



COMMUNITY ECONOMIC RESILIENCY INITIATIVE

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS PREAMBLE

Association of Central Oklahoma Governments in Partnership
with the Oklahoma Main Street Center and the University of
Oklahoma's Institute for Quality Communities

2021

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INTRODUCTION

The Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG), a collaborative, regional organization of municipal and county governments, has received a supplemental CARES Act Recovery Assistance grant from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) - Austin Regional Office, a bureau within the U.S. Department of Commerce, to respond to, and recover from, the impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. A portion of this grant shall be used by ACOG to fund the **Community Economic Resiliency Initiative (CERI), a program that offers municipal governments the opportunity to develop planning demonstration (demo) projects that will model strategic community and economic investment with a focus on sustainable economic recovery and long-term resiliency.**

Part of ACOG's efforts to review and update its Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the Capital Area Economic Development District (CAPEDD) of Oklahoma (ACOG region) is to better serve and sustain the local economy during and after the pandemic. The CERI Program hopes to encourage and demonstrate healthy, economic best practices proposed in the Updated CEDS to ensure competitiveness at the national level.

The planning demo sites must be located within an Activity Center. This Activity Center concept was first developed in the 2040 Encompass Plan for the Oklahoma City Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), which for this specific program, includes cities located in the following Counties of Oklahoma, Cleveland, Canadian, and Logan. The Activity Centers Map can be [viewed here](#). Building on the Activity Center concept, additional eligible areas were added for the purpose of the CERI Program that could potentially foster a demonstration site project.

Through this Call for Applications, ACOG is soliciting proposals from municipal jurisdictions hosting Activity Centers to receive professional consultant services for planning demonstration sites that will address and implement the goals outlined in the Updated CEDS Strategic Framework. Likewise, **the objective is to choose a diverse group of between 3 and 5 planning demo sites that will represent small, mid-size, and large cities.**

In developing the CERI Program, **ACOG has partnered with the Oklahoma Main Street Center (OMSC) and the University of Oklahoma Institute for Quality Communities (IQC)** to provide a toolkit of services to successful applicants that serve as the foundation for effective economic revitalization and resiliency.

The OMSC is home to the Oklahoma Main Street Program, which provides training, resources, and technical assistance for the revitalization and preservation of historic central and neighborhood business district areas. The Oklahoma Main Street Program serves as the state coordinating program for Main Street America, a program of the National Main Street Center, Inc. The Oklahoma Department of Commerce oversees the state Main Street Program.

The University of Oklahoma IQC is a community engagement program that helps students build partnerships with local governing and civic organizations in order to design solutions to local problems that affect health, economy, and the quality of life of Oklahomans. **IQC will be procured through an inter-local government agreement with ACOG to provide planning consultant services to each of the selected applicant cities for the demo sites.**

CERI aims to engage area governments to develop the tools they need to become economically resilient. Dependent upon the scope of their application project, successful applicants will receive valuable planning consultation services, community and district assessment and asset mapping, community development and best practices training, and will be enrolled, if eligible, in the Oklahoma Main Street Center's two-year Associate Program through guided implementation. For an in-depth

understanding of the Main Street Approach, please refer to IQC and the Mayors' Institute for City Design's recent webinar, titled "[Anchors and Connectors for Small Town Success](#)."

ELIGIBLE PLANNING DEMONSTRATION SITES AND APPLICANTS

As stated previously, any municipal government within the four-county ACOG region that is host to an Activity Center is eligible to apply. To successfully qualify, the local government must express a need for professional services in developing plans and implementation methods to create a sustainable planning demonstration site that contributes to the economic resiliency, growth, and/or revitalization of the Activity Center. The updated Encompass 2040 Plan has designated over 900 sites (216 square miles of land area) as Activity Centers across the ACOG region for the CERL Program. Activity Centers are geographic locations that are host to a combination of high-density employment/activity and associated land use areas and can include colleges, large sports arenas, special districts, regional parks/recreational areas, and town centers. The dimensions of an Activity Center entail a one (1) mile buffer or diameter from the center point of the spherical-shaped designated area. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the proposed demo site is required to be within the one (1) mile diameter in order to be considered an eligible project.

