

## Urban Sustainability Innovator Profile: Jacqui Bauer

**Jacqui Bauer (Bloomington) oversees sustainability programming, where she navigates town-gown opportunities and receives guidance from the USDN Small Cities User Group.**

What is the most innovative sustainability effort you've led or been part of?

Jacqui: "The [Hoosier to Hoosier \(H2H\) Community Sale](#) makes me feel like we're breaking new ground in Bloomington." In the words of the program website, "Hoosier to Hoosier (H2H) is a reuse program that aims to do three things: 1.) Divert reusable items from the landfill during student move-out, 2.) Prevent additional resource consumption by selling collected items to students and community members, and 3.) Raise funds for local charities and other organizations."

What makes the Hoosier to Hoosier program innovative?

Jacqui: "The H2H concept itself isn't that innovative, but the tools we designed to spread our resources are." Each year during a massive goods collection season, the program culminates with a yard sale. But this is not your typical yard sale. Think: a huge warehouse with 45 tons of reusable products. (Check out this [time-lapse video](#) from sale day.) "There is so much stuff that needs to be moved and sorted and cleaned, yet I am an office of one. So we created a volunteer compensation program," Jacqui explained. The Indiana University Office of Sustainability and the City of Bloomington's Department of Economic and Sustainable Development partner with local nonprofits such as the animal shelter. The shelter recruits H2H volunteers from their existing volunteer list. In exchange, H2H donates up to \$1,000 from the sale proceeds for 100 hours to the nonprofit that recruited the volunteer. "Their volunteer does the work for the yard sale because they are motivated to get the donation for the nonprofit they already know and trust. The other benefit is you get all these other people involved who wouldn't self-identify as caring about waste issues and wouldn't come to the table to learn this."

You joined the USDN Innovation Fund Steering Committee a year ago. What motivated you to volunteer?

Jacqui: "I've benefited tremendously from the fund, and I wanted to give back." She notes that the grant team she leads that is building the Rent Rocket tool is also creating a resource to boost market demand for sustainable rental housing. Not only will this new tool benefit her community - where 50% of the 82,000 people are students - but it will be applicable to any community interested in greening their rental housing stock. Aside from her gratitude for receiving a grant through the Innovation Fund, Jacqui wanted to give back to the network because "the products and projects are a great indicator of what is important in the field and to my colleagues. What comes out of the network gives me a goal and a reference to help me keep my compass tuned. It's an honor to be part of it."

Describe your experience on the Innovation Fund Steering Committee.

Jacqui: "The Innovation Fund uses a very different framework for a grants program, especially compared to federal options. It's a group that puts genuine thought into what their colleagues are trying to accomplish. The Steering Committee works with you to hit your mark, giving the member the benefit of the doubt. We are about enabling these projects to happen not just approving their proposal."

You have an interesting perspective being a Steering Committee member and a lead grantee. Do you have any reflections about the fund based on your grantee experience?

Jacqui: "I feel like the fund enables me to invest in the Rent Rocket project because in order to get the money I don't have to spend all the time serving the grantor with extensive reporting and change order processes. It's given me room to explore what possible solutions might be while tackling a huge challenge no one has the answer to. Failure is OK; failure is part of finding the answer."

You participate in the USDN Small Cities User Group. How is that going?

Jacqui: "This is probably one of the most valuable things I've gotten out of USDN. During these calls, one or more members prepare information to present a specific challenge they need help with. Then the group really digs into the details together. It's a focused and deep dive. So many of us are functioning in a vacuum with city co-workers who don't know what we're actually doing. Participating in this user group is like having additional staff on your team."