



ASSOCIATION OF
CENTRAL OKLAHOMA
GOVERNMENTS

2024-2025 COMMUNITY ECONOMIC RESILIENCY INITIATIVE (CERI)

**POLICIES &
PROCEDURES**

JUNE 11, 2024

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 EDA Planning Grant to provide valuable planning services to the municipalities within our region. As a result, ACOG has reserved \$45,000 to fund two cities to take part in the 2024-2025 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.

The ACOG 2021 Updated Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is to be a focal point of any planning demonstration site proposal throughout this application process. The CERI Program strives to encourage and demonstrate healthy, economic best practices proposed in the [ACOG Updated CEDS](#). Your CERI application must align with one or more of the following Updated CEDS goals: Transit-Oriented Development; Placemaking; Business Adaptation; Opportunity Zones; Partnerships and Collaboration; and Government Policy Responsiveness¹.

ACOG has partnered with the University of Oklahoma Institute of Quality Communities (IQC), a community engagement program that helps students build partnerships with local governing and civic organizations to design solutions to local problems that affect the health, the 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 planning demonstration sites.

Eligibility Criteria:

- **Any city/town that is a current member of the ACOG Board of Directors (BOD), has a population of 25,000 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 budget of \$22,500 designated per city/town to provide practical planning assistance through IQC. Any municipality that wishes to take part in the CERI Program must contribute \$2,500 funding for a total of \$25,000 in valuable planning consultant services. ARPA or any other federal funds are not eligible for the contribution.

ACOG looks forward to receiving your application **no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, July 15, 2024**. No late submissions will be accepted. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Sharon Astrin, Community and Economic Development Manager, at 405.234.2264.

¹ See the CERI Policy & Procedures CEDS Strategic Framework section for further information.

INSTITUTE FOR QUALITY COMMUNITIES (IQC) SERVICES

As stated previously, 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.

IQC has performed invaluable planning services throughout Oklahoma that have fostered economic growth and community development in many municipalities. To view the successfully completed CERI Projects, please click [HERE](#).

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 (September-October 2024)

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 (October 2024 - May 2025)

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 (February - April 2025)

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 (May 2025)

IQC will deliver a final narrative and graphic report, 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 2025.

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 regional 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. **However, ACOG does reserve the right to further limit project eligibility to reflect funding and time constraints.** 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.

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](#))

FUNDING

ACOG developed a budget of \$45,000 for the 2024-2025 CERI Program. ACOG has set aside \$22,500 per recipient(s). The municipalities that are selected must contribute \$2,500 in funding to ACOG to be utilized in the planning demonstration site work. ARPA or any other 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.

UPDATED CEDS FRAMEWORK (GOALS)

The goals established in the Updated ACOG Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) were purposely designed to address economic resiliency and sustainability.

The subsequent outline targets specific components from the Updated CEDS goals that are relevant to the CERI Program Application. For a competitive application, your proposed site must align with at least one or more of the following goals:

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." TOD provides 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 the connection between land use and transportation to enable citizens to live healthier lives and reduce environmental impacts.
- 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 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

While expanding and supporting municipal planning efforts, cities and towns are expected to communicate and coordinate with local businesses to advance places that will enhance economic growth and adaptation.

- Support for businesses to adapt their business models for current and future needs, localization and investing in community growth, innovative solutions, outward facing interactions, etc.
- Inclusive planning with small business owners for outdoor seating/display shelves, and other expansions. Connect businesses with access to expansion opportunities and be inclusive about the issue of access to funding.

OPPORTUNITY ZONES

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

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

- 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.

APPLICATION

The deadline for submission is 5:00 P.M. on Monday, July 15, 2024, to ceri@acogok.org. To be accepted, your application must be typed, completed, and emailed in PDF format. Including the application form, the applicant must include the site map, checklist, required attachments, and resolution that is included in the application packet. If needed, applicants may submit a typed, hard copy, to ACOG, however, applications in mail transit by the application deadline 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 the receipt of a CERI Planning Demonstration Site Application, the time and date of receipt will be documented. Applicants will receive confirmation of submission by email or phone within two (2) business days of the submission deadline.

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, their relevance to the goals in the Updated CEDS, and the potential effect 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:

1. Intake & Review for Completeness
2. Assessment & Interview Process – CERI Review Committee
3. Final Evaluations & Recommendations – CERI Review Committee
4. 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 five members. Three 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 review of planning demonstration site applications for basic completeness and compliance per the CERI Planning Demonstration Site application checklist requirements. Items in the application must be checked off 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.

