

2023

ANNUAL REPORT



THE INDIANA OFFICE
OF COMMUNITY AND
RURAL AFFAIRS

A LETTER FROM LT. GOV. SUZANNE CROUCH AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DUKE BENNETT

In 2023, the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs continued to be a resource for rural communities through grants, programming, staff support and more. Communities took advantage of OCRA programs to build local capacity, invest in infrastructure, fuel community and economic development and build relevant and thriving places where Hoosiers want to live and work.

We often refer to rural Indiana as “the next great economic frontier,” and this was evident over the course of 2023. We saw New Castle earn the PreservINg Main Street designation, community leaders come together to network and learn at the OCRA in YOUR Region meetings held around the state, communities celebrated during Downtown Development Month, and saw more Hoosier homes and businesses receive high-speed broadband access.

In 2023, over \$35 million in OCRA funding was awarded to 157 cities, towns and counties. Additionally, the agency:

- Relunched the Recovery Housing Program, resulting in four communities earning funding to develop recovery housing in their towns and cities;
- Expanded broadband access to more than 820 Hoosier homes and businesses through the Indiana Connectivity Program; and
- Offered a \$621,400 value of in-kind services to Indiana Main Street communities through OCRA’s Indiana Main Street team .

We look forward to seeing the impact the projects funded in 2023 will have on communities, as towns install safer drinking water systems, citizens gain access to reliable internet, and cities carry out transformational projects in their communities.

Rural Indiana is truly the next great economic frontier, as well as the heart of our state. Thank you to all our Hoosier communities for their continued efforts to make Indiana an even better place to live. We look forward to working with you in 2024.

Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch
Executive Director Duke Bennett

OUR VISION

The Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs works with communities to build relevant and economically thriving places where people want to live, work and grow.

To help promote community prosperity, OCRA has developed a variety of programs to provide capacity-building solutions and assure ready, marketable and competitive communities for economic growth. These programs fall under four key competencies.



Infrastructure

- Next Level Connections Program
- Indiana Connectivity Program
- Wastewater Drinking Water Program
- Stormwater Improvements



Quality of Place

- Main Street Revitalization Program
- PreservINg Main Street
- Public Facilities Program
- Owner Occupied Rehabilitation
- Connecting Communities and People with Disabilities
- Recovery Housing Program



