

Student-Led, Faculty-Guided Technical Assistance Project Application

Background

Since 2011, the MSU Regional Economic Innovation (REI) has supported over 190 innovative economic development projects in Michigan, spurring high-growth entrepreneurship, job creation, and economic innovation. REI partners have achieved remarkable success; with over \$68 million in public and private investments generated by 102 Student-Led, Faculty-Guided projects; over 74 Co-Learning Plans; and 17 Co-Implementation projects (Innovation Fellowships). Partners of REI leverage higher education, businesses, local governments, EDDs, non-profits, economic developers, and others who create, identify, and develop new economic development strategies and practices, and perform technical assistance for communities in Michigan.

REI is committed to a process of engagement to create the best and brightest community and economic developers in the world. Throughout 2025, the REI Network submitted innovative economic development ideas/topics of interest. Through a competitive process, working with the REI Consultative Panel of experts across the state, the following topical areas were determined to be timely and effective to assist bringing critical new knowledge to bear on the challenges we currently face in community and economic development. Topical area discussion follows below. Student-Led/Faculty-Guided projects should also fall within one of four categorial areas, including: 1) resiliency planning, 2) financial resiliency, 3) 21st century communications, and 4) circular economies. Within a chosen category, applicants must identify one more topic to focus their work on.

Topic

REI has identified the following topical areas for possible Student-led/Faculty-guided projects of 2026. They include: 1. Leveraging Higher Education as Anchors for Community Investment, 2. Ecosystem Over Ownership: Advancing Collaborative Economic Models in Distressed Communities, 3. Donor Advised Funds and Family Wealth: Unlocking Capital for Community, 4. Exploring Job Creation Potential Through Extended Producer Responsibility and Waste Reduction Policies in Michigan, 5. Finding the “Sweet Spot” in Housing Development Permitting: Aligning Government Processes with Developer Expectations, 6. Advancing Community Benefit Agreements in Publicly Funded Economic Development, 7. Other.

Student-Led/Faculty-Guided Projects

MSU REI plans to select between two and three student-led/faculty-guided technical assistance projects for funding for the 2026 year. These projects, based in colleges and universities across the state, should assist Michigan communities in completing local and regional economic development initiatives, especially in distressed rural and urban communities. If you have questions, or for more details about this process or timeline, please contact us at jondyjen@msu.edu.

The deadline for submissions is December 08, 2025.

Your project should:

- Support or provide research for ALICE populations (Asset-limited/Income-Constrained Employed);
- Focus on Redevelopment Ready Communities or areas with concentration of opportunity zones;
- Fit one or more foci areas of resiliency planning, financial resiliency, 21st century communications and/or circular economies;
- Address at least one of the 6 topical areas – or ‘other’ as topic area;
- Assist an economically distressed community or region in Michigan;
- Engage the community throughout the project period;
- Have a strong economic development component;
- Deliver ideas for creating knowledge-economy jobs and high-growth entrepreneurship;
- Provide economic development professionals in the community with access to technical assistance and data analysis that otherwise would not be available to them;
- Where feasible, collaborate with your region's EDD;
- Be completed in one semester.

Deliverables

- 10-page (max) ADA compliant summary of your project that described the problem, research undertaken, results, findings and recommendations.
- 2-page dissemination plan, including: who/what/where/how (social media, video, press release, presentation, etc.) and when (timeline with benchmarks) along with acknowledgment of REI support.
- Present at the REI Innovate Michigan! Summit in July/August 2026, if applicable.

Contact Information

College or University Name: _____

Contact Person: _____

Address:

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

General Description

Please describe the project you wish to pursue with your students, explaining your proposed budget in detail, in an attached document (maximum two pages).

Will an EDD region or affiliated organization be a partner in this project?

- ☐ Yes _____
- ☐ No _____

Project Timeline

Do you believe the project can be completed in one semester (15 weeks)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (explain) _____

Project Impacts

Is the project likely to create knowledge-economy jobs?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

Is the project likely to create high-growth entrepreneurship?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

Will the project target a distressed area?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

Project Investment

What type of support is your institution contributing? (please provide details)

- ☐ Time _____
- ☐ Funding _____
- ☐ Data _____
- ☐ Other _____

How much financial assistance are you requesting?

- ☐ \$500-\$2,000 /project

Commitment

- ☐ I will commit to presenting at the REI annual event in the late summer/early fall, alongside a few of my students and/or members of the community where the project took place.

Please submit your completed application to Jenan Jondy at the Center for Community and Economic Development by emailing jondyjen@msu.edu or via mail to:

Michigan State University

1615 E. Michigan Ave.

Lansing, MI 48912

Thank you for completing this application form and sharing your project with us. We look forward to working with you in the future. Please use the space below or attach a separate document to describe the project you wish to pursue with your students:

