



 **INDIANA  
UPLANDS** A REGION ON THE RISE

**READI**  
REGIONAL ECONOMIC ACCELERATION  
& DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

  
**Indiana**  
Economic Development Corp

# Ready Communities Initiative 2.0 Program Summary

*Advancing Regional Prosperity through Quality of Place and  
Workforce Attraction Strategies*

June 17, 2022

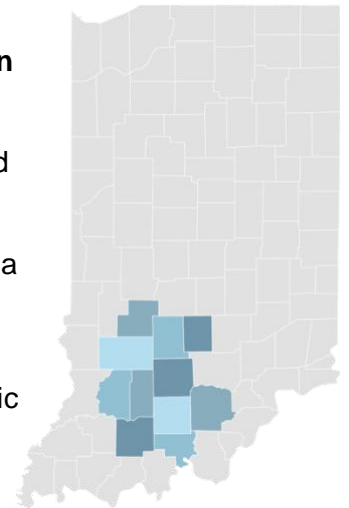


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## Introduction

Regional Opportunity Initiatives, Inc. (ROI) was established in 2016 with a **mission to advance economic and community prosperity in the 11 counties of the Indiana Uplands**. ROI is growing potential and possibility through a focus on advanced sectors, regionalism, transformative school and workforce redesign, and placemaking strategies.

In support of its mission, ROI, Radius Indiana, and its regional partners submitted a regional development plan, *[A Region on the Rise](#)*, to the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) last September in response to the State’s Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative (READI). This plan outlines strategies and goals to help ensure the region realizes long-term economic vitality. Based on this document, the State of Indiana allocated \$30 million to fund programs and projects aligned with the regional goals outlined in the Uplands READI development plan.



## Purpose

With guidance from the Uplands READI Steering Committee, ROI is reviving the successful Ready Communities Initiative, which will offer grant funding opportunities across the 11 counties of the Indiana Uplands. Ready Communities Initiative 2.0 (Ready 2.0) will provide Uplands communities the resources to 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 a great place to live, work and play. Up to \$3 million of Uplands READI funding has been allocated to support this grant program.

## Opportunity Analysis

In 2018, ROI provided planning grants for each of the 11 Uplands counties to create a plan celebrating each county’s unique quality of place and develop strategies that advance prosperity in their county and the region. Those efforts resulted in 11 county-wide [Quality of Place and Workforce Attraction Plans](#). Upon completion of these plans, ROI offered Ready Communities Implementation Grants (Ready 1.0), ultimately awarding approximately \$3 million to 18 projects in 10 counties to further the strategies and goals outlined in the county plans.

## Program Description

Ready Communities 2.0 Implementation Grants will build upon these initial efforts through funding made available by the State’s READI program. The goal of this initiative is to financially support projects that align with both the *Quality of Life and Workforce Attraction Plans* and the Uplands *Region on the Rise READI Development Plan*. State READI funding is part of Indiana’s American Rescue Plan Act’s State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) allocation, and Ready Communities’ grants will have to align with the federal requirements for these funds, which impact both the potential uses of the funds and the implementation process for grants awarded.

ROI will host a grant workshop to introduce Ready 2.0 and provide information to help potential grantees successfully pursue and capture grant funding. Throughout the process, ROI will provide resources, including those provided by IEDC and their READI consultant, Ernst & Young Consulting

(EY), to support grantees. Grants will be competitively awarded and will focus on programs and projects that meet the goals outlined in the Uplands *Region on the Rise* plan:

- Grow population in every Uplands county, reversing the trend of rural population decline
- Meet the workforce demands of key sector employers
- Provide place-based amenities needed to attract and retain population

## Grant Guidelines

### Objective:

The Ready Communities 2.0 grant program will fund projects or programs strategically designed to positively impact the Indiana Uplands and meet the goals outlined in the *Region on the Rise* plan. Projects and programs should improve regional capacity to attract and retain workforce by creating community amenities or enhancing the attributes that make the region an attractive place to live, work and play.

### Prerequisites:

**ROI will host a grant workshop on June 27, 2022, to assist interested parties through this process.** While not required, potential applicants are strongly encouraged to attend the workshop to determine if Ready Communities 2.0 grants could prove beneficial and gain insights into preparing a fundable proposal.

