

IDAHO COMMUNITY REVIEW APPLICATION GUIDE

A Community Assessment and Planning Program

A program of the Idaho Rural Partnership (www.irp.idaho.gov)

The Idaho Community Review is the flagship program of the Idaho Rural Partnership (IRP), a non-partisan collaborative effort to make rural Idaho stronger, healthier and more prosperous. Our public- and private-sector member organizations and other partners work closely with rural residents and leaders to identify solutions at a local and regional level. We listen and observe, share perspectives, and explore technical assistance and resources appropriate to each community. The process leaves community residents and leaders better prepared to build on shared strengths and work together to achieve common goals.

The entire community review process includes three phases. All communities will complete Phase 1. Communities that demonstrate the interest and readiness are encouraged to move on to Phases 2 and 3. Communities with populations under 10,000 people are invited to submit the Phase 1 application associated with this guide.

This guide summarizes the community review process. It should be reviewed before your community completes the associated community review application. The exclamation point symbol is used throughout this guide to call attention to the most significant responsibilities of the community.



Benefits

A community review can help your community:

- reach agreement about community priorities and economic development opportunities.
- support future grant applications with objective, professional assessment of local conditions and opportunities along with the in-kind value of the community review process
- identify sources of funding, technical assistance, and best practices
- improve community decision-making and leadership strategies
- increase the number of residents involved in community organizations and projects.
- strengthen relationships with agencies that provide funding and assistance

Responsibilities

Community is more than a collection of rugged individuals occupying the same space; it involves people who share a sense of place and purpose, who can cooperate when needed, and who are willing to personally sacrifice or contribute to make life better and more secure for future generations.

While IRP coordinates the overall review process, each community is expected to invest in their review by assigning people, time, energy, and resources to the process and related follow-up activities. Success depends on faithful participation from a true cross-section of your community. Applicant communities should begin the review process by identifying 1 or 2 leaders who facilitate the development of an inclusive team that reflects a diversity of perspectives—including those with whom you may personally disagree. This “Home Team” will be involved in all aspects of your community review, including local fundraising, logistics, preparation, data collection, and action planning.



We cannot stress this enough: the value of this process to your community is directly proportional to the diversity and commitment of the Home Team. It is the Home Team’s responsibility to ensure the Team reflects the community.



How does a Community Review work?

Each of the three phases of the community review process provides numerous opportunities for community residents and leaders to share their experiences, knowledge, opinions, and ideas with visiting community and economic development professionals. These professionals comprise what we call the “Visiting Team.” Your community will identify people to serve on its “Home Team.”

The information gathered throughout the process is recorded (without using names) and used to develop observations, recommendations and resources applicable to the community.

Application Process

Completed community review applications for Phase 1 must be submitted to the Idaho Rural Partnership on or before Friday, March 2, 2018. The application requires the signature of the mayor. IRP’s Program Committee will select up to three communities to work with during the 2018 calendar year. The communities will be selected based on the Committee’s assessment of each community’s readiness to successfully undertake Phase 1 activities.

Phone and email communication with IRP staff is strongly encouraged prior to submitting the application. These pre-application conversations address expectations, funding, logistics, community participation, and scheduling. We also recommend collaborating with your local or regional economic development organization to complete the application. See the Community Review Application for additional details.

As described on pages 5-6, the community also has some responsibility to raise funds to support each phase of the community review. This fundraising effort is typically done in collaboration with IRP staff.



The Three Phases of the Community Review Process

As noted previously, the entire community review process includes three phases. All communities will complete Phase 1. Communities that demonstrate the desire and readiness to do so are encouraged to complete Phases 2 and 3. The three phases are described below.

