ASSOCIATION OF
CENTRAL OKLAHOMA
GOVERNMENTS

2025-2026
COMMUNITY ECONOMIC
RESILIENCY INITIATIVE
(CERI)

POLICIES &
PROCEDURES

July 10, 2025

Association of Central Oklahoma Governments
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ASSOCIATION OF CENTRAL OKLAHOMA GOVERNMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG), a collaborative, regional organization of local governments, has designated a portion of the awarded 2023-2025 and the 2026-2028 EDA Planning Grant to provide valuable planning services to the municipalities within our region. As a result, ACOG has reserved a total of $45,000 to fund two cities to take part in the 2025-26 Community Economic Resiliency Initiative (CERI) Program.

The CERI Program offers municipal governments the opportunity to develop planning demonstration (demo) sites that will model strategic community and long-term economic investment with a focus on placemaking and cultural heritage tourism.

CERI aims to engage local governments to develop the tools they need to become economically resilient and sustainable. Depending upon the scope of their application project, successful applicants will receive valuable planning consultant services, community research and public engagement guidance, proposed project implementation strategies, and best practices training.

ACOG has partnered with the University of Oklahoma Institute of Quality Communities (IQC), a community engagement program in the University of Oklahoma Christopher C. Gibbs College of Architecture. IQC builds partnerships with mayors, city managers, and civic organizations across Oklahoma to identify challenges in the built environment. Students learn by experience to gather community input, analyze existing conditions, and develop conceptual planning and design solutions. These partnerships enhance learning and help Oklahomans reshape their towns and cities in ways that improve health, economy, and quality of life.

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 planning demonstration sites.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:

- Any city/town that is a current member of the ACOG Board of Directors (BOD), has a population of 63,000 residents or less based on the 2020 U.S. Census Data and that is located within Logan, Oklahoma, Canadian, or Cleveland Counties may apply. No exceptions will be made to the geographical or demographic requirements.

ACOG developed a total budget of $45,000 for two cities to receive practical planning assistance through IQC. The actual funding amount allocated per municipality will be determined by the scale and complexity of the selected projects. Any municipality that wishes to take part in the CERI Program must contribute a 10% match, not to exceed $3,000, in local funding to obtain IQC's valuable planning consultant services. Federal funds are not eligible for the contribution. Local commitment of not only financial resources, but also civic engagement, is essential for CERI to be successful.

ACOG looks forward to receiving your application no later than 5:00 p.m. on Friday, August 8, 2025. We strongly encourage applicants to discuss your project ideas with us before applying. Contact Sharon Astrin at sastrin@acogok.org. No late submissions will be accepted.

INSTITUTE FOR QUALITY COMMUNITIES (IQC) SERVICES

IQC will be utilizing the following structure for the CERI Program. The structure is designed to be timely and effective for the work being done by IQC. If selected, CERI participants can expect the following consultant services from IQC.

1. **Establish the Project**

    The IQC team and the Community Steering Committee will hold preliminary meetings to refine the goals and scope of the project. The local Project Lead will assist IQC in compiling background documents and data.

2. **Conduct Research and Ongoing Engagement**

    IQC and the Community Steering Committee will establish a meeting schedule so that the Community Steering Committee can support research and engagement, and so the committee can review progress. The Committee will assist IQC in determining an engagement strategy that invites residents to participate in shaping outcomes through workshops, charrettes, surveys, interviews, walk-and-talk meetings, or other activities. Engagement will continue throughout the project. The Committee will review progress as IQC prepares research on topics like history, demographics, asset-mapping, urban form analysis, field work, precedent studies, related trends and best practices, or other areas of relevance.

3. **Develop Recommendations**

    IQC will develop and present design and/or planning strategies for review and refinement by the Community Steering Committee. IQC will refine these into a series of short-term and long-range action items with steps toward implementation, and related funding opportunities.

4. **Deliver Final Reports and Presentations**

    IQC will deliver a professionally printed plan, and a presentation slide deck. The Community Steering Committee will assist in scheduling a final presentation where IQC will present results to local officials, stakeholders, and the public.

The program will operate alongside the OU school year. Projects can be expected to conclude in late Spring of 2026.

PLANNING DEMONSTRATION SITES

CERI will provide planning consultant services with a strategic emphasis on placemaking and cultural heritage tourism. The following is a list of eligible project categories. These categories are designed to empower a community to fully utilize this service in creating their planning demonstration site:

- Within a half mile radius of the main government building/city hall/courthouse (town center)

- Within an existing or proposed boundary of a major park/recreation area

- An existing business corridor, or within a main street/commercial district

- Cultural/heritage tourism site (historic place or district)

Applicants will select one or more of the above categories that their project will fall under to promote innovative and creative ways to meet the aspirations of your community... The scope of these technical services will depend heavily upon the content of the planning demonstration site application and the applicant's local commitment, resources, issues, and initiatives. The actual funding amount allocated per town will be determined by the scale and complexity of the selected projects.

Although a broad range of targeted planning endeavors is allowed, the following project types are ineligible due to the program's limited funding and time frame:

- Community-Wide Comprehensive/Master Plans
- Capital Improvement Programs (CIPs)

The City shall conduct appropriate due diligence to confirm its legal authority to use any property involved in the Project. This includes verifying ownership, ensuring the property is not held in trust or subject to restrictions, encumbrances, or oversight that would impair its use. The City is responsible for obtaining any necessary approvals or clearances prior to commencing project activities and shall hold ACOG harmless from any claims, delays, or liabilities arising from failure to do so.

FUNDING

All funding to be utilized for this program is contingent upon the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) receiving sufficient and timely grant funding from the awarding agency. If grant funds are reduced, delayed, or not received, ACOG may reduce, delay, or cancel program funding without penalty or further liability.

APPLICATION

The deadline for submission is 5:00 P.M. on Friday, August 8, 2025. Applications must be submitted digitally at https://www.grantinterface.com/sl/LtOTrm, Access Code: CERI2025. Click "Create New Account" to log in to the portal and apply. **For all questions concerning the digital application process, including any technical issues, contact Cameron Veal at cveal@acogok.org.** As part of the application, the applicant must upload the site map, required attachments, and formal resolution that are required.

Upon the receipt of a CERI Planning Demonstration Site Application, the time and date of receipt will be documented. Applicants will receive immediate confirmation of submission by email.

PLANNING DEMONSTRATION (DEMO) SITE SELECTION PROCESS

The general goal of ACOG staff, the CERI Review Committee, and the ACOG Board of Directors (BOD) in selecting planning demonstration site projects is to engage a diverse mix of rural and urban communities across the ACOG region. The planning demonstration site application process is based on the quality of ideas, and the potential impact that a project could have on a community's long-term economic resiliency. The CERI Planning Demonstration Site Application is a competitive selection process. Applications will be assessed in a four-phase process that will include:

- Intake & Review for Completeness

- Assessment, Evaluation, & Recommendations – CERI Review Committee

- ACOG BOD Consideration of Recommended Selected Planning Demo Sites

CERI REVIEW COMMITTEE

The CERI Review Committee, which will be responsible for application evaluation and for final demo site recommendations, will be comprised of six members. Four members will be ACOG staff, and two members from outside of the organization that represent professions relevant to the program. Only the CERI Review Committee will make the selection recommendations to be presented to the ACOG BOD. 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 interests unresolved within the CERI Review Committee will be determined by the ACOG BOD.

PHASE I: INTAKE & REVIEW FOR COMPLETENESS

Following the end of the application submission window, ACOG staff will begin reviewing applications for basic completeness and compliance per the CERI Planning Demonstration Site application requirements. An application with missing documents following the final application deadline will not be considered.

PHASE II: ASSESSMENT, EVALUATION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The CERI Review Committee members will read a copy of each submitted application that has been verified by ACOG staff as complete for their assessment. **Please also note that the Committee has the prerogative and right to change the scope of a submitted project application to accommodate the limited funding and time frame, as well as the primary objectives of the CERI Program.**

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

- 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 project

- Comprehensive coordination with other organizations and non-profits to address a full range of needs

- Applicability and transferability of the planning demonstration site outcomes locally and regionally

Following individual evaluations by members of the CERI Review Committee, members will meet and collaborate to arrive at a consensus and select two planning demonstration site applications to recommend to the ACOG BOD.

PHASE III: ACOG BOD CONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDED PLANNING DEMO SITES

The final recommendations of the CERI Review Committee will be presented to the ACOG BOD at the regularly scheduled August 2025 meeting. ACOG staff will formally request the approval of the two Demo Sites by the ACOG BOD.

Please note that email notification of selection and a contract will be distributed to the chosen applicants for execution after the Board's final decision.

POST-SELECTION

The project leader (point of contact) for the selected cities will work with the University of Oklahoma's IQC team to coordinate the days that the IQC team will meet with the community.

The site visits will focus on connecting with community members of all ages through a series of engagement activities to learn about their ideas, priorities, and goals for your planning demonstration site.

Following the visits, the IQC team will reconvene at OU and begin to develop the plan for each city's demonstration site.

CONTACTS

Direct all program-related questions to:

Sharon Astrin
CED Manager
sastrin@acogok.org

Direct all digital application questions to:

Cameron Veal
CED Planner II
cveal@acogok.org

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

1. **What will CERI cost per City or Town?**

   A municipality that is selected for the 2025-26 CERI Program must contribute 10 % of the project dollars allocated in local funding, not to exceed $3,000. Federal funds are not eligible for the contribution. The local commitment of not only financial resources, but also civic engagement, is essential for CERI to be successful.

2. **When will applicants be notified about the planning demo site selections?**

   The ACOG Board of Directors will review and vote on selected applications on August 28 and chosen applicants will receive an official email by August 29.

3. **How long does the CERI Program take from start to finish?**

   The program begins in September and concludes in May.

4. **What national award did the CERI Program receive?**

ACOG received the 2022 Aliceann Wohlbruck Impact Award from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) for the CERI Program. Award recipients were selected based on their program's impact on promoting economic development, fostering resilience, and improving the quality of life for residents.

5. **Can the 10% required match be made in-kind?**

No, the CERI Program requires a financial contribution to add to the funds that ACOG is contributing to IQC's planning services.

6. **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 six members: four ACOG staff members and two outside professionals from the region. These individuals will not be municipal elected officials, ACOG Board members, or CERI Program applicants.

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 the 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, community facilities architecture, and more.

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 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 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 the next steps, such as applying for grant funding or organizing volunteer efforts to implement changes.