a designated slum/blight area may qualify for OCRA funding under this National Objective.
b. Examples of slum/blight area-basis projects include downtown sidewalk repairs or façade improvements to multiple downtown buildings
c. Examples of slum/blight spot-basis projects are removing environmental hazards from a single downtown building or demolition of two attached downtown buildings that pose a significant safety hazard to the community.

8. What are examples of types of eligible activities for the Community Development Block Grant?

a. Acquisition of real property
b. Clearance & demolition of real property
c. Rehabilitation of public owned building
d. Rehabilitation of privately owned downtown commercial buildings
e. Historic preservation
f. Construction or rehabilitation of privately owned utilities
g. Construction or rehabilitation of public facilities
h. Owner occupied rehabilitation
i. Planning activities that are available for this program include: Water Infrastructure Plan, Broadband Readiness Plan, Environmental Assessment, Public Facilities Feasibility Study and Historic Preservation Plan.

9. Which regulations apply to Stellar CDBG funded projects?

a. Projects utilizing CDBG funds must have an eligible applicant, meet a national objective, and be an eligible activity under the State's CDBG program.
b. All CDBG funded projects will continue to be required to meet with public participation requirements and all federal cross cutting requirements including: Environmental Review, Buy America Preference (BAP), Federal Labor Standards (Davis Bacon Wages), Acquisition and Relocations (URA) and Fair Housing and non- discrimination requirements.

10. Do CDBG Stellar projects compete in the regular timed rounds throughout the year or do they come in on a rolling basis?

a. The designated communities will have set-aside funding, so they will not be required to compete in normal rounds. Application will be accepted on a rolling basis.

11. Can funds be used for a county property within a non-entitlement community?

a. Yes.

12. Can funds be designated for a sub-recipient for a CDBG eligible project?

a. Yes, non-profits are eligible to be sub-recipients on Stellar CDBG projects. The applicant may contract with a not-for-profit organization to carry out the activities of an eligible project, provided that the organization can document its nonprofit status with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, the Indiana Department of Revenue, and the Indiana Secretary of State.

13. Can CDBG funds be used for feasibility or planning studies?

a. Communities can only undertake the following planning activities with the Stellar CDBG program: Water Infrastructure Plan, Broadband Readiness Plan, Environmental Assessment, Public Facilities Feasibility Study, and Historic Preservation Plan. It is important to note that funding for COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plans, Economic Development Plan, Comprehensive Plan, and Downtown Revitalization Plan cannot be pursued through Stellar CDBG.

14. Can communities who do not receive Stellar CDBG funding, still apply for CDBG funding in other rounds during the Stellar period?

a. Communities who DO NOT receive OCRA CDBG Stellar funding are still eligible to apply for other CDBG rounds. All communities must be in good standing with OCRA in order to apply for all CDBG funding.

15. Does the five-year stipulation apply to Income Surveys for the Stellar Pathways Program?

a. Yes. All our typical CDBG rules and requirements apply to the Stellar Pathways Program. Income surveys are considered valid for five years from the date of the first survey contact (e.g. first mailer, first phone call, first house visit).
b. All income surveys must follow OCRA's income survey policies and procedures. Projects using an income survey NOT approved by OCRA will be deemed ineligible.

c. If a community completes an income survey for a project in its SDP, the income survey shall remain valid within the five-year Stellar programmatic timeline.

16. Will communities be reimbursed for the development of income surveys?

a. No. All our typical CDBG rules and requirements apply to the Stellar Pathways Program.

Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCDA)

1. What is the funding type offered by Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority?

a. The funding set-aside offered by the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority is the HOME Investment Partnerships Program.
b. The purpose of the HOME program is to provide habitable and affordable housing for low and moderate-income persons. IHCDA is tasked with using its portion of HOME funds to improve the quality of existing housing stock in Indiana.

2. What is the HOME Investment Partnership Program Homebuyer Program?

a. The purpose of the HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME) Homebuyer Program is to provide subsidies in the form of grants and loans to selected applicants for the acquisition, rehabilitation and/or new construction of housing for purchase to serve low-income beneficiaries.
b. A property must either be a single-family unit, duplex, triplex, townhome, or a building with no more than four units.

