

Request for Applications

Citizens' Institute on Rural Design (CIRD)

The Citizens' Institute on Rural Design™ is a National Endowment for the Arts leadership initiative in partnership with the Housing Assistance Council.

Call for Applications Release Date: January 22, 2021

Application Deadline: March 12, 2021

Submit via: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RP3GY68>

Contact: CIRD@ruralhome.org

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Housing Assistance Council (HAC), with To Be Done Studio, are excited to announce the Request for Applications to the Citizens' Institute on Rural Design (CIRD). Rural communities are invited to submit applications to receive design support and technical assistance to host a virtual and on-site local Design Workshop (if local public health guidelines allow) or participate in the Design Learning Cohort.

About CIRD

The Citizens' Institute on Rural Design (CIRD) is a leadership initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the Housing Assistance Council. Focusing on communities with populations of 50,000 or less, CIRD's goal is to enhance the quality of life and economic viability of rural America through planning, design, and creative placemaking.

CIRD is intended to empower local citizens to capitalize on unique local and regional assets in order to guide the civic development and future design of their own communities. The CIRD program goals include:

- Building design capacity in rural communities to plan comprehensive revitalization strategies;
- Introducing creative placemaking, arts, culture, and design strategies as drivers of economic development in rural America;
- Facilitating a network of rural communities for design idea exchanges and peer learning; and

- Preparing communities to be ready and competitive for arts- and design-related state and federal funding opportunities.

Since 1991, the Citizens' Institute on Rural Design (CIRD) has provided design assistance to more than 100 rural communities in all regions of the United States, empowering residents to leverage local and regional assets in order to guide the civic development and future design of their own communities. More information about CIRD can be found at <https://www.rural-design.org/>.

OPPORTUNITY

For 2021, the CIRD program consists of two different opportunities via a single application:

Opportunity 1) Local Design Workshops

Up to four (4) communities will be selected to participate in an on-site rural **Design Workshop**. (Based on timing and in accordance with local health guidance, this workshop may be a hybrid virtual and in-person program.) With support from a wide range of design, planning, and creative placemaking professionals, the workshops bring together local residents and local leaders from non-profits, community organizations, and government to develop actionable solutions to a specific design challenge. Examples of potential design challenges include but are not limited to:

- Historic preservation and adaptive reuse of community buildings
- Designing quality affordable housing that supports livable and equitable communities; including housing and other amenities that support young people, families, and/or the elderly and aging in place
- Creating public or civic spaces that support and integrate cultural expression and local identity and/or play and active recreation
- Developing recreational trails for mobility, active transportation, and economic development
- Redesigning Main Street as a local street versus state highway/thruway
- Designing spaces and places that improve access to healthy food and local food systems
- Leveraging Main Street or local businesses for economic development, including branding, wayfinding, façade improvements, and streetscape design
- Integrating cultural identity into the built environment to drive heritage tourism.

Selected communities will receive additional support including customized follow-up support leading up to and after the workshop as well as access to and web-based resources, webinars, and peer learning through the Design Learning Cohort (described below).

Opportunity 2) Design Learning Cohort

Up to fifteen (15) rural communities will be selected to participate in a **Design Learning Cohort**. Rural community leaders from government, non-profits, local business, and civic organizations are invited to:

- Participate in virtual trainings and sessions on design, planning, community engagement, facilitation and fundraising techniques;
- Connect and exchange design ideas with peers from other rural communities in the cohort
- Receive technical assistance and coaching from experienced design professionals tailored to their particular community design challenge; and
- Receive support in navigating funding opportunities to make their community's vision a reality;

Applicant organizations can indicate on their application if they only want to participate in the Design Learning Cohort (and not be considered for the hybrid local Design Workshop opportunity).

Both opportunities within the CIRD program connect rural residents and community leaders with resources and ideas for developing locally driven solutions to community design challenges.

Prospectus for more details on the Learning Cohort opportunity.

Applications must be submitted online via [survey monkey](#) by March 12, 2021 at 11:59 PM EST

A webinar about this opportunity will be hosted on February 9, followed by office hours for questions about the application hosted through CIRD's Facebook page during the week of February 15 and March 1. See Important Dates below for details.

ELIGIBILITY

Applicant Organizations must:

- Be part of a rural or tribal community of 50,000 or less, that is rural in character.
- Identify a specific design challenge to address through the CIRD program.
- Be able to participate in CIRD as indicated in Participation Expectations below
- Plan a workshop with CIRD staff during the period of programming from May 2021-December 2022

The following entities meeting the criteria above are encouraged to apply:

- Municipal, tribal, or county governments
- Local nonprofit organizations, including but not limited to Main Street organizations, art centers, preservation groups, historical societies, or chambers of commerce, working in rural areas

- Regional planning organizations working in rural areas
- University community design centers or university agricultural/extension offices with close ties to the community presenting the design challenge
- Partnerships of the entities listed above are encouraged to apply

PARTICIPATION BENEFITS

Local Design Workshop Communities

Four(4) communities will be selected to do a deep dive into a pressing design challenge that is impacting their community. Each workshop includes:

- \$6,000 stipend to the host community for workshop staff time and related expenses
- A tailored virtual design process working with a dedicated resource team, including goal setting, and online sessions with design experts to assist with project visioning and advancement toward implementation
- Potential site visit from a local/regional designer, if local public health guidelines allow.
- A Design Book and action plan following the workshop, with project-specific design and planning recommendations, created by the CIRD resource team
- Ongoing technical assistance related to project until December 2022

In addition to the benefits listed above, Design Workshop communities will have access to all events and opportunities offered to the Design Learning Cohort, described below.

Design Learning Cohort

Up to 15 communities from the applicant pool will be invited to participate in the Design Learning Cohort. The opportunity allows up to four (4) leaders from each selected community to participate in virtual training in design, planning, community engagement, and facilitation techniques; engage with peers from rural communities; and receive support in navigating funding opportunities to make their vision a reality. The Design Learning Cohort opportunity includes roughly a dozen engagements, specifically:

- A series of online learning sessions led by nationally recognized field experts, tailored to engage cohort members and activate peer learning
- A series of public webinars and private breakout sessions that connect cohort members to design experts
- Technical assistance through office hours, one-on-one coaching, optional in-person convenings, and online resources
- Additional opportunities to socialize and share best practices and experiences with rural peers from around the country

PARTICIPATION EXPECTATIONS

To receive a stipend and community-specific design expertise, Design Workshop communities must:

- Designate a local coordinator who will serve as the main point of contact for the workshop and communication with the CIRD resource team. This person may also be responsible for tracking expenses and other administrative and logistic details.
- Provide a \$6,000 match to the \$6,000 stipend for hosting a workshop in their geography. A match can be cash or in-kind, which could include assets like local photographer time, additional designer or artist contracts, and/or staff time.
- Collaborate with the CIRD resource team to organize the design challenge site visit and virtual engagements. This will include:
 - Setting an achievable scope, sharing important documents, developing an engagement plan, and identifying final products from the CIRD resource team that fit the community-specific design challenge.
 - Coordinating a socially distanced site visit from a local/regional team (if local public health guidelines allow)
 - Hosting a virtual kickoff meeting with core community stakeholders, a planning meeting with CIRD and project team members, and a public meeting for a larger audience
 - Providing feedback on initial design materials
 - Coordinating hybrid virtual and in-person workshop, depending on local health conditions
 - Completing project wrap-up activities, including final feedback, exit survey, next steps
- Provide a final budget report and narrative report after completion of the site visit and workshop.
- Participate in Design Learning Cohort activities and broader CIRD network building, including but not limited to CIRD workshops and events, both online and in-person (where local public health guidelines will allow).

To receive a CIRD certification, Design Learning Cohort communities must:

- Attended at least 9 out of 11 learning sessions and webinars, including breakout sessions
- Demonstrate progress on their community-specific design challenge between May 2021 and December 2022
- Complete exit survey

IMPORTANT DATES

January 22, 2021	Request for Applications launched
February 9, 2021 at 2:00 PM EST	CIRD RFA Information Webinar
Week of February 15 and Week of March 1	Online open office hours with HAC to answer application questions (See CIRD Facebook page)
March 12, 2021	Applications due 11:59pm ET
Late April	Successful applicants notified
Early May	Successful applicants publicly announced
May 2021-December 2022	CIRD Program activities, including local workshops and learning cohort programs

