

2023 Call for Innovation Fellows

Background

Since 2011, the MSU U.S. EDA University Center for Regional Economic Innovation (REI) has supported over 150 innovative economic development projects in Michigan, spurring high-growth entrepreneurship, job creation, and economic innovation. REI partners have achieved remarkable success; with over \$60 million in public and private investments generated by nearly 80 Student-Led, Faculty-Guided projects; over 60 Co-Learning Plans; and 14 Co-Implementation projects (also known as Innovation Fellowships). Partners of REI leverage higher education, businesses, local governments, Economic Development Districts (EDDs), non-profits, economic developers, and others who create, identify, and develop new economic development strategies and practices, and perform technical assistance for communities in Michigan.

Call for Innovation Fellows

The REI Innovation Fellowship Co-Implementation program was established in 2016 to tackle tough economic development issues that our distressed communities of Michigan face every day by supporting community leaders on the ground. Innovation Fellowships provide support and coordination to turn concepts into actions, and implement new economic development tools, models, and policies. Innovation Fellows recruited by REI and its partners, such as EDDs and past Co-Learning Plan authors, will identify recommendations from past Co-Learning Plans **(as well as generate new ideas)** providing practical information for local and state economic development practitioners and policymakers as they consider important decisions for Michigan communities. **These Fellowships may fall within one of four categorical areas, including: 1) resiliency planning, 2) financial resiliency, 3) 21st century communications, and 4) circular economies.** Within this chosen foci, applicants must identify a topical focus for their proposed project.

Topical Areas

REI is committed to a process of engagement that will identify and create new ways to approach economic development to support high-growth entrepreneurship and job creation in distressed regions across Michigan. Throughout 2022, the REI Network (nearly 3,000 Michigan economic development practitioners, business leaders and scholars) submitted innovative economic development ideas and/or topics of interest. Through a competitive process, working with the REI Consultative Panel of experts across the state, the following topics were determined to be timely and effective areas that could help bring critical new knowledge to bear on the challenges faced in community and economic development. The topical areas are listed below.

Topics

The REI University Center has identified the following topical areas for possible Co-Learning Plans of 2022. They include: 1) Clean Energy Economies of Michigan, 2) Defining Equitable Economic Development in Your Region or the State, 3) Circular Economies of Michigan, 4) Blight and Deconstruction within Michigan, 5) Michigan Planning Organizations Leveraging the Planning Process Together for Greater Impacts, and 6) Other. Further description of each is shared below. These topical areas **within one of the above mentioned four categories** were weighed by the REI Consultative Panel with consideration to likelihood of creating or retaining jobs and/or businesses in economically distressed regions of Michigan.

- 1) Clean Energy Economies: how can cities or rural areas of Michigan make this happen?
- 2) Equitable Economic Development Defined: examining new or prior models and/or effective practices in Michigan with discussion of racial policy and practice impacts.
- 3) Circular Economies (open topic): what is a circular economy and how might it be catalyzed, incentivized, or accelerated? Are there specific business sectors in Michigan that are strategic for advancing circularity, if yes what can economic developers do to assist in this economic transformation?
- 4) Blight and Deconstruction: What can economic developers do to minimize structural blight and abandonment and support the growth and development of a structural material deconstruction economy in their region?
- 5) Michigan Planning Organizations Leveraging the Planning Process for Greater Impact: What tools, models, policies and programs can be adopted to advance regional planning in Michigan? How can the planning process be leveraged, including by working together, to help build capacity for overstretched communities?
- 6) Other

Application Instructions

An Innovation Fellow should be embedded within the community or organization they seek to work with in order to achieve the project's goals. Innovation Fellows are expected to work with a community and/or an organization for their entire Fellowship and are considered contractors with financial support from the REI. REI intends to fund up to two Innovation Fellows for approximately a seven to eight month period.