Phase 1: Listen



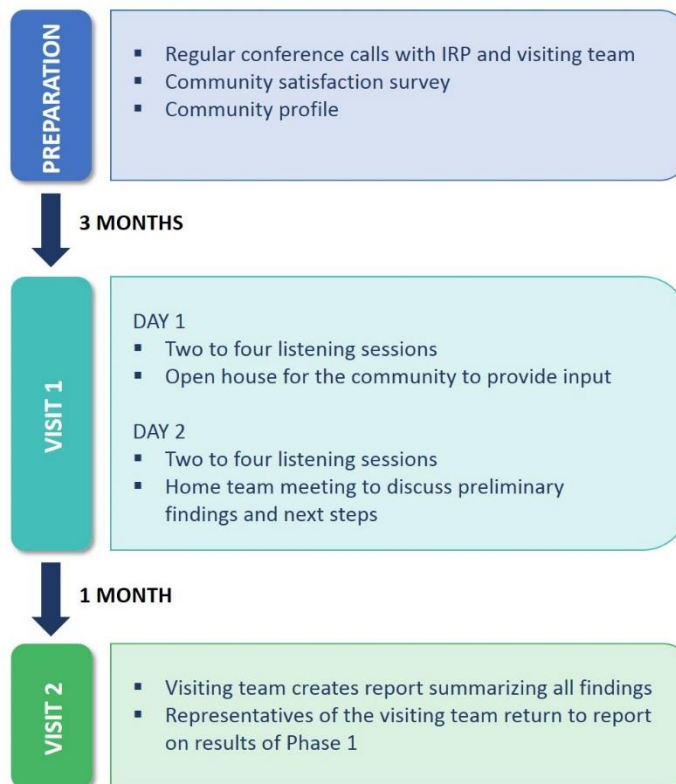
The **Listen** phase of the community review includes asking residents to complete a community satisfaction survey, conducting community listening sessions, and creating a data profile of the community. To support these activities, this phase also includes identifying the 1-2 Home Team Leaders and additional five to eight people to serve on the initial Home Team to help coordinate activities and arrange meals for a three- to four-person Visiting Team. Planning for Phase 1 involves a series of phone conference calls with IRP and the Visiting Team. These virtual meetings begin no less than three months before the first community visit to allow the survey to be completed.



Once the survey is completed, the Visiting Team will then spend two days in your community conducting listening sessions with specific stakeholder groups and facilitating an open house for all residents to drop in and provide input. The Home Team is responsible for inviting residents to participate in these activities. IRP will provide translation in communities with a significant number of residents (e.g. >10% of total population) for whom Spanish is their first language. Once completed, the listening sessions are followed by a Home Team meeting to discuss preliminary findings and next steps. A report summarizing all findings—including the Visiting Team’s assessment of the community’s readiness for Phase 2—is provided within a month, at which time the Visiting Team will return to the community to deliver the report, help identify up to three focus areas that will be explored in Phase 2, and discuss next steps.



Phase 1: LISTEN Timeline and Summary of Activities



Phase 2: Learn



The **Learn** phase of the community review involves planning for additional community visits and includes an expanded Visiting Team of experts from around the state; these experts can help the community refine the focus areas identified at the end of Phase 1. When your Home Team is ready, the Visiting Team members who participated in Phase 1 will return to your community and begin planning for town hall meetings and tours that will take place over a three-day period. This planning meeting will take place no less than 10 weeks before the Phase 2 community visit. Regular conference calls between Home and Visiting Team leaders will continue throughout this 10-week period.

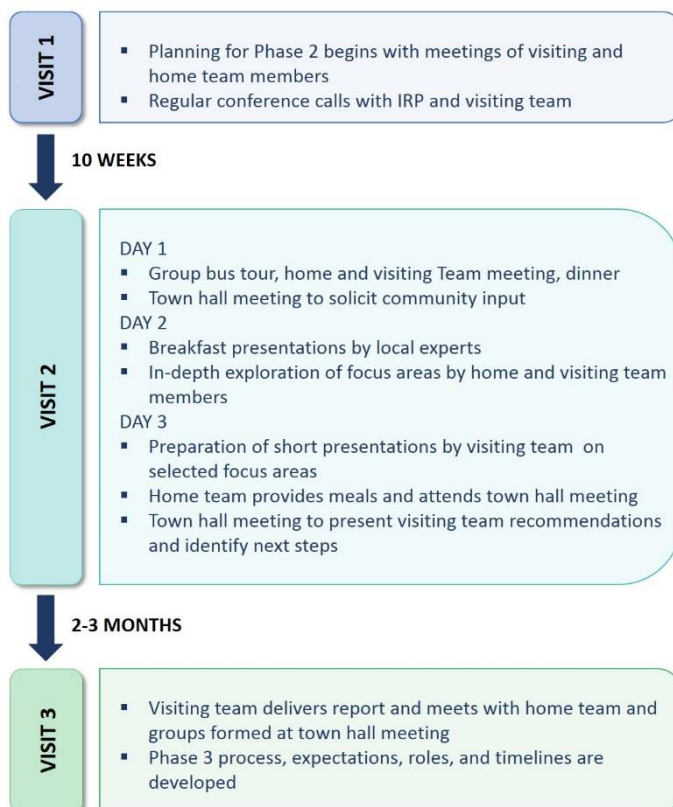
At the initial planning meeting, the Home Team will receive guidance regarding additional fundraising, marketing town hall meetings to the community, creating itineraries, and the logistics of feeding the larger Visiting Team (Visiting Team members pay their own travel and lodging, but the community is expected to feed them and provide transportation during the three-day visit).



The community will be asked to identify or develop a collaborative approach it will use to act on recommendations identified as a result of Phase 2. This approach might include, for example, a coalition of organizations, a community action team, or a service organization that can engage a broad spectrum of residents in volunteer activities.



