

Indiana Main Street Levels FAQ

1. Why will levels help with brand preservation?

- a. For a long time, the Indiana Main Street coordinating program struggled to find a balance between the quantity of local Main Street orgs to the quality of Main Street orgs. We want each of our local programs to be the best quality they want to be and can be. Over time this will allow more of our local programs to become higher functioning, contain more capacity, have greater local impact, and more. We want to be able to preserve what it means to be an Indiana Main Street program and for people around the state to know what that means. The levels system helps define what it actually means to be a Main Street organization, as well provide stepping stones for local programs to grow and become even higher functioning.

2. Are the three levels hierarchical in nature?

- a. The levels are NOT hierarchical in nature since each level is independently valuable with its own incentives, growth benchmarks, and more. We believe that each program has the decision to interact with the Main Street approach as much or as little as they want or can. The levels are not meant to place certain organizations above another but instead incentivize growth and brand preservation.

3. What do I need to do if I want to take my organization to a new level?

- a. You will need to first talk to your [Community Liaison](#) about your desire to move up a level and what next steps and areas the organization needs to take to do so.
- b. If you are an ODAN wanting to move to an IAMS:
 - i. The organization meets all eight standards required by the National Main Street Center.
 - ii. During the open application period, which occurs annually, you will submit an IAMS application which the review committee will then review for potential acceptance into the level. For more information on how to apply to the IMS Program, see [this document](#) and [watch this video](#).
- c. If you are an IAMS wanting to move to a NAMS:
 - i. The organization meets all 10 standards set forth by the National Main Street Center, including having a full-time staff person hired and a paid membership to the NMSC.
 - ii. Contact your Community Liaison and set up a time for you to meet with IMS Coordinating Staff for an official in-person interview/evaluation to move up into the NAMS level.

4. What if I am a new community applying to become a Main Street organization?

- a. Please reference the new application standards and review the process on the IMS webpage, that is [found here](#). Contact your Community Liaison, reference [the checklist](#) for becoming a new program, and prepare to apply during the open application period each year.

5. **Is there an opt-out for a community who does not want to participate in IMS or ODAN?**
 - a. Yes. If the organization decides that to dissolve the Main Street status, no matter the status, please contact IMS coordinating staff or your Community Liaison.
 - i. Please note: If you reapply after dissolving the organization, previous work will not be grandfathered into any of the incentives. We also encourage you to keep your 501c3 status in case someone wants to revitalize the local program in the future.

6. **If a program lost their Main Street designation, can it be reinstated?**
 - a. If your program lost its designation in the past you will need to go through the steps of reapplying to be a part of the program. Please reference question #4 to learn more.

7. **How and when will the "placement" be done? Will we have a review to be placed into one of these categories?**
 - a. Indiana Main Street hired the National Main Street Center to conduct thorough reviews of each program through 2019 annual reporting stats as well as deep dives into the programs websites, social media, interactions, etc. The levels were determined from this review.

8. **Define "adequate funding". Does this mean the MSP should be capable of operating independently on its own?**
 - a. We believe that each local program wanting to have long term success and impact will have a sustainable operating budget and fundraising plan. That being said, we understand that the capacity to do this is not always possible but we do expect it from our programs in the IAMS and NAMS levels because of the interaction and work they are doing in the local community. Each of these programs should have a budget in correlation with the size of the community they serve and the amount of work they are doing. There is no firm number or equation; but the coordinating program would expect to see cash reserves, fundraising goals and plans, etc. Please contact the IMS coordinating staff for further instruction.

9. **What are the "open" and "closing" deadlines for filing in all three (3) areas?**
 - a. To move up a level or apply as a new local program, the applications will open once a year. For 2020, the application period is open from November 9, 2020 to March 1, 2021.

10. **Can the "full time" staff be the same employee for more than one Mainstreet?**
 - a. There is no technical rule about doing this in a county. However, according to National Main Street, there has never been much a success story with one person overseeing multiple Main Street programs in a county. It is difficult a staff member to not be overworked by one program and having to split his/her time between two or more communities is exceptionally pressuring and difficult. This also may cause issues when one community feels like one community is receiving more time or attention than the other and can put the director in an awkward or uncomfortable place. If this is something you are considering, please contact your Community Liaison or IMS coordinating staff to talk more about it.

11. Is the evaluation process interactive?

- a. Please refer to question #7 to read more about the evaluation/review process. If you have a concern or want to understand more about the level you are placed in please reach out to your Community Liaison or IMS coordinating staff.

12. Will attendees be able to get a copy of this presentation or at least an overview of the presentation to share with our teams?

- a. Please [go to our website](#) and you will be able to get all the resources you need there to share out to your teams.

13. Have all Indiana Main Street programs already been sorted into the level they currently suit? Or is there time going into 2021 that allows Main Street programs to organize what is needed for each tier?

