



The Council of State Governments
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2011 Innovations Awards Application

DEADLINE: MARCH 28, 2011

ID # (assigned by CSG): 2011- _____

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

State: __Indiana_____

Assign Program Category (applicant): ___ Economic Development_____ (Use list at end of application)

1. **Program Name:** Stellar Communities
2. **Administering Agency:** Office of Community and Rural Affairs, Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority, Indiana Department of Transportation
3. **Contact Person (Name and Title):** Anne Bell, Communications Manager, Office of Community and Rural Affairs
4. **Address:** One North Capitol, Ste. 600, Indianapolis, IN 46204
5. **Telephone Number:** 317/232-0162
6. **FAX Number:** 317/233-3597
7. **E-mail Address:** abell@ocra.in.gov
8. **Web site Address:** <http://www.in.gov/ocra/2513.htm>
9. **Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.**
The Stellar Communities program funds comprehensive community development projects in Indiana's smaller communities through a partnership of multiple state agencies. Through this program, Indiana is doing more with current resources and making a bigger impact in communities, with a slimmer state budget.
10. **How long has this program been operational (month and year)?** Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on March 28, 2011 to be considered.
 - Initial state team and process development: Spring 2010
 - Letters of Interest received from communities: October 2010
 - Selection of 12 finalists and technical assistance workshop: December 2010
 - Strategic Investment Plans received from 12 finalists: January 2011
 - Site visits to finalists: February 2011

- Selection of two pilot communities for funding: March 2011
- Community announcement of two pilots: March 2011

11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?

The Stellar Communities program was designed to help Indiana's smaller communities undertake larger-scale, more comprehensive community development projects utilizing multiple funding streams administered by the State. Lt. Governor Becky Skillman recognized a need for more innovative, comprehensive development efforts in rural communities in Indiana in order to meet unique local needs and make a bigger impact, so she brought the three state agencies to the table to design the Stellar Communities program. The program embodies collaborative government partnerships and successfully leverages state and federal funding from multiple agencies to undertake comprehensive projects.

12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.

Representatives from the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs, Indiana Department of Transportation, and Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority met regularly beginning in April of 2010 to begin designing a comprehensive approach to the Stellar Communities concept.

During summer of 2010, the team of three agencies worked on solidifying the program's design, process, and time frames, and included the program in agency Consolidated Plans.

In late September 2010, the program was announced to the public and rural communities were encouraged to send a Letter of Interest expressing their intent to apply for the program from the Chief Elected Official, due in October.

From the 42 letters of interest, the three agency partnership chose 12 communities as finalists to pilot the program. It was made clear at the time out of 12 finalists that only two pilots will be chosen for funding.

An information workshop was held on December 5, 2010 and communities were presented with necessary information to complete a Strategic Investment Plan due January 21, 2011. Finalists were awarded \$10,000 per community to complete this document, which required engineering and design to complete cost estimates and preliminary renderings.

Site visits were scheduled throughout the month of February. During the site visit, each community presented their Strategic Investment Plan to the state team. The plans were evaluated using the following criteria:

- Is the plan's impact visible to citizens and surrounding region?
- Does the plan create a replicable comprehensive model?
- Will the plan attract future economic investment?
- Does the plan leverage existing community assets?
- Does the plan demonstrate significant regional impact?

From February 21 to March 5, the state team met to review the input gathered at the site visits and through the Strategic Investment Plans to choose our two pilot communities.

North Vernon, Indiana and Greencastle, Indiana were ultimately selected as the pilot communities and were notified with a phone call on March 7, 2011 and called the other 10 finalists. A news release from Lt. Governor Skillman's office also was distributed the same day.

On March 10 and 11, events were held in the two communities to celebrate recognize their selection as a pilot and to pause for the work ahead.

On March 25 and 26, local and state partners will meet to begin work on year one projects and establishing timelines.

13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?

