

INVESTMENT CONNECTION

Community Development Investment and Lending Partnership

Organization Background

Name Of Organization

WV Community Development Hub

Mission Statement

The WV Community Development Hub (The Hub) is a statewide 501(c)3 community development project organization that drives forward community economic development strategies in rural West Virginia communities. The Hub prioritizes working with communities that have robust volunteer leadership, engaged local elected officials committed to economic revitalization and resiliency, and that demonstrate initiative to undertake creative, bold and transformational projects that will lead to significant diverse economic development. We work directly with community decision-makers, business owners, and redevelopment stakeholders to identify, prioritize and implement a range community improvement projects including community engagement activities, entrepreneurial development, and building redevelopment strategies. All of our programs include project seed funding to aid predevelopment activities and ensure successful implementation.

Overview Of Organization

The WV Community Development Hub has been working with communities to revitalize the main streets of rural WV downtowns for the past eleven years. During that time, we have worked with 55 communities and provided technical assistance funding to support over 250 community development projects, including 35 predevelopment projects directly relating to building redevelopment activities. In the past 5 years alone, communities in Hub programs have leveraged over \$5.9 million dollars in outside funding for their initiatives. The Hub works annually with 15-20 municipalities across the state of West Virginia, primarily focusing on towns with populations between 1,000 – 25,000. The Hub has a track record of coordinating programs that reach hundreds of West Virginia communities, building community teams that develop the increased capacity needed for economic resilience, connecting communities with the technical resources needed to complete large, long-term catalytic projects, and supporting infrastructure improvement projects that have leveraged millions of dollars in investment. Over the past ten years, The Hub has managed and distributed over \$650,000 in technical assistance funds to 55 communities across the state. Through these funds, The Hub has supported development and implementation of over 250 community projects, including dozens of predevelopment projects that are the same model that will be undertaken in this program. Just in the past year, The Hub has managed the distribution of \$250,000 in funding, and has directed through its programmatic support over \$1 million in additional outside technical assistance funds to West Virginia community development projects. The Hub has significant experience working with volunteer community teams that are passionate about revitalizing their communities and that are willing to put in the time, talent and leadership to

lead the charge in bringing businesses and economic activity back to their rural communities. Through all of our programs we guide project teams to set goals, develop and coordinate projects, manage technical assistance funds, connect to technical expertise, and manage external contractors to complete project goals. Downtown Appalachia: Project Boost is structured to draw on this experience and to integrate some of the strongest elements of our program structures: coordinated and coached project teams, engaged program partners that bring technical expertise and funding opportunities to the program.

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Proposal Information

Proposal

Title

Downtown Appalachia: Project Boost

Support

Request

Investment/Grant

Requested Dollar

Amount

250000

**Please list other Significant Partners in the
Proposal**

Northern Brownfields Assistance Center at West Virginia University; BAD Buildings Program at West Virginia University; WV Downtown Appalachia Advisory Group

Proposal

Description

The Downtown Appalachia: Project Boost program will work in low-income and distressed rural communities in WV to advance economic revitalization efforts through redeveloping

mixed-use real estate to enable local business development and expansion. The program will provide technical services to four community economic development agencies to put critical main street real estate properties back into productive reuse, supporting the growth and creation of multiple local businesses, workforce development training centers, residential housing units and one rural health clinic. DAPB will use the redevelopment activities as training programs to help create new nonprofit developers that will serve rural West Virginia communities, helping to fill a critical gap in development services for the state, where many rural communities have no active private developer yet engaged in redevelopment opportunities. Investment in this program will be used as match funding for a federal EDA CARES grant which is slated to provide \$120,000 in technical assistance to each of the four projects. Match funding for DAPB will be used to expand program technical services, including the engagement of legal guidance, regional development technical expertise, and evaluation services. It will also help to support staffing for the program at the WV Community Development Hub and the Northern Brownfields Assistance Center at West Virginia University, the two primary program partners. The four properties that will be served by the program are the historic YMCA Building in Fairmont WV (proposed business incubator and co-working space, with mixed market-rate and affordable housing units on the upper floors), the B&O Rail Station in Grafton WV (event rental space, office units and commercial kitchen, with vacation rentals on the upper floor), the GC Murphy Building in Richwood WV (business offices and brewery/distillery business on the lower floor), and the Rupert Elementary School Campus in Rupert WV (rural health clinic, business and workforce development training space, with senior housing units on the upper floor). Through participation in the DAPB program, these four properties will successfully complete comprehensive building development activities, secure developers, finalize business leasing agreements, access and secure construction funding, and create financial strategies and capital stacks for each property to drive an aggressive and actionable property development timeline.

