IAIS Rail Ready Site Program

Implementation Guide & Checklist

FOR EDO PARTNERS

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This guide is for Economic Development Organization (EDO) staff who are actively working through the IAIS Rail Ready Program. It translates the program overview into concrete, sequential actions with clear timelines, specific deliverables, and expectations at each stage.

Use this document alongside your LOIS listing, Lasso RFI responses, and any materials provided by your IAIS contact. If you have questions at any stage, contact Jim Bowman at **jbowman@iaisrr.com** or **319.981.4798.**

Program Overview

The Rail Ready Site Program is a no-cost, partnership-driven initiative from Iowa Interstate Railroad. Its purpose is straightforward: help EDOs along the IAIS network prepare their rail-adjacent sites to compete effectively for industrial investment, before a real opportunity is on the line.

Speed-to-market is the defining standard in today's industrial site selection process. Site selectors routinely narrow a field of dozens of candidates to a shortlist within days, and they eliminate sites quickly when data is incomplete, utilities are undocumented, or responses are slow. Rail access is a genuine competitive advantage, but only when the supporting documentation and preparation are in place.

The Rail Ready program is organized as a progressive process. Communities do not need perfect documentation before they begin. Each completed step increases a site's competitiveness, reduces perceived risk, and improves your team's ability to respond quickly and confidently when a real inquiry arrives.

Program-at-a-Glance Timeline

Milestone	Timeframe	EDO Action Required	IAIS Provides
Step 1: Introductory Session	Weeks 1–2	Attend introductory webinar, identify sites to enroll	Site selection education, program orientation
Step 2: LOIS & Lasso Training	Weeks 2–4	Complete LOIS training in week 1 & Lasso training in Week 2	Training coordination via Strata
Step 3: Populate LOIS Listing	Weeks 3–5	Enter all available site data into LOIS	Best-practice listing example, review support
Step 4: Practice RFI via Lasso	Days 1–30 post-training	Respond to mock RFI within 30 days	Issue mock RFI modeled on real inquiries
Step 5: Readiness Scorecard & Action Plan	Weeks 10-12	Review scorecard, ask questions, review gaps & priorities	Structured evaluation report, Custom prioritized action plan
Step 6: Action Plan Implementation	Weeks 10-12	Assign internal tasks, Begin making systematic improvements (costs may apply)	Ideation on creating/obtaining funding solutions
Step 7: Ongoing Improvement	Rolling / Ongoing	Implement ongoing improvements & updates in LOIS	Progress reviews, marketing plan & inclusion in IAIS paid marketing upon level of readiness

Note: Timelines above represent a typical progression and will vary based on your team's capacity, the number of sites enrolled, and documentation already in hand. IAIS will work with your schedule.

STEP 1	INTRODUCTORY SESSION	WEEK 1–2

What This Step Is

IAIS conducts a webinar with your team focused on how industrial site selection actually works, from the consultant's perspective. This is not a general overview. It is a working session designed to help your team understand exactly why sites get eliminated early and what documentation and infrastructure clarity make the difference. During the session, Strata Platforms will provide a high-level overview of the LOIS & Lasso platforms as well as training options.

What to Expect

- **Duration**: Approximately 60 minutes, virtually via Microsoft Teams
- **Attendees**: EDO leadership, Strata Platforms, plus anyone who manages site documentation or responds to industrial inquiries
- **Format**: Presentation followed by open discussion: bring questions about your specific sites
- No preparation required before this session, though bringing any existing site data is helpful

What IAIS Will Cover

- How site selectors use screening tools and why early elimination happens quickly
- The documentation hierarchy: what gets checked first and why
- Rail-specific site factors and how IAIS evaluates infrastructure for industrial use
- An introduction to the LOIS & Lasso platforms and how they feeds into consultant workflows
- What the Rail Ready program looks like from start to finish

Your Checklist — Step 1

- ☐ Confirm attendees and schedule session with IAIS - *Include anyone who handles site inquiries or documentation*
- ☐ Identify which site(s) you want to enroll in the program
- ☐ Gather any existing site information before the session (ownership details, utility contacts, zoning status)
- ☐ Take notes or assign someone to document key takeaways
- ☐ Confirm your LOIS account status (existing account or need to create one)

STEP 2	LOIS LISTING & LASSO RFI TRAINING	⏱ WEEKS 2–4

What This Step Is

Your team will receive training on two tools that site selectors and industrial consultants use in their daily work:

- **LOIS** (Location One Information System): the primary online database where site selectors search for and evaluate industrial sites across the country. Your property needs to be listed here with complete, current information to appear in searches.
- **Lasso**: LOIS's integrated Request for Information (RFI) management tool. When a consultant sends an inquiry, Lasso is how you receive it, organize your response, and follow up. This tool is how professional, fast response is made possible.

