Title of initiative to be proposed:

Empowered Democracy in Communities: Collaborative Systems for Local Self-Governance in the 21st Century

Name of lead PI, with title, department/school:

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Key team member names and departments/schools (up to 10 names):

David Audretsch, Professor and Ameritech Chair, SPEA and IU Network Science Institute Affiliated Faculty; Claudia Avellaneda, Associate Professor, SPEA Local Governance Initiative Affiliated Faculty and Ostrom Workshop Affiliated Faculty; Robert Kravchuk, Professor, SPEA Local Governance Initiative; Sean Nicholson-Crotty, Professor, SPEA Local Governance Initiative Affiliated Faculty; Barry Rubin, Professor Emeritus, SPEA Local Governance Initiative Affiliated Faculty; Terry Amsler, Adjunct Lecturer, SPEA and former Director,

Description of area to be proposed. What constitutes this area of research or creative activity as emerging? (Word limit=500)

Commentators say U.S. democracy is at risk. Trust in government is at an all-time low; adversarial partisanship is high. National legal and institutional structures enabled capital to create extreme wealth -- and extreme inequality in distribution. The press is under attack and faces an unprecedented challenge building a national consensus on what facts are true. Electoral districts for both state legislatures and the U.S. House of Representatives are so badly gerrymandered that citizens are losing faith in the power of voting. Millennial surveys report low support for democracy.

The Federalist Papers' authors argued for dividing society and government into smaller and smaller parts and interests to avoid the tyranny of the majority. They believed separation of powers provided a structure to elicit voluntary collaboration in the interest of the common good; change requires broad consensus.

Scholars observe that effective governance involves all sectors, public, private, nonprofit, and civic, in agreeing on collective action. Increasingly, communities need to engage in collaboration with cross-sector stakeholders to address common goals for solving 'wicked' problems across policy arenas including public finance, sustainability, transportation, economic development, land use, poverty, social services, and health care. For example, local governments need assistance with place-based research on economic and community development, leading to better jobs and incomes.

To make collaboration work, scholars point to leadership in tackling a difficult problem; stakeholders seeing advantages in collaborating; a situation that needs to improve; a shared mission, shared goals, and trust; and bringing a positive attitude to the table. Yet, other scholars see the local democratic participation and self-organization that de Tocqueville described as now diminishing and hyper-pluralism growing. What practical steps can the academy take to support the health of our democracy?

Citizens and stakeholders need collaborative governance. This means public engagement, cross-sector collaboration, and information systems to help communities build shared knowledge for problem-identification and problem-solving. Communities need systematic access to big data for making policy decisions. Communities may lack infrastructure for collaborative governance in the form of a portal, convening organization, or lead organization in a network to bring together cross-sector organizations and convene public deliberation. Imagine a 21st Century infrastructure for democratic collaborative governance. What would it look like? How would it work?

IU has faculty who could support communities by building systems for democratic and collaborative self-governance involving citizens, residents, and stakeholders from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Together, faculty can develop and pilot systems thinking and collaborative governance infrastructure for communities in Indiana, providing the basis for outside funding applications to expand to communities in other states.

The team will build connections to centers on campus, within the state, and nationally. One team member is reaching out to AIM, formerly the Indiana Association of Cities and Towns. The team has affiliations with SPEA's Local Governance Initiative, the Ostrom Workshop on Political Theory and Policy Analysis, COAS, and the Indiana University Network Science Institute. The team would seek future funding from foundations that are members of Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE), an affinity group.