Take your time to consider each component of your application before submission. We have established this rule to be fair and transparent while reducing observational bias. No amendments can be made to an application after the deadline closes.

PHASE II: ASSESSMENT & INTERVIEW PROCESS

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. The Committee reserves the option of requesting interviews with applicants, if needed (refer to Timeline/Schedule). 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.

PHASE III: FINAL EVALUATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

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:

- 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 CEDS Updated Goals
- 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 on selecting two planning demonstration site applications to recommend to the ACOG BOD.

PHASE IV: 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 2024 meeting. ACOG staff will formally request approval of the two-planning demonstration 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.

TIMELINE/SCHEDULE OF IMPORTANT DATES

- June 11, 2024: _____ Call for Applications Open
- June 14, 2024: _____ At 2:00 PM: ACOG will host a Q&A Session via Virtual meeting (Teams)
- July 15, 2024: _____ Submittal Deadline - Applications Due by 5:00 P.M.
- July 17, 2024: _____ Application Review for Completeness by Staff
- July 18, 2024: _____ Complete Applications Sent to CERI Review Committee for assessment
- July 25, 2024: _____ CERI Review Committee meets Virtually to Decide on Interviews
- July 26, 2024: _____ Applicants Notified of Interview Schedule
- August 6, 2024: _____ CERI Review Committee meets for Interviews, if needed
- August 14, 2024: _____ CERI Review Committee meets to Evaluate Applications and to Recommend Final Selection to the ACOG BOD
- August 29, 2024: _____ ACOG BOD Consideration of the two-Planning Demo Sites as Recommended by the CERI Review Committee
- August 30, 2024: _____ Selected Applicants (Demo Cities) Notified by Email
- September 4, 2024: _____ Administrative Approval of Inter-Local Agreement with IQC for Consultant Services for Demo Cities
- September 6, 2024: _____ Contract for Financial Contribution provided to Demo Cities for Execution
- September 9-29, 2024: _____ IQC Preliminary Coordination with Demo Cities
- September 30, 2024 - May 9, 2025: _____ IQC Planning Consultant Services Provided for Demo Cities
- May 2025: _____ IQC will Finalize, Deliver Reports, and Present Findings to Demo Cities

POST-SELECTION

The project leader (point of contact) for your city/town will work with the University of Oklahoma's IQC team to coordinate the two days that the student led team will visit your city/town to meet with the community. IQC will reach out with a project statement for your municipality to outline your planning demonstration site project statement and goal.

While in your city/town the site visit will focus on connecting with community members of all ages through a series of engagement activities to learn about their ideas, priorities, goals for your planning demonstration site.

Following the visit, the IQC will reconvene at OU and begin to develop the plan for your city/town's planning demonstration site.

CONTACTS

General Information and Questions: Direct all inquiries and questions to CERI@acogok.org

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CED Manager, Association of Central Oklahoma Governments
sastrin@acogok.org

Rebecca Blaine
Research Fellow, University of Oklahoma Institute for Quality Communities
rblaine@ou.edu

FAQS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

1. What will CERI cost per City or Town?

A municipality that is selected for the 2024 -2025 CERI Program must contribute \$2,500 in funding for the project. ARPA or any other 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. Are there certain Updated CEDS Goals that a CERI application must address?

Your CERI application must meet one or more of the following goals: Transit-Oriented Development; Placemaking; Business Adaptation; Opportunity Zones; Partnerships and Collaboration; and Government Policy Responsiveness.

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

The 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 key wording throughout their application.

4. Will ACOG hold a CERI training workshop before the application deadline?

Yes. The ACOG Community & Economic Development team will host a virtual 2024-2025 CERI Program Q&A session on Microsoft Teams on June 14, at 2 p.m.

5. 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 29 and chosen applicants will receive an official letter via email by August 30.

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

Once a city or town is selected and an interlocal agreement is signed, the entirety of the program will last the duration of the OU Academic School Year (August 2024-May 2025).

7. 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.

8. Can the \$2,500 required contribution be made in-kind?

No, the CERI Program requires a financial contribution to add to the \$22,500 that ACOG is contributing to IQC's planning services.

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 people (three 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.

10. Why is a non-numeric metric evaluation utilized by the CERI Review Committee? Also, explain the Committee's right to reduce the scope of a submitted project.

ACOG chose to use a non-numeric metric evaluation system based on its successful utilization in previous competitive funding programs. 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. Based on the Application Checklist it appears that the inclusion of each required item, adherence to page limits, word counts, 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. Taking the time to methodically assemble your application packet and following the checklist is fundamental for consideration by the CERI Review Committee.

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 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.