



CERI WEBINAR

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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2021

## GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. **Why are Activity Centers from the 2040 Encompass Regional Transportation Plan being used as the qualifying factor for eligible municipal applicants?**

*In the Encompass 2040 Plan the Activity Centers were developed to depict where local investment should be targeted for transportation improvements. In the same way, it was determined that these areas should logically be the focal points of economic development for our region.*

*Please note that all municipalities have a town center and therefore have at least one designated Activity Center.*

2. **How can an applicant determine the center point and accurate dimensions of their Activity Center, and correctly calculate whether the proposed project demo site is at least 25% within the area of the Activity Center? Is there an option to submit a project application using a phased in approach?**

*Applicants are encouraged to contact ACOG's Transportation Planning Services Division (TPS) GIS staff to verify accurate dimensions and determine 25% demo site project area location within an Activity Center.*

*Yes, applicants can submit a planning demo site proposal that is comprised of multiple phases, which allows for greater flexibility in meeting the 25% area requirement within an Activity Center.*

3. **Can you identify for the applicant what the exact employment density (cluster) or land use activity (retail/office concentration) is the reason for the Activity Center designation?**

*From a geographic standpoint, ACOG can identify the location of the Activity Center and the primary concentration of employment/attraction. Please reach out to TPS for further clarification.*

4. **Why the recommended \$19,000 minimum value of services and how can the applicant accurately estimate the planning service value for this application process? Is there a maximum cost ceiling for a project proposal that the applicant should be aware of?**

*This is based on IQC's average planning project cost estimates. The recommended \$19,000 is a suggested target to consider and does not rule out applications that cost less.*

*Technically no, the CERI Review Committee will determine the allocation of planning service resources depending on the scope of a proposed project, timeframe, and whether three (3) or five (5) projects are recommended for final selection. Though not required, the addition of matching funds becomes more of a factor if an applicant wishes to pursue a larger project scope.*

5. **How can the applicant be assured that the reference to a financial or in-kind match will not become the primary determining factor in the selection process?**

*This program was designed for small, medium, and large communities; intended to be fair and equitable to all communities. Financial and in-kind matching allows for an expansion of scope but is not required. Please note that the evaluation criteria to be utilized by the CERI Review Committee does not include matching as a factor in the selection process.*

**6. It is stated that ACOG is open to other eligible project types. Please explain further.**

*ACOG is open to other proposals that address economic resiliency, such as neighborhood centric projects located within an Activity Center.*

**7. What is the purpose behind the Updated CEDS Goals as it relates to the application process?**

*Inclusion of the Updated CEDS Goals is meant to inform and guide applicants to generate a relevant application. ACOG encourages applicants to review the Updated CEDS Goals and to utilize similar wording throughout their application.*

**8. Why the Early and Preliminary Review option for applicants?**

*Gives applicants an opportunity for a qualitative assessment of their proposal by ACOG staff before the final application deadline. The objective is to improve the quality of applications. Participation does not guarantee a successful application.*

**9. Who will be appointed to the CERI Review Committee and how will they be objectively selected by ACOG?**

*The CERI Review Committee will be comprised of 5-7 people (2 ACOG) and 3-5 outside professionals from the region. These individuals will not be municipal elected officials or ACOG Board members.*

**10 Why the non-numeric evaluation by the CERI Review Committee? Explain the Committee's right to reduce the scope of a submitted project.**

*ACOG chose to use a non-numeric evaluation system based on its successful utilization in similar programs here and at other organizations. The emphasis will be on developing a consensus among the Committee members on the strengths and weaknesses of the submitted applications.*

*The CERI Review Committee's ability to change or reduce the scope of a proposed application gives them the flexibility to recommend viable projects that adhere to the Update CEDS Goals, limited timeframe, and cost factors.*

**11. Is there a guarantee that at least one planning demo site will be selected per the stated city population categories (small, medium, and large)?**

*It is the intent of ACOG and the CERI Review Committee to select applicants in a fair and equitable manner not solely based upon a community's size. Selection will depend upon which communities submit applications and the types of projects that strategically address the intent of the CERI Program.*

**12. Please explain the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) component once successful selection as a planning demo site.**

*An MOU is not a contract, but a statement of responsibilities and commitments. Each selected applicant City will be required to enter into an MOU with ACOG prior to receiving professional services from the Oklahoma Main Street Center and the Institute for Quality Communities.*

13. Based on the Application Checklist it appears that the inclusion of each required item, adherence to page limits, the order of the application submittal, and compliance to the established deadlines are the primary factors in meeting the threshold for consideration. Are there any exceptions?

No.