Issues Addressed (check all that apply)

Community Services and Facilities, Stabilization and Sustainability, Workforce Development / Economic Development, Other

Other Description

Community Development Capacity Building

Geographic Impact

State-wide

State

West Virginia

West Virginia Counties

Population Served

Downtown Appalachia: Project Boost will directly serve four municipalities in West Virginia. The towns that will be served by the program are Fairmont (Marion County, census tract 54-49-0201.00), Grafton (Taylor County, census tract 54-91-9646.00), Richwood (Nicholas County, census tract 54-67-9505.00) and Rupert (Greenbrier County, census tract 54-25-9502.00). County populations are 34,701 in Greenbrier County, 55,100 in Marion County, 25,148 in Nicholas County, and 16,482 in Taylor County.

Population Income by Area Median Income (AMI) and other identifiers (percentage of Free and Reduced Lunch for youth or designated "Disaster Area" or designated "Distressed or Underserved"

Demographics for the four communities served by the Downtown Appalachia: Project Boost program are as follows: Fairmont (Marion County WV; census tract 54-49-0201.00): Low income census tract, tract labeled as a distressed area by the Appalachian Regional Commission ("ARC") in 2021 because it has a median family income of \$12,500 (16.9% of US average), a poverty rate of 58.6% (417% of US average), and is located in a transitional county. The tract has a population of 1,297. The minority percentage of the tract is 30.41% and it is a Qualified HubZone through Dec. 31 2021 and is a Qualified Opportunity Zone. Grafton (Taylor County WV; census tract 54-91-9646.00): Middle income census tract in a transitional county, according to ARC designations. The tract is contiguous to a distressed area (census tract 54-91-9648.00), which is labeled as a distressed area in 2021 because it has a median family income of \$48,875 (66.1% of the US average), a poverty rate of 24.7% (175.8% of the US average). The Grafton census tract in this program has an area median income that is 84.23% of the US average with a median family income of \$45,484, a poverty rate of 19.4% and a minority percentage of 4.88%. It is a Qualified HubZone through December 31, 2021 and is a Qualified Opportunity Zone. Richwood (Nicholas County WV, census tract 54-67-9505.00): Moderate income census tract in a county that is designated as distressed by ARC. The area has a median income by household that is 71.02% of the national average, an 2020 estimated median family income of \$38,351, and a poverty rate of 27.3%. It is a Qualified HubZone and is located adjacent to a Qualified Opportunity Zone. Rupert (Greenbrier County, census tract 54-25-9502.00): middle income census tract, tract is labeled as a distressed area by ARC because it has a median family income of \$33,274 (45% of US average), a poverty rate of 25.4% (180.6% of US average), and is located in a transitional county. It has a population of 3,495. It is a Qualified HubZone through December 31 2021 (re-designated census tract) and is located adjacent to a Qualified Opportunity Zone. In terms of employment, all counties in the program have an employment rate lower than the national average of 59.3%, and three of the four counties are 10 points or more lower than that average. Employment rates for the counties are Greenbrier County (46.9%); Marion County (53.6%); Nicholas County (47.1%) and Taylor County (49.3%). The Fairmont and Grafton projects are located within the geography served by the Region VI Planning and Development Council. In their 2020 CEDS Update under Goal #2 Central Business District Revitalization, Region VI clearly indicates that a primary goal of the region is the revitalization of central business districts, including the implementation of "comprehensive downtown revitalization efforts which have goals like the Main Street Program." Downtown Appalachia: Project Boost is intended to drive forward revitalization of central business districts in Fairmont and Grafton, in many ways following the goals of the state's Main Street Program. The Region VI CEDS specifically states that it is a goal of the Council to "provide technical assistance to projects and programs which will result in the

