

iisc.uiowa.edu

How does IISC provide mutual benefits for UI students and community partners?

IISC brings together communities and students to partner on projects addressing the environmental, equity, economic, and cultural issues communities face today. IISC invests University of Iowa faculty and student time to increase the capacity of Iowa communities and to help them plan for a sustainable future. By taking students out of the classroom and into communities to complete real-world projects, IISC accomplishes two university-wide goals: enhancing sustainability across the state and transforming teaching and learning at the University of Iowa.

What types of project opportunities are available through IISC?

Based on our experience working with community and campus partners on hundreds of projects since 2009, IISC has bundled University of Iowa engaged-learning courses that have a strong track record of success and impact in communities. An IISC community can expect 15 projects from a variety of disciplines, including: planning, engineering, law, marketing, geography, film, public art, library science, and museum studies. While these are our core campus partners, we can consider additional disciplines to best match the needs of community partners. Additional details about the 15 project opportunities are included as an attachment.

How can communities identify projects that are well-suited for the IISC partnership?

IISC staff is available to help you throughout the project development process. Communities should first consider the 15 project types included in the IISC partnership. Using these as a starting point, communities may consider reaching out to key stakeholders and organizations to solicit ideas for projects. Community stakeholders might include: Elected Officials, City Administrators, Economic Developers, Planners, Conservationists, Superintendents, Police Chiefs, Public Health Officials, City Engineers, Chambers of Commerce, Main Street Directors, Art Councils, Non-Profit Organizations, Emergency Management, Social Service Providers, and so on.

Communities are further encouraged to review the Star Community Ratings system (www.starcommunities.org) to gain a better understanding of sustainability indicators that may help identify projects. While working toward designation as a STAR Community is a significant undertaking, the framework may be useful to assess sustainability strengths and weaknesses, and therefore opportunities to collaborate with IISC.

Additionally, projects completed through past IISC partnership can generate ideas for prospective community partners. For project reports from each completed IISC project, as well as descriptions for current projects, please visit <https://iisc.uiowa.edu/partnerships>.

How long does the IISC partnership last?

An IISC community partnership is built around one academic year (August – May). IISC also works with community partners for several months leading up to the beginning of the fall semester, developing projects and working out logistics. The partnership wraps up shortly after the end of the academic year, allowing time for review and sharing of final deliverables.

How does IISC work to ensure high-quality final deliverables?

IISC works with high-achieving graduate and advanced undergraduate students, often on their capstone projects just before graduation. While students take the lead role on completing projects, the best outcomes result from a true collaboration that also involves dedicated and experienced faculty, IISC staff, and invested community partners. IISC director Travis Kraus, with past experience working as an economic developer, chamber director, community planner, and small business owner, oversees the partnership and projects, helping to bridge the gap between community needs and academia. All work is reviewed and edited as necessary to ensure the final work products best meet the needs of community partners.

Does IISC really complete a mural for each of our partnering communities?

A mural is the most common type of public art we do in communities and, yes, our talented MFA students can complete a mural in your community. However, other forms of public art are also possible. IISC has a framework for designing and installing public art pieces that reflect the community identity and values. Public art projects are scaled so that all costs are covered by the financial contribution. Larger-scale projects are possible if additional funding exists.

What are the roles and responsibilities of community partners?

Successful projects and partnerships depend heavily on strong local leadership and guidance. One or two community coordinators will champion the IISC partnership in the community and serve as the central point of contact. The coordinator will serve as a liaison between the community and IISC, and will work directly with IISC Director to oversee the partnership and all projects. A community coordinator should expect to spend 5 hours per week on average working on the IISC partnership.

For each project, project leaders will be the primary point of contact for students and faculty working on that project. Project leads should expect to spend at least one hour per week on the project for each semester the project is in progress. The beginning and end of each project will likely require more time and attention. This work may include preparing background materials, communicating with students and faculty via e-mail, phone calls or video-conferencing or meeting in person, participating in reviews of student work on the projects, and participating in events.

What is the total financial cost of participation in the IISC partnership?

The requested financial contribution from communities is \$50,000. The funds cover all project-related expenses, including travel, printing, public meeting materials, etc. Communities will have no additional costs to complete the proposed 15 projects. The total financial contribution and number of projects is negotiable.

Can the financial contribution be split among multiple community organizations?

Yes, communities can choose to fund their contribution through collaborations with other groups, such as county or state agencies, school and watershed districts, chambers of commerce, non-profits, community foundations, or other local organizations. IISC can provide examples of how past partners have shared costs among multiple partners.

Can the financial contribution be split over two fiscal years?

Yes. We can be flexible with payment arrangements. By default, IISC will invoice community partners according to the following breakdown and timeline:

- 25% upon entering into an agreement (due by the June prior to the academic year)
- 25% upon completion of the fall semester (due by the January of the academic year)
- 50% upon completion of the academic year (due by the June following the academic year)

What are other reasons communities choose to partner with IISC?

The IISC partnership is a very exciting and productive year for community partners, and its definitely a big deal for the University of Iowa! One of the intangible outcomes of the partnership we've seen is that community members and organizations coalesce around this initiative, thinking about new ways to take on big challenges. Communities tap into student creativity and faculty expertise to take on big challenges and get projects "unstuck". We've seen student projects lead to significant private investment, such as a \$500,000 private contribution for a new student-designed park in Sioux City, and we've seen communities save significantly on consulting fees because they can build on IISC work. Our partnering communities also get a lot of attention through media coverage and a high profile in University of Iowa marketing. Our past community partners have become our biggest champions, and are happy to talk about their experience with prospective IISC communities.