Economic Development

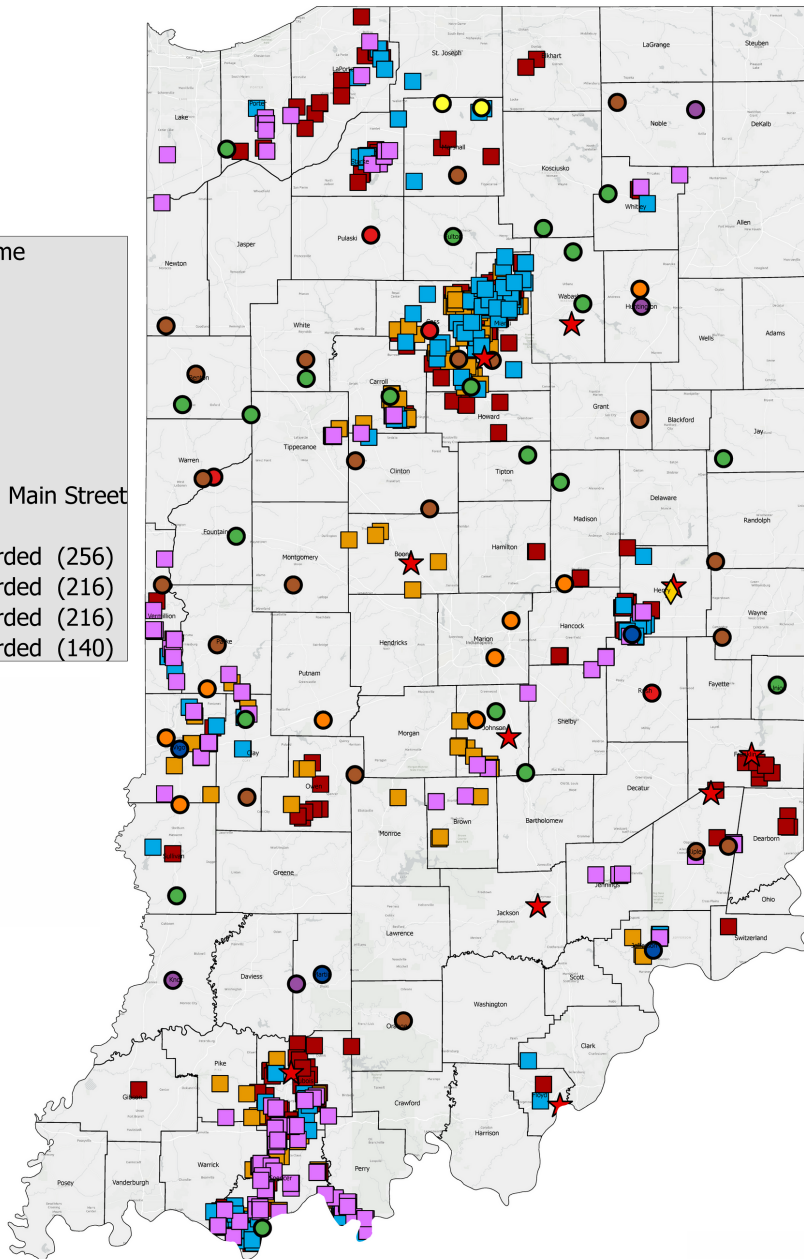
- Indiana Main Street
- Downtown Catalyst Grant
- Covid-19 Response Program
- Blight Clearance Program



Capacity Building

- Planning Grant Program
- Hometown Business Preservation Initiative
- Beat the Heat
- Stellar Communities
- Hoosier Enduring Legacy Program
- OCRA's Downtown Affiliate Network

