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Adams County READI Proposal

Project or Program Contact Information

Project/Program Name	M.E.R.I.T Center
Project/Program Contact	Colton Bickel
Project/Program Contact Email	cbickel@adamscountyedc.com
Project/Program Contact Phone	(260) 724-2588
Relationship to Project/Program	Project Coordinator

Project or Program Location

Address	1109 Dayton Street Decatur, IN 46733
County	Adams

Project or Program Details

What type of project/program?	Both
What is the duration of the project/program?	This project is anticipated to be completed over the course of three years, beginning in 2022.
Is this a hybrid project and program?	Yes
Select project/program focus areas. (You can select multiple)	Grow the Workforce Entrepreneurship & Innovation

Share a description of the project/program.

Adams County has a chance to address increased skills training, support entrepreneurship and provide space for community services with the availability of the former Northwest Elementary School, located in Decatur. This opportunity is being pursued by the Adams County Economic Development Corporation (ACEDC), local businesses, schools, municipalities, and local Foundations. The goal of this collaboration is to transform the 55,000 square foot building into a center to serve the needs of Adams County and the surrounding area. This new facility has been named the MERIT Center: to build Momentum through Education, Resources, Innovation & Technology.

The idea of an Education/Training Center in Adams County has been discussed for many years with multiple variations, but always lost steam due to a lack of a facility. This specific iteration began in 2018 when a group of local individuals became aware that the soon to be vacant Northwest Elementary School could fulfill what had ultimately stopped previous attempts.

This group led efforts for the City of Decatur to purchase the facility, which was completed in July 2019. The City then entered into an MOU with the Adams County Economic Development Corporation (ACEDC) to get the wheels off the ground.

The efforts being put forth by the MERIT Center Board have been successful, and the Board is now ready to take the next steps to increase the usage and occupancy of the MERIT Center. To that end, the MERIT Center Board plans to make several upgrades to the facility that make it usable and marketable to potential tenants, educational providers, and entrepreneurs. These upgrades, which are outlined below, are anticipated to be completed via assistance from the READI program.

The MERIT Center Board has identified six physical projects that will be funded via this opportunity. The six projects prepare the building for increased usage, and also create easier management. The MERIT Center Board plans for the following improvements: Door System (key-fob), Security System, HVAC, Bathrooms, Tenant Assistance, General Cosmetic.

The MERIT Center Board also envisions an entrepreneurial environment that fosters the development of ideas and opportunities. The MERIT Center Board plans to create this space at the MERIT Center, with program funding to provide technology, workspace, advisement, etc. to assist entrepreneurs. This space would also serve as a co-working space, allowing those individuals working remotely a place to work and connect.

The MERIT Center Board believes these improvements would allow for the MERIT Center to move into the next phase of development and begin to have the impact that was originally envisioned for the facility. We strongly believe the projects/program mentioned will set the trajectory for continued

and enhanced success for the MERIT Center.

Why is this project/program regionally significant?

The MERIT Center is open for all residents to pursue opportunity and growth. The MERIT Center Board envisions these residents coming from Northeast Indiana, Northwest and West Central Ohio, surrounding counties, and Adams County.

The MERIT Center set out with a vision of making the individual and community a better place, by providing opportunities for growth. The journey to this idea created the following thought that sums up why the MERIT Center Board believes the MERIT Center is regional significant:

We as a Region are better, when we as Individuals are better!

This project would allow for increased capacity and management at/of the MERIT Center. The improvements made to the physical asset will increase the opportunity for regional entities and regional individuals to participate in the offerings provided by the MERIT Center.

One example of this would be the MERIT Center being engaged with several Higher Education providers located within the Northeast Indiana region. These partnerships are created because of the regional need for higher education, but are also contingent upon the capacity within the region to house educational opportunities. Therefore, it is easy to see that someone from a neighboring county may come to the MERIT Center for an education opportunity, rather than make a longer trip for the same opportunity. The upgrades that would come from this funding opportunity would allow for a better environment for these students and enhance the capacities for additional opportunities.

The MERIT Center also sees the creation of an entrepreneur center and co-working space as a regional opportunity, and could conceivably be partnered with other similar spaces throughout the region. It is not a stretch to think that there are individuals in every community willing to get away from their "home" environment for a work day. It is this audience that the MERIT Center Board believe allows for this opportunity to be regional.

