



## *Frontier Communities Initiative*

### **Frontier Community Initiative Narrative**

The Frontier Community Initiative program was established by the state legislature in 2013. It is a community economic development public/private, partnership program of the Economic Development Department with a local applicant community and coordinated through the New Mexico MainStreet Program. That partnership includes a financial commitment toward the proposed project from the public sector. Applicant communities must be under 7,500 in population. The proposed project must provide positive economic impact (ie: leverage private sector reinvestment, economic and/or business expansion or job creation) in the traditional or historic commercial district.

The Frontier program provides professional technical assistance to a community, which has been selected to participate through this application process. The Frontier program is not a grant program, and direct funding for selected projects is not part of the services and resources provided for the project. Applicant communities are encouraged to engage not only their municipal government, but both their county government and their regional Council of Governments as well.

Communities currently affiliated with the New Mexico MainStreet Program or the New Mexico Arts and Cultural District Program are not eligible to apply for the Frontier Community Initiative program. The number of Frontier Communities designated is contingent upon the annual state appropriation for operating the New Mexico MainStreet Program through the New Mexico State Legislature.

The purpose of the Frontier Communities Program is to provide community economic development support to rural communities under 7,500 in population to develop a catalytic economic development project within a traditional or historic commercial district (i.e. court house square, town center or village plaza). The proposed project should demonstrate its positive impact in job creation, business development or enhancing the economic environment for the community.

Additionally, the program hopes to plant the seeds to expand local capacity *to develop “community-builders” – people continuing to work together after the project is finished to strengthen existing community development groups and support networks to continue the work of revitalization, bolster community pride and identity, preserve cultural heritage, transmit values and history, build economic and social capital, and stimulate economic development.*

Applicant communities who wish to revitalize their traditional or historic commercial center by focusing on a major historic and/or cultural asset or the rehabilitation and restoration of an historic or cultural property will select that project based on the project’s contribution to the local economy, the state’s economic well-being, and to a sound and proper balance between preservation and development.

Services and resources provided to the applicant community by New Mexico MainStreet and its consultants will be tied to the *Main Street Four-Point Approach*®, an interdisciplinary set of strategies that assist the revitalization of historic and traditional commercial districts. The services and resources provided by New Mexico MainStreet will be based on the proposed project.

Applicants accepted into the Frontier Community program are not considered MainStreet projects nor may they use the MainStreet name for this initiative. Selected applicant communities are designated as a *Frontier Community Initiative*. However, certain trainings and services may be accorded to designated Frontier Communities available through New Mexico MainStreet during the period of designation.

Designated communities are encouraged to attend those trainings to assist with building their local capacity to reinvest in their local economy. Training opportunities include MainStreet Institutes, Workshops, Leadership Network meetings and Conferences. An annual calendar of New Mexico MainStreet trainings is provided on [www.nmmainstreet.org](http://www.nmmainstreet.org). Access to those trainings and workshops are available to Frontier Community stakeholders at the same cost as MainStreet and Arts and Cultural District organization affiliates.

Designation of a community as a Frontier Community will be for the duration of the services awarded to the project, usually of one Fiscal Year duration, ending June 30, 2015. At the discretion of the Department, selected communities may have the term of partnership with the Department extend from one to two years.

Designated Frontier Communities are expected to fully participate in the program of services as a partner. A stakeholder group of volunteers for the project to implement recommendations by the professional staff is required. The state program is not responsible for the implementation of the community-based project nor for funding the project.

Projects selected must conform to all state regulations and guidance for economic development support including the state constitution's "anti donation clause." Recommendations from the state professionals involved in the project may include adoption by municipal ordinance of any one of several financing tools created by the state as municipal enabling legislation to finance the project such as the Local Economic Development Act (LEDA), a Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA) or Quality of Life Tax. The state professionals will assist the Frontier Community in reviewing a number of financing options from federal, state, foundation and other fund raising sources once an estimated budget for the project has been developed.

## **ELIGIBILITY**

- Applicant community must be an incorporated municipality under 7,500 in population. Unincorporated villages and towns may apply if the County or the Council of Governments takes on full fiscal and financial partnership responsibilities in the proposed project.
- Applicant community cannot be currently affiliated to the Economic Development Department as a local MainStreet or Arts and Cultural District Program.
- The focus of the Frontier Communities Initiative program is on a catalytic project considered to be of substantial economic impact, such as entrepreneur and business development, branding and market destination, the rehabilitation and/or adaptive re-use of historic theatres, courthouses, schools, cultural centers, WPA and CCC properties, commercial property storefronts (façade squad), *Salas*, community parks, streetscapes adding pedestrian safety amenities, Rail Road era buildings, village plazas and courthouse squares and other cultural properties on the state's list of registered cultural properties.
- The community may nominate only one project as an applicant.
- The project requires partnership resources from the municipality and stakeholders. State professional technical assistance through MainStreet is targeted to that one designated community economic development project.
- Depending on project, the municipality would be expected to explore dedicated source of funding through one of the state-enabled financial revitalization tools or other federal and foundation sources to support the effort in implementing the project.

- Additionally, the state technical assistance team may recommend the adoption or amendment of an ordinance creating a Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA) and its companion municipal financing tool a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District, and/or the appropriate sections of the Local Economic Development Act (LEDA), or other state redevelopment and revitalization tools appropriate to the scope and scale of the proposed project.
- Any building qualifying in this application must be open regularly for public access.
- Only one application per community will be accepted.
- Communities accepted into the program would not be considered or branded as a “MainStreet” program.