3. What are the funding priorities of the HOME Investment Partnership Program Homebuyer Program?

a. Projects must demonstrate they are meeting the needs of their specific community.
b. Serve low-income households (at or below 80% of area median income).
c. Demonstrate capacity and readiness to proceed.
d. Link the project to the revitalization of existing neighborhoods, preferably through a comprehensive approach (i.e., as part of a published and approved community revitalization plan).
e. Propose projects that are energy-efficient and are of the highest-quality design attainable within a reasonable cost structure.
f. Propose the use of state certified Minority Business Enterprise (MBE), Women Business Enterprise (WBE), Federal Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE), Veteran-Owned Small Business (VOSB), and/or Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) contractors, and development team members.

4. Who are eligible applicants for the HOME Investment Partnership Program Homebuyer Program?

a. Eligible applicants include cities, towns, or counties that are located within Indiana but outside of the following participating jurisdictions. Applications from, or housing activities located within the following participating jurisdictions are NOT eligible for HOME funds:

i. Bloomington
ii. Evansville
iii. Fort Wayne
iv. Gary
v. Hammond
vi. Indianapolis/Marion County
vii. Lake County
viii. Lafayette Consortium
ix. Muncie
x. South Bend Consortium

5. What are eligible activities of the HOME Investment Partnerships Program Homebuyer Program?

a. Only performing acquisition is not eligible; however, acquisition in conjunction with another activity is permitted.
b. Rehabilitation, new construction, acquisition/rehabilitation or acquisition/new construction of single-family housing.
c. If HOME funds are used for acquisition of vacant land or demolition in conjunction with another activity, then construction must commence within nine months of the demolition or acquisition.
d. Manufactured homes are eligible if they meet IHCDA's Manufactured Housing Policy or if rehabilitation will bring the unit up to these standards:
    i. A single dwelling unit designed and built in a factory, installed as a permanent residence, which bears a seal certifying that it was built in compliance with the Federal Manufactured Housing Construction and Safety Standards law and which also complies with the following specifications:
        a. Shall have been constructed after January 1, 1981, and must exceed nine hundred fifty (950) square feet of occupied space per I.C. 36-7-4-1106(d);
        b. Is attached to a permanent foundation of masonry construction and has a permanent perimeter enclosure constructed in accordance with he One- and Two-Family Dwelling Code;
        c. Has wheels, axles and towing chasses removed;
        d. Has a pitched roof;
        e. Consists of two or more sections which, when joined, have a minimum dimension of 20' X 47.5' enclosing occupied space; and
        f. is located on land held by the beneficiary fee-simple title or 99-year leasehold and is the principal residence of the beneficiary.
        g. All other manufactured or mobile homes that do not meet the aforementioned criteria are ineligible to receive rehabilitation assistance funded by IHCDA.

6. What is the HOME Investment Partnership Program Rental Construction Program?

a. The purpose of the HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) rental construction program is to provide subsidies in the form of grants for the acquisition, rehabilitation, and/or new construction of rental housing for low-income households. Through this program, the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCDA) seeks to create or preserve affordable housing options for renter households.

7. What are the funding priorities of the HOME Investment Partnership Program Rental Construction Program?

a. Indiana Housing and Community's Development Authority's Goal is to fund development that:

i. Demonstrate that the project is meeting the needs of their specific community;
ii. Serve extremely low-income and very low-income households;
iii. Demonstrate capacity and readiness to proceed;
iv. Contribute to community revitalization;
v. Promote aging-in-place and accessibility strategies to provide independent living for seniors and persons with disabilities;
vi. Utilize energy-efficient high-quality design features, within a reasonable cost structure; and
vii. Include certified Minority Business Enterprise (MBE), Women Business Enterprise (WBE), Federal Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE), Veteran-Owned Small Business (VOSB), and/or Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) contractors and development team members.