Training Format

IAIS will coordinate training for your team through Strata (the platforms provider), available as a live session or via recorded training materials. Training typically runs 1 hour per platform. Individual custom training is also available.

What to Expect

- You will leave training knowing how to create and edit your LOIS listing, upload documents and photos, and navigate the platform from a site selector's perspective
- You will understand how Lasso routes incoming RFIs to your account, how to organize a response, and how to document communication
- IAIS will share a best-practice LOIS listing example so you can see what a well-prepared site looks like

Your Checklist — Step 2

- ☐ Confirm LOIS account is active and accessible by your team
- ☐ Attend LOIS platform training (live or recorded)
- ☐ Attend Lasso RFI tool training (live or recorded)
- ☐ Review the best-practice LOIS listing example provided by IAIS
- ☐ Identify the staff member(s) who will be the primary owner of your LOIS listing going forward
- ☐ Test your access — log in to both platforms and confirm you can navigate them

Why This Matters
If your site is not listed in LOIS, it is effectively invisible to a large segment of the site selection community. If your Lasso account is not set up and monitored, you may miss RFIs entirely or respond too slowly to stay in consideration.

STEP 3	POPULATE YOUR LOIS SITE LISTING	WEEKS 3–5

What This Step Is

Using the framework from Step 1 and the platform training from Step 2, your team now completes your LOIS listing with all currently available information. This is the most documentation-intensive step of the program and will likely require coordination with multiple parties including property owners, utilities, and local government.

How to Approach This

Work through the site data categories below. Enter what you have now. Flag what needs to be confirmed or developed. Do not delay listing updates because some information is incomplete - partial, accurate data is better than no data, and IAIS will help you identify what's missing.

Site Data Categories — Minimum Requirements for Initial Screening

Site selectors expect the following information at a minimum during initial screening. If any of these are missing, your site is at higher risk of early elimination:

Site Control & Ownership	Transportation Access
□ Confirmed willing seller or owner contact □ Stated price per acre (or range) □ Parcel acreage (total and usable) □ Legal description and parcel ID □ Current ownership structure (individual, LLC, public, etc.) □ Any known encumbrances or liens	□ Rail carrier name (IAIS) and service details □ Nearest rail switch or terminal and distance □ Road access, highway and/or interstate proximity □ Nearest commercial airport and driving time □ Nearest port or barge access (if applicable) □ Truck turning radius and access point condition

Utilities	Zoning & Permitting
□ **Electric:** provider, voltage available, distance to service □ **Natural gas:** provider, line size, pressure, distance □ **Water:** provider, line size, pressure, daily capacity □ **Sewer:** provider, capacity, distance to main □ **Telecom:** fiber providers, bandwidth available □ **Contact** information for each utility provider	□ Current zoning classification □ Allowable industrial uses under current zoning □ Any variances or special use permits required □ Local permitting authority and contact □ Estimated permitting timeline □ Any known deed restrictions

Additional Documentation: Speed-to-Market Factors

The items below are not always required at first screening, but having them ready significantly improves your site's competitiveness and signals seriousness to consultants. These should be your ***next documentation priorities*** after the minimum data above is complete:

- ☐ **Boundary Survey**: certified, current
- ☐ **Topography Map**: grading and drainage characteristics
- ☐ **Title Report**: confirms clear ownership and no outstanding claims
- ☐ **Wetlands Delineation**: confirms developable area
- ☐ **Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA)**: required by most lenders and many projects
- ☐ **Utility Buildout Plan with Cost Estimates**: how long and how much to bring service to the site
- ☐ **Rail Infrastructure Plan**: switch location, siding capacity, and estimated buildout cost
- ☐ **Workforce Data**: labor availability, wage rates, commute shed
- ☐ **Community Overview**: quality of place, housing, schools, and amenities

Your Checklist — Step 3

- ☐ Complete all minimum site data fields in your LOIS listing
- ☐ Upload any available supporting documents (survey, ESA, zoning map, aerial photo)
- ☐ Add high-quality photos and/or aerial imagery
- ☐ Confirm all utility contact information is current and accurate
- ☐ Note any data gaps directly — document what is unknown so IAIS can advise
- ☐ Ask IAIS to review your draft listing before finalizing

What IAIS Will Do
IAIS will review your listing and provide feedback before you finalize it. Use the best-practice example as your reference point.

STEP 4	PRACTICE RFI USING LASSO	DAYS 1–30 Post-Training

What This Step Is

IAIS will issue a mock Request for Information (RFI) through Lasso, modeled after actual site selector inquiries. Your team has 30 days to prepare and submit a complete response using the Lasso platform.

Why This Practice Round Matters

The first time you receive a real RFI should not be the first time you figure out how to respond. Real RFIs often arrive with tight timelines (sometimes 48–72 hours) and require organized, accurate, professional responses. A disorganized or incomplete response can eliminate a site from consideration immediately, regardless of its actual potential.

This practice run lets you:

- Build your response system and file organization before it counts
- Identify what documentation you don't have yet and where the gaps are
- Get comfortable with the Lasso interface in a no-stakes environment
- Practice internal coordination: who pulls what information and how quickly

What the Mock RFI Will Include

The mock RFI will reflect the types of questions site selectors actually ask at first contact, including:

- Site acreage and available parcel configurations
- Rail service details: carrier, switch access, siding capacity
- Utility capacity and timeframe to service
- Zoning and permitting pathway
- Environmental status (Phase I, wetlands)
- Ownership and pricing
- Infrastructure buildout timeline and cost estimates

Your Checklist — Step 4

- ☐ Receive mock RFI from IAIS via Lasso: confirm receipt and note the 30-day response window
- ☐ Assign internal team roles: who pulls what information?
- ☐ Draft your response in Lasso: do not email responses separately, use the platform
- ☐ Gather any supporting documents referenced in the RFI
- ☐ Review your draft response before submitting: is it complete? Professional? Accurate?
- ☐ Submit response within 30 days

Timeline Expectation
You have 30 days for this practice round. In a real situation, turnaround expectations can be much shorter - 48 to 72 hours is not uncommon for initial RFI responses. Use this 30-day window to build a system that could be executed quickly when the real thing arrives.

STEP 5	READINESS SCORECARD REVIEW	⏱ WEEKS 10-12

What This Step Is

After reviewing your LOIS listing and your Lasso RFI response, IAIS will prepare and deliver a Readiness Scorecard – a structured evaluation of your site's current preparedness level across the key categories that matter to site selectors. The exercise scores the site against itself as well as other sites. A sophisticated data set, as well as a variety of high level and granular reports, will be generated as companions to your scorecard, to assist with visualization and prioritization of next steps.

What the Scorecard Covers

- **Site Control**: ownership clarity, pricing, and parcel structure
- **Transportation**: rail infrastructure details and road/air access documentation
- **Utilities**: completeness of data and any known capacity limitations
- **Zoning & Permitting**: clarity of development pathway and timeline
- **Environmental**: Phase I status, wetlands, and known risk factors
- **Documentation**: what's present, what's missing, and what's out of date
- **RFI Response Quality**: speed, completeness, and professional presentation

How to Use Your Scorecard

The scorecard is a diagnostic tool, not a grade. Its purpose is to give your team and IAIS a shared, honest picture of where your site stands so that improvements can be prioritized intelligently. Sites at all levels of readiness benefit from this clarity.

Your Checklist — Step 5

- ☐ Receive Readiness Scorecard from IAIS
- ☐ Review with your full team: share with relevant partners (utility providers, planning staff, property owners)
- ☐ Note any scorecard findings that surprise you: these are worth a follow-up conversation with IAIS
- ☐ Identify your highest-priority gaps based on scorecard results
- ☐ Schedule a debrief call with IAIS if needed to discuss findings

What to Expect
The scorecard will be direct about gaps and limitations. This is intentional, the goal is to surface issues now, when they can be addressed proactively, rather than during a real site selection process when they result in elimination.

STEP 6	ACTION PLAN & IMPROVEMENT ROADMAP	WEEKS 10-12

What This Step Is

Based on the Readiness Scorecard, IAIS will develop and deliver a custom, prioritized Action Plan for your site. This document serves as your roadmap for improving site readiness over time, with items sequenced so that progress can be made incrementally.

What the Action Plan Includes

- Prioritized list of documentation gaps to address, in recommended order
- Specific guidance on how to close each gap (who to contact, what to commission, what information to gather)
- Infrastructure improvement recommendations, including rail and utility buildout planning
- Estimated timelines for each action item, where applicable
- Identification of any third-party studies or reports needed (survey, Phase I, utility study, etc.)

How to Work Through the Action Plan

Not everything on the action plan will be achievable immediately, and that is expected. The plan is designed to be worked progressively. Prioritize items that:

- Address gaps that cause early-stage elimination (ownership clarity, utility capacity, zoning confirmation)
- Can be completed with low cost or effort (updating contact information, gathering existing utility data, confirming zoning)
- Are prerequisites for other improvements (a boundary survey is required before some utility studies)

Your Checklist — Step 6

- ☐ Receive Action Plan from IAIS
- ☐ Review action items with your team and relevant stakeholders
- ☐ Assign ownership for each action item — who is responsible?
- ☐ Set internal target dates for priority items
- ☐ Identify any items that require budget or third-party services, and begin the approval or procurement process
- ☐ Schedule your first check-in with IAIS (typically 30–60 days after action plan delivery)
- ☐ Update your LOIS listing as each item is completed

Third-Party Studies
IAIS can help you identify the right vendors and set realistic expectations for each study. Contact IAIS to discuss.

STEP 7	CONTINUED SUPPORT & PATH TO MARKETING	ONGOING

What This Step Is

Rail Ready is not a one-time review, it is an ongoing partnership. IAIS will continue to work alongside your team as improvements are implemented, answer questions as they arise, and advise on both site-specific and rail-specific considerations as they develop.

Ongoing IAIS Support Includes

- Regular check-ins to review progress on action plan items
- Support for future RFI responses — IAIS can advise on rail-specific questions in real inquiries
- Feedback on LOIS listing updates as new documentation is added
- Coordination with IAIS marketing and business development when a site reaches advanced readiness

Path to Marketing

When your site reaches an advanced level of readiness, with core documentation complete, utility data confirmed, rail infrastructure clearly defined, and your LOIS listing fully populated, IAIS will develop a customized marketing plan in collaboration with your EDO. This plan will include:

- Promotion through IAIS marketing channels and partner networks
- Inclusion in IAIS Rail Ready Sites inventory
- Targeted outreach to site selectors and industries aligned with your site's profile
- Coordination with state and regional economic development partners
- Co-branded marketing materials developed with your organization

What "Advanced Readiness" Looks Like

There is no single finish line, but a site at advanced readiness will generally have the following in place:

- ☐ LOIS listing complete, current, and reviewed by IAIS
- ☐ Ownership and pricing confirmed in writing
- ☐ Utility capacity data documented for electric, gas, water, and sewer
- ☐ Zoning confirmed for target industrial uses
- ☐ Rail infrastructure plan developed with IAIS input
- ☐ Phase I ESA on file (within 5 years)
- ☐ Boundary survey on file
- ☐ Wetlands delineation completed or confirmed as non-applicable
- ☐ Workforce data available for the regional labor market
- ☐ Lasso response system tested and ready

Your Checklist — Step 7 (Ongoing)

- ☐ Maintain regular communication with your IAIS contact
- ☐ Update LOIS listing each time new documentation is completed
- ☐ Respond promptly to IAIS check-in requests
- ☐ Notify IAIS if a real site inquiry arrives, IAIS can support your response
- ☐ Continue working through the action plan items between check-ins
- ☐ Discuss marketing timing with IAIS as your site approaches advanced readiness

Quick Reference: Site Selector Screening Priorities

The table below summarizes how site selectors typically weight site factors during initial screening. Use this as a reference when prioritizing which documentation gaps to close first.

Factor	Screening Stage	Why It Matters
Site Availability & Willing Seller	First screen	Sites with unclear ownership or no stated price are often skipped entirely
Rail Access Details	First screen	Vague rail claims ('near railroad') are insufficient — switch location and service details are required
Utility Capacity (Electric, Gas, Water, Sewer)	First screen	Missing utility data triggers elimination; confirmed capacity with provider contacts is expected
Zoning & Permitting Pathway	First screen	Consultants need to know if a project can be approved — unknown zoning is a red flag
Phase I Environmental Status	Early screen	Most projects require a clean Phase I; unknown environmental status signals risk
Acreage and Site Configuration	First screen	Sites must meet minimum acreage requirements; usable area matters, not just total parcel size
Infrastructure Buildout Timeline & Cost	Mid-screen	Projects need predictability; unknown utility buildout timelines create schedule risk
Workforce Availability	Mid-screen	Labor market data is required for most industrial decisions
Community Attractiveness	Late screen	Matters for employee recruitment and retention; supporting data strengthens final presentations

Questions? Ready to begin?

Jim Bowman | Senior Director, Economic & Site Development
jbowman@iaisrr.com | 319.981.4798 | **iaisrr.com**