The Wabash Heartland Innovation Network (WHIN) is seeking proposals from eligible organizations to become the WHIN community partner who would administer a Regional Cultivation Fund grant of up to $800,000 to deliver new venture and small business accelerator programming to Benton, Cass, Carroll, Clinton, Fountain, Montgomery, Pulaski, Tippecanoe, Warren and White counties. The grant period is up to 3 years beginning at award. The grant will be funded in the form of reimbursement for incurred expenses.

The purpose of WHIN’s RE program is to boost start-ups as well as to give small and “Main Street” businesses a disciplined process to REimagine their possibilities; to help small and medium rural manufacturers REtool; and to help regional businesses REconnect to make the pivot to conducting more business online. The program will support local REcovery and RESilience in the post-pandemic economy. Whatever the sector and wherever a business is in its lifecycle, WHIN wishes to empower entrepreneurial thinking, skill-building, online and digital proficiency, and networking connections that can provide traction for ideas to take off.

Eligible applicants:

- Must be a 501c3 organization located in the WHIN region
- Have current audited financial statements
- Have an existing curriculum with demonstrated results for new venture and small business acceleration
- Have a viable strategy for engaging and serving all ten counties

To apply, please submit the following to RCF@WHIN.org:

a. One page application, format is attached.

b. Narrative
   i. Please briefly explain why you are applying to deliver this programming to the WHIN region and why your organization is best qualified to be the community partner for this grant.
   ii. Please describe the curriculum and programming you presently offer. Besides an indication of content and how many people you have served, please describe how you organize classes or cohorts, what the expectations are for participants, how often you offer the curriculum, how long you have offered the curriculum and any other information you feel distinguishes your programming. Whom do you feel is not a good candidate for your programming?
   iii. Please provide empirical evidence of the success of your programming. You may include a selection of testimonials, especially to indicate the breadth of
businesses that have benefited from your services. How, specifically, do you assist “Main Street” businesses and small manufacturers?

iv. What, if any, adaptation to your curriculum/programming would you wish to accomplish with the WHIN grant to allow your programming to be available to all ten WHIN counties and to rural environments?

v. How would you engage the counties to be served? With whom would you work as partners in areas that do not currently offer any accelerator services? How would you keep them engaged? This initiative should coordinate with and support existing accelerator programs where they are available. How have you worked with those programs in the past and how would you partner with them for this grant?

Mindful of areas that do and do not have existing services:

1. How would you recruit and organize cohorts? How would you address inclusion of underserved populations?
2. How would you deliver the programming? Would you require space for cohorts to meet and, if so, how would you meet that need? Would you require coaches or meeting facilitators? If so, how would you meet that need? Would you utilize a virtual platform to deliver programming?

vi. Please describe program deliverables over the grant period.

vii. Please describe expected program outcomes over the grant period.

viii. How will you sustain the program beyond the grant period (including fees you would charge, matches you might require, fundraising in the counties.)

c. Implementation Timeline: please attach a Gantt or similar chart for preparing to deliver and delivering programming.
d. Written documentation from applicant’s board indicating support for application
e. 501c3 Determination Letter from IRS
f. Budget and budget narrative
g. Copy of audited financials within the last two years

Applications are due by 5pm, March 4, 2022 to RCF@WHIN.org.