



Livable Communities Initiative

Technical Assistance Program Guidance

Rockford Metropolitan Planning Organization
Round 2 – Application Process

Call for Projects: June 2 – August 4, 2025

Introduction

Region 1 Planning Council (R1) is a government agency that serves the Rockford Region and works with local, county, and state agencies to support cooperation in planning. R1 serves as Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Rockford Region, consisting of Winnebago County, Boone County, as well as the northeast corner of Ogle County. R1 helps foster informed and collaborative discussions on regional issues by assisting government entities with long-term planning, securing funding, and providing analysis and data to support regional projects and initiatives.

Under this capacity, R1 has developed a Livable Communities Initiative (LCI) that provides technical assistance services to neighborhoods and nonprofits in the development of a subarea study. The goal is that these subarea studies will spur reinvestment in “middle” neighborhoods. These studies will reimagine auto-focused infrastructure, increase multi-modal travel choices, improve environmental quality, promote economic and workforce development, and address housing needs.

This document provides information on the process Region 1 Planning Council (R1) will use to solicit, select, and award the LCI Technical Assistance Program.

About the Livable Communities Initiative

Over the past decade, the region has identified lofty long-range goals through various plans aimed at enhancing the livability of the region as a whole. However, these large-scale plans will take years of gradual implementation and investment before any dramatic improvements will be seen.

To truly move the needle, the region needs to focus on conducting coordinated subarea plans with clearly defined implementation strategies instead of relying solely on large regional plans with broad goals. The subarea studies should focus on stabilizing and strengthening middle neighborhoods through the integration of quality transportation facilities and services with housing choices, vibrant communities, robust economic development, and inclusive growth that spurs strategic reinvestment from both the public and private sectors.

The Livable Communities Initiative (LCI) Programs are designed to provide both technical assistance (TA) and implementation support for localities, with implementation occurring as a separate phase following the technical assistance program. These programs are operated by regional planning councils and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) across the nation. Regional planning councils leverage the technical expertise of their staff and dedicate funds to capital projects and planning efforts that tackle community-scale livability challenges.

The LCI technical assistance program provides local communities with expert support to help guide land use and transportation planning in ways that benefit both neighborhoods and the larger region. This program is strongly rooted in community input, with extensive public engagement playing a key role in shaping the outcomes. The ideas and feedback gathered directly influence the recommendations and solutions included in the Technical Assistance Neighborhood Plan, which will be developed throughout the process. Once technical assistance is completed, the implementation phase – separate from the TA program – comes into play. This phase, awarded to the City of Rockford, helps bring the recommendations and strategies developed during the TA phase into action.

Each LCI program is tailored to meet the specific needs and opportunities within its neighborhood boundary, providing both practical support and incentives to improve the livability and sustainability of communities.

Purpose & Intent

The purpose of the LCI program is to provide support to communities wanting to conduct action plans in key neighborhoods within the Rockford Region. There is no set number of projects that will be selected in a given solicitation round, as project scopes can vary in size and complexity. The size and complexity of each project will also determine the number of technical assistance hours provided to the neighborhood. Applicants are not limited to applying for one study but must submit a separate complete application for each proposed study and provide a ranking of their priorities.

Ultimately, these studies provide a blueprint for creating vibrant, walkable places that improve the quality of life for those who live and work in the community by offering increased mobility options and access to resources, such as healthy food, affordable housing, and employment opportunities.

The final deliverable will be a sub-area comprehensive action plan that outlines specific strategies and recommendations contributing to an improved quality of life for residents in the Rockford Region.

Neighborhood Focus

A unique aspect of this program is that it is focused on improving middle neighborhoods. Middle neighborhoods are stable places for middle and working-class families but may be teetering on the edge of growth. These neighborhoods are also essential to a region's tax base, identity, and economic mobility and security.

"Middle" neighborhoods in the Rockford Region were identified using the following considerations:

- Impact Indicators: population density and job proximity;
- Housing Quality Indicators: vacancy rates;
- Socio-Economic Indicators: educational attainment and low-moderate income households;
- Health Indicators: high blood pressure; and
- Livable Wage.

