

Improving Communities through Crowdgranting

Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority
Special Achievement

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Introduction

In 2015, the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCDA) noticed a need in Indiana communities across the state. While the primary mission of the state agency is to provide opportunities for stable and affordable housing and to promote self-sufficiency, members of the Real Estate department recognized the growing need for quality-of-life improvements in the same towns and cities that also needed housing. Knowing Hoosiers have a choice in where they live, and that neighborhoods and communities thrive with active social infrastructure and places for individuals to enjoy recreation, healthy activities, collaborative environments, and public art, IHCDA began brainstorming ideas for how to provide funding opportunities for these improvements. In 2016, IHCDA began working with Patronicity, a triple-bottom line company, with the goal of providing organizations a web-based platform for crowdfunding towards place-based community projects. The partnership turned into a program called *CreatINg Places*, a unique funding source for nonprofit and local unit of government partners to work hand in hand with the state of Indiana to support placemaking projects. The program accepted its first applicants in 2016, launched its first campaign in 2017 and recently surpassed the milestone of 250 successful projects.

Mission

The goal of *CreatINg Places* is to assist Indiana communities in funding place-based projects that highlight and improve upon a community's identity and strengths. "Crowdgranting" combines crowdfunding - the practice of funding a project or venture through small donations from a large number of people, typically via the internet - with a reward-based sponsor matching grant. Crowdgranting is an innovative yet simple way for non-profit groups or local unit of government departments to generate public interest in and raise donations for making local improvements. Because it utilizes a web-based donation platform, projects are accessible to anyone with internet access. This tool engages local residents, businesses, and community organizations to play a part in developing community improvements, while also fostering a greater sense of pride as they invest in their surroundings. *CreatINg Places* supports projects that activate underutilized public spaces or that creates new public spaces. The program aims to generate public interest and involvement in the development and implementation of place-based improvements by incentivizing small, public donations with a matching grant from IHCDA if their fundraising goal is reached within a set period of time. Indiana's ability to retain and attract talent is improved when its communities can develop their unique sense of place, as well as their outdoor amenities and activities. It is IHCDA's hope that the *CreatINg Places* program will have positive effects on the lives and well-being of the Indiana communities it serves, and so far, that goal has been met many times over.



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Nearly \$10 Million Raised

Since the program launched in 2016, communities across the state of Indiana have crowdfunded a total of \$9,560,330 towards the places they want to see and enjoy in their neighborhoods, towns, and cities. Alongside these crowdfunded dollars that come from individuals, small businesses, foundations, grants, and other entities, IHCDCA has provided \$8,046,200 in grant funds utilizing state Development Fund dollars. Over its lifetime, the program has assisted with over 250 successful projects and has seen a 96.36% success rate of communities raising funds to be eligible for the matching grant from IHCDCA.

Return on Investment

Not only has the program seen success and rapid growth in recent years, but it has also consistently stirred up a wealth of additional support for projects beyond just crowdfunded and state-granted dollars. For every \$1 that IHCDCA invests in these projects, \$4.18 is invested by both the crowdfunding campaign and additional outside donors. The results are expounding community impact, with numerous project creators returning to the program to do a second or third project in their communities. While creative uses of space have come from the program—train boxcars turned into public restrooms, murals on the sides of silos, educational greenhouses, and alley activations—some of the most impactful transformations have been simple. Many rural Indiana towns of less than 1,000 people have come together to build pickleball courts and playgrounds as gathering places. City recreation departments have seen new use of public space with the addition of fitness courts, trail connectors, and public plazas. Vacant lots have been turned into community gardens, pocket parks, music amphitheatres, and memorials to local heroes and history.

CreatINg Places is continuing to meet milestones and grow into new communities every year. With 250 projects funded and more already successfully raising funds in 2024, staff who work on the project expect to reach 300 funded projects by 2025.

Spinoff Programs

The success of CreatINg Places has given rise to two other crowdgranting programs under the CreatINg Places umbrella: My Community, My Vision and CreatINg Livable Communities.

My Community, My Vision is a youth-driven placemaking partnership with a vision for connecting young people in Indiana to the places they live and allowing them the opportunity to make a positive impact in their communities. Cohorts of youth council students participate in a semester-long program focused on asset-based community development, stakeholder engagement, and placemaking. Over the course of four months, students develop an idea for a place-based community project, determine the project's scope and budget, and fundraise for their project utilizing Patronicity's website. Teams that meet a fundraising goal by the end of the semester are eligible to receive a dollar-for-dollar match of IHCDCA grant funds to contribute to their project, as with other



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CreatINg Places projects. Student youth council teams, alongside their foundation or local unit of government sponsor, utilize these funds to see their project—whether a trail, park, plaza, mural, or other concept—built in their town or city to be a place for their community members to enjoy for years to come.

To further the missions of both AARP’s Livable Communities program and IHCDA’s CreatINg Places crowdgranting program, CreatINg Livable Communities is a partnership that assists Indiana communities in funding place-based projects specifically related to aging in place. Eligible applicants who apply for participation in IHCDA’s CreatINg Places program who meet additional AARP Indiana project requirements may be considered for additional sponsorship funding through the supplemental program. All projects must meet CreatINg Places guidelines.



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Visual Aids and Supporting Materials

The CreatINg Places website is [here](#).
The My Community My Vision website is [here](#).
The CreatINg Livable Communities website is [here](#).



Below are photos of several successful projects funded through the CreatINg Places program.



The [Putnam County Mural Project](#) in Greencastle, Indiana engaged the community by hosting workshops and presentations for artists interested in learning about murals and creative placemaking projects. The mural's theme was based on community input and engaged residents across the entire county.



The [Kevin Hammersmith Inclusive Playground](#) in New Albany, Indiana created a state-of-the-art accessible playground where all abilities and ages can interact and play.



The [Memorial Swinging Bridge](#) in Winamac, Indiana raised funds to permanently illuminate a 1923 war memorial bridge on the 100th anniversary of construction.



The [Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. & Father Hesburgh Monument](#) in South Bend, Indiana activated an unused space downtown to create a gathering place for dialogue, recreation and reflection (pictured is the monument unveiling).



The [Monarch Commons](#) in Fowler, Indiana was transformed from a vacant lot into a community gathering space with outdoor dining tables, a covered stage area, and butterfly-friendly landscaping.



The [Anderson Artist's Alley](#) in Anderson, Indiana established an outdoor exhibition hall that features a rotating collection of artwork by local artists.