Tiffin-Seneca Economic Partnership

19 W. Market St., Suite C
Tiffin, Ohio 44883

Annual Project Identification & Prioritization Process (PIPP)
Adopted by the Tiffin Community Development Committee (TCDC) on July 22, 2020

1. **Foundational Ideas**
   - **Purpose** - The purpose of the process is to identify and establish a list of projects that benefit the city of Tiffin (within the city corporate limits) and to prioritize the list to identify priority projects that best aid the community. The end goal is for the city to speak with a unified voice when pursuing funding opportunities in order to find greater success.
   - **Eligible Projects** - To be eligible for consideration for the list, a project must be community-oriented. Any public project which benefits the people of the city of Tiffin is eligible.
     - To clarify: these are not private business projects; those are *economic development* projects handled by TSEP as opposed to *community development* projects that this committee is tasked with. The result of the project must benefit the "greater good."
   - **Project Categorization** - Projects will be evaluated and placed in one of three categories:
     - Priority Projects - These projects will make a greater impact in the community, meet the need of the community, and are identified as ready for funding. (We anticipate very few of these.)
     - Recommended Projects - These projects are identified as meeting the needs of the community and are ready for funding.
     - Reviewed Projects - These projects may have merit, but either do not fully meet community goals or may not be ready for funding.
   - **Other Lists** - When in the interest of the community, the Review Panels and Committee may review and recommend additional lists of projects for consideration from specific funding sources, such as the State Capital Budget Bill, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), etc.

2. **Review Panels**
   - **Purpose** - The review panels determine the initial project categorization covering specific subjects.
   - **Responsibilities** - The Review Panels are responsible for the following:
     - Soliciting and evaluating proposals.
     - Putting proposals in categories.
     - Establishing clear, long-term criteria for evaluating project merits and making those criteria available at the beginning of the process.
     - Leadership - One member of the Tiffin Community Development Committee (TCDC) will lead each review panel. Each TCDC member will sit on at least one review panel.

3. **Review Panels, Subjects, Coordinators, Suggested Contributors, and Criteria**
   - The following Review Panels will be established:
     - **Hospitals, Healthcare, and Human Services**
       - Subject: Hospitals, health care, human and social services, and issues affecting children and families.
       - 2020 Lead: Kathy Oliver
       - Suggested contributors: Seneca County EMS, Health Department, United Way, Family and Children First Council, DJFS
     - **Quality of Life**
       - Subject: arts, tourism, open space and recreation, amenities, beautification, trails
       - 2020 Lead: Jodie Reinbolt & Andrew Kalnow

- Suggested contributors: Parks Department, Destination Seneca County, Downtown Design Committee, others
  - o **Education & Training**
    - Subjects: Universities, schools, adult education, training.
    - 2020 Lead: Kim Raddison
    - Suggested contributors: University leadership, TCS administration, workforce staff
- **Late Projects** - A Review Panel may accept and review a project submitted after the deadline up until the time the panel submits a final report of its recommendations to the Committee.

4. **Evaluation Criteria**
   - **Committee Criteria** - In selecting projects, the Review Panels and Committee will consider the following factors:
     - o **Economic Growth Potential** - The sustained ability to create high-value jobs and increase tax revenue; or to improve the overall community environment for workers and employers for long-term.
     - o **Cost-Effectiveness** - Providing a good return on investment for the community; creating the maximum positive effect for the least cost.
     - o **Maturity** - The project is ready for funding. Examples of maturity include:
       - a budget with identified sources of revenue
       - matching funds already raised or committed
       - completed detailed plans
       - vetting with affected stakeholders
       - confirmed community support
       - support from affected political jurisdictions
       - in the case of construction, an appropriate level of design
     - o **Feasibility** - A project is feasible if funds for this kind of project and the dollar amount requested are within the range of funds typically allocated to this type of project.
     - o **Sustainability** – Plan for maintenance and longevity of the project
     - o **Impact** - The overall long-term effect the project is expected to have on the City of Tiffin.
     - o **Support** - Support is measured by the number and depth of commitment of individuals and organizations in favor of the project; also by the lack of opposition.
   - **Mandatory Review Panel Criteria** - The Review Panels should give higher priority to mature and feasible projects that stand a greater chance of receiving funding.
   - **Optional Review Panel Criteria** - Subject to the guidelines stated in this process, the Review Panels shall have discretion to select additional criteria for establishing categories for each project. Review Panels should review criteria annually and update them, if necessary. As part of the routine business, a Review Panel shall take a vote on the criteria for the following year; otherwise, the previous year's criteria will carry over for the following year. Criteria shall be published online.