- a. All programs have already been placed into their levels.
- b. Your Community Liaison will follow-up with each organization over the next 90 days to provide an feedback from your review. They will cover what the organization can begin working on (as well as a kudos on what you have been doing well in) and the organization can begin planning to do if the plan is to move to a different level in the next open application period in 2021.

14. Are the level's metrics available for review?

- a. All information about each of the levels including incentives, benchmarks/metrics, etc. can be [found here](#).

15. The 'farming community' here has very different needs from an urban or suburban one. Will the categories be standardized or individualized to meet the 'local' level needs?

- a. Each community is different and Indiana Main Street as well as National Main Street Center will always strive and has always strived to take that into consideration throughout the review and placement of organizations into the levels. OCRA does not compare urban to rural or large to small communities because we each community is unique and has its own challenges.

16. Is the work plan training open to anyone?

- a. Yes, the work plan training on December 1, 2020 is open to anyone, even those groups not an apart of the program yet. [Registration details can be found here](#).

17. Will there be any discussion or criteria around the Main Street district?

- a. The neighborhood Main Street group is ideally for larger urban communities or large communities that have specific neighborhoods who want to have specific impact in their area. If you have further questions about this topic, please reach out to IMS staff or your Community Liaison.

18. To whom in IMS is the application sent?

- a. Please refer to question #4 and follow the information listed.

- 19. Will you set a calendar of training staff and volunteers for the year? If so, when can we expect to see this for planning? In addition, how are you determining the topics?**
- a. We will plan to release a calendar of training in work with the National Main Street Center in first quarter of 2021. We determine these topics through discussions with all Main Street groups, as well as to select topics around benchmarks built within each level.
- 20. Can you explain what will happen on Nov. 17 further?**
- a. November 17, 2020 is when your organization will receive an email with your level placement. This email will contain some documentation that you must review with your board and return signed to us by January 2021.
- 21. Can you go into detail on what is expected from an adequate operating budget for the IAMS level?**
- a. Please refer to question #8 or reach out for further information and resources.
- 22. Will the ODAN groups be eligible to apply for OCRA grants?**
- a. No, the ODAN level will only be allowed to apply for smaller placemaking grants. Organizations should have high capacity and functioning to handle large amounts of funds as well as a strategy on how to best utilize and implement that funding. We also like to remind that Main Street is not a grant program. You should always think of grants as additional or helpful income to the budget but have a more consistent budget influx from stakeholders, donors, municipalities, etc.
- 23. Is it even feasible for a small community (example under 2,000) to grow to be a higher functioning organization?**
- a. Yes! There have been some amazing small communities that have are functioning higher and had a higher impact then some of their larger counterparts. This process works for all sizes of communities and getting the right people at the table to take your organization to the place it wants to grow to.
- 24. Is the ability to get grants a selling point for getting funding from the city government?**
- a. We would argue no, it is not. Grants come and go but your impact as an economic development tool will have impact for many years to come. Advocating to your municipality or town leadership by showing them your local impact rather than just receiving certain grant funding is more sustaining. If you ever need further advocacy or help from the Indiana Main Street coordinating program, please reach out to [Abby Chapman](#) (IMS Outreach and Organization Manager).
- 25. If you apply to move to the next level and are denied, is there a limit of the number of times you can reapply?**
- a. No, there is no limit to applying to move up a level.
- 26. Will there be any examples of work plans and fundraising plans made available to organizations?**

- a. Yes, please reach out to IMS Coordinating Staff to receive example templates for these various requirements.

27. Will there also be a bullet point list of minimum requirements for the work plan and fundraising plans?

- a. A bulleted list or minimum requirements will not be required because we want your organization to take example templates and then work together as an organization to grow and make them the most effective. We want to make sure our organizations are not just checking a box to be at a certain level but are applying the Four Point Approach™ and having overall organizational health.

28. Will OCRA help support us in making sure that our Mayors, town councils, etc. will know just how important the Main Street program is for their community?

- a. Yes, please review question #24 for more on this and feel free to reach out to [Abby Chapman](#) (IMS Outreach and Organization Manager) at to learn more.)

29. Is having a full-time paid staff a prerequisite for being in the middle level?

- a. No, it is not required to be at the IAMS level. OCRA suggests though that, as your organization grows, it becomes a priority in the overall budgeting and planning to consider hiring at least a part time or (preferably) a full-time director.

30. How often should we report to our local city or economic development about how and what our impact is?

- a. It is recommended that you report to your local stakeholders at least once every quarter.

31. Is there a formula for the diversification of funding that we should strive for? i.e. what percentage from the city, what percentage from membership, etc.?

- a. There should be an overall balance to your best ability. Each organization is different and sometimes communities receive a lot of funding from their municipality or town leadership and others from a local industry or larger business and some from membership dues. The goal is to have broad based support from throughout the community and this should be reflective in your fundraising. Some funding is provided by the businesses and some is provided from local partners and so on. This naturally develops as you continue to build that support.