



Northwest Indiana **READI Proposal**

A Regional Renaissance



Prepared by



September 30, 2021

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September 30, 2021

Indiana Economic Development Corporation
1 N. Capitol Avenue, Suite 900
Indianapolis, IN 46204

RE: 2021 READI Grant Application

Distinguished Members of the Committee:

Competition compels us; that is the nature of free enterprise, but cooperation sustains us. Cooperation and teamwork are at the core of creativity and long-term success. Thank you for the opportunity to compete for the READI grant. As the President and CEO for the Northwest Indiana Forum, I firmly believe that cooperation is the key to our region's economic success. I also believe our best days await us and it is up to us to cooperate and bring that success to fruition.

Nestled on the southern shore of Lake Michigan, Northwest Indiana is a region rich with assets. Our proximity to the City of Chicago in addition to our three Class I and two short run railways, deep freshwater port, international airport, robust highway infrastructure, expanding commuter railway, 61st National Park, water, hiking and biking trails, 61 municipalities and impressive Indiana tax climate, position Northwest Indiana to compete nationally and internationally.

In late 2017, under the leadership of the Northwest Indiana Forum, multiple organizations and communities in Northwest Indiana launched an ambitious effort to develop the first economic development strategic plan for the seven-county region, including Lake, Porter, La Porte, Newton, Jasper, Pulaski, and Starke. TIP Strategies was engaged in February 2018 to facilitate the planning process and to develop the planning documents. Over the course of eight months with the input of more than 500 business leaders, legislators, entrepreneurs and engaged citizens, **IGNITE the Region**, Northwest Indiana's strategy for economic transformation was developed and presented to the public in September 2018. The vision of **IGNITE** is:

"Northwest Indiana drives its vibrant and inclusive communities by creating the most dynamic economic environment of the Midwest, fueled by innovation, diversity, and talent."

As of September 2021, 88% of the plan has been initiated or completed. This pragmatic playbook has been the roadmap for success and cooperation. The plan is built around five aspirational goals that serve as the pillars of future economic vitality and growth. The pillars reflect a holistic view of economic development that address business development and marketing, entrepreneurship and innovation, infrastructure, talent and placemaking. The mission of this plan is to attract, develop and connect talent in the region, grow sustainable capital investment and per capita income.

Our READI application reflects these five pillars and the desired outcomes. Throughout the plan, we have assembled \$636 million dollars in projects with a match of \$2 billion. We are requesting \$52 million for our priority projects. In this ecosystem of projects, there is a 10:1 match. Not all of the individual projects meet the 4:1 match, but they have all been deemed top priority projects to advance the economy of Northwest Indiana.

We have investment opportunities coming from all over the world and our region is working together and moving in the same direction. **IGNITE the Region** has been the driving force for this activity and the READI application will take this plan to the next level by removing roadblocks and helping us accomplish our goals in a more expedited fashion. Thank you for your willingness to partner to further attract talent, investment and raise per capita income throughout Northwest Indiana.

Kindest regards,



Heather Ennis

Northwest Indiana READI Proposal

A Regional Renaissance

welcome

A United Effort

READI Project Selection Team

Don Babcock, Purdue University Northwest
Bill Baker, Urschel Laboratories
Wade Breitzke, +WeCreate Media
Bert Cook, La Porte Economic Advancement Partnership
Lisa Daugherty, Center of Workforce Innovations
Stephen Eastridge, Jasper County Economic Development Organization
Heather Ennis, Northwest Indiana Forum
Marie Foster-Bruins, One Region
Karen Lauerman, Lake County IN Economic Alliance
Tony Oss, Larson-Danielson Construction Company
Bill Sheldrake, Policy Analytics
Matt Wells, Purdue University Northwest
Jason Williams, Society of Innovators
Sherrri Ziller, Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority

Northwest Indiana Legislative Delegation

Senator Mike Bohacek
Senator Ed Charbonneau
Senator Eddie Melton
Senator Frank Mrvan Sr.
Senator Rick Niemeyer
Senator Lonnie Randolph
Senator Karen Tallian
Representative Mike Andrade
Representative Michael Aylesworth
Representative Pat Boy
Representative Doug Gutwein
Representative Earl Harris Jr.
Representative Regan Hatcher
Representative Carolyn Jackson
Representative Chuck Moseley
Representative Julie Olthoff
Representative Jim Pressel
Representative Hal Slager
Representative Vernon Smith
Representative Ed Soliday

IGNITE Leadership Group

Kyle Allen Jr., Lake County, Indiana Board of Commissioners
Don Babcock, Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO)
Speros Batistatos, South Shore Convention & Visitors Authority
Julie Bieszczat, Barney Enterprises Management Services
Wade Breitzke, +WeCreate Media
Chris Campbell, Centier Bank
Joe Coar, Tonn and Blank Construction
Tom Collins Jr., Luke Oil
Bert Cook, Greater La Porte Economic Development Corporation (GLEDC)
Rick Dekker, Dekker Vacuum Technologies
Erica Dombey, Regional Development Company (RDC)
George Douglas, Indiana Beverage
Stephen Eastridge, Jasper County Economic Development Organization
Heather Ennis, Northwest Indiana Forum (NWIF)
Cem Gercek, Carmeuse Lime & Stone
Ron Gifford, Starke County Economic Development Foundation
Mike Golando, Cargill
John Girzadas, B. Coleman Aviation
Bill Hanna, Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority
Ian Hirt, Port of Indiana Burns Harbor
Clarence Hulse, Economic Development Corporation Michigan City
Robert Johnson, Cimcor
Denarie Kane, City of Hobart
Thomas Keon, Purdue University Northwest
Leah Konrady, One Region
Kris Krouse, Shirley Heinze Land Trust
Paul Labovitz, US National Park Service
Richard Leverett, AT&T
William Lowe, Indiana University Northwest
Patrick Lyp, City of Valparaiso
Dean Mazzoni, Franciscan Alliance
Michael McCall, Fair Oaks Farms
Stewart McMillan, Task Force Tips
Mike Noland, Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD)
Pete Novak, Greater Northwest Indiana Association of REALTORS (GNIAR)
Nathan Origer, Pulaski County Community Development Commission
Randy Palmateer, Northwestern Indiana Building & Construction Trades Council
Craig Phillips, City of Michigan City
Carol Podolak, BNutty
Rex Richards, Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce
Matt Saltanovitz, Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC)
Carolyn Saxton, Legacy Foundation
Dan Vacarri, Gary/Chicago International Airport

NWI Forum Board of Directors

Bill Baker, Urschel Laboratories
Dave Bareham, Enbridge
Dan Botich, Short Elliott & Hendrickson
Rick Calinski, NIPSCO
Joe Coar, Tonn & Blank Construction
Anthony Contrucci, Centier Bank
Lisa Daugherty, Center for Workforce Innovations
Stephen Eastridge, Jasper County Economic Development Organization
Larry Fabina, Cleveland Cliffs
Matt Gower, Carmeuse Lime & Stone
Phil Greiner, First Midwest Bank
Brian Hittinger, Krieg DeVault
Clarence Hulse, Economic Development Corporation of Michigan City
Chancellor Ken Iwama, Indiana University Northwest
Katheryn Jenkins, Horseshoe Casino
James Jorgensen, Hoepfner Wagner & Evans
Anthony S. Kazakevicius, Chicago South Shore & South Bend Railroad
Chancellor Thomas Keon, Purdue University Northwest
Richard Leverett, AT&T
Dean Mazzoni, Franciscan Health Care
Mike Micka, Holladay Properties
Justin Mount, Indiana American Water
Michele Murday, EnviroForsensics
Tony Oss, Larson-Danielson Construction
Dewey Pearman, Construction Advancement Foundation
Helen Pennington, Harris Bank
Rex Richards, Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce
Gilbert "Gil" Rynberk, Wintrust Bank
Cathy Sventanoff, South Shore Convention and Visitors Authority
Lori Tubbs, McColly/Commercial Advantage
Matt Vessely, 1st Source Bank
Michael Wortham, bp America