5. **Public Input**
Public comment shall be solicited. Project information will be available for the public to review and comment.

6. **Project Sponsor Responsibilities**
   - **Application** - Project sponsors apply by completing a form or forms provided by the Committee.
   - **Point Person** - Project sponsors shall provide a designated individual who will be responsible for communicating and answering questions of the review panel and/or TCDC.

7. **Committee and Review Panel Activities**
   - **Process Start** - The process shall start in August or as soon as possible thereafter of each year with an announcement of the details, rules, timetable, deadlines, forms, and contacts for questions.
   - **Dissemination of Information** - The information about the process should be disseminated to as many groups and likely project sponsors as possible. Participants in the process in previous years should also be notified.
   - **Categorization by Review Panel** - Each Review Panel shall categorize projects submitted to that Review Panel. The categorized list shall be forwarded to the TCDC.
   - **Action by the Committee** - The Committee shall consider the recommendations of the Review Panels. The Committee may do the following:
     - Accept the recommended list of the Review Panel as submitted;
     - Ask the Review Panel to reconsider a project or projects on the recommended list;
     - Amend the recommended list;
     - Add a project of particular merit that had not previously been reviewed by a Review Panel; provided that the project had been submitted to the Review Panel in advance of the Committee meeting and that a motion to add the project is adopted by a two- thirds majority of the Committee.
   - **Additions to the List** (Special Circumstances) - The Committee Chair may add projects to the community reviewed list under the following circumstances after the Committee meets. Notification of any such project shall be made to members of the Committee.
     - At the request of a member of the Congressional Delegation, City Council or Mayor
     - In consultation with the appropriate Review Panel, if the project meets an urgent and widely recognized community need or if a timely funding source is presented
   - **Presentation of Lists** - The Committee may present the appropriate lists to local, state or national leaders, local foundations, or other bodies where there is an opportunity for funding.

8. **Additional Guidelines**
   - **Conflict of Interest** - To minimize conflicts of interest, panel members should inform the Review Panel, and members of the TCDC should inform the TCDC of their associations with any project under review. The lead of the Review Panel or the chair of the TCDC may ask a member to recuse themselves in the case of a conflict of interest.
   - **Objectivity** - In making recommendations for projects, the TCDC and Review Panels shall not consider membership in TSEP or any organization that leads a Review Panel.
   - **Two-Year Categorization** - A project submitted in a state capital budget year that is evaluated and receives a category listing can receive the same category listing for a second consecutive year without additional evaluation, provided the project sponsor affirms that the project and its need have not been changed substantially.

9. **Advocacy Responsibilities**
   - **Primary Advocacy Responsibility** - Primary advocacy responsibility shall remain with the sponsors of the project, with the Committee and its staff playing a supporting role.
   - **Staff Support** - Project sponsors who participate in the process shall be supported by TSEP staff, to the extent feasible.
   - **Respect for Process** - It is expected, in the course of their advocacy activities, that project sponsors shall be respectful of the decisions of the Review Panel in terms of the categorization of their project.
   - **Agreement between Process Participants and TCDC** - Project sponsors who agree to participate in the process are expected to support the overall process. Sponsors of any project, no matter where it appears on the

categorized lists, are under no obligation to limit their own advocacy activities in support of their project, as long as they acknowledge the outcomes of the process.

10.   Annual Schedule
- September 1 through November 12 - Project Solicitation: anyone can submit projects online
- November 12 – Project Submission Deadline; then shortly after the deadline, we enter into the Open Comment Period where the projects are posted online for public review.
- December 1 – Comment Period Closed. Projects go to the Review Panel Chairs, who distribute project information to the committee members.
- January – Review Panels meet to classify each project as "priority," "recommended," or "reviewed." In State Capital Budget years and CDBG years, they are also prioritized in order (ranked).
- February – Full TCDC meets to approve the panel recommendations, and in State Capital Budget & CDBG years, to prioritize (rank) the overall list.
- Mid-February – the TCDC, TSEP Staff and City administration present to state legislators or other bodies where funding is available
- Note – if state legislators need it earlier in a state capital budget, the schedule is moved up

11.   Amendment
These Guidelines and Procedures may be modified by a majority vote of the TCDC with advance notice provided in writing or email to the members of the TCDC.

Background on the PIPP and TCDC

TSEP's Involvement with Tiffin's Community Development
Whereas economic development is the process of promoting and facilitating investments by private businesses that create and retain jobs, community development is the process of promoting and facilitating investments into community assets that increase quality of life. Since 1990, the Tiffin-Seneca Economic Partnership (TSEP), formerly SIEDC, has been involved with community development inside the city of Tiffin, originally with housing programs, over the last couple of years as the administrator of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, and most recently as the leader of the downtown Main Street Program.