YEAR IN REVIEW



Total Funding
\$35,630,139

Amount
Leveraged:
\$69,088,879

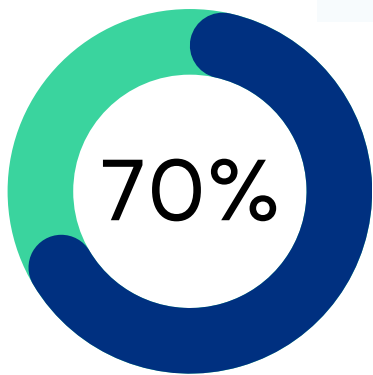
Projects Funded:
115

Communities
Funded: 157

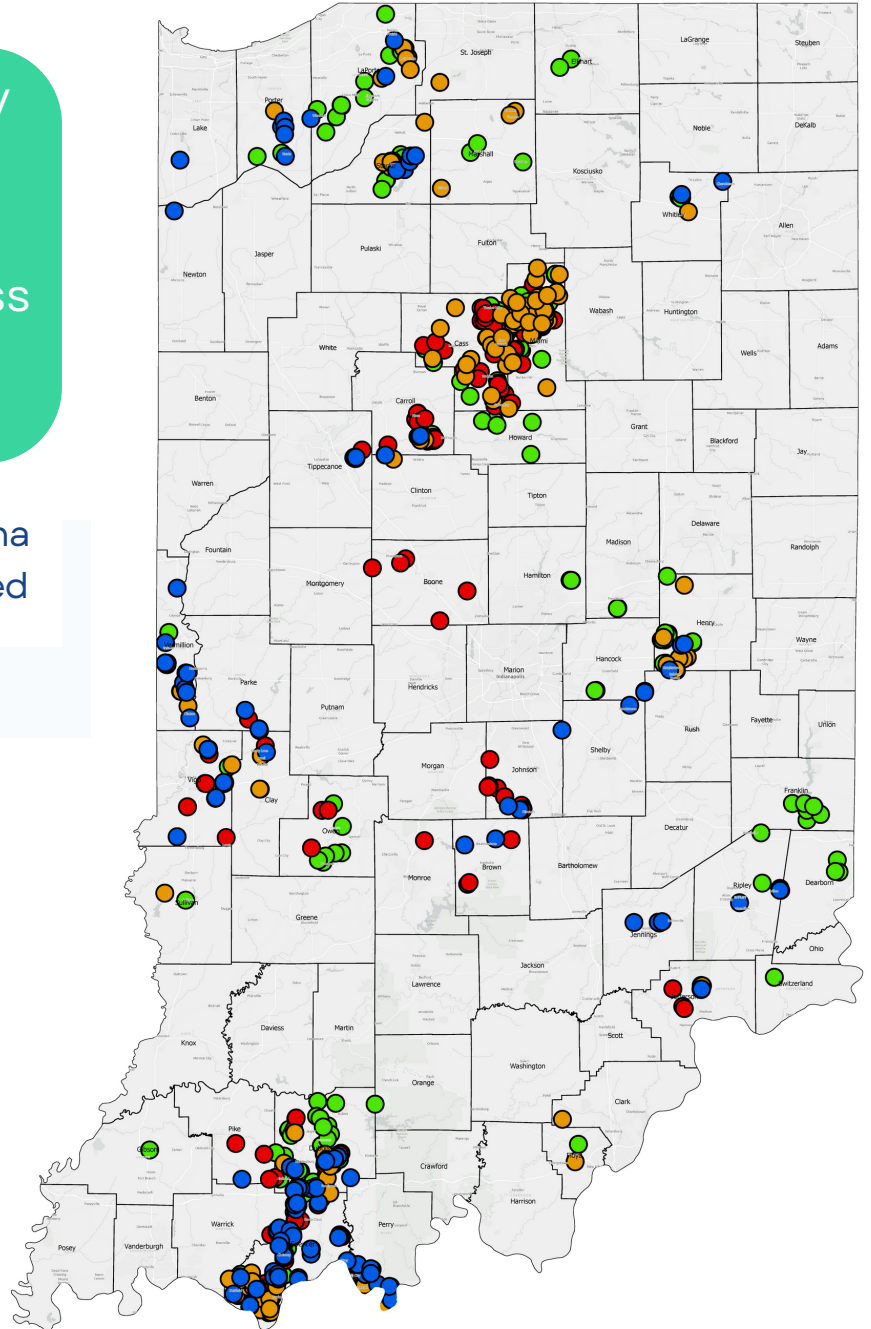
INDIANA CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM

The Indiana Connectivity Program awarded more than **\$3.2 million** to expand broadband access to 826 Hoosier homes and businesses.

Since its launch in 2022, the Indiana Connectivity Program has awarded funding to 64 of Indiana's 92 counties, nearly 70%.