Following the workshop, organizations will have the opportunity to communicate their interest in pursuing grant funding by submitting a **Letter of Intent** to ROI. An applicant may submit one or more projects/programs for consideration by completing separate Letters of Intent for each project/program. **Information will be submitted via ROI's online [grant portal](#), which can be accessed on the Regional Opportunity Initiatives website. The following information will be required:**

- Name of applicant organization
- Name and title of contact person
- Contact information
- Business type and Employer Identification Number (EIN)
- Project description
- Timeline
- Total project cost
- Amount of funding requested
- Other funds identified/secured to support the project or program (e.g., grants, TIF, federal/state grant funds, donation)
- Other information specific to your project or program

To access the Letter of Intent, visit ROI's online [grant portal](#), which can also be accessed on the Regional Opportunity Initiatives website.

Projects and programs must align with one or more of the following categories:

- **Community Cohesion & Support**  
Examples: Childcare facilities, workforce training centers, public spaces, innovation spaces, or digital inclusion support activities
- **Connectivity Infrastructure Development**  
Examples: Trail enhancements, bike & pedestrian paths, walkability improvements, public broadband or wi-fi, digital inclusion activities, utility expansions, public transit, or transportation needs
- **Health and Well-Being**  
Examples: Programs or projects that improve food or housing security, behavioral health care programs, farmer's markets, trails, or park improvement projects that promote public health

Projects must also align with SLFRF funding guidelines. Examples provided by the U.S. Treasury include but are not limited to:

- Trail development
- Behavioral health outreach & engagement programs
- Broadband and internet/wi-fi service projects
- Sewer & water infrastructure improvements
- Capital improvements to public spaces and/or arts & cultural facilities
- Childcare facility expansion/improvements

ROI staff members will be available at the workshop and during the application process to answer questions and work with potential grantees on how to make projects or programs work within these parameters.

## Ready Communities 2.0 Timeline:

- Letters of Intent due on July 29, 2022
- If selected, full application due on September 16, 2022
- Grant awards on or before October 30, 2022

\*An expedited evaluation process may be available for a small number of projects and programs with well-documented Please request details from READI Project Manager Maren Witte if you believe your project may be eligible for an expedited review. This option is not recommended for most applicants.

## Eligible Applicants:

- Incorporated cities and towns
- County commissions and councils
- Nonprofits, including foundations, agencies, and hospitals
- Public education 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
- For-profit businesses

Please contact the ROI READI Project Manager, Maren Witte, at [readi@regionalopportunityinc.org](mailto:readi@regionalopportunityinc.org) to confirm your organization's eligibility.

## Funding Available:

Ready Communities 2.0 will be funded with up to \$3 million of the State's READI allocation for the Uplands. Grants will be available in amounts from \$100,000 to \$249,999 per grant.

## Evaluation Process:

ROI will open the [grant portal](#) on **June 17, 2022**, and applicants will be invited to first submit a Letter of Intent. The Uplands Grant Evaluation Committee will review Letters of Intent and invite full applications for proposed projects and programs that align with both READI (IEDC) and Ready Communities (ROI) requirements and parameters. This includes the timing constraints for the use of READI funds, as dictated by federal requirements for the use of SLFRF dollars. ROI will keep applicants informed of progress throughout the process.

Applications will be submitted through ROI's online grant portal to be reviewed by an Uplands Grant Evaluation Committee. Applications selected by the committee will be submitted to the State through the READI grant management portal for review by the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) and Ernst & Young.

Projects approved through this portal will be eligible for funding after a grant agreement is completed with ROI. This Grant commences upon signature of the Grant Agreement. Unless modified per the Grant Agreement, Ready Communities 2.0 projects must be completed by December 2024.

**READI Project/Program Evaluation Process**



**Match Requirements:**

The State’s READI initiative requires a 4:1 match to READI dollars, calculated on the overall Uplands portfolio of projects. **ROI will require a 1:1 minimum match ratio for Ready Communities 2.0.**

Match can come from local public funding (not state), private, or philanthropic sources. Examples include but are not limited to Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds, general tax funds, local ARPA funds, business/developer investments, private foundations, or community foundations. Projects with a higher match may be given additional consideration. If you have questions about the project/program match, please contact ROI. Project funding sources must be known when the full application is submitted.