Northwest Indiana Mayors

Anthony Copeland, East Chicago
Bill Carroll, Lake Station
Tom Dermody, La Porte
Dennis Estok, City of Knox
Sue Lynch, Portage
Thomas McDermott Jr., Hammond
Matt Murphy, Valparaiso
Duane Parry, Michigan City
Jerome Prince, Gary
Brian Snedecor, Hobart
Steve Spebar, Whiting
David Uran, Crown Point
Stephen Wood, Rensselaer

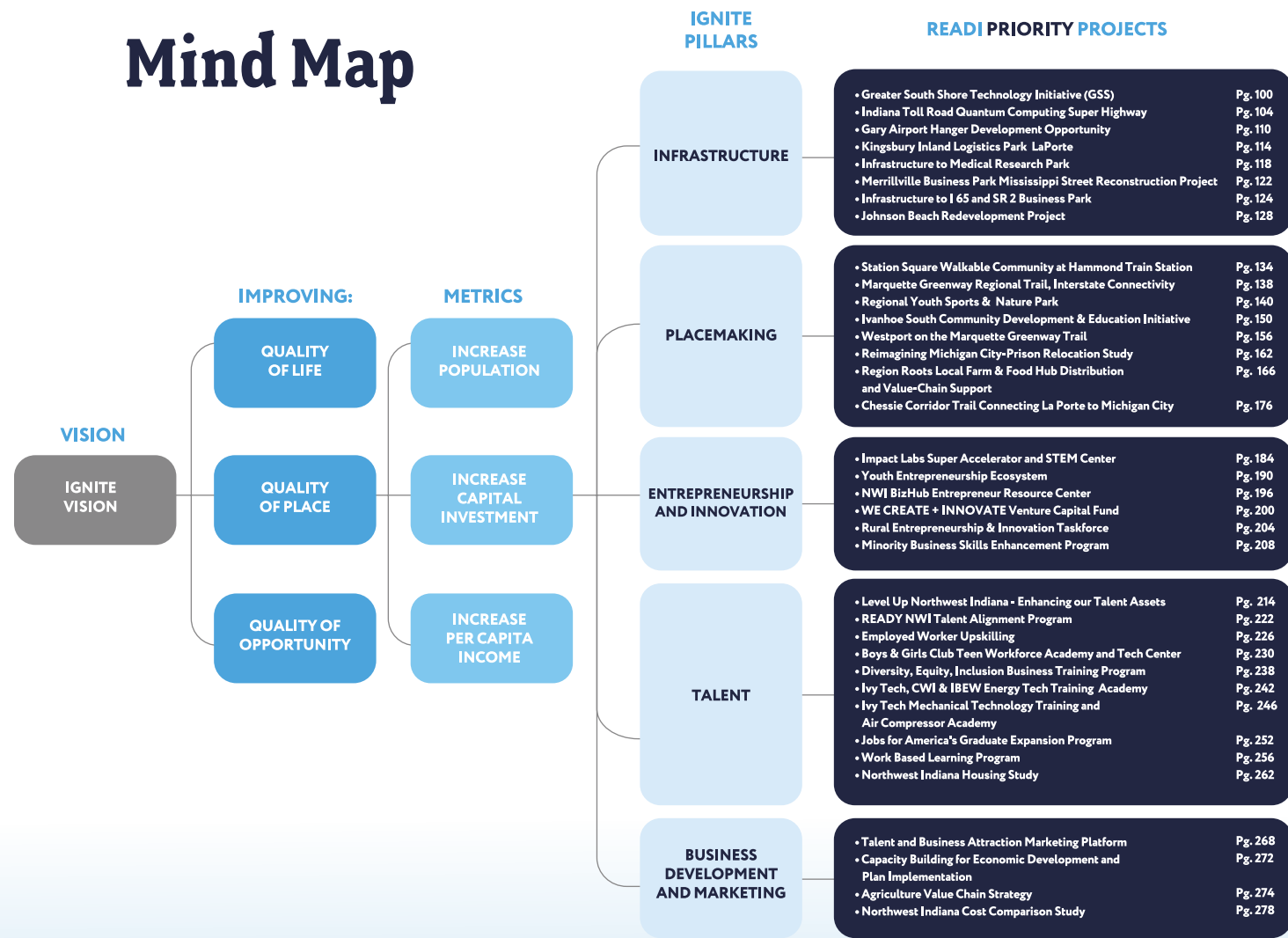
Special Thanks To Our Partners

Center of Workforce Innovations
Greater Northwest Indiana Association of Realtors
Gary/Chicago International Airport
Kankakee- Iroquois Regional Planning Commission
Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District
Northwest Indiana Forum
Northwest Indians Regional Development Company
Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority
Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission
Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Authority
One Region
Policy Analytics, LLC
Ports of Indiana - Burns Harbor
Society of Innovators
+WeCreate Media

Ex Officio Forum Board Members

Edwin Buswell, Kankakee-Iroquois Regional Planning Commission
Heather Ennis, President, Northwest Indiana Forum
Lorri Feldt, Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Center
Matt Saltanovitz, Indiana Economic Development Corporation
Ty Warner, Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission

welcome to The IGNITE Mind Map



IGNITE PILLARS

READI PRIORITY PROJECTS

IGNITE PILLARS	READI PRIORITY PROJECTS
INFRASTRUCTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater South Shore Technology Initiative (GSS) Pg. 100 Indiana Toll Road Quantum Computing Super Highway Pg. 104 Gary Airport Hanger Development Opportunity Pg. 110 Kingsbury Inland Logistics Park LaPorte Pg. 114 Infrastructure to Medical Research Park Pg. 118 Merrillville Business Park Mississippi Street Reconstruction Project Pg. 122 Infrastructure to I 65 and SR 2 Business Park Pg. 124 Johnson Beach Redevelopment Project Pg. 128
PLACEMAKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Station Square Walkable Community at Hammond Train Station Pg. 134 Marquette Greenway Regional Trail, Interstate Connectivity Pg. 138 Regional Youth Sports & Nature Park Pg. 140 Ivanhoe South Community Development & Education Initiative Pg. 150 Westport on the Marquette Greenway Trail Pg. 156 Reimagining Michigan City-Prison Relocation Study Pg. 162 Region Roots Local Farm & Food Hub Distribution and Value-Chain Support Pg. 166 Chessie Corridor Trail Connecting La Porte to Michigan City Pg. 176
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact Labs Super Accelerator and STEM Center Pg. 184 Youth Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Pg. 190 NWI BizHub Entrepreneur Resource Center Pg. 196 WE CREATE + INNOVATE Venture Capital Fund Pg. 200 Rural Entrepreneurship & Innovation Taskforce Pg. 204 Minority Business Skills Enhancement Program Pg. 208
TALENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level Up Northwest Indiana - Enhancing our Talent Assets Pg. 214 READY NWI Talent Alignment Program Pg. 222 Employed Worker Upskilling Pg. 226 Boys & Girls Club Teen Workforce Academy and Tech Center Pg. 230 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Business Training Program Pg. 238 Ivy Tech, CWI & IBEW Energy Tech Training Academy Pg. 242 Ivy Tech Mechanical Technology Training and Air Compressor Academy Pg. 246 Jobs for America's Graduate Expansion Program Pg. 252 Work Based Learning Program Pg. 256 Northwest Indiana Housing Study Pg. 262
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talent and Business Attraction Marketing Platform Pg. 268 Capacity Building for Economic Development and Plan Implementation Pg. 272 Agriculture Value Chain Strategy Pg. 274 Northwest Indiana Cost Comparison Study Pg. 278

IGNITE Vision

IGNITE Vision: Northwest Indiana drives its vibrant and inclusive communities by creating the most dynamic economic environment of the Midwest, fueled by innovation, diversity, and talent.