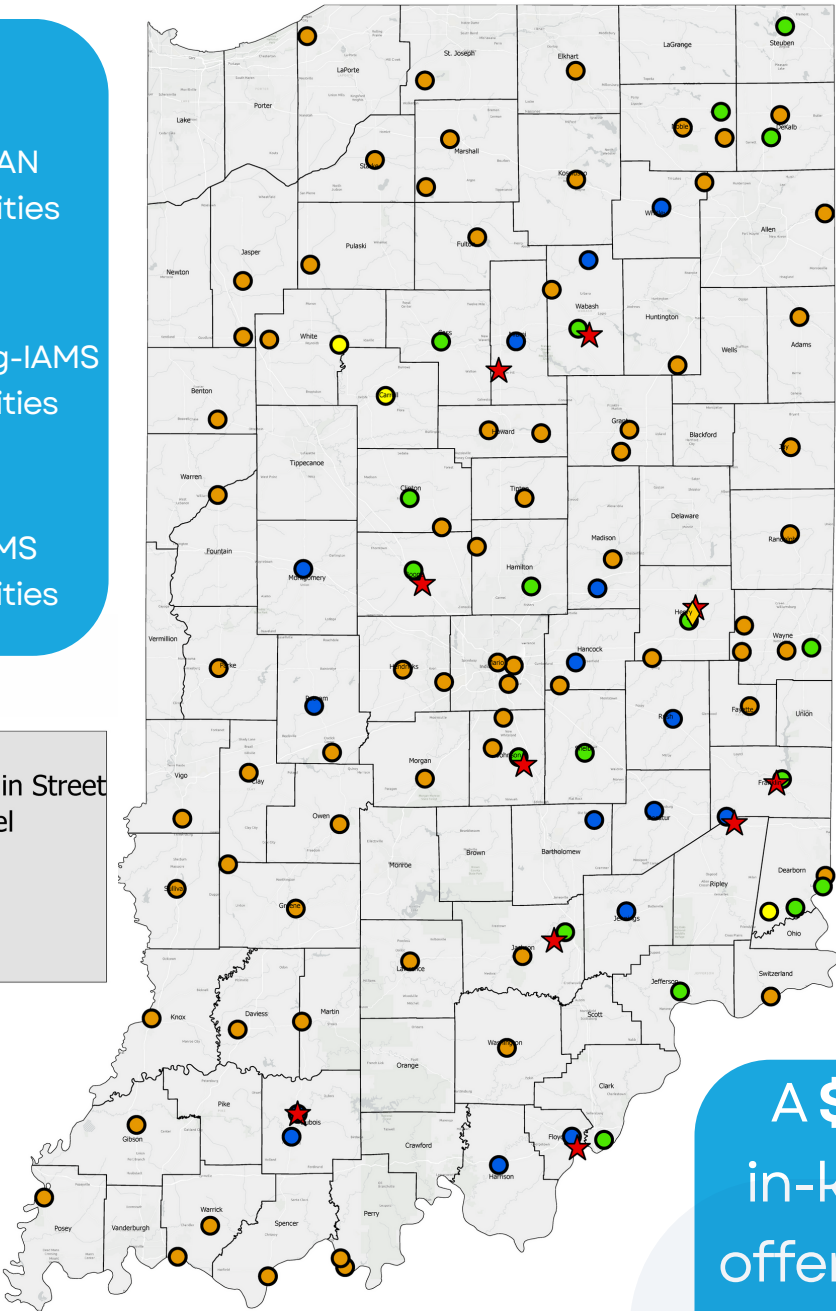
- ICP 7 Awarded (140)
- ICP 6 Awarded (216)
- ICP 5 Awarded (216)
- ICP 4 Awarded (256)



STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

- 9
New ODAN
Communities
- 3
New Aspiring-IAMS
Communities
- 2
New NAMS
Communities

- ★ TCOMS
- ◆ PreservING Main Street
Main Street Level
- A-IAMS
- IAMS
- NAMS
- ODAN



- The **Taking Care of Main Street** grant program awarded **\$150,000** to 10 Main Street organization, with local match funds totaling **\$151,520**.
- Previous **PreservING Main Street** awardees Kendallville & Brookville saw their programs come to a close after being awarded \$2 million in the fall of 2021, with CDBG construction continuing through June 2024.

A **\$621,400** value of in-kind services were offered to Indiana Main Street communities in 2023.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

The Indiana Main Street network was asked
What is one way the IMS coordinating program has positively impacted your organization?

Indiana Main Street is vital to the success of our Main Street organization. Continued educational and networking opportunities, oversight to our programs to make sure we are headed in the right direction, encouragement and access to resources to make our program stronger.

It helps us stay focused on our goals. Maestro reporting also helps us stay present and engaged in our districts.

Indiana Main Street always provides quick and helpful solutions to our questions and challenges.

