



Connected Communities Breakthrough Project FAQs

What is the Breakthrough Fund?

The Foellinger Foundation developed the Breakthrough Fund as part of its 60th Anniversary to positively influence the quality of life in Allen County by encouraging and supporting ideas that help residents lead fulfilling and connected lives. The NIIC was awarded two-year support for the Connected Communities Project.

What is the Connected Communities Breakthrough Project?

In the Connected Communities Breakthrough Project, The NIIC will partner with trusted connectors to reach potential entrepreneurs in under-represented groups. Trusted connectors will bridge the gap between the entrepreneurial resources at The NIIC and high potential entrepreneurs who are don't often use The NIIC's services. These trusted connectors, along with The NIIC, form a connected community of mentoring, encouragement, and support to the potential business builders and entrepreneurs as they go through the process of ideating, cultivating, and converting a business idea into a viable and sustainable business concept or venture.

Who are potential clients for the entrepreneurial services?

The potential clients benefiting the most from this program will be under-represented communities with entrepreneurial talent in Allen County. Communities with smart, resilient, capable entrepreneurs who may lack the resources, network, confidence, and opportunities to start a business. This might include, but not be limited to, rural citizens, women, immigrants, minorities, ex-offenders, and disabled persons.

Who are the partners in this project?

Partners include Allen County organizations who deliver job skills and placement services to their clients, have built solid, trusting relationships with their clients, and have a trusting relationship with The NIIC. They can act as a conduit or connector to help potential entrepreneurs receive resources and coaching from The NIIC to start a business. The initial organizations working together for this project are Allen County Public Library, Women's Entrepreneurial Opportunity Center (WEOC), The League for The Blind and Disabled, Blue Jacket, and Amani Family Services.

What results do you expect from this project?

Through entrepreneurship, inclusive and diverse entrepreneurs and business builders will have opportunities to more fully and actively participate in economic prosperity and social well-being creating new companies and jobs.

What should be involved in the project?

The NIIC actively seeks to engage diverse entrepreneurs in Allen County at every stage of business. These motivated entrepreneurs will receive individual and venture-specific assistance. The NIIC also looks to add additional trusted connector organizations who can fill the role of introducer, organizer, and provide a meeting place for these diverse entrepreneurs across Allen County.

How can I learn more or get involved?

We would love to hear from any organization or person who would like to access support, learn more, or get involved. Visit TheNIIC.Org to find out more or contact Mike Fritsch, mfritsch@niic.net, telephone 260-407-6442.