



*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

## **County HELP program progresses: Community projects submitted for review with potential for additional projects to take shape**

**December 8, 2022 (Warsaw, IN)** – More headway has been made with the Hoosier Enduring Legacy Program (HELP) Kosciusko. Community projects have been submitted for review for the Strategic Investment Plan, with opportunity for more projects to move forward.

As a recap, Kosciusko County was one of three communities selected by the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) to participate in the first round of the HELP program. HELP assists and equips rural communities with developing Strategic Investment Plans, resulting in a legacy project for each community focused on at least one of four community development pathways/focus areas including **advancing e-connectivity, enhancing quality of place, promoting community wellness, and strengthening local economies**. The communities of Etna Green, Mentone, Milford, and Pierceton agreed to participate with the County collectively in the program.

A brief review of what's happened so far:

1. Feedback from local residents about community development priorities was collected, including a survey and community engagement activities. HELP received more than 350 responses.
2. Volunteer committees representing Etna Green, Mentone, Milford, Pierceton and the County reviewed feedback and shared project recommendations with local units of government for each community.
3. Project recommendations were reviewed by the local units of government and a Core Advisory Team comprised of town clerks, county-wide leaders, and local funding agencies. These recommended projects were then submitted to OCRA and an update regarding funding will be shared.

“At this point in the process we’re waiting to hear news from OCRA about project funding, while also working with Purdue on our community Strategic Investment Plan which will serve as a ‘road map’ for implementing projects,” said Kosciusko County Community Coordinator Amy Roe.

Not all projects could be included in the Strategic Investment Plan due to a number of reasons such as project timelines and criteria. However, there’s opportunity for more community projects to take shape if additional funding sources and community partners can be identified.



“The benefit about this process is, although only a certain number of projects could be submitted for the Strategic Investment Plan, community partners and organizations are stepping forward to help support additional projects, and more steering committees have been created to help move these projects forward. We feel these projects should be honored, and still have the opportunity to move forward even if it isn’t through the traditional ‘HELP process’,” said Roe.

For example, one community proposed that more work be done to promote bilingual diversity, and the committee is now partnering with the OrthoWorx Diversity Committee on the next steps.

Similar connections have been made with a handful of other projects, and HELP Kosciusko is seeking the right partner(s) or appropriate connections for these additional projects:

- **Creating a “green” business hub** – Create more awareness about businesses focused on environmental sustainability, and how Kosciusko County might attract and support more “green” businesses.
- **Kosciusko Elected Leaders Academy (KELA)** – Formal training opportunity for newly elected local leaders and those considering running for office.

If you’d like to be involved with moving one of these projects forward, or making a helpful introduction or connection please contact Amy Roe at [aroe@kcgov.com](mailto:aroe@kcgov.com).

For more information on HELP Kosciusko visit [www.kcgov.com](http://www.kcgov.com). Stay up-to-date with program events and happenings by following HELP Kosciusko on Facebook @HELPKosciusko.

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#### **About the Hoosier Enduring Legacy Program (HELP) in Kosciusko County**

The Hoosier Enduring Legacy Program (HELP) from the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) supports communities directly by building capacity, creating a peer network system between communities participating in the program, developing a strategic investment plan and providing access to set-aside funding. HELP is a 52-week process culminating in a dynamic Strategic Investment Plan rooted in four pathways: advancing e-connectivity, promoting community wellness, enhancing quality of place, and strengthening local economies.

#### **Media Contacts:**

Amy Roe (HELP Kosciusko County) – [aroe@kcgov.com](mailto:aroe@kcgov.com)

Cary Groninger (Kosciusko County) – [cgroninger@kcgov.com](mailto:cgroninger@kcgov.com)