In our recent board meeting, our members stated that it was really pivotal having IMS come to our organization this year. That having such a direct purpose and attention for the visit was so very helpful and encouraging for our board.

Any time we have a question about peer main street orgs, job descriptions, long-term strategy, etc., the IMS team always has great experience and recommendations to provide. They really feel like a well-connected part of our board.

The ongoing support, the ease in access and approachability, and the seemingly bottomless wealth of knowledge and resources!

Coaching, training, answering questions, providing resources...too many to list!

4

Community Exchanges hosted in
Rushville, Jasper, Terre Haute & Lebanon

15

Technical assistance visits with
local Main Street organizations

31

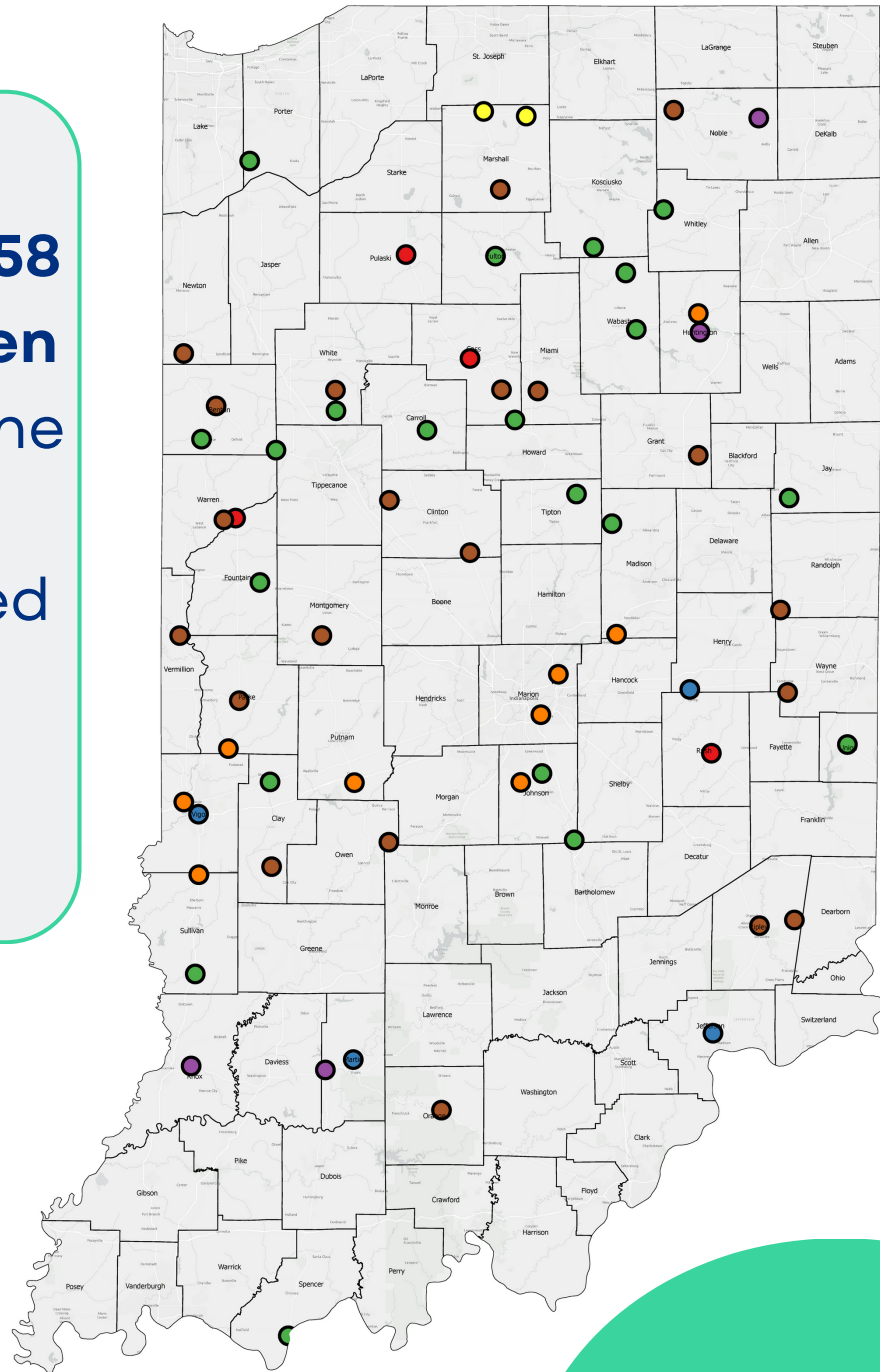
Total trainings offered to
Indiana Main Street communities