By providing support at the neighborhood level, the LCI will:

- Provide interventions aimed at stabilizing and reinvigorating these neighborhoods for overall regional prosperity.
- Provide dedicated resources that lead to job growth, updated housing, and growing home markets.
- Incentivize an educated and career-ready workforce to move to or stay in the region.

Eligibility

Eligible applicants are neighborhood organizations or neighborhoods associations with the support of their local municipality or alderman.

Neighborhood Association: A neighborhood association is a group of residents who work together to enhance their community. While membership is typically encouraged, it is not required. These associations may organize events and establish clear neighborhood boundaries. To be recognized as an official neighborhood association, the group must receive approval from an elected official.

Below is a list of the current identified middle neighborhoods in the Rockford MPA (in alphabetical order):

Keith Creek West* - 2024 (round 1) selected neighborhood	Rolling Green East
Midtown	Signal Hill
North Towne	Southeast Belvidere
Ridge Avenue	South Gate

To be eligible, applicants agree to align the goals of their study with the Livable Communities Framework.

Studies completed through the LCI technical assistance program are conceptual in nature and any award to applicants is for planning assistance only. Program funds cannot be used to cover the costs expended by the grantee. Additionally, the following activities are not eligible for TA program funds:

- Right-of-way acquisition
- Detailed engineering
- Surveying
- Stormwater/sewer system design
- Construction of transportation system facilities
- Capital projects

Applicant Commitments & Expectations

Applicants to the LCI Technical Assistance Program are expected to fulfill the following commitments:

- **Complete Application:** Prepare and submit an application that will be available starting June 2 with a deadline of August 4, 2025.
- **Neighborhood Presentation:** Your neighborhood will give a presentation for decision-makers to learn more about specific needs, challenges, and opportunities.
- **Neighborhood Input:** If your neighborhood is selected, neighborhood input will be essential to complete the study and gain residents' perspectives.

Project Selection & Programming Process

Annual Programming Process

A solicitation of eligible TA projects will occur on an annual schedule through a competitive application process. The following process will be used for the LCI Technical Assistance project selection.

Step 1. The competitive application process will begin with a formal announcement at a Community Advisory Forum (CAF) meeting. The announcement will include information on the current cycle's eligibility and evaluation criteria, funding preferences and priorities, how to obtain application packets, and the submission deadline.

Step 2. The application period will typically begin the first full week of June and last approximately 2 months. An optional project abstract can be submitted to R1 staff within the first 21 days of the solicitation period. R1 staff will provide preliminary feedback on the abstracts approximately five (5) business days after their submittal.

Step 3. Upon receipt of applications, R1 staff will review submission materials to determine eligibility and completeness. Applicants with ineligible projects will be notified by R1 staff of this determination. If an application is determined to be incomplete, R1 staff will inform the applicant and request additional information or materials be submitted within five (5) business days.

Step 4. Eligible projects will be reviewed independently by a selection panel comprised of members of the Community Advisory Forum (CAF) and LCI Stakeholders while being scored based on criteria published in the formal announcement. The CAF will release a list of prioritized project recommendations to R1

Step 5. Preliminary project recommendations will be announced and released for a 30-day public comment period. During the 30-day comment period, finalists will be asked to present their projects to R1's Citizens Advisory Forum (CAF) and LCI Stakeholders. The R1 Governing Board will also be presented with the project recommendations for consideration. Once the CAF has determined the proposals to award, successful applicants will be notified.

2025 Schedule

The application and selection process for the LCI Program spans approximately seven months and involves several critical steps.

Milestone	Description
May 1, 2025	Round 2 application informational presentation to the CAF
May 5, 2025	City of Belvidere City Council Presentation
May 12, 2025	City of Rockford City Council Presentation
June 2, 2025	Round 2 application period opens
August 4, 2025	Round 2 application period closes
October 23, 2025	CAF Neighborhood Presentations
Early November 2025	LCI Stakeholders meeting
November 13, 2025	R1 Governing Board Approves LCI Award

Application Process

Applications for the Technical Assistance Program can be accessed through Region 1's Livable Communities Initiative webpage at <https://r1planning.org/planning/livable-communities-initiative/>.

The application will be provided as a fillable PDF and must be submitted via email by **5:00 PM CST on August 4, 2025**.

Applications and questions may be submitted to:

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