

Stellar Communities Program Definitions

- Call for Letters:** First outreach to communities in the form of an announcement. The Call for Letters establishes the deadlines for the Stellar Communities Program and announces that the State team is accepting Letters of Interest.
- Capacity:** The professional, leadership, and financial capability to undertake the proposed projects during the term of the Stellar Designation. Members of the Stellar Development Team must be identified in the Letter of Interest and capacity must be demonstrated across the team.
- CDBG:** The Community Development Block Grant program, a federal program under the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). CDBG program regulations are found at 24 CFR 570.
- Community Engagement:** Active community member participation in the planning process and selection of the projects that are included in the Letter of Interest and Strategic Investment Plan. The Development Team must be able to provide evidence of community engagement and to explain the process used to seek community input. Community engagement should continue throughout the Stellar Designation period. In addition, particular funding sources may have required Citizens Participation and Public Hearing requirements that must be adhered to on a project-by-project basis.
- Designated Community:** A community that is selected by the State Team, based upon review of the Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) and site visit, to be designated as a Stellar Community. Designated Communities have access to non-competitive or set-aside funding from the State Team funding partners for a three-year period. Funding is not, however, guaranteed and the Designated Community must still apply to the appropriate agency for each individual project. Funding for a particular project may be in the form of a grant or a loan, subject to the terms of the particular funding source and applicable funding agency.
- Development Team:** All members identified in the Letter of Interest Information Sheet that will be responsible for planning and the preparation of the LOI and Strategic Investment Plan as well as for the daily implementation of projects and project coordination if designated.
- Eligible Applicant:** Eligible Applicants for the Stellar Communities Program must be a local unit of government (city or incorporated town) that is not located within a CDBG entitlement community. Communities that are not eligible to participate in the State CDBG program are ineligible for Stellar Communities. A local unit of

government that resides in a MPO, must meet the eligibility requirements below:

- If the community falls within an MPO's Planning Area, they must have a letter of recommendation from the MPO for the proposed projects.
- If the community falls within an MPO urbanized area, they must have approval from the MPO for the proposed projects. If selected, any funding for the proposed projects must be financed by the MPO.

The local unit of government may subcontract with non-profit and/or for-profit entities to administer, design, develop, and/or implement Stellar projects.

Entitlement Community: A local unit of government that receives its own allocation of CDBG funds from HUD. Entitlement communities are not eligible to apply for the Stellar Communities Program.

Feasibility: A community's demonstrated ability to complete the Stellar projects. The Letter of Interest and Strategic Investment Plan should demonstrate that the proposed projects are feasible, reasonable, and able to be completed within the Stellar designation period.

Finalist Community: A community that is selected by the State Team, based upon the submission of a successful Letter of Interest, to advance to the process whereby the community creates a Strategic Investment Plan (SIP). Finalist Communities each receive a planning grant to aid in the creation of the SIP.

IDNR: Indiana Department of Natural Resources

IFA: Indiana Finance Authority

IHCDA: Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority

INDOT: Indiana Department of Transportation

IOTD: Indiana Office of Tourism Development

ISDH: Indiana State Department of Health

Information Sheet: A form that is included with the Letter of Interest submission to identify the Development Team members and anticipated projects.

Letter of Interest (LOI): A Letter of Interest is a letter from a Local Unit of Government signed by its Chief Elected Official that communicates the community's vision and interest in being a Finalist Community. LOIs must be submitted in the format defined in the Call for Letters.

- Leveraging:** A community’s demonstrated ability to attract other public and/or private investment. In addition, particular funding sources may have required leveraging or “match” requirements that must be adhered to on a project-by-project basis.
- Local Unit of Government:** Local units of government that are eligible to apply for the Stellar Communities Program are cities or incorporated towns that are not located within a CDBG entitlement community. Communities that are not eligible to participate in the State CDBG program are ineligible for Stellar Communities.
- Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA):** The boundary in which the metropolitan transportation planning process must be carried out.
- Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO):** The designated local decision-making body that is responsible for carrying out the metropolitan transportation planning process.
- OCRA:** Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
- OSBE:** Indiana Office of Small Business and Entrepreneurship
- Planning Grant:** Each Finalist Community receives a planning grant to aid in the preparation of the Strategic Investment Plan (SIP). The planning grant will not exceed \$10,000 but may be less for communities that have previously received planning grants under the Stellar Communities program.
- Project Matrix:** A form that is included with the Letter of Interest submission to identify projects and project costs. Projects currently underway, proposed Stellar Communities Projects, and proposed complimentary projects will be included in the form.
- Quarterly Meeting:** Throughout the term of the Stellar designation, each Designated Community will have quarterly meetings with the State Team to provide progress updates and to ask questions about Stellar projects.
- Regional Impact:** Within the LOI and SIP, a community must describe how its Stellar vision will provide a value-added impact to not only the targeted area, but also to the broader community and region.
- ServeIN:** ServeIndiana is a division of the Department of Workforce Development and manages the AmeriCorps program.
- Site Visit:** This is a critical step in the selection phase where the State Team visits each Finalist community to physically look at the project area, to hear the Finalist Community’s presentation, and to ask questions about the Strategic Investment Plan. The site visit can last up to three hours maximum.

State Team: The State Team consists of agency staff members representing the following agencies (each acronym is defined in this document):

- IDNR
- IFA
- IHCDA
- INDOT
- IOTD
- ISDH
- OCRA
- OSBE
- ServeIndiana

The State Team sets Stellar Program policies and procedures, reviews Letters of Interest (LOIs) to select Finalist Communities, and reviews Strategic Investment Plans (SIPs) and conducts site visits to select Designated Communities. Additionally, the State Team works with Designated Communities throughout the term of their Stellar designation by providing technical assistance, participating in quarterly meetings, and reviewing applications for funding of specific projects.

Stellar Community: See “Designated Community”

Stellar Program: Indiana’s Stellar Communities Program is a collaborative effort by IHCDA, INDOT, and OCRA. The purpose of the Stellar Program is to annually designate two communities and to then assist those communities with achieving a three-year revitalization strategy. Through a Strategic Investment Plan (SIP), communities identify areas of interest and types of projects, produce a schedule to complete projects, produce cost estimates, identify local match amounts, sources, and additional funding resources, indicate the level of community impact, and describe the significance each project will have on the overall comprehensive revitalization of the community.

Strategic Investment Plan (SIP): A document created by a Finalist Community with aid from a planning grant to show its Stellar vision and proposed projects. Finalist Communities are evaluated by the State Team based upon their SIP submission.

Sustainability: A community’s demonstrated ability to maintain the Stellar projects as well as to continue additional community development efforts after the Stellar designation period has ended.

Urbanized Area (UZA): A Census-designated urban area with 50,000 residents or more.