Proposed Innovation Project

Please provide a detailed narrative, not to exceed five pages, that describes the proposed scope of work. It should be double-spaced, have three-quarter-inch margins and 12-point font. It should also clearly identify sections containing the following information:

1. Cover page, including your name, email address, phone number, affiliation, and project title;
2. Description of population served or researched through the project idea (ALICE, Asset-Limited/Income Constrained Employed) supporting socially or economically distressed regions;
3. Identified Economic Development Districts, Redevelopment Ready Communities and/or concentration of opportunity zone tracts (this may also be statewide);
4. Foci area of resiliency planning, financial resiliency, 21st century communications or circular economies;
5. Discussion of the significance and implications of one or more of the topical area(s) chosen for Michigan communities and regions, specifically those communities in the most distressed regions with high concentrations of ALICE populations;
6. A brief summary of the problem and how your proposed project will address the economic development challenge or opportunity, also utilizing prior Co-Learning Plan or Student-Led, Faculty-Guided project information, if applicable;
7. The purpose in taking on this project, noting any special contributions it may make toward equitable economic development efforts in Michigan. Is the project new to the community you wish to work with or to Michigan? (please describe);
8. A list of who you plan to work with to implement this project. Have you already made contact with these individuals/organizations?;
9. A basic timeline of your proposed project, including possible tasks for individuals or teams;
10. What resources (besides financial support) could REI provide that are useful to your project?;
11. The skills, qualifications, and/or connections unique to you to guide this community or organization for this project;
12. A description of, and how your project might generate, living-wage jobs, public/private investments, or could be transformative in the community;
13. A **Dissemination Plan** listing Who/What/Where/How (social media, video, press release, presentation, etc.) and When (timeline with benchmarks);
14. A **letter of endorsement** from your organization or from the community you intend to work with, and;
15. One to three paragraphs describing how you fulfill the qualifications listed below.
16. A predicted number and description of jobs that may be created or retained, if applicable;
17. A predicted number of businesses created or retained, if applicable;
18. Discussion of diversity, equity and/or inclusion objectives intended for incorporation into the project strategy and their development;
19. Describe briefly how you plan to make your final report ADA compliant/accessibile, and;
20. Share how you will continue to explore diversity, equity and inclusion in your project throughout its duration and beyond August 2023.

Required Qualifications

- Strong knowledge base in the foci and topical area, or interest and formal training in facilitating and leading successful projects
- Creative problem solver
- An opportunistic mindset
- Energy and passion for the project
- Proactive and prudent
- A high level of social capital
- A long-term vision for the project

Funding

Up to \$10,000 for an eight month period.

Deliverables

1. Four written updates provided according to the schedule below. Each update must be at least two pages in length and indicate major steps taken to accomplish goals, barriers, and successes/outcomes.

Updates and deliverables should be provided according to the schedule below:

- **December 12, 2022:** Deadline for proposal submission
- **January 2023:** Notice of Awards
- **February 17, 2023:** Innovation Fellowship project should be underway
- **April 3, 2023:** First update due
- **May 5, 2023:** Second update due
- **June 2, 2023:** Third update due
- **July 7, 2023:** Fourth update due
- **August 4, 2023:** Slide deck for *Innovate Michigan!* Summit due
- **August 17, 2023:** *Innovate Michigan!* Summit presentation
- **August 25, 2023:** Final report due

Submission

Applications must be received by **5:00 pm EST on Monday, December 12th 2022.**

- *Online submissions are available* at reicenter.org (preferred method)
- *Email submissions* may be submitted as file attachments and sent to jondyjen@msu.edu (you must enter your Innovation Fellow Project Title, the date, and your last name in the subject as: "Innovation Project Title, date, last name." Submissions will be acknowledged by an e-mail message to the lead author named on the application).

Questions

Please contact Jenan Jondy at jondyjen@msu.edu or 517-353-9555.

Application

Title of proposed Innovation Fellowship project: _____

Name(s): _____

Organization: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Other Partners (please include contact information):

Qualifications: Please describe your knowledge and work experience relevant to the topic. What makes you qualified to conduct an Innovation Fellowship on this topic?

Other Notes:

☐ In submitting this proposal, I agree to meet the timeline and deliverables specified in this call for Innovation Fellows.

Signature _____ Date_____