8. Who are eligible applicants for the HOME Investment Partnership Program Rental Construction Program?

a. Eligible applicants are limited to the following:
   i. Local units of government (cities, towns, or counties) located within Indiana, except in the excluded Participating Jurisdictions listed below
   ii. Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs)
   iii. 501(c)3 and 501(c)4 nonprofit organizations
   iv. Public Housing Agencies (PHAs)
   v. Joint Venture Partnerships

b. Applications from, or housing activities proposed to be located within, the following Participating Jurisdictions are NOT eligible to apply for IHCDA HOME funds:
   i. Bloomington
   ii. Evansville
   iii. Fort Wayne
   iv. Gary
   v. Hammond
   vi. Indianapolis/Marion County
   vii. Lafayette Consortium
   viii. Lake County
   ix. Muncie
   x. South Bend Consortium

9. What is a Community Housing Development Organization? (CHDO)

a. A Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) is a private, community-based nonprofit organization whose primary purpose is to develop affordable housing for the community it serves.
b. To be recognized as a CHDO, an organization must meet the requirements pertaining to the legal status, organizational structure, capacity, and experience as set forth in 24 CFR 92.2, and certified by IHCDA as a CHDO.

10. What are eligible activities of the HOME Investment Partnerships Program Rental Construction Program?

a. The program is intended for the rehabilitation and/or new construction of rental housing.
b. Acquisition only is not an eligible activity. However, acquisition in conjunction with another activity is permitted. If HOME funds are used for acquisition of vacant land or demolition in conjunction with another activity, then construction most commence within nine months of the acquisition or demolition.
c. Eligible activities include:
    i. Rehabilitation, new construction, acquisition/rehabilitation, or acquisition/new construction of rental housing in the form of traditional apartments, single room occupancy units (SROs), or single-family housing.
        a. SRO housing consists of single room dwelling units that are the primary residence of the occupant(s). Neither kitchen nor bathroom facilities are required to be in each unit. However, if individual units do not contain bathroom facilities, the building must contain bathroom facilities to be shared by tenants. SRO housing does not include facilities for students. Rent limits for SRO units are treated differently than rent limits for other HOME-assisted units.
    ii. Rehabilitation of Rental Housing Tax Credit (RHTC) developments with compliance periods that have expired prior to the due date for application. RHTC developments still in the 30-year extended use period are eligible to apply for HOME funds, assuming the initial 15-year federal compliance period has expired.
    iii. Rehabilitation of existing HOME developments with HOME affordability periods that expired prior to the due date for this application.
    iv. Manufactured/mobile homes are eligible only if they meet all of the following standards or if rehabilitation will bring the unit up to these standards:
        a. A single dwelling unit designed and built in a factor, installed as a permanent residence, which bears a seal certifying that it was built in compliance with the Federal Manufactured Housing Construction and Safety Standards Law.
        b. A unit that was constructed after January 1, 1981
        c. A unit that is attached to a permanent foundation of masonry construction and has a permanent perimeter enclosure constructed in accordance with the One- and Two-Family Dwelling Code.
        d. A unit that has wheels, axles, and towing chassis removed
        e. A unit that has a pitched roof
        f. A unit that is located on land held by the beneficiary in fee-simple title or 99-year leasehold and is the principal residence of the beneficiary.

Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT)

1. What type of transportation projects are eligible?

a. The funding can be used on any federally eligible projects such as trails, roads, sidewalks, safety and bridge projects. The asset must be owned by the LPA.

2. **Can INDOT funds be used for Engineering, Right of Way acquisition and construction inspection or construction only?**
    a. INDOT funds can only be used for the construction phase of a project. This includes utility and railroad construction as well as the actual construction and inspection.

3. **Can Stellar Funds be used as match for INDOT Community Crossing?**
    a. No, the Stellar program is separate from the Community Crossings program.

4. **Are there any special instructions for communities located in a metropolitan planning organization (MPO)?**
    a. MPO communities are not required to have a commitment for transportation funding from INDOT or their MPO to submit an LOI since the community may have other sources to address transportation issues that they have identified. Communities submitting LOIs must include transportation issues, but each community must define the issues and the method of addressing them. If your MPO would like to participate in the funding of a project within the urbanized area, they can. If not, you will have to use other sources of funding. INDOT funds cannot be used in an urbanized area.