The MERIT Center will also have a regional impact via the partnerships created with the current and potential tenants. The current tenants are Regional entities, and not specific to Adams County. The MERIT Center Board evaluates potential tenants based on their service, but also who they are serving. The emphasis has been and will be placed on partners in the regional landscape. It's understood that the first priority for the MERIT Center is elevating the community where its located. However, it is also important for the MERIT Center Board to understand how the region is impacted.

It is easy to understand that the MERIT Center is a regional asset, and the MERIT Center Board believes that the opportunities within its walls are bigger than the four of Adams County.

How does this project/program relate to the identified focus area(s)?

The projects outlined for the MERIT Center accomplish two of the areas of focus set forth for the Northeast Indiana application. The focus areas being addressed with this project are Growing Workforce and Entrepreneurship and Innovation.

The MERIT Center was established to be a location that individuals could come to seek education, training, re-skilling, employment assistance. The facility is well on its way to accomplish this goal with the existing and potential tenants.

The workforce in Adams County is historically one of the best in the State of Indiana, as evidenced by our low unemployment rates. In the months of April and May of 2021, the Adams County unemployment rate was the lowest in the State of Indiana. Therefore, we have to always be seeking new ways to increase our labor pool for the businesses that call Adams County home. The MERIT Center is seen as one of the assets that will help in this effort. The educational opportunities, as well as, the resources located in the MERIT Center are helping and will continue to help bolster the Adams County workforce.

Adams County has never been on the cutting edge of entrepreneurship or innovation, however, it is clear that Adams County is prime for harvest in this arena. In 2019, Adams County hosted a Build Institute program for entrepreneurs. The program was completed by fourteen entrepreneurs in Adams County that sought to develop and seek guidance on their idea. This type of passion should be fostered and with the upgrades to the MERIT Center, that is exactly what will happen.

There are many needs within the Focus Areas of this application, and the MERIT Center Board believes that several can be addressed with the projects being considered in this application.

What is the project/program timeline?

The construction portion of this application would be started and completed in 2022-2023.

The programming for the Entrepreneurship/Innovation Center would run through 2024.

List the partners involved in this project/program.

Adams County Government
City of Decatur
City of Berne
Town of Monroe
Town of Geneva
Adams County Economic Development Corporation
M.E.R.I.T Board
Adams County Community Foundation
Adams County Council on Aging
Adams County Prosecutor
Adams County Early Learning Coalition
Tenants: Bowen Center, Literacy Alliance, Family Centered Services,
Community & Family Services
Common Ground Church & Pathfinder Services
Community Fiber Solutions

Project or Program Finances

Upload a file with project/program finances.

<https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/10970656876>

What is the sustainability of the project/program? Share your 3-year plan.

The MERIT Center Board has set a model for the sustainability for the MERIT Center. This model focuses around the revenue generation from the tenants, with assistance from the building owner the City of Decatur. These two vital components allow for the building and its mission to be sustainable over the course of time.

Lease Space: The MERIT Center has set aside roughly, 25% of its 55,000 sq/ft., as leasable space. This space is anticipated to be completely full by the spring time of 2022, with nearly 50% of that space already being occupied and under lease. It is anticipated that each lease will be considered individually, with some being short-term and some long-term leases. This will be critical when anticipating cash flow and the long-term sustainability of the facility. These uses will allow the MERIT Center Board to collect revenue that will allow for the educational, entrepreneurial, programmable aspects of the MERIT Center to be sustained.

The goal is to have the leasable areas fully extended by the end of 2022, and maintained for additional years.

Rental Space: The MERIT Center will also be available for more one-off type of use through the rental of space. It is anticipated that the rental spaces would be utilized on a regular basis for things such as Educational Programs, Trainings, Annual Dinners, Receptions, Youth Sports, Sports Camps, etc. These events will all be allowable at a rental fee for the space provided. The MERIT Center Board has already begun this effort and has seen success with multiple rentals already being fulfilled.

The MERIT Center has also been engaged with local organizations/agencies /businesses who have committed to supporting the facility. These entities have committed to utilizing the facility for the various needs of their organizations. The MERIT Center has been the host of five drive-thru job fair events, which allowed companies to screen potential employees.

It is anticipated that the rental spaces will be utilized on a regular basis and provide a great source of revenue to sustain the facility.