Municipal governments are entitled to submit as many applications as there are Activity Centers in their jurisdiction. Please note when you access the Activity Center Map, via the previously mentioned link, you will observe that many Activity Centers intersect each other, thus creating an overlapping effect. For example, the City of Guthrie is covered by two Activity Centers; the City can submit two planning demo site applications as long as each proposed project has 25% area presence in the respective Activity Center dimensions. This reinforces the requirement of only one application per Activity Center will be accepted. The only exception to this provision will be if the Activity Center crosses municipal boundaries. In these situations, more than one application per Activity Center will be accepted.

To further explain the previously stated diversity objective, it is the intent of ACOG that selected planning demonstration sites are generally representative of the composition of small towns (population below 5,000), mid-size cities (population between 5,000 and 50,000), and large cities/urban areas (population over 50,000) within the ACOG region.

Applicant governments applying for the Main Street Program must also express their intent to partner with an existing or proposed 501(c)(3) non-profit organization; please visit this guide from the [National Council of Nonprofits](#).

WHAT MUNICIPALITIES NEED TO KNOW AND WHY THEY SHOULD APPLY

Please note that this **Call for Applications does not offer grant funding, but does offer planning consultant services with a strategic emphasis on community identity and placemaking** for the following eligible project types:

- Town Center Development/Redevelopment
- Historic Commercial Business District Revitalization (Main Street Program)
- Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)
- Corridor/Special District Studies
- Regional Park & Recreational Projects

This list of eligible demo site proposals is designed to empower a community to fully develop a designated Activity Center. Applicants are not limited to the types of projects listed above. Innovation and customization to meet the needs and goals of your community is encouraged. However, ACOG does reserve the right to further limit project eligibility to reflect funding and time constraints. For examples of potential planning demonstration site projects, please visit the [Oklahoma Main Street Center 2020 Awards Program](#) and the [IQC Project Library](#). **Prospective applicants are encouraged to contact Matthew Weaver, CED Manager, at 405-234-2264 or mweaver@acogok.org with questions regarding project eligibility.**

The scope of these technical services will depend heavily upon the content of the demonstration site application and the applicant community's local commitment, issues, and initiatives. **The general time frame for execution of consulting services will be eight (8) to twelve (12) months, depending on the size and scale of the project. A detailed timeline is provided on [page 9](#).**

Applicants are encouraged to submit project planning proposals with a minimum, estimated service value of \$19,000. However, ACOG will consider applications on a case by case basis. Applying municipalities do have an option to provide a financial and/or in-kind match to enhance their proposed project scope. Please note this is not a required component of this program in order to qualify for consideration. Rather, the match can provide a community the opportunity to leverage this potential service to address a larger project scope.

Although a broad range of targeted planning endeavors is allowed, the program's limited funding and time frame require a listing of ineligible project types, as shown below:

- Community-wide Comprehensive/Master Plans
- Capital Improvement Programs (CIPs)
- Any proposed project that exceeds a 12-month time frame for completion

UPDATED CEDS STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK GOALS AND ACTIVITY CENTERS

The goals established for the CAPEDD Updated CEDS Strategic Framework were strategically designed to address economic resiliency and sustainability. While different in some ways, these goals build upon and complement ACOG's Encompass 2040 Regional Transportation Plan for Activity Centers. **The subsequent outline targets specific components from the Updated CEDS Goals that are relevant to the CERI Program Application:**

TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

Transit-oriented development (TOD) includes "a mixture of housing, office, retail, and other amenities integrated into a walkable neighborhood concentrated within a quarter mile of quality public transportation." Infrastructure to allow citizens to have access to all necessities within a 15-minute walk/bike ride increases self-sufficiency and long-term economic resiliency.

- Improve connection between land use and transportation to enable citizens to live healthier lives and reduce environmental impacts.
- Identify and/or create grants and subsidies for public transportation development and use programs.
- Activate current and future walking/biking and public transportation infrastructure by incentivizing usage.
- Accelerate efforts to provide equitable distribution of transit-oriented development within underserved communities.