revitalization of the region's central business districts, especially those with philosophies mirroring the Main Street Program." Additionally, the 2020 CEDS Region VI Update lists Goal #7: Public Facilities and Community Development as a primary regional goal, stating that the Council has a goal to "develop and maintain public property that will effectively improve circulation, enhance community appearance, promote cultural resources, and provide neighborhood residents with improved security as part of an overall program of community development." This goal includes working with community partners to develop financing strategies for development projects and community development initiatives that draw down state and federal funding. The Richwood and Rupert projects are located in the footprint of Region 4 Planning and Development Council. As they state in their support letter, "Region 4 has identified Community/Downtown Revitalization as an important strategy and goal for our region." In their 2019 CEDS Update they identify a goal of the agency to "develop viable downtown areas to attract and expand job opportunities..." including "increas[ing] the use of downtown areas by expanding existing businesses and promoting new owners to locate to the area." The Downtown Appalachia: Project Boost program also directly relates to CEDS Section III(3): "Work towards a strong, diversified economy with a mixture of industrial, tourism and commercial goods and services supported by a well-trained workforce." Copies of the CEDS and letters of support from the Regional Planning and Development Councils are linked in the proposal. Resolutions of support from local municipalities and letters of support from West Virginia congressional and senate offices are linked as well. Additional support letters from community partners, businesses and economic development entities are available upon request.

Anticipated Outcomes/Impact

Downtown Appalachia: Project Boost program will "directly lead to the mobilization of over \$12 million in private capital investment for the redevelopment of 82,000 square feet of mixed-use commercial space within 3 years." According to a detailed IMPLAN analysis (linked) of the project economic impacts, DAPB will support 120 temporary construction jobs and "[o]ngoing activities at the newly developed buildings will create and retain 89 additional permanent jobs. Further the newly renovated space will create catalytic opportunities for individuals from workforce training programs and entrepreneurs." We should note that the analysis only considered the impacts of commercial and business activities, and did not analyze impacts of housing development. This work will lead to the redevelopment of 82,000 square feet of mixed-use commercial space in West Virginia, the creation of 120 temporary, 89 permanent jobs initially and 801 permanent jobs over a nine-year period, and the opening of at least 8 new businesses throughout the four communities. Anticipated businesses and workforce development services including a workforce development training center, a community and technical college training space, a rural health center, a new brewery and distillery company, and multiple affordable housing units. Over nine years, because of the Downtown Appalachia: Project Boost program, the state of West Virginia could expect to see an estimated \$91.9 million in output associated with the ongoing activities that could be developed in these renovated buildings. This increase in overall economic activity across the state would support the generation and retention of about 90 job each year or 801 jobs accrued over nine years. During that time an economic impact assessment of this project has

estimated that this activity would provide for \$46.8 million in value added, of which nearly \$35.3 million would go as Labor Income to employees and proprietors across the state.

Describe evaluation methods used to measure success

Evaluation methods that will help ensure success are directly tied to the goals of the evaluation activities and the goals of the project. The goals for the evaluation include documenting “program performance” or the quality of the implementation and the extent to which the program provides the services as described. The evaluation also has the goal of documenting the impact of the program, or the “outcomes” of the project- did it achieve what is set out to do. Program Performance methods include the documenting and tracking of services provided by the program. The Hub has developed an internal data tracking and management database to collect the details of all service encounters with community partners. Service encounter forms, monthly reports, staff surveys, and partner surveys are all used to track the extent and quality of services provided. DAPB has two types of program outcomes. The first type of outcome is the success in engaging various stakeholders in the technical assistance and project effort (developers, businesses, community leaders, funders and other partners). The second type of outcome is the impact of the project and collaborative effort (investments in capital, square feet of building space renovated, job created, and long-term economic impact). To measure engagement project documentation (i.e. meeting attendance and trainings) will be used to document engagement over time. Surveys with stakeholders will document satisfaction and quality as described above. Outcomes will be tracked by use of business records, community data, and in depth qualitative and quantitative data collection by program evaluators All data will be used as part of an ongoing continuous quality improvement (CQI) process led by the evaluation partner with participation of The Hub staff and key stakeholders to identify strengths and weaknesses and improve services to ensure program success.

Project Time Frame - Is your request for an existing or new program

New Program

Other Supporting Documentation

File

Download

N/A