## OKLAHOMA MAIN STREET CENTER (OMSC)

### 1. What is Main Street?

*Main Street is a philosophy, a program, and a comprehensive approach to downtown or historic district commercial revitalization. It utilizes the Main Street Four Point Approach™ of Organization, Promotion, Design and Economic Vitality that encourages economic development through historic preservation. Main Street is volunteer-led and community-driven that fosters partnerships and collaboration among citizens and stakeholders.*

### 2. What does the OMSC provide?

*Oklahoma Main Street Center provides training, resources and technical assistance for preservation-based commercial district revitalization.*

### 3. What does it cost to apply?

*There is no charge to apply to be a possible member of the Oklahoma Main Street Program.*

### 4. What types of grants are provided?

*The Oklahoma Main Street Center does not provide monetary funds. The OMSC staff provides technical assistance in comprehensive community revitalization through the Main Street Four Point Approach™.*

### 5. Can Main Street apply to the entire town?

*No. The Main Street area must be either a “traditional downtown” or “traditional neighborhood commercial district.” The Main Street program should focus its attention on one central area. Those in the surrounding area will certainly benefit from a stronger core and are encouraged to take part in the revitalization of the district.*

### 6. What is the Main Street Four Point Approach™?

#### **Design**

- a. *The appearance of your Main Street district sets a vital first impression for your local historic commercial district. Capitalizing on its best assets – such as historic buildings and pedestrian-oriented streets – is just part of the story. By adding in an inviting atmosphere through attractive window displays, parking areas, building improvements, signs, sidewalks, landscaping and more, your historic core will portray positive visual message about what your district has to offer.*

## Promotion

- b. *Marketing is a vital component of a successful Main Street program, framing a positive image and encouraging consumers and investors to live, work, shop, play, and invest in the district. Through local volunteers, you can market your district's unique characteristics to residents, investors, business owners and visitors. Efforts such as advertising, retail promotional activity, special events, and marketing campaigns will improve consumer and investor confidence and encourage commercial activity and investment in the district.*

## Economic Vitality

- c. *The Main Street program helps make existing business owners more competitive while recruiting new businesses and economic uses to create a commercial district that responds to today's consumer needs. By diversifying your district's economic base and converting unused or underused commercial space into economically productive space, your historic core can strengthen its economic assets and boost the profitability of the district.*

## Organization

- d. *The first step is getting everyone to work toward the same goal. To have a successful Main Street revitalization program, the Organization Point needs to bring together the human and financial resources to reach your goals. A governing board and standing committees make up the fundamental organizational structure, while a paid program director coordinates and supports local volunteers. By using this structure, your local program can build the consensus and cooperation needed to bring vibrancy to a commercial district.*

## 7. Where can I find more information?

*Contact the Oklahoma Main Street Center or go to our website at [www.okcommerce.gov/mainstreet](http://www.okcommerce.gov/mainstreet).*

## 8. Will the Main Street-eligible projects and the Non-Main Street-eligible projects be handled in the same way or differently?

*Main Street-eligible projects will receive assistance from both the Oklahoma Main Street Program and the IQC. Non-Main Street-eligible projects will receive assistance only from IQC.*

## 9. Please explain why an existing or proposed private nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization is required for a Main Street eligible project.

*Main Street is a nonprofit entity. Establishing and continuing an Oklahoma Main Street program requires a nonprofit status.*

## 10. Please further explain which applicants should complete the Main Street Community Application forms and why? Please explain the benefits of a Two-Year Associate Main Street membership.

*Applicants that are pursuing a Main Street eligible project and are not currently members of the Oklahoma Main Street Program should complete the Main Street Community Application forms to establish a Two-Year Associate Main Street membership.*

*The free Two-Year Associate Main Street membership is designed as a capacity-building bridge toward a fully designated Main Street Program, and is usually employed by smaller cities that are unable to hire full-time staff but want to observe the tangible benefits of involvement in the Oklahoma Main Street Program.*



## UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA INSTITUTE FOR QUALITY COMMUNITIES (IQC)

### 1. What is the University of Oklahoma Institute for Quality Communities (IQC)?

*IQC works with communities on topics that are connected to planning and design of the built environment. Past topics have included neighborhood planning, walkability, street design and safety, parking inventories, public space design, interior design or architecture of community facilities, and more. Check out the project library for dozens of examples.*

### 2. Who is on an IQC project team?

*IQC's project teams include faculty, staff, and students from the OU Christopher C. Gibbs College of Architecture. Team members represent disciplines like Architecture, Construction Science, Environmental Design, Interior Design, Landscape Architecture, Regional & City Planning, and Urban Design.*

### 3. How can our community get involved in the IQC process?

*We believe that the community is the expert when it comes to local challenges and opportunities. All of our projects seek to engage a broad variety of community stakeholders and residents to understand their ideas and dreams for the community. We use tools like public workshops, walking tours, and games to help understand what community members would like to see in the future of the community.*

### 4. What is the result of an IQC project?

*The result of a project is often a report or presentation that summarizes the findings, recommendations, and next steps for addressing the community's goals. The report may include guiding principles, design alternatives, policy strategies, or implementation tactics supported by maps, graphics, or photos. After projects have concluded, many community partners use the reports to guide next steps, such as applying for grant funding or organizing volunteer efforts to implement changes.*