PLACEMAKING

The Project for Public Spaces defines placemaking as, “Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share; placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.”

- Create healthier communities by supporting and incentivizing innovative placemaking, especially with regards to public gathering spaces, walking and biking paths, public parks and gardens, and events.
- Engage community business owners, artists, and other community members to partner with government and local organizations to implement and maintain these game-changing projects.
- Preserve and protect natural areas, historic/cultural districts, and scenic corridors.

BUSINESS ADAPTATION

- Support for businesses to adapt their business models for current and future needs, localization and shortening of supply chain, innovative solutions, ecommerce, etc.
- Support micro-grants for small business owners for outdoor seating/display shelves, etc. Connect businesses with access to capital and be inclusive about the issue of access to funding.

OPPORTUNITY ZONES

- Support regional coordination around marketing and development of the Opportunity Zones in Cleveland, Logan, Canadian, and Oklahoma Counties.
- Identify opportunities to align the needs of underserved communities with the development goals of the Opportunity Zones.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

- A strong partnership with the Oklahoma Main Street Center, if a community meets the program eligibility requirements, should constitute a priority for providing the organizational and technical assistance necessary to carry out many initiatives outlined within this Updated CEDS.
- Partnerships with other economic development and community organizations including, but not limited to, chambers of commerce, conventions and visitors' bureaus, non-profit organizations, and foundations are also essential in expediting the implementation of the actions outlined herein. These partnerships should be inclusive (reflective), interactive, and structured in a way which supports long-term resiliency.

GOVERNMENT POLICY RESPONSIVENESS

- Zoning ordinance and development regulation agility and the application of best practices are vital to economic growth.
- Strategic land use and regulatory changes along with streamlined permitting procedures encourage investment and quality development of a community.

REVIEW CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF PLANNING DEMONSTRATION SITES

A complete CERI Planning Demonstration Site Application submittal will include the following components:

- CERI Planning Demonstration Site Application Form
- CERI Planning Demonstration Site Application Checklist

- Planning Demonstration Site Area Map
- Issue Statement
- Explanation of Local Resources
- Discussion of Local Commitment
- Assessment of Local Capacity
- Appendices
- Oklahoma Main Street Community Forms

(If your community is not currently a member and plans to submit a Main Street eligible project)

Please see the [CERI Planning Demonstration Site Application Checklist](#) for a detailed description of the required content of each component listed above.

APPLICATION FORMAT AND SUBMITTAL PROCESS

Upon completion of the Application Form, including Checklist and Attachments, applicants will send the following to Matthew Weaver, CED Manager, ACOG, 4205 N Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City, OK 73105:

- One (1) signed unbound original and two (2) copies of the complete Application form with Checklist and Attachments
- One (1) all-inclusive PDF stored on a flash drive

The deadline for submission of applications is **Wednesday, February 24, 2021, at 4:00 p.m.** Applications in mail transit by the deadline will not be accepted. Handwritten applications will not be accepted.

ACOG is not responsible for applications misplaced, misaddressed, or lost in the mail. Applications made late by any of these circumstances will not be considered for competitive review. Upon ACOG's receipt of a planning site demonstration application, the time and date of receipt will be stamped and documented. Applicants will receive confirmation of submission by email or phone within two (2) business days of the submission deadline.

Following the end of the final application submission window, ACOG staff will begin preliminary review of planning demonstration site applications for basic completeness and compliance per the CERI Planning Demonstration Site Application Checklist requirements. **Note that this is a cursory review for completeness of applications, not a qualitative review.** Applications at this stage will be accepted or disqualified based on whether the applicant provided the required documents in the order and format requested. Items in the application must be checked off on the application checklist and be present in the application package in the order indicated on the checklist. An application with missing documents following the final application deadline will not be considered.

Applicants will be notified via email within eight (8) days of the final submittal deadline of their application status.

