



# CENTER FOR RURAL ENGAGEMENT

Strengthening communities through applied research, community-engaged teaching, and student service.



## About the Indiana University Center for Rural Engagement

The Indiana University Center for Rural Engagement brings together people, research, cultural assets, and expertise to improve quality of life and address rural challenges from addiction to the arts.

Together with our partners, we have become a national model for how universities can support the needs and futures of rural residents and communities.

Working in full-spectrum community innovation through research, community-engaged teaching and student service, we build vision, harness assets, and cultivate sustainable leadership structures within the communities to ensure long-term success.

### Focus areas



Health and wellness



Quality of place



Resilient communities



Educational attainment



Economic development



Capacity building

We leverage the resources of IU Bloomington to improve rural communities.

**9K**

faculty and staff

**550+**

academic programs



**200+**

research centers

**40K**

students

**324+**

community ideas were gathered from initial listening meetings.



**4,900+**

students have participated in community-engaged projects and activities.



**590+**

student organizations, community engagement programs, and service learning classes are connected to opportunities through IU Corps.



**33,700+**

community members in 87 communities have been engaged to build collaborations and refine our understanding of community opportunities.

**280**

community-identified projects have been launched in 53 Indiana counties since 2017.

**1,300,000+**

student service hours since the 2018 launch of IU Corps.

# Together we're creating a healthier Indiana.

In collaboration with community leaders, we have prioritized population health issues to promote the well-being of people in rural communities, with a focus on substance use disorder, obesity and diabetes, maternal and infant health, tobacco use, mental health, aging-in-place, and chronic disease.



## Chronic disease

We are addressing major chronic conditions—the leading causes of death in Indiana—including type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and obesity. We do this through Community Health Improvement Plans and assessments, a rural nursing health screenings program, and health professional training and continuing education.

## Maternal health

We seek to increase maternal and infant care and lower smoking and other dangers. The School of Public Health's Project UNITE aims to reduce Indiana's rates of teen pregnancy. The IU Center for Collaborative Systems Change and the Maternal Advocates Resource Alliance have launched community trainings to support mothers and babies.

## Mental health and addictions

We are working to reduce the cumulative impact of substance abuse in rural communities with the development of an opioid response program and community education modules. We are implementing best practices in rural addictions treatment and prevention in partnership with the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration, the Indiana Rural Health Association, and ShipHappens.

In collaboration with the School of Public Health and the School of Social Work, we are working to increase access to mental health and substance use disorder services in rural communities. In partnership with the IU Eskenazi Museum of Art, we launched Creative Arts for Vets, an arts-based wellness initiative for Indiana's veterans.

## Health and Technology

The Luddy School of Informatics, Computing, and Engineering is researching peer caregiving activities, conducting feasibility testing of CareBand wearable device technology, and creating application solutions that address barriers to healthcare. We are also implementing telehealth solutions that fit rural communities.

## Professional development

We have facilitated more than 40 community education and training sessions on topics ranging from adverse childhood experiences to substance use disorder. Together with the School of Social Work and the School of Public Health we developed a free, online training module on trauma informed care for communities.

# Together we're improving the resilience of our land, water, and food.

Our environment is changing. As communities seek new approaches to flood control, water sources and treatment, food security, and parks and public land management, our center is a connection point to the research and resources that inform future steps.

## Food systems

We seek to increase the consumption and production of local food in Indiana's strong agricultural economy with a local food value chain advancement plan, harnessing the buying power of institutions and organizations and connecting them to Indiana's food producers.

IU Sustainable Food Systems Science is working to identify community food system needs, gather ideas for improvement, and map regional food systems. A multi-disciplinary team is collaborating with local leaders and residents to examine food programs, increasing seniors' access to food and launching nutrition prescription programs that boost local food access.

## Parks, recreation, and public lands

We are heightening awareness of Indiana's excellent parks and recreation resources to promote tourism and health for both Hoosiers and visitors with an inventory and opportunity mapping project.

As part of these efforts, the Indiana Geological and Water Survey launched improved topographical maps of the Knobstone escarpment, and the Luddy School of Informatics, Computing, and Engineering is working in collaboration with Hoosier National Forest to monitor light pollution and gain Dark Sky Designation.

## Water resilience

A 2014 study by the Indiana Chamber of Commerce notes that Indiana ranked first in the nation in the percentage of its economy that depends on water. We are dedicated to examining water resources, including karst aquifers that require greater understanding of their role on Indiana's water supply resilience.

Indiana Geological and Water Survey is conducting a karst aquifer study and a springs inventory in the Indiana Uplands region to gain a better understanding of these resources and the region's resilience for future water source and treatment demands.





## Together we're helping arts and culture thrive in rural communities.

The arts and humanities are a critical part of community, contributing to our understanding of the human experience and increasing community quality of place. Through our partnership with more than a dozen IU departments and programs, rural residents are crafting their own narratives and reimagining a creative horizon that is both individually and collectively fulfilling.

### Arts Administration

We have coordinated with the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs to offer an IU Rural Arts Certificate program to build capacity, strategy, and sustainability of community rural arts programs. The Master of Arts Administration program developed strategic plans for Huntingburg, Nashville, and Salem, Indiana.

### Housing

We have convened a regional housing coalition that created the Hoosier Housing Ready Toolkit, empowering communities to take control of increasing their desirable housing stock. In collaboration with the Eskenazi School of Art, Architecture, and Design, we are creating innovative home design solutions that fit rural communities.

### Creative aging

In partnership with Traditional Arts Indiana and the Mathers Museum of World Cultures, we are developing creative aging guides, activity kits, and workshops that leverage folk arts to improve quality of life for older adults in rural communities.

### Rural arts series

We are working with IU Arts and Humanities Council faculty to bring arts performances and exhibitions, such as music, dance, film, and theatre; museum exhibits; lectures; creative writing; artist residencies; and initiatives to assist local arts groups with community development and capacity building.

### Arts education

The IU Eskenazi Museum of Art's Rural Teachers Engaging Art program provides school-based techniques for engaging with museum collections in ways that help teachers understand and utilize the healing and educational power of the arts. The program uses an emergent approach to outreach that features co-created, arts-based experiences that speak to the needs and goals of individual teachers.

### Creative placemaking

Together with the Eskenazi School of Art, Architecture, and Design and the J. Irwin Miller Architecture Program, we provide planning, advising, and design resources around spaces that enhance creativity, local identity, and innovation in rural communities.



## How we work

Drawing on the center's key strengths, we work side-by-side with rural communities, Indiana University faculty, students, and staff, and regional, statewide, and national organizations. Each collaboration is unique, and our team takes a customized approach to our partnerships.

### **Collaborate**

We are an active partner in community-engaged research, teaching, and service projects.

### **Facilitate and consult**

We facilitate community planning with approaches that place local voices at the forefront.

### **Communicate**

We curate information from our initiatives for campus and community stakeholders.

### **Advise and educate**

We expand knowledge and skill development among campus and community stakeholders.

### **Network**

We support networking between campus and communities.

### **Advance**

We collaborate with campus and community stakeholders on grants and development.

**Learn more**  
**Become a partner**  
**Propose a project**

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