This approach to funding community development projects is a true paradigm shift from the manner in which government funding has been administered for years. Because of this program, a dialogue has started to seek the best way in which state government can pair resources and foster bigger and more efficient impact, utilizing separate agencies with our separate funding streams and timelines. In addition to leveraging funds and achieving cost efficiencies, this program also changes the process by which state government operates. The Stellar Communities program demonstrates an unprecedented collaboration between state agencies. The transformative program is a step toward reducing or eliminating many of the poor procedures which state governments are notorious for, including duplication of efforts, tedious and slow procedures, and a high learning curve regarding available programs.

14. What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

The bulk of costs to administer this program are staff time and travel, which are paid through regular agency resources from appropriate state or federal funding streams. Existing equipment and meeting space are utilized to keep costs low.

15. What are the program's annual operational costs?

The program's annual cost is zero, since operational costs of this program are folded in with normal staff duties and parameters.

16. How is the program funded?

The program will be funded by each agency's state and federal funding platforms.

17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.

No.

18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?

This program does not require any equipment or technology in addition to what is already available for day to day operations in state government, such as MS Office and e-mail.

19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address.

Lt. Governor Becky Skillman recognized a need for this type of community development partnership and convened leaders from the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs, Indiana Department of Transportation, and Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority to design a collaborative program. She may be reached by phone at 317/232-4545 or by mail:

Office of the Lieutenant Governor
Statehouse
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2797

20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?

No similar programs exist on the state level.

21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?

The selection process has been fully implemented but the administration of funding and completion of proposed projects will not be fully implemented until 2014. The first two pilot communities were announced March 7, 2011 by Lt. Governor Skillman. Another round of pilots is planned to be selected in 2012.

22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.

Pro:

- Focus of project on comprehensive, sustainable community development.
- Unprecedented communication between state and local partners.
- Communities expressed positive response to this approach to government funding.
- Program created increased investment in community from local partners, such as local investment funding Wi-Fi "bubble" in Greencastle.
- Organizations that have not collaborated before are now partners on the state and local level.

Con:

- Some logistical issues with site visits will be resolved in the next round. For example, more than one site visit will not be scheduled on the same day in the event that one runs long.
- Severe weather interrupted some site visits and caused re-scheduling and backtracking.

23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

The program is generating huge interest from various stakeholders. Other state agencies, including the State Revolving Fund and Department of Natural Resources have expressed interest in joining the Stellar team to be part of the available funding resources for the next round of pilots. Also, a federal partner, USDA-Rural Development, would also like to join forces and offer funding resources in the next round.

24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?

In order to replicate this process, a strong working relationship and trust needs to exist between agency partners. Team members chosen for the state team must be dedicated to doing things differently and believe in the end result. Also, the participating agencies must use their strengths to work together in partnership.

******Please find supplemental document with project overviews attached******

CSG reserves the right to use or publish in other CSG products the information provided in this application. If your agency objects to this policy, please advise us in a separate attachment.



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2011 Innovations Awards Application Program Categories and Subcategories

Use these as guidelines to determine the appropriate Program Category for your state's submission and list that program category on page one of this application. Choose only one.

Infrastructure and Economic Development

- Business/Commerce
- Economic Development
- Transportation

Government Operations and Technology

- Administration
- Elections
- Information Systems
- Public Information
- Revenue
- Telecommunications

Health & Human Services

- Aging
- Children & Families
- Health Services
- Housing
- Human Services

Human Resources/Education

- Education
- Labor
- Management
- Personnel
- Training and Development
- Workforce Development

Natural Resources

- Agriculture
- Energy
- Environment
- Environmental Protection
- Natural Resources
- Parks & Recreation
- Water Resources

Public Safety/Corrections

- Corrections
- Courts
- Criminal Justice
- Drugs
- Emergency Management
- Public Safety

Save in .doc or rtf. Return completed application electronically to innovations@csg.org or mail to:

CSG Innovations Awards 2011
The Council of State Governments
2760 Research Park Drive, P.O. Box 11910
Lexington, KY 40578-1910

Contact:

Nancy J. Vickers, National Program Administrator
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The Council of State Governments
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This application is also available at www.csg.org.