5. **If my community falls within an MPO, what proposed projects must be approved by the MPO?**
    a. INDOT funds cannot be used in an MPO's urbanized area. Any transportation projects located in an urbanized area with gaps in financing could use MPO funding if approved by that MPO. INDOT cannot provide additional funding to the MPO due to program regulations. IHCDA and OCRA programming do not need to be discussed with the MPO.

Indiana Department of Health (IDOH)

1. **What is the Rural Health and Wellness Grant?**
    a. A grant offered by the Indiana Department of Health focusing on the expansion of an existing program or adding a new, innovative approach to addressing an identified healthcare issue within the region.

2. **How much funding is allocated from IDOH?**
    a. $75,000 Total

3. **Does IDOH Funding have a matching requirement?**
    a. No

4. **What are the qualifications/requirements for IDOH Funding?**

a. Grant has an established Bidder Number, registered with the State of Indiana, and has a W-9 on file with the State of Indiana.
b. Grantee qualifies as non-for profit or government entity.
c. Grantee will be able to provide a fiscal agent who will be responsible for budget management and development of a sustainability plan to ensure the project continues.
d. Grantee must submit invoices for 100% of the awarded amount by September 30, 2026, to the Department of Health
e. Funding for allowable expenses must be incurred from date of the grant agreement through June 30, 2026.
f. Processing of invoices cannot be initiated until an executed grant agreement is in place and a purchase order assigned.
g. Executed grant agreement will be between the awardee and the Indiana Department of Health.

5. What type of projects can we use the IDOH funding for?

a. Projects can address a challenge identified in their Community Health Assessment. Examples include, but are not limited to:
    i. A community garden
    ii. Farmers' markets
    iii. Wellness programming
    iv. Behavioral health services
    v. Support groups
    vi. Community meal services
    vii. Breast feeding support

6. What is not allowed under IDOH Funding?

a. Direct health care services
b. Indirect cost (reference document attached)
c. Purchase of medical equipment, ambulances, and any other vehicles or major communications equipment.
d. Purchase or improvements to real property
e. Research
f. Funding cannot be used to pay for existing programs, projects, staff, or administrative costs.

Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

1. What is the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)?

a. The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is a matching assistance program that provides grants for 50% of the cost of the acquisition and/or development of outdoor recreation sites and facilities.
b. New programmatic guidance from the National Parks Service has resulted in some key changes to the application processes. DNR has compiled all of these changes into the LWCF Changes Quick Guide.

2. Who are eligible applicants for the LWCF Fund?

a. Only park and recreation boards established under Indiana law are eligible. The park and recreation board must also have a current 5-year master plan for parks and recreation on file, approved by the Community Grants & Trails Section.

3. What are examples of types of projects for the LWCF?

a. Grant applications may consist of land acquisition and/or facility construction or renovation for local public parks for outdoor recreation. New parks or additions to existing parks may be funded.

b. All land developed must be controlled by the park board through direct ownership. Examples of types of projects include:
   i. acquiring a park or natural area;
   ii. picnic areas;
   iii. sports and playfields, such as playgrounds, ballfields, court facilities, and golf courses;
   iv. water-oriented facilities for boating, swimming, and access to lakes, rivers, and streams;
   v. natural areas and interpretive facilities;
   vi. campgrounds;
   vii. fishing and hunting areas;
   viii. winter sports facilities;
   ix. amphitheaters and bandstands;
   x. trails;
   xi. roads, restrooms, utilities, park maintenance buildings;
   xii. Nature centers

4. How much is my community eligible to apply for?

a. The Land and Water Conservation Fund local applicants may request amounts ranging from a minimum of $250,000 up to a maximum of $1 million.

5. How is LWCF funding received?

a. Because the LWCF is a reimbursement program, the project sponsor does not receive the grant funds once the application has been approved. Rather, the sponsor is reimbursed 50% of the actual costs of the project. The sponsor must have the local matching 50% of the project costs available when the application is submitted. In order to receive the money reserved for the project, a reimbursement request must be submitted to your grant coordinator.