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANTS

The CDBG program awarded **66 grants** to **58 communities** and **seven counties** throughout the state, totaling **\$30,263,997** in awarded funds with grantee match totaling **\$62,601,181.**

CDBG Program Name

- BCP
- PFP
- PL
- RHP
- SIP
- Stellar
- WDW



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANTS

Blight Clearance Program

- Four grants
- \$1,635,027 awarded

Public Facilities Program

- Four grants
- \$2,000,000 awarded

Planning Grants

- 21 grants
- \$1,026,270 awarded

Recovery Housing Program

- Four grants
- \$2,947,000 awarded

Stormwater Improvements Program

- Nine grants
- \$5,400,000 awarded

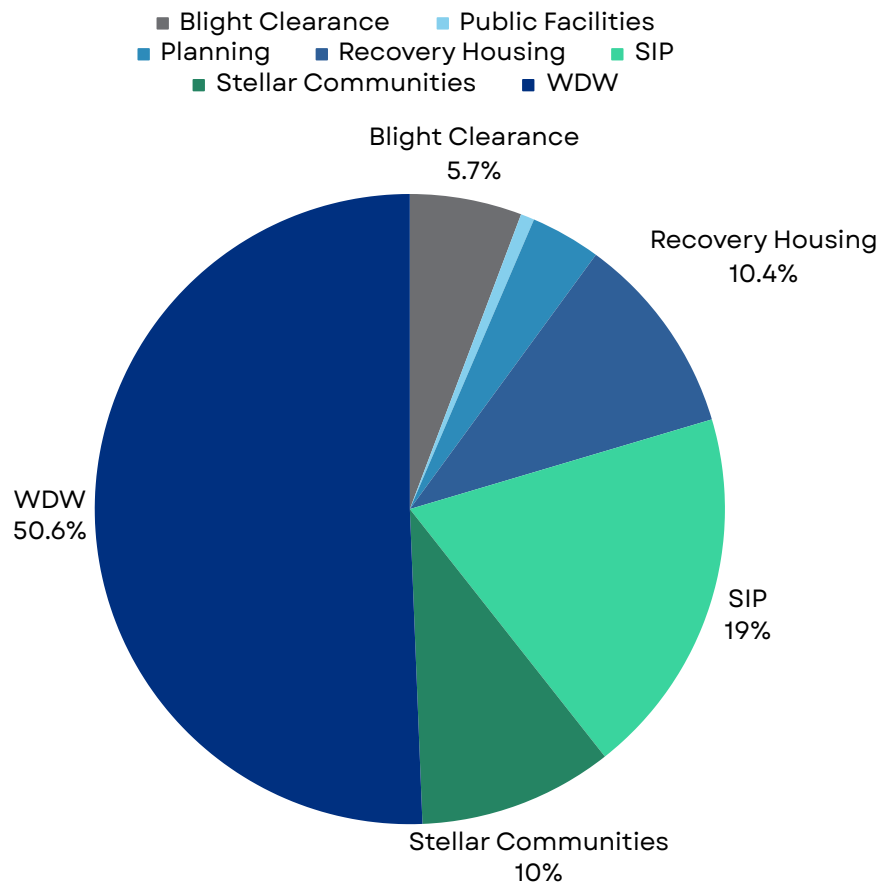
Stellar Communities

- Three grants
- \$2,842,200 awarded

Wastewater/Drinking Water Program

- 21 grants
- \$14,413,500 awarded

Breakdown of Community Development Block Grant funding by program



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANTS

105

Hours of training CDBG staff received in community and economic development courses