Early and Preliminary Compliance Review of Submitted Applications

Applications submitted no later than **Friday, February 12, 2021, at 4:00 p.m.** will be eligible to receive a **preliminary qualitative and compliance review conducted by ACOG staff.** Applicants will receive staff comments on their application and will have the opportunity to submit a revised application prior to the final submission deadline. ACOG staff will return their comments and recommendations

via email to the early applicants within a reasonable timeframe. Please note that participation in the early submittal review process does not guarantee a successful application.

APPLICATION EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

The CERI Planning Demonstration Site Application is a competitive selection process. Applications received after the deadline will not be reviewed or considered.

The planning demonstration site applications will be reviewed by an independent CERI Review Committee appointed by ACOG. Prior to application review, all committee members will be expected to identify conflicts of interest due to elected position, appointed position, or other relationships pertaining to the jurisdiction of applications. Conflict of interest unresolved within the CERI Review Committee will be resolved by the ACOG Board of Directors (BOD).

The CERI Review Committee will employ a qualitative, non-numeric metric to evaluate each community's planning demonstration site application in relation to the Updated CEDS Strategic Framework. Committee members will use the review criteria below to evaluate each application in a fair and consistent manner:

- Field empty or irrelevant information
- Insufficient relevance
- Sufficient relevance
- Notable or complete relevance

At the preference of the individual committee members, additional consideration may be given to the following **Discretionary Factors** in assessing the level of response from applicants:

- Innovative concept/approach to the project
- Proposed or pending private and/or public development projects within the demo site area that will complement and support the Updated CEDS Goals
- Comprehensive coordination with other organizations and non-profits to address a full range of needs
- Applicability and transferability of the planning demo site outcomes locally and regionally

Following individual evaluations by members of the CERI Review Committee, members will collaborate to arrive at a consensus on selected planning demonstration site applications, and, if necessary, request in-person project presentations from applicants that produce applications of highest relevance. Please note that the Committee has the prerogative and right to reduce the scope of a submitted project application in order to accommodate the limited funding and time frame of the CERI Program. **The CERI Review Committee will produce final recommendations for projects and ultimate selection of successful projects will be left at the discretion of the ACOG BOD.** Written notification of award and an initial Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be distributed to winning applicants shortly after decisions from the ACOG BOD are made.

The general goal of ACOG, the CERI Review Committee, and the ACOG BOD in selecting planning demonstration site projects is to engage a diverse mix of rural and urban communities across the ACOG region.

In short, the planning demonstration site application process is solely based on the quality of ideas, their relevance to the goals in the Updated CEDS Strategic Framework, and the potential effect a project could have on a community's long-term economic resiliency.

SCHEDULE OF IMPORTANT DATES

December 29, 2020	Call for Applications
January 5, 2021	CERI Application Forum (Virtual): Program Overview with Question & Answer Session
February 12, 2021	Optional, Early Application Submittal to ACOG by 4:00 p.m. Staff Review & Comments with Opportunity for Application Adjustments Prior to Final Deadline
February 24, 2021	Final Submittal Deadline: Applications Due at ACOG by 4:00 p.m.
February 25 – March 3, 2021	Preliminary Review of Submitted Applications for Basic Compliance
March 4, 2021	Notification of Application Status Sent to Applicants
March 5, 2021	Complete Applications Sent to CERI Review Committee
March 15 - 16, 2021	CERI Review Committee Evaluation Meeting(s) at ACOG Applicant Presentations to CERI Review (if requested) and Final Recommendations
March 25, 2021	CERI Planning Demonstration Sites Selection by ACOG Board of Directors
March 26 – April 9, 2021	MOUs with Oklahoma Main Street Center and Cities with Approved Planning Demonstration (Demo) Sites
April 16 – May 28, 2021	Oklahoma Main Street Center Coordination with Demo Cities
April 29, 2021	ACOG Board of Directors Approval of Inter-Local Government Agreement with OU Institute for Quality Communities (IQC) for Consultant Services
June 2 – August 2, 2021	IQC Preliminary Coordination with Demo Cities
August 3, 2021 – May 9, 2022	IQC Planning Consultant Services Provided for Demo Cities per MOUs
May 24, 2022	CERI Planning Demonstration Sites Project Completion and Final Reports (IQC and OK Main Street)