6. What bonus points will be eligible for a community in the Stellar Pathways Process?

a. Stellar finalists will be awarded additional points toward a Land and Water Conservation Fund Application. The amount will be 5% of the total points available.

7. For the Land and Water Conservation Fund, do all participating communities have to have an active parks board to be eligible? For instance, if Region A consists of County A, Town B, and Town C, do all three of the municipalities have to have an active parks board to be eligible to apply?

a. An active parks board would be necessary for the municipality taking on the project.

8. **For the Land and Water Conservation Fund, if the community is actively creating a five-year Master Parks Plan, are they eligible for the set-aside funding?**
    a. Each community applying for Land and Water Conservation Fund funding must have an approved five-year Master Parks Plan. If a community has a plan in the process, DNR can try their best to help complete the plan and get it approved. Unfortunately, if a community does not have a plan started, it's unlikely the community will complete it in time.

9. **What is the Historic Preservation Fund?**
    a. The Historic Preservation Fund is a federal program administered by the DHPA to assist important local preservation projects and help the State meet its goals for cultural resource management. The DHPA makes grant awards in three different project categories through a competitive annual round.

10. **Who are eligible applicants for the Historic Preservation Fund?**
    a. Eligible applicants include registered not-for-profit organizations, county and municipal government agencies, and colleges and universities. Historic buildings or structures to be documented or rehabilitated with grant federal funds must already be listed in the National Register of Historic Places at the time of application.

11. **What is the National Register for Historic Places?**
    a. The National Register for Historic Places is the federal list of historic properties that have been formally recognized by the National Park Service. The DHPA reviews and maintains the nominations for Indiana properties included in the National Register.

12. **What is the Indiana Register of Historic Sites and Structures?**
    a. The Indiana Register of Historic Sites and Structures (the State Register) was created by an act of the Indiana General Assembly in 1981. The Department of Historic Preservation and Archaeology administers the program. Note that all Indiana properties listed in the National Register are automatically listed in the State Register. However, sometimes properties are listed solely in the State Register.

13. **What are examples of types of projects for the HPF?**
    a. **Architectural and Historic projects** include: National register nominations for eligible historic districts; public education programs and materials about preservation, such as workshops, training events, publications, and brochures; feasibility studies or historic structure reports for National Register-listed properties; plans and specifications for the rehabilitation of National Register-listed properties; and historic context studies with National Register nominations for certain types of historic resources. Grant requests in this category can range from $5,000 to $50,000.

    b. **Archaeological projects**, include: Survey, testing, and research focused on specific geographic areas or cultural groups; National Register nominations for individual or multiple archaeological items; and public education programs and materials about archaeology. Grant request in this category can range from $10,000 to $50,000.

c. **Acquisition and Development** projects include: preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and acquisition of National Register-listed properties. This category is often referred to as "bricks and mortar money," and issued to help save buildings and structures that are threatened or endangered in some way. Properties that are not already listed in the National Register are not eligible for HPF grant assistance. Grant requests in this category can range from $10,000 to $75,000.

14. What is the timeline for the HPF application and implementation?

a. August 1: Application packets are posted on the DHPA's website.
Early October: The grant application deadline is normally the first Friday in October.
Late January: Projects selected for funding are tentatively notified of funding status.
June 1: Earliest project start date. Projects cannot begin until DHPA has received confirmation of its award from the National Park Service and has provided official grant awards to recipients, which may be later than June 1.
June 30: Latest project end date, Projects must be completed by the end of June two years after the grant award.

15. What are the match requirements for the HPF Program?

a. All grant awards must be matched with funds from any non-federal source. The applicant must document that it has the required matching funds available within its own accounts at the time of application. The short program cycle does not allow time to fundraise the required match during the grant period.
b. **70/30** grant-to-match ration is available only to colleges and universities for archaeological survey projects conducted in prioritized areas due to the DHPA's need for site location data.
c. **60/40** grant-to-match ration is available only to communities that are federally designated as Certified Local Governments (CLGs) to conduct any type of project.
d. **50/50** grant-to-match ratio is available to all other applicants, regardless of project category.