SELECTION CRITERIA

Applications will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria, equally weighted:

Excellence is a reflection of the commitment, quality, and capacity of the applicant and partners to host a workshop and engage the community to address design challenges, including:

- Alignment with CIRD goals and design technical assistance offerings
- Capacity to lead a local design workshop and/or steward activities in their local community
- Commitment to partner and collaborate locally to address a design challenge

Merit reflects the relevance of the identified design challenges to the local community, the community's readiness and enthusiasm to tackle the design challenge, and a commitment to stewarding a local design agenda; including:

- Clear design challenge and relevance to local community needs
- Proven track record of strong stakeholder engagement and willingness to engage in future community engagement processes
- Commitment to participation in the CIRD program and willingness and capacity to implement ideas from the program

If circumstances warrant, CIRD might give special consideration to applications in certain geographies and/or applications that promise unique contributions to national rural design conversations. Applicants have the opportunity to indicate if they are only interested in being considered for the Learning Cohort.

Application Instructions:

We recommend that applicants prepare their answers prior to starting the application process, as you do not have the ability to save your progress while submitting. Your responses can be copied and pasted into the application form. Please contact CIRD@ruralhome.org if you have any questions about the application submission process.

Please provide responses to the following questions:

1. Lead Applicant Contact Information

Name:

Organization Name:

Organization Street Address:

City:

State:

Zip Code:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

2. Population size of applicant community (city, county etc.)

3. If the project is located in a different location than your organization, please complete this question:

(Optional) Project city

(Optional) Project state

4. Primary contact information, if different than above:

Name:

Title:

Email address:

Phone number:

5. Please consider the [Design Learning Cohort](#) and local Design Workshop opportunities.

Which of the CIRD programs are you interested in applying for?

Design Workshop and Design Learning Cohort

Design Learning Cohort only

6. Please describe what aspects of the Design Learning Cohort program would be most valuable to you and your organization. (up to 100 words)

7. Please describe your organization's mission and primary focus. (Up to 200 words).

8. Please describe your community (Descriptions of the people and places affected by the community design challenge are encouraged here. You will have an opportunity to describe the design challenge itself in the following questions.) (Up to 200 words)

Design Challenge Information

Please describe the design challenge your community is facing (i.e., street redesign, adaptive reuse and preservation of a historic structure, etc.):

9. Describe your design challenge (100 words)
10. Why is this a critical issue? (100 Words)
11. What do you need help with? (100 Words)
12. Who will benefit from this project and why? (100 Words)
13. What next steps do you have planned on your specific design challenge? (100 Words)
14. Describe your current project team and partner organizations that will be involved. Who is a part of this project? Have you worked together in the past? How will you collaborate on this project? (200 words) (*We recognize that teams change over time - please respond here with the most current information*)
15. For each partner organization mentioned above, please provide Organization Name, Contact Name, Contact Email, and a short description of their potential role in your CIRP project. (200 words)
16. What is your organization's current staffing capacity to work on this program? (100 words)
17. (Skip this question if you are only interested in the Design Learning Cohort) Please submit a budget based on the sample template below, listing some proposed uses for the \$6,000 stipend and \$6,000 match. You may want to consider whether your workshop will take place in-person or virtually (based on local guidance for safe gathering). Selected applicants can adjust their budget later.
 - File upload

Supporting Material

Supporting materials, including photos, videos, and letters of support, are encouraged but not required.

18. Photos/Images: you may provide up to 20 photos or images that show your community and the context and location of your design challenge. Maps of relevant sites are

encouraged. Please combine all images into a single pdf document and include short captions with the images or on a separate page.

File upload

19. Video/Online material: you may include a link to one video (for example, through Vimeo or YouTube) or a link to a static web page or online pdf document. Video time should not exceed 3 minutes and documents should have no more than 20 photos with short captions.

Link to video/ website

20. Letters of support: you may provide up to 3 letters of support from community leaders or partners. This will help us better understand the network of support that will ensure a successful workshop and design process. Please compile letters into a single pdf and clearly label "letters of support."

File upload

21. Would you like to be subscribed to the CIRD newsletter? (Y/N)

22. How did you hear about the CIRD program?

CIRD website

Social media

CIRD Newsletter

Other Newsletter

Word of Mouth

Click "submit" or press Enter.