IGNITE the Region is built around five aspirational goals that serve as the pillars of future economic vitality and growth for the region. They reflect a holistic view of economic development that addresses business development & marketing, entrepreneurship & innovation, infrastructure, talent, and placemaking. Under each goal are several strategies and actions needed for implementation.

10:1 Grant Match

TOTAL REQUESTED: \$52,000,000

36 PRIORITY PROJECTS

IGNITE Identified Projects

103 PROJECTS and growing

IGNITE PILLARS

TALENT

READI COMPLETE LIST OF PROJECTS

- Level Up Northwest Indiana- Enhancing our Talent Assets
- READY NWI Talent Alignment Program
- Employed Worker Upskilling
- Boys & Girls Club Teen Workforce Academy and Tech Center
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Business Training Program
- Ivy Tech, CWI & IBEW Energy Tech Training Academy
- Ivy Tech Mechanical Technology Training and Air Compressor Academy
- Ivy Tech Career Coaching and Employer Connections
- Jobs for America's Graduate Expansion Program
- Work based Learning Program
- Boys & Girls Club Facility Michigan City
- Hire Ed Marketing Internship Program
- Northwest Indiana Housing Study
- Work Release and Mental Health Talent Correction Program
- First Things First Early Childhood and Family Educational Program
- IN-MaC Innovation & Design Studio
- Eleven Fifty Academy- Advancing Tech
- Fair Oaks Workforce Housing

PLACEMAKING

- Hohman Avenue Rebuild Walkable Community Project
- Station Square Walkable Community at Hammond Train Station
- Marquette Greenway Regional Trail, Interstate Connectivity
- Marquette Greenway Regional Trail Waymarking Signage Business Application Initiative
- Lake County Eats Local Urban Farmers Market Capacity Building
- Panhandle Pathway Multi Modal Trail Winamac
- Boutique Hotel Adaptive Historical Structure Initiative Valparaiso
- Valparaiso Regional Youth Sports & Nature Park Valparaiso
- Ivanhoe South Community Development & Education Initiative Gary
- Little Calumet River Agriculture/Regenerative Farming Initiative Chesterton to Michigan City Porter
- Amber Flatwoods ADA Trail Destination Michigan City
- Westport on the Marquette Greenway Trail Burns Harbor
- Region Roots Local Farm & Food Hub Distribution and Value-Chain Support
- NWI Food Council - Artisan Food Business Expansion, Development & Recruitment
- NWI Food Council - Farmers Market Coordination in Food Insecure Communities
- NWI Food Council - Farm Expansion, Development & Recruitment
- Northwest Indiana Medical Residency Program
- Rensselear Famers Market Downtown Revitalization Initiative Rensselear
- Singing Sand Connectivity Trail/Marquette Greenway Michigan City
- Housing Opportunities New Affordable Homes Initiative Michigan City
- Washington Park ADA Destination Playground Michigan City
- Meadowbrook Conservation Destination Center Shirley Heinze Land Trust
- Michigan City Prison Feasibility Study Relocation of Facility
- Federation of Block Clubs Neighborhood Beautification Initiative Gary
- Chessie Trail Corridor LaPorte to Michigan City South Shore Station
- Gary Elevated Trail Project to complete Marquette Trail Gary
- City of Valparaiso Trail Development: Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and Downtown District Connectivity Valparaiso
- Gary East Gateway Project Miller Station to the Beach Gary
- Valparaiso Transit Oriented Development Trail Valparaiso
- Regional Plan for Trail Connectivity to the Munster TDD Munster
- Munster Gateway Beautification & Infrastructure Initiative Munster
- Hobart Southlake Sports Complex Hobart
- Dunes Mixed Use Development

IGNITE PILLARS

INFRASTRUCTURE

READI COMPLETE LIST OF PROJECTS

- Port of Indiana Alternative Green Energy Project
- Port of Indiana Multimodal Bulk Warehouse Construction Initiative
- Port of Indiana Rail Truck Maritime Modal Expansion
- Greater South Shore Technology Initiative (GSS)
- Mississippi Street Reconstruction Project/Business Park Development Project
- Regional Economic Development Permitting Portