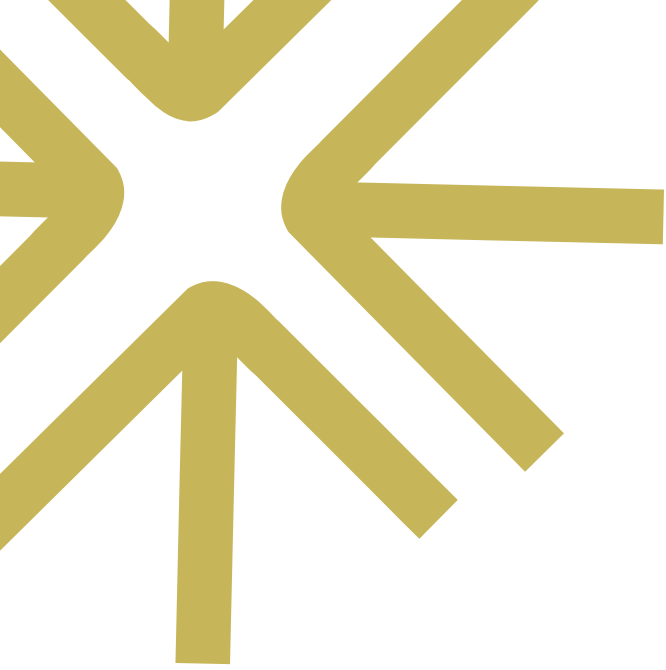




Frequently Asked Questions

UPDATED AS OF 09/30/26

The following frequently asked questions (FAQs) are meant to provide additional guidance about the funding opportunities available through the Community Parks Initiative (CPI) administered by Indiana Community Development Projects, Inc. (ICDP). The FAQs may be updated periodically as necessary.

Invited applicants should carefully review both the Request for Proposals (RFP) and these FAQs when considering submission of any proposal through this two-phase initiative.

INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

What is the aim of CPI?

The aim of CPI is to enhance local park systems through the development and implementation of community-driven plans to improve the quality of life and place for individuals and communities throughout the state of Indiana (see Indianapolis exception below). Given the varied needs of communities across Indiana, CPI's funding opportunities are meant to support a range of planning, assessment and implementation activities that enable cities and towns to engage a broad group of community stakeholders to inform the development and implementation of plans to enhance local parks systems and related amenities.

ELIGIBILITY

Who is eligible to participate in CPI?

The eligible cities and towns must have a population of at least 5,000 residents according to [2025 population estimates from STATS Indiana](#) as well as a parks and recreation function with sufficient resources and/or expertise to successfully plan, design, execute and maintain park improvements (see Indianapolis exception below).

Why is it important to demonstrate a parks and recreation function and what does it mean for an invited city or town to have a parks and recreation function with sufficient capacity and/or expertise to participate in the initiative?

In order for this initiative to have an enduring impact on the quality of life and place for individuals and communities throughout the State of Indiana, it is important that the invited cities and towns have a parks and recreation function (e.g., parks department, public works and the like) equipped to implement, sustain and maintain park system improvements and/or programming.

Additional details on this requirement can be found on page 5 of the RFP and on the website www.indianacpi.org under the Initiative Resources tab.

Invited cities and towns with questions about eligibility are encouraged to send a message to info@indianacpi.org for further discussion.

Are park systems in Marion County included in the initiative?

Indianapolis, which recently received \$80 million from Lilly Endowment to improve 42 parks in the Indy Parks and Recreation system, is not eligible to participate in CPI. These four other cities and towns located entirely or partially in Marion County with populations above 5,000 are invited to participate: Beech Grove, Cumberland, Lawrence, and Speedway.

Can communities not listed as an invited city or town participate?

No. Only the 126 invited cities and towns that meet the eligibility requirements can participate in this initiative.

Can township or county parks departments apply for the CPI grants if they manage parks and trails located within the boundaries of invited cities or towns?

No. Only the invited cities and towns that meet the eligibility requirements can apply to participate in this initiative.

NONPROFIT PARTNERS

Can an eligible city or town designate another organization to serve as the grantee through CPI's funding opportunities?

Yes. Within its proposal, a city or town may choose to designate one or more local 501(c)(3) public charities with a demonstrated commitment to parks (e.g. "Friends of" parks group, local community foundation) to serve as the grant recipient. There must be a documented relationship between the governmental entity and the local nonprofit to ensure accountability, transparency, and pursuit of community-supported projects.

If a city or town designates a local 501(c)(3) public charity to serve as the grant recipient, what are the obligations of both the city or town and the designated public charity?

Both have obligations under the program. Without attempting to provide a complete listing of obligations, here are a few to keep in mind. The city or town should play a significant role in prioritizing park needs for its community and must coordinate closely with the designated public charity in the execution of grant activities. In addition, the designated public charity will have obligations under the grant agreement with ICDP, including but not limited to conducting planning and/or implementation activities; using the grant funds strictly and solely for the charitable purposes described in the proposal; and reporting on both the progress of the grant activities and the financial management of grant funds.

Why might a city or town want to designate a 501(c)(3) public charity as the grantee?

A city or town may choose to designate a 501(c)(3) public charity to serve as grantee for several reasons, including, but not limited to:

- The 501(c)(3) public charity has an existing arrangement with the city or town to manage or support local parks system improvements.
- The city or town's partnership with the 501(c)(3) public charity would add capacity and/or expertise to develop and implement projects or programs to enhance the local parks system.

PHASE 1: PLANNING GRANTS

Will every city or town that submits a planning grant proposal receive funding?

ICDP has allocated enough funds to award planning grants to all invited and eligible applicants who submit a complete and satisfactory proposal that addresses the initiative's aims and objectives; however, ICDP reserves the right to decline any proposal.

How much funding can a city or town request in a planning grant proposal?

A city or town can request planning grant funding based on its population according to STATS Indiana 2025 population estimates. Grant amounts range from up to \$50,000 for smaller cities or towns to up to \$250,000 for the more populous communities.

Can a city or town that has already engaged in park planning activities (e.g., parks master plan development) skip the Phase 1 planning period and still be eligible to submit a Phase 2 Competitive Implementation Grant proposal?

No. An invited city or town must participate in Phase 1 of CPI to be eligible to participate in Phase 2.

What can the planning grants be used for?

Planning grants should be used to conduct comprehensive assessment and planning activities that align with the aims of the initiative, address the initiative's guiding questions, and if desired, prepare a proposal for the competitive phase of the initiative. Planning grants are meant to support a range of planning and assessment activities that engage a broad group of community stakeholders and are relevant to each community's local context. In addition to engaging the community, this may include understanding national best practices in parks and recreation and creating or updating master plans for individual public parks or a public park system, among other activities.

As described in the RFP, potential planning activities include, but are not limited to:

- Community surveys, resident interviews and/or focus groups;
- Site visits to other parks or communities;
- Attendance at parks and recreation conferences;
- Assessment of existing park system amenities;
- Development of a parks system master plan;
- Consultation with subject matter experts on park design, engineering and construction;
- Site and/or environmental analyses;
- Development of a Phase 2 implementation grant proposal.

Can planning grants be used to support existing parks planning efforts or must planning grants be used for new efforts?

Planning grants can be used to support a variety of activities, including those related to new planning efforts as well as those that are already underway.

What level of detail should a city or town include in its planning grant proposal?

Planning grant proposals should address CPI guiding questions on page 3 of the Request for Proposals and provide a high-level overview of its plans to engage community stakeholders and conduct planning and assessment activities to inform the development of plans to enhance and revitalize local parks. The description of these activities does not need to be certain on every detail. For example, the proposal may describe plans to engage a consultant to assess the community's parks system; however, the proposal would not need to identify the specific consultant who will be hired.

Is there a certain time period a planning grant should cover?

Planning grants are intended to support planning activities ahead of the Phase 2 Implementation Grant submission deadline on August 6, 2027. However, a city or town can use the planning grant from the date of the Grant Agreement through December 31, 2027, to complete planning activities that further its understanding of local needs and how investments in parks amenities and related programming can address those needs.

If a city or town does not spend all its planning grant funds, may those funds be used for other purposes?

No. A city or town must use its planning grant for planning activities described in its proposal. If the city or town does not expect to fully spend its planning grant prior to the end of the grant period, it should contact ICDP for further guidance.

PHASE 2: IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS

Will every city or town that submits an implementation grant proposal receive funding?

No. Phase 2 Grants will be awarded through a competitive process. Not all applicants who submit a proposal will be awarded a grant.

How much funding can a city or town request as part of Phase 2 of CPI?

A city or town can request Phase 2 funding based on its population according to STATS Indiana 2025 population estimates. Grant amounts range from up to \$1 million for smaller cities or towns to up to \$30 million for the more populous communities.

How many grants will be awarded through Phase 2 of CPI?

ICDP has allocated up to \$380 million for Phase 2 grants. ICDP is not targeting a specific number of grants to award; rather, the number of grants awarded will depend on the number and quality of grant proposals submitted, among other factors.

For what purposes can Phase 2 grants be used?

As outlined in the RFP, Phase 2 grant funding is intended to provide support for a broad range of projects or programs to enhance a city or town's public park system.

Phase 2 projects or programs may include, but are not limited to:

- Renovations, upgrades, enhancements or construction of:
 - playgrounds, sport fields and courts, or pools and splash pads;
 - comfort stations, gazebos or pavilions, seating and signage;
 - other parks amenities including fountains, landmarks, public art, murals, or memorials;
- Development of new public access points connecting local parks to adjacent trails, waterways, and natural areas (e.g., bikeshare programs, kayak launches);
- Construction of a family or community center in a local park for neighborhood programs (e.g., cooking classes, free health screenings, weekly food pantry distribution, after-school tutoring, and emergency winter warming services);
- Development of programming to draw more regular park visits including community concert series, farmers' markets, bird watching clubs, and other educational subjects of community interest;
- Land acquisition and construction of a new public park in an area of high need.

What parks may a city or town include in its Phase 2 grant proposal?

A city or town should include in its proposal only public parks and greenspaces that are owned and maintained by the local governmental authority and its parks and recreation function. Accordingly, parks owned and maintained by other entities – e.g., a local neighborhood association, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, National Parks Service – are not eligible to be funded through this initiative.

A city or town may choose to include public parks and greenspaces that are within city limits and are owned and maintained by county or township government if, as a result of the planning process, its inclusion reflects the needs of the community and demonstrates the potential for compelling community impact.

Should a city or town elect to include such public parks in its Phase 2 Grant proposal, the county or township parks and recreation function will be considered a collaborating partner. The county or township would need to submit a letter of commitment with the proposal. See Phase 2 Implementation Proposal guidance on pages 8 – 10 of the RFP for additional information.

Can a city or town propose to use its Phase 2 grant to support projects or programs at multiple community parks?

Yes. A city or town could propose to use its Phase 2 grant to support projects or programs at multiple community parks. Alternatively, a city or town could choose to allocate its requested grant funding to a single large park system project and/or program.

Proposed projects and programs should be informed by the planning process, reflect the needs of the community, and demonstrate the potential for compelling community impact.

Can a city or town propose using Phase 2 funding to support existing park initiatives or activities?

Yes. A city or town may propose to further enhance or expand existing park initiatives or activities related to community parks. For example, grant funding could be used to implement projects or programs identified in a parks master plan developed prior to the launch of CPI or expand access to an existing program. However, each city or town is encouraged to contemplate the CPI guiding questions as outlined on page 3 of the RFP and use the Phase 1 planning period to assess whether community stakeholders support prioritizing these efforts over other park projects or programs.