Overall 3-year Plan: The MERIT Center Board envisions the full occupation of leasable space by Spring time of 2022 and rental use continuing to increase each year by 20% of previous. This will allow the facility to continue to operate on a level that keeps the facility and programs ongoing. It is anticipated that the MERIT Center will make great strides and be 75% self-sustained in three years, however, the MERIT Center Board believes that it will take the MERIT Center five years to be fully self-sustaining.

The anticipated upgrades to the MERIT Center will be the catalyst for the growth and sustaining the facility into the next three to five years.

Describe the return on investment for this project/program.

The MERIT Center Board will view the Return on Investment of this opportunity in a two-fold approach, as its anticipated to fund construction work as well as programs. The metric that will allow the MERIT Center Board to gauge success or "Return of Investment" is below:

The Construction project should help the MERIT Center reach a new level of functionality and management, which will in turn make it more marketable. The MERIT Center Board will view this as a success if the lease occupancy increases to 80% of the leasable space by the end of June 2022. It is also anticipated that the rental spaces would be utilized for a minimum of 5 hours per week beginning in 2022.

The Programmable portion of this project will also be a metric for the MERIT Center Board. The MERIT Center plans to host four entrepreneurial programs per year beginning in 2022. The MERIT Center Board will count this a success if programs run and bring in 10-15 participants per program.

These two measurements will also undoubtedly create new revenue for the MERIT Center, which will ultimately serve as the Return on Investment and allow for additional growth.

Project or Program Assets

Share an image of the project/program. (Option 1) <https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/10970656879>

Share an image of the project/program. (Option 2) <https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/10970656880>

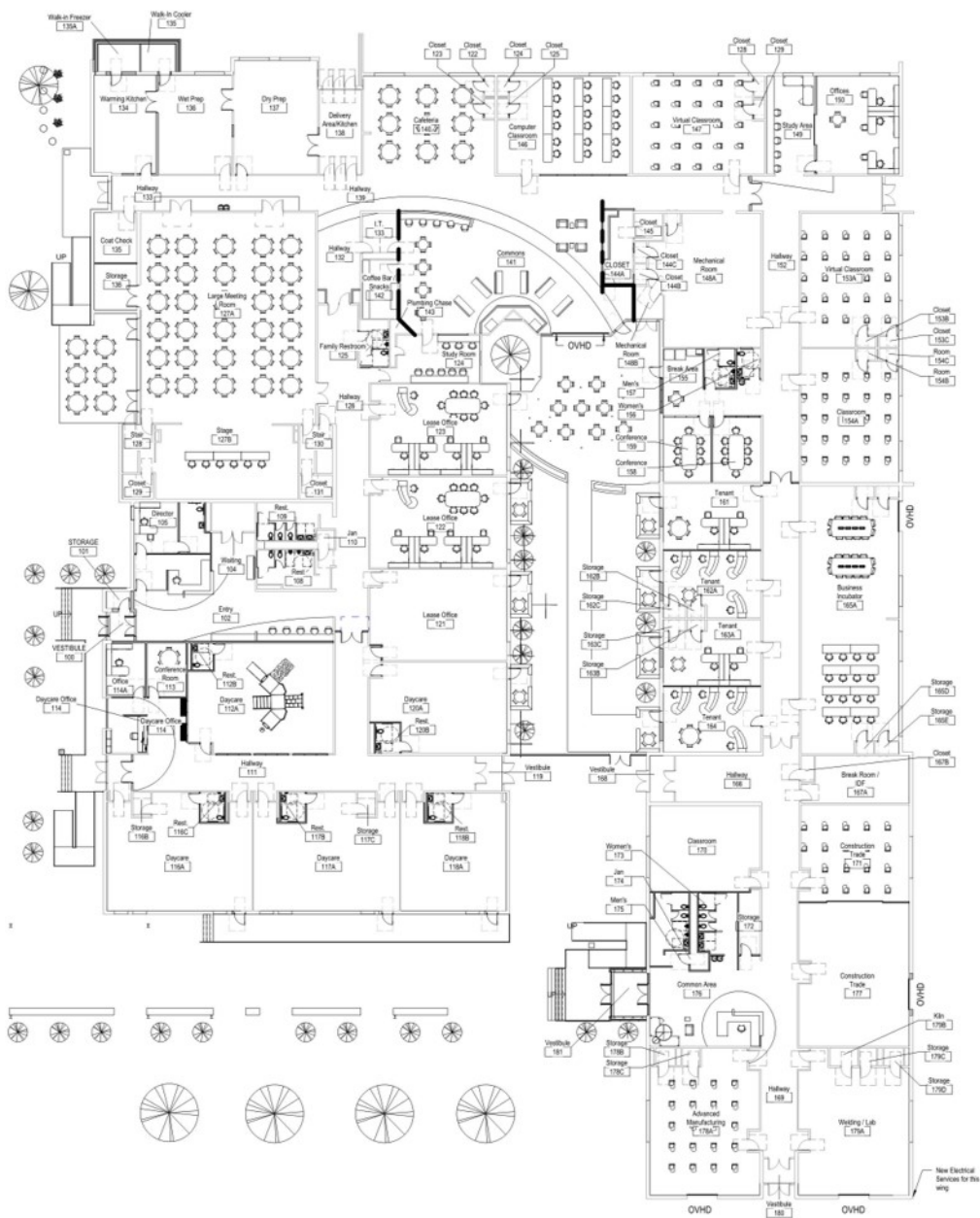
Share an image of the project/program. (Option 3) <https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/10970656881>





