



**BOWEN CENTER
FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**2013 COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS WILL HELP REGIONS BETTER UNDERSTAND
THEIR PAST AND PLAN FOR STATE'S UPCOMING BICENTENNIAL**

Cities, counties and regions encouraged to apply for facilitated workshop; deadline is March 15.

INDIANAPOLIS - (Jan. 23, 2013) - Cities, counties and regions across Indiana are encouraged to apply for a facilitated workshop in their community that could help them better understand their past and prepare for a monumental event in their future – Indiana's Bicentennial. Each year the Bowen Center for Public Affairs at Ball State University and Indiana Humanities hold a Community Conversations series designed to help communities tackle challenging issues. The focus of the Community Conversation series for the next three years will be Bicentennial 2016: The Next Indiana. The 2013 deadline to apply is March 15.

"During the past 200 years, Indiana communities have changed a great deal in size, economics, and government structure," said Dr. Sally Jo Vasicko, co-director of the Bowen Center for Public Affairs. "These workshops will help serve as a catalyst for the necessary, but difficult, conversations about how communities can prepare for the next 200 years."

If selected, communities will develop a local steering committee and meet with Indiana Humanities and the Bowen Center for Public Affairs to create a customized program to be held in summer or fall, 2013. A dozen statewide organizations also provide resources to the program.

The goals of the Community Conversations will be to:

- Convene regional conversations among community leaders and citizens from public, private and non-profit sectors to better understand the community's past and future;
- 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 to continue to address these challenges.

"We're looking for communities that want to come together and discuss what they want to become and how they can build upon their strengths to get there," said Keira Amstutz, president and CEO of

Indiana Humanities. "The agenda will be tailored to each community's needs and be designed to bring communities into an open civic dialogue that recognizes the importance of both vision and action."

The workshops vary by community and audience. They are typically a one-day workshop that spans several hours, beginning in the morning and concluding in mid-afternoon. However, they can also be a two-hour event with a keynote speaker, a mobile bus tour, or anything in between. A nominal fee can 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 for Public Affairs, Indiana Humanities, and event sponsors. After the workshops, The Bowen Center for Public Affairs will provide additional consultation as requested.

The following partners have agreed to lend their expertise and support as a part of this program:

- 2016 Indiana Bicentennial Commission
- Community Based Projects, Ball State University
- Governor's Council for People with Disabilities
- Indiana Association of Cities and Towns
- Indiana Chamber of Commerce
- Indiana Farm Bureau
- Indiana Grantmakers Alliance
- Indiana Historical Society
- Indiana Landmarks
- Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs
- Indiana Office of Tourism Development
- *Inside INdiana Business* with Gerry Dick

Regions must submit a proposal by March 15 to Dr. Vasicko at svasicko@bsu.edu or:

Dr. Sally Jo Vasicko, Co-Director
Bowen Center for Public Affairs, North Quad 294
Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana 47306

The following information should be included in the proposal:

- Name and contact information of lead community partner
- List of partner organizations and contact person for each organization (It is recommended that applicants include a broad range of community organizations that will play a role in the planning and implementation process.)
- Three potential dates from June 1, 2013 through November 30, 2013
- Answers to the following questions:
 - Why is this topic an important one to the community?
 - How will better understanding your past help position your community for the future?
 - What do you want to accomplish during the session?
- Applicants will also need to identify a follow-up strategy for after the conversation and provide a name and contact information for the person leading the follow-up session.

Communities will be selected and notified by mid-April, 2013.

Visit www.bowencenterforpublicaffairs.org for more information, or contact Dr. Vasicko at 765.285.5875.

Over the past four years more than 20 Indiana regions have been selected to participate in the Community Conversation series, which is aimed at helping the community build on its strengths and meet its challenges.

“These workshops are so beneficial because they bring people together for meaningful dialogue and ideation,” said Sally DeVoe, executive director of the Madison County Community Foundation. “Our multi-county community forum was an example of how well it can work. Bringing economic development, business, and community experts together to serve on panels and facilitate conversations was an ideal vehicle for discussion on regional economic growth and collaboration. Only by understanding that we are all ‘in this together’ can we hope to bolster each other’s efforts to improve quality of life, drive economic expansion and promote cooperation with our neighbors.”

About Indiana Humanities

Indiana Humanities connects people, opens minds and enriches lives by creating and facilitating programs that encourage Hoosiers to think, read and talk. Learn more at www.indianahumanities.org.

About the Bowen Center for Public Affairs

The Bowen Center for Public Affairs at Ball State University advances the ideals of civic literacy, community involvement, and public service exemplified by the career of Dr. Otis R. Bowen. The Center leads the way in Indiana toward an energized citizenry and vital community life. Learn more at www.bowencenterforpublicaffairs.org.

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