Are trail projects eligible for this program (e.g. trail extensions, new trail routes)?

Yes. Projects that renovate, upgrade, enhance or construct trails or walking paths within a public park or greenspace are eligible projects. Projects that enhance or complement local trails (e.g., a linear park adjacent to a trail, trailhead park) are also eligible.

Projects that extend existing or create new trail routes outside of public parks or greenspaces are not eligible projects for this initiative.

What costs can be included in a Phase 2 grant budget?

ICDP expects Phase 2 grants to be deployed in a variety of ways to support, strengthen, beautify and activate public parks. Grant expenditures may include, but are not limited to, design and engineering fees, land acquisition, construction costs, consultants and contracted support, administration, programming, and maintenance. See the Guide to Budget Preparation (Phase 2) in Appendix 1 of the RFP for more information.

May a portion of the Phase 2 budget include funds to support administration and programming costs?

Yes. Up to 15 percent of the requested grant can be budgeted for expenses directly related to administering the grant or supporting new or expanded parks system programming provided expenses are reasonable and appropriate. Allowable administration and programming costs might include, but are not limited to, staffing, supplies, technology, marketing materials, meeting expenses, fundraising or consulting costs provided the costs are related to the projects and programming funded through the proposed Implementation Grant budget.

While the grant can fund a variety of administrative expenses, it should not be used for general operating and administrative expenses of a city, town or, if applicable, public charity. There should be a clear rationale for including these costs to administer grant funding that connects to the implementation of the proposed projects or programs. For example, the grant could be used to fund the portion of a park director's time spent working on implementing the proposed projects or programs; however, it should not be used to cover the entirety of the park director's annual salary.

See the Guide to Budget Preparation (Phase 2) in Appendix 1 of the RFP for more details.

May a portion of the Phase 2 budget include funds to support the park's future maintenance and sustainability?

Yes. Up to 15 percent of the grant budget can be used for maintenance and sustainability costs of the projects funded by a Phase 2 grant. These costs can include landscaping, equipment repair, sanitation and waste management, among others. A city or town may also choose to use a portion of the grant to establish a maintenance reserve. If the city or town intends to use grant funding to establish a maintenance reserve for ongoing maintenance needs after the end of the grant period, the proposal should describe the process the city or town will use to oversee and approve spending from the reserve.

Grant funds cannot be used for a parks system's broader maintenance expenses at parks not funded through this grant opportunity.

Does a Phase 2 proposal need to identify additional funders? Will a funding match make a proposal more likely to be funded?

No. An additional funding match is not required; however, if the total funding request needed to complete and/or sustain the proposed projects or programs is greater than the funding request, the proposal should describe a credible plan for how the city or town expects to raise additional financial resources to address any funding gaps or sustain the proposed projects or programs after the grant period ends. Proposals with commitments from external funders will be looked at favorably, if applicable.

Is there a certain time period a Phase 2 grant should cover?

All grant funds must be spent within three years following the award of the grant. If a Phase 2 grant covers a grant period of more than one year, the budget should detail how grant funds will be used each year during the grant period.

How soon should a city or town begin to implement its proposed project and/or program?

Phase 2 grant activities should commence no later than the end of 2028.

Will there be an opportunity to receive proposal feedback for the competitive Phase 2 grants?

No. Since this is a competitive funding opportunity, all proposals will be evaluated as submitted without an opportunity for feedback.

GENERAL

Can communities with multiple parks submit multiple proposals?

No. Each city or town should submit a single proposal, even if the proposal includes projects or programs in multiple community park systems.

Will funding be disbursed on a reimbursement basis?

No. Funding will be disbursed after a grant agreement is signed by both the grantee and ICDP.

Can a city or town submit a collaborative proposal with another city or town?

No. Each eligible city or town must submit its own proposal. However, in describing the rationale for the inclusion or exclusion of amenities, the proposal may make reference to amenities available in nearby communities.

Invited cities and towns may submit additional questions to ICDP at info@indianacpi.org.