18

Hours of technical assistance training provided to grant administrators on submitting program income reports

16

New grant administrators certified as part of grant administrator training, increasing the number of total GAs to 150

80%

By May of 2023, 80% of expenditure was met for the CDBG-CV program. Supplemental funding was provided to 18 communities with an additional **\$4.5 million** to aid local businesses in building resiliency to prevent economic impacts of potential future health pandemics.

The Recovery Housing Program was relaunched, resulting in four communities earning \$2.9 million to develop recovery housing in their communities.

Communities participating in Beat the Heat were provided an additional \$25,000 to implement their heat management strategic plans.

OCRA's regional community liaisons are strategically located throughout the state to assist communities in accomplishing the goals set forth by the local government.



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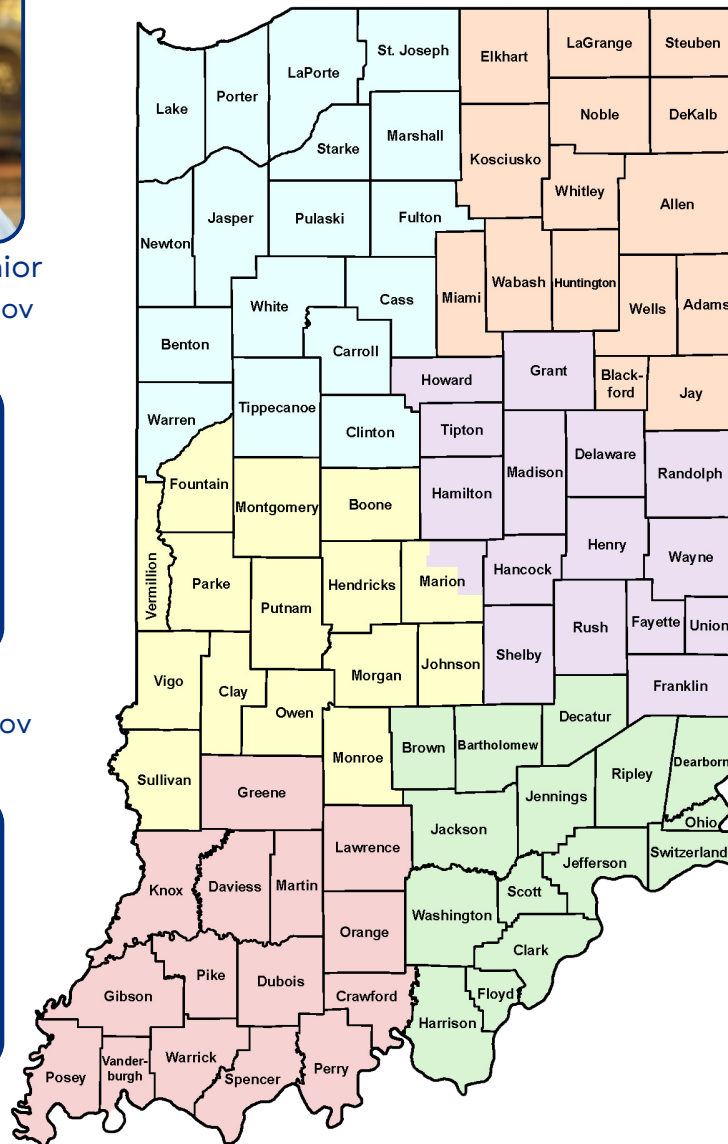
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Under the leadership of Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch, Indiana’s Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs’ mission is to work with local, state and national partners to provide resources and technical assistance to assist communities in shaping and achieving their vision for community and economic development.

For more information, visit ocra.in.gov.