16. How is HPF funding received?

a. All grant funds are paid out on a reimbursement basis as work progresses, not as a lump sum at the beginning of the project. The grant recipient must pay project costs with its own funds, then seek periodic reimbursement by carefully documenting project expenses. Grant reimbursements are paid electronically about 30 days after submission and approval of appropriate documentation. The DHPA normally holds the final 15% of the grant funds as retention until the completed project is reviewed and approved.

Indiana Arts Commission

1. What is the program offered by the Indiana Arts Commission?

a. Creative Convergence is a team-based workshop and funding opportunity focused on creative community development.
b. It equips community leaders and economic development strategies, collaborate effectively across sectors, and engage residents in meaningful, inclusive ways.

c. Participating teams learn how to work together to advance arts and creativity in their community through training and a funded project.

2. **What does the Creative Convergence program include?**
    a. A free, two-day in-person workshop, focusing on community engagement and economic development through the arts.
    b. A $1,000 stipend for each team to cover travel and accommodation.
    c. A post-workshop project grant of up to $5,000 for an eligible arts and community project.
    d. Optional partnership with the CreatINg Places program for additional funding via Patronicity's crowdgranting platform.
    e. Ongoing mentoring and coaching calls for grantees provided by ICI and IAC staff.

Indiana Destination Development Corporation (IDDC)

1. **What services will be offered by the Indiana Destination Development Corporation?**
    a. Provide guidance and direction for communities in the area of tourism, destination development, and community marketing
    b. Assist in identifying tourism assets in the respective communities

Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC)

1. **If my community participates in the Stellar Pathways Program, will the community's local match be eligible for READI 2.0 Program's requirement of 1:1 match from local public funding?**
    a. Yes.

Letter Of Intent Submission Process

1. **Which documents should be included with the Letter of Intent (LOI) packet?**
    a. Past and Existing Plans Excel Attachment
    b. Current Projects Excel Attachment
    c. Financials for all participating entities (local unit(s) of government AND non-profit organizations)
    d. **Non-Profit Lead Applicants ONLY:** Letter of Interest from Local Unit(s) of Government **County Government Lead Applicants ONLY:** Interlocal Agreement Letter of Acknowledgement from a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
    a. Application General Information
    b. Application Narrative Responses

2. **Does each Town Council President and County Commissioner President sign the interlocal agreement?**
    a. If the Lead Applicant of the Stellar Pathways Program is a county government, the interlocal agreement must be signed by:

i. The county commissioners
ii. The county council president
iii. Signature of the chief executive officer for each participating municipality (city or town).

3. Is there a page limit for the LOI?

a. No. there is no page limit.
b. However, there is a character limit of 8,000 characters for each narrative section within the Grants Management System (GMS).

4. Will we need to submit a letter of interest?

a. If you are a non-profit (e.g. non-government entity) lead applicant, then yes, a letter of interest must be submitted with your letter of intent.
b. The letter of interest must be signed by the executive director of the non-profit organization AND the chief elected official (e.g. Major, Town Council President) of each participating municipality.
c. A template for the letter of interest is available on found on the Stellar webpage ocra.in.gov/stellar.

5. Can I submit the LOI in person or does it have to be online only?

a. The LOI must be completed online. No printed documents or hard copies will be accepted.
b. Everything will be submitted via the Grants Management System (GMS). All questions are answered and all attachments uploaded within GMS.

6. What other type of requirements are required of a designated community?

a. Each designated community is required to hold four meetings a year for the five-year designation period with the State team to provide project updates.
b. Each designated community will be required to provide data throughout the designation period.
c. Participating communities must adopt an inter-local agreement committing to the partnership for a period of at least four years by final application.

7. Is an interlocal agreement needed to be in place at the LOI submission?

a. If you are a county-led applicant, yes.
b. The interlocal agreement needs to be in place upon submission of the LOI.

8. When is the LOI due to OCRA?

a. The Letter of Intent will be due to OCRA via GMS on December 15, 2026.

