



Bowen Center for Public Affairs



January 2009

Dear Community Leader:

Difficult economic times like these create a unique challenge for cities, towns, counties and regions: On the one hand, they must find new and creative ways to set themselves apart as vibrant places to live, work, play and do business; on the other hand, they have a harder time finding the resources needed to pursue those new ideas.

We want to help.

In an effort to help multi-county regions in Indiana address their most challenging policy and community concerns, the Bowen Center for Public Affairs at Ball State University and the Indiana Humanities Council, along with a distinguished roster of partners, are offering regions the opportunity to develop one-day community workshops addressing their own unique needs.

By early 2009, four Indiana regions will be chosen for participation through an application process. Recognizing that no cookie-cutter solution will work for all regions, we will work with each of the areas individually to develop customized, targeted programs.

Our objective is simple: To facilitate conversations that will broaden opportunities for collaboration and help communities develop solutions to compete in these challenging times. After the workshops, the Bowen Center for Public Affairs will continue to help the regions with access to resources and ongoing consultation.

You'll find details about the workshops on the following pages. We look forward to working with you to strengthen your community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ray Scheele".

Dr. Ray Scheele
Co Director
Bowen Center for Public Affairs

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sally Jo Vasicko".

Dr. Sally Jo Vasicko
Co Director
Bowen Center for Public Affairs

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Keira Amstutz".

Keira Amstutz
President and CEO
Indiana Humanities Council

Bowen Center/Humanities Council Community Workshops

Purpose of Workshops:

We have designed these workshops as a way to support Indiana communities and regions looking for solutions to some their most challenging and timely issues. The workshops will:

- Convene regional conversations among community leaders and citizens from public, private and non-profit sectors to address major challenges facing communities.
- Evaluate possible solutions for addressing community challenges and discuss best practices.
- Provide regions with access to resources, technology, and expertise in the creation of solutions to regional problems.
- Provide ongoing consultation among regional leaders through the Bowen Center for Public Affairs at Ball State University.

Partners:

If your region is selected, the following partners have agreed to lend their expertise and resources to your community as a part of this workshop program.

- The Bowen Center for Public Affairs
- Indiana Humanities Council
- Indiana Chamber of Commerce
- Association of Indiana Counties
- Indiana Association of Cities and Towns
- Jeffersonville Chapter of the NAACP
- Inside Indiana Business with Gerry Dick

Workshop Agenda:

The 2009 Regional Workshops will present the latest insights into how to develop competitive community strategies through collaboration, open dialogue, well-leveraged human capital and cultural assets, and a shared vision for the region across public, private, and non-profit sectors. The workshops are interactive and participatory. Recognizing the importance of action as well as vision, the agenda will be designed to bring us into an open civic dialogue.

The workshops will begin at 9 a.m. and end around 3 p.m. A nominal fee will be charged to participants to cover the cost of meals and materials. The cost of the speakers, planning and promotion will be covered by the Bowen Center, the Indiana Humanities Council and event sponsors.

Areas of Focus:

If chosen for participation, your region can select from the following menu of issues to customize your agenda:

- **Green Agenda/Sustainability** – Cities, towns and counties are anxious to do their part to conserve energy and promote environmental sustainability. We will focus on the elements of a cost-effective green agenda and show how local governments can develop their own environmental sustainability plans.
- **Community/Economic Development** – Affordable housing, rejuvenated commercial corridors, new jobs – these are important priorities for cities and towns. We will look at new tools available

to communities and show how they can be used to make a difference in the quality of life and the quality of place in Indiana's cities and towns.

- **Arts and Culture as a Community Development Strategy** – Many cities and towns have learned that enhancing their arts and cultural environment not only can make a big difference in how residents feel about their communities, but also can affect economic development and education. We will show how cities and towns have created, funded and implemented an arts-and-culture strategy and how it can be done in communities across Indiana.
- **Local Government Reform** – In the last several sessions, the Indiana General Assembly has considered government restructuring proposals in individual counties and statewide. The Kernan-Shepard Report on local government reform, including government consolidation, will be a major focus in the 2009 session. Tax restructuring has impacted cities, towns and counties profoundly. We will focus on how cities, towns and counties can work and plan within this new environment and deliver services as well or better to their residents.
- **Education Reform** – Communities across Indiana are looking for new ways to strengthen public education. We will explore innovative new developments in education reform and discuss ways that cities, towns, and counties can become more involved in public education.

Post-Meeting Follow Up:

The Bowen Center for Public Affairs will offer follow-up assistance for community officials and leaders committed to undertaking action plans that will advance initiatives emerging from workshop discussions. The assistance will consist of consultation with Center staff regarding plan implementation, sharing information about best practices, practical advice for creating workable plans of action, and opportunities for collaboration and exchange of ideas and experiences.

How can my region apply?

To apply, please submit a letter of interest by **January 20, 2009**, to the e-mail address below. Include the following:

- Name and contact information of lead community partner.
- Definition of region and list of top workshop partners.
- Selection of issue/issues from the above menu.
- Three potential dates between February 1 and May 1, 2009.

When will we know if our region is selected?

Four regions will be selected and notified by the end of January 2009.

On behalf of all of the partner organizations, we encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to bring this resource to your community. If you have any questions, please contact Raymond Scheele and Sally Jo Vasicko, Co Directors, Bowen Center for Public Affairs, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-8982, rscheele@bsu.edu, svasicko@bsu.edu. For your convenience, this information is also listed on the Bowen Center website at <http://www.bsu.edu/politicalscience/bowencenter/>.