M.E.R.I.T. CENTER

DAYCARE



Related Work for :
 ADAMS COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
M.E.R.I.T. Center Renovation - SD
 1109 Dayton Street
 Decatur, IN 46733



221 West Baker Street TEL: 240.422.7994
 Fort Wayne, Indiana 46802 FAX: 240.426.2947



DESIGN BY: Author REVISED BY: Checker
 CONSTRUCTION DATE: 2009 DATE: 2009-11-30

F100

FURNITURE PLAN

Project Name: MERIT CENTER (Adams County)

Project Cost/Budget - Construction Projects (if applicable)

Description		Cost - Fiscal Year 2021	Cost - Fiscal Year 2022	Cost - Fiscal Year 2023	Cost - Fiscal Year 2024	Totals Per Category	% of Total Expense
Door Systems Installation		\$ -	\$ 25,000			\$ 25,000	2%
Security System Installation		\$ -	\$ 25,000			\$ 25,000	2%
HVAC Improvements		\$ -	\$ 300,000			\$ 300,000	19%
Bathrooms Improvements		\$ -	\$ 92,400	\$ 387,200		\$ 479,600	31%
Tenant Assistance		\$ -	\$ 636,500			\$ 636,500	41%
Cosmetic Improvements		\$ -	\$ 75,000			\$ 75,000	5%
Project Construction Expenses Totals per year		\$ -	\$ 1,153,900	\$ 387,200	\$ -		
Total Construction Expenses Project Cost		\$ 1,541,100					

Project Cost/Budget - Programs (if applicable)

Description		Cost - Fiscal Year 2021	Cost - Fiscal Year 2022	Cost - Fiscal Year 2023	Cost - Fiscal Year 2024	Totals Per Category	% of Total Expense
Entrepreneurial Programming		\$ -	\$ 50,707	\$ 50,707	\$ 50,706	\$ 152,120	100%
		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0%
		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0%
		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0%
Project Program Expense Totals per year		\$ -	\$ 50,707	\$ 50,707	\$ 50,706		
Total Program Expenses Project Cost (all fiscal years)		\$ 152,120					

Funding Source

Description		Cost - Fiscal Year 2021	Cost - Fiscal Year 2022	Cost - Fiscal Year 2023	Cost - Fiscal Year 2024	Totals Per Category	% of Total Expense
READI		\$ -	\$ 333,220	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 333,220	20%
Other Funds \$		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0%
Private/Philanthropic Funds \$		\$ 635,000	\$ 150,000	\$ 150,000	\$ 85,000	\$ 1,020,000	60%
Local Government Funds \$		\$ 100,000	\$ 80,000	\$ 80,000	\$ 80,000	\$ 340,000	20%
Project Income Totals per year		\$ 735,000	\$ 563,220	\$ 230,000	\$ 165,000	\$ 1,693,220	
Total Project Income (all fiscal years)		\$ 1,693,220.00					
Total Project Cost (all fiscal years; Construction Expenses + Program)		\$ 1,693,220.00					