9. What type of financial documents is OCRA seeking for local unit of government financials?

a. OCRA is seeking the Gateway Report from 2025 for each participating municipality. This should include the entirety of the report.

LOI Evaluation and Program Selection

1. **How will the Stellar Pathways Committee evaluate the Letter of Intent?**
    a. Incomplete Letters of intent will not be evaluated. Incomplete Letters of Intent are those that do not provide all required attachments and/or do not answer all narrative sections.
    a. The Stellar Pathways Committee will evaluate the Letter of Intent based on the following information provided by the applicant(s):
        i. Attachments
        ii. Narrative answers
    b. Stellar Pathways Committee members will review each LOI individually and provide feedback. Lastly, each Stellar Pathways committee member will be asked to rank the LOI from strongest to weakest.
    c. All Stellar Pathways committee members will meet to discuss the results of the evaluation process and select four finalist communities to participate in the Stellar Pathways Process.

2. **When will the communities know if they were selected as a Stellar Pathways Participant?**
    a. Stellar Pathways Participants will be selected and announced on January 13, 2027. Once announced, Stellar Pathways finalists receive $50,000 towards the creation of their Strategic Development Plans.

3. **What happens if our community is selected?**
    a. If your community is selected, they will begin participating in the Stellar Pathways Process. All information regarding the process will be sent to the community key contact person to disseminate to the group.

4. **What happens if our community is not selected?**
    a. If your community is not selected, OCRA will provide feedback and rationale from the Stellar Pathways Committee to each participating community.

1. **What is the purpose of the Strategic Development Plan grant?**
    a. The Strategic Development Plan grant will be used by the finalist to develop the Strategic Development Plan. Each finalist participating in the Stellar Pathways Process will be allocated $50,000 from the Office of Community and Rural Affairs to be used towards the Strategic Development Plan and planning process.

Strategic Development Plan

1. **Does the involvement of local foundations increase the viability of a project?**
    a. Yes, past designees have involved their local foundations to help with the sustainability of their efforts.

2. **If a community is submitting a streetscape project for the upcoming CDBG round, will it affect negatively their LOI application?**
    a. No, it will not have an impact on the review of the community's LOI.

3. **Does the Strategic Development Plan (SDP) need to identify projects for every partner agency?**
    a. No, each partner agency does not need to be included in the Strategic Development Plan, but their involvement as a partner should be clearly identified throughout both the LOI and SDP. It is highly recommended to create projects for use of the set-aside funding.

Final Selection of Designees

1. **What is the structure for the community presentations for the Stellar Pathways finalists?**
    a. The Stellar Pathways Committee will travel to each finalist community for a presentation by the finalist and site visit between May 3-21, 2027.

2. **Who should I contact if I have questions?**
    a. All questions should be directed to stellarcommunities@ocra.in.gov.

Implementation Period

1. **How long after designation do regions have to complete their projects?**
    a. Communities have five years to use designated funding to complete projects identified as part of their strategic development plan.

2. **If my community participates in the Stellar Pathways Process, at what point would my community be ineligible for Community Development Block Grant Funds?**
    a. Only Stellar Pathways designees are ineligible to apply for CDBG funding.
    b. This ineligibility period begins at the start of the designation period.
    c. OCRA encourages all eligible communities to apply for annual rounds of Community Development Block Grant funds.

Miscellaneous

1. **What are requirements associated with providing public access to local meetings?**

a. All meetings for the development of projects should follow Indiana's Public Access Laws. Questions should be sent to the Public Access Counselor.

2. How will the process for technical assistance be determined for partner agencies?

a. Technical Assistance will be offered at the Stellar Pathways workshops and Agency Days and will continue through kick off and quarterly meetings once designated.

3. Are communities required to have an Indiana Main Street organization?

a. No, communities are neither required to have an Indiana Main Street organization nor required to fund their community's Main Street organization. Collaboration is a key to success within the program. Past successful communities have partnered with key community organizations including main street organizations, chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, community foundations, and school corporations.

b. If you have downtown projects in your Main Street district, and you have a Main Street organization, they must be involved in the conversation.