**Eligible Projects/Programs:**

Innovative or transformative programs or projects that improve regional quality of place and workforce retention and attraction opportunities, while adhering to requirements and funding limitations, are eligible under this program. Projects and programs should align with county [Quality of Place and Workforce Attraction Plans](#) and the “[Region on the Rise](#)” READI Development Plan. The sources for Ready Communities 2.0 funds are federal American Rescue Plan Act’s State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) allocated by the State of Indiana for READI.

SLFR funds must be used in accordance with U.S. Treasury guidelines. To help communities meet these requirements, the Treasury has designated several eligible categories and provided examples of programs or projects listed below. This list is not exhaustive.

Category	Examples:
<b>Public Health Emergency</b>	<p>COVID-19 Mitigation &amp; Prevention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for prevention, mitigation, or other services in congregate living facilities, public facilities, and schools</li> </ul> <p>Behavioral Health Care:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced behavioral health services in schools</li> <li>• Expansion of access to evidence-based services for opioid use disorder prevention, treatment, harm reduction &amp; recovery</li> <li>• Behavioral health facilities and equipment</li> </ul>
<b>Negative Economic Impacts</b>	<p>Impacted Households &amp; Communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job training, public jobs programs and fairs, support for childcare, start-up assistance for unemployed individuals</li> <li>• Home repair/home weatherization</li> <li>• Programs, devices &amp; equipment for internet access and digital literacy</li> <li>• Childcare and early learning services</li> </ul> <p>Assistance to Small Businesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rehabilitation of commercial properties, storefront improvements &amp; façade improvements</li> <li>• Technical assistance, business incubators &amp; start-up/expansion assistance</li> <li>• Support for microbusinesses</li> </ul> <p>Aid to Impacted Industries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical assistance, counseling, or other services to support business planning</li> </ul>
<b>Disproportionately Impacted Households &amp; Communities</b>	<p>Impacted Households &amp; Communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remediation of lead paint or other lead hazards</li> <li>• Investments in neighborhoods to promote improved health outcomes</li> <li>• Improvements to vacant and abandoned properties, including rehabilitation or maintenance, renovation, removal and remediation of environmental contaminants, demolition or deconstruction, greening/vacant lot cleanup &amp; conversion to affordable housing</li> <li>• Schools and other educational equipment &amp; facilities</li> </ul>
<b>Infrastructure</b>	<p>Water &amp; Sewer Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Projects eligible under Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) or Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) programs</li> <li>• Culvert repair, replacement of storm sewers, and additional types of stormwater infrastructure</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead remediation projects</li> </ul> <p>Broadband Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Projects that serve unserved areas that meet the 100/100 Mbps requirements. Treasury encourages prioritizing investments in fiber-optic infrastructure wherever feasible and to focus on projects that will achieve last-mile connections</li> <li>• Cybersecurity investments</li> </ul>
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The grant amounts defined for Ready Communities 2.0 were purposely selected because of the reduced requirements for federal procurement. Projects and programs funded under this grant program must follow the federal procurement standards set forth in Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200.317-2 CFR 200.327, as applicable. **Projects and programs of \$249,999 or less will be eligible for the Small Purchase Procurement Standards, which provide much greater flexibility and fewer process requirements.**

The U.S. Treasury does require that programs and projects in this funding category include key performance indicators, including both output and outcome measurements. ROI will provide additional guidance and support on meeting this requirement. ***For questions about a project or program eligibility or any of these requirements, please contact ROI.***

### Evaluation Criteria:

Applications will be evaluated based on a set of criteria which may include:

- Relevancy to the regional goals and objectives outlined in the [A Region on the Rise READI Development Plan](#) and [county Quality of Place plans](#).
- Eligibility within the IEDC’s READI funding parameters.
- Potential for impact on population gain and workforce development and attraction.
- Capacity to advance prosperity in the region.
- Thoughtful budget development.
- Timeline alignment with funding parameters.
- Leverage ratio of matching funds.
- Organizational experience and demonstrated results of past projects.
- Sustainability of project/program, where appropriate.
- Alignment with evidence-based performance outcome indicators.
- Equitable outcomes.
- Applicants’ capacity to execute project or program, with a focus on community buy-in.



## Contact:

If you have specific questions about any of the information in the grant guidelines, please contact Maren Witte, READI Project Manager.

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