Community Development is a Team Sport
It's critical to be mindful that there are a large number of other organizations and individuals engaged in community development initiatives in Tiffin. These include, but are not limited to, the Mayor, City Engineer, Parks Director, City Council, committees and commissions (e.g., Shade Tree), as well as other city employees; County Commissioners, elected officials and departments (e.g., Seneca County JFS, MHRSB, Health Department), and team members; the Seneca Regional Planning Commission (i.e., active transportation, transit, the multi-jurisdictional comp plan, etc.); local foundations (e.g., TCF, NM, Meschech-Frost, Webster, Mercy Health); local businesses and business leaders (e.g., East Green, Clouse-Kirian Leadership Park, Frost-Kalnow Stadium, new downtown bike racks, Mercy Community Nature Preserve); local organizations, nonprofits, and associations (e.g., United Way, Leadership Seneca County, Rotary, Kiwanis, All Patriots Memorial, Helping Hands, Homelessness Coalition); educational institutions (Heidelberg, TU, NCOESC, TCS, Sentinel Career Center); state and federal officials and agencies; everyday citizens and volunteers doing good; and many, many more. Community Development is definitely a team sport.

Historical Context – TSEP & CDBG

TSEP has been working over the last several years to improve the way we lead and facilitate community development for the City of Tiffin.

- For years, Tiffin's CDBG program was administered by Karen Bowers, a 25-year veteran, who knew the complex program well and worked directly with the city administration to determine project priorities. In 2015, the State started requiring a formal plan for community engagement in strategic decisions, known as the [Community Development Implementation Strategy](#) or CDIS. As part of the CDIS, a (Tiffin) Community Development Committee was created, a prioritized list of project ideas was created, and community was asked to contributed ideas (see [article](#)).
- In 2016, Karen retired, and TSEP retained CT Consultants to help administer the program on an interim basis. Open community meetings were held in the city's wards to talk about CDBG, solicit project ideas, and receive feedback on the list developed (see [article](#)). Thanks to CT's help, the City applied for and received its $150,000 allocation plus an additional $300,000 in discretionary downtown revitalization funds (see [article](#)). This money helped with streetscaping along the East Green and provided additional façade enhancement funds.
- In 2018, CT worked with Tiffin City council members to identify projects in a concentrated process, and improvements to Riverview Park were chosen. The park improvements have been completed, and it was a good project directly emanating from a resident (representing true community engagement). However, a better, longer, and more engaged process was sought.
- In 2019, TSEP raised additional funding, created a new position, and brought on a new full-time team member, Audrey Flood, to focus on community development and improve the process. Once Audrey started full-time in June, she began meeting with Tiffin City council members to hear about their priorities and learn about project ideas. She worked hard to familiarize herself with the program, and although, the coronavirus pandemic disrupted plans to hold public meetings early in the year, public meetings were indeed held in late spring/early summer.
- In February 2020, the Tiffin Community Development Committee (TCDC) was reconstituted and relaunched, with the goal of improving the process and developing a prioritized list of projects that would not only help meet the CDIS requirements but also serve as an advisory body (also the original goal in 2016) to help identify, define, and prioritize a list of community development projects for a variety of funding sources (not just CDBG). This list would provide local, state, and federal officials, as well as local foundations, a sense of the community's priorities. State Representative Reineke, Mayor Montz, and other stakeholders have expressed a desire for an improved process and project list on an annual basis.
- Given coronavirus and the newness of the committee, it didn't have the chance to go through a true project identification, definition, and prioritization process, but it did affirm the best project for the most recent round of CDBG allocation funding – Nature Trails park – a project that the City Engineer's office designed. An application for funding was submitted last month, and we look forward to hearing the result in September.

An Advisory Role

As with the original committee in 2016, it's important to note that the TCDC does not intend to inhibit, restrict, or control the decisions of any elected or appointed officials, but to provide them useful information and "ammunition" in order to (1) increase the competitiveness of grant and other funding applications and request and (2) to increase the total overall amount of funding the community is able to procure. One of the benefits of this initiative, is that the officials retain the ability to exercise their full discretion regarding projects.

Improving a Process

In order to significantly improve 2016 and 2018 processes, we are looking to have the TCDC implement a localized and adjusted version of the successful approach used in the Dayton Region called the Priority Development Advisory Committee or PDAC process.