Phase 2: LEARN Timeline and Summary of Activities




Phase 3: Launch




The **Launch** phase provides assistance needed to implement recommendations identified and prioritized during Phase 2. The exact nature of this assistance depends on community needs and issues and is facilitated by IRP. We expect representatives of your local and/or regional economic development organization will be actively involved in this Phase. Assistance may include, but is not limited to the following:

- Plan community conversations about issues that need further exploration before charting a direction
- Leadership development training to expand the leader base in the community
- Technical assistance by Phase 2 visiting team members to move projects forward
- Organizational development for teams and steering committees

Communities that engage in this phase of the review by April, 2020 will be invited to submit an application for a mini-grant of up to \$1,500 to complete a community project or task identified through the community review. Mini-grants will be awarded to proposals the IRP Program Committee deems consistent with the objectives outlined in the mini-grant application.

The community will participate in quarterly conference calls throughout Phase 3 to provide updates on progress updates and challenges. This phase also includes planning for a one-year celebration that will occur approximately 12 months after initiation of Phase 1. A follow-up community satisfaction survey and a focus group-like activity known as Ripple Effects Mapping will be conducted one year after the celebration event. 


Reporting and Feedback

We ask communities participating in the Review process to provide brief updates on an annual basis for two-to-three years following the Review. These updates will share progress the community has made as either a direct or indirect result of a Community Review. IRP uses this information to improve the Community Review Program. It also helps the partnering agencies and organizations measure the impact of Reviews and demonstrate how resources and investments are leveraged through the process. The information is also shared with our funding entities to show the impact their contributions are making to improve the economic and social conditions in rural Idaho communities. This is critical to maintain support for our work in rural Idaho. 

Community Review Costs

If your community hired a professional consulting firm, the estimated costs for a team of 14 professionals (including salary, travel, lodging, site visit, data collection, and report writing) would likely exceed \$50,000. The actual combined costs of Phases 1 + 2 is approximately \$20,000-\$25,000, largely thanks to significant personnel, travel, and lodging costs being covered by Visiting Team members and their employers. Historically, IRP has used funding from our various public and private sector partners to cover more than 50% of this cost.

Local Match

We do require a local contribution or match for each of the three phases of the community review process to cover direct costs not otherwise supported with grant funding and in-kind contributions. The local match demonstrates your community's commitment and capacity to take full advantage of a community review. Many people and organizations from around Idaho believe in your community and are willing to make a significant investment in your community review; we ask that you—as the beneficiaries of their time and effort—also make an investment that is significant to you. 

The local contribution is typically a combination of: (1) funds, and (2) in-kind donations of time, food, and transportation services. Recognizing each community is unique, IRP will work with Home Team leaders to reach agreement on the amount of the local match. We will also support and participate in the community's effort to raise funds locally. The local match typically comes from a mix of local businesses, government agencies, community-based organizations, and residents. All local contributions to Idaho Rural Partnership are tax-deductible.

Depending on the size of your community and its fundraising capacity, the local contribution is typically in the range of \$1,500-\$3,000 for each of the three phases of the community review process.

Funding from Businesses, Government, and Community-based Organizations

Funding from these entities in the community support the actual cost of conducting a community review. These costs include, for example, the survey, coordination by IRP, and report writing. The funding plan will also reflect the ability of the community to raise funds. We know that for small communities have limited fundraising capacity; this shouldn't deter them from applying for a community review.

Funding from Residents

We strongly encourage communities to invite residents to financially support the community review and/or the cost of post-review follow-up through small contributions. Raising at least some funds in this manner has the added benefit of promoting the review and getting residents invested in the process and its outcomes. Small contributions—as little as \$1 to \$5 from residents—can add up to meaningful support, while also promoting the review and creating a sense of investment in the process and outcomes.

On-line crowdfunding websites such as www.citizeninvestor.com can be effectively used to facilitate small contributions from residents. Fundraising strategies that have been used by other communities to support community reviews, including additional information about crowdfunding, will be provided early in the planning process.

About the Idaho Rural Partnership

The Idaho Rural Partnership (IRP) is proud to serve as Idaho's Rural Development Council. Our mission is join diverse public and private resources in innovative collaborations to strengthen communities and improve life in rural Idaho. IRP was initially formed in 1991. The purpose, responsibilities and governance of IRP are found in Title 67, Chapter 90 Idaho Code. The Idaho Department of Labor has served as IRP's home since 2014. Region IV Development Association has served as our fiscal sponsor since 2010.



IRP is governed by a Board of Directors consisting of 30 leaders and representatives of the Idaho Legislature, government agencies, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and universities who share a passion for the success of rural Idaho. Information about the Idaho Partnership and the Idaho Community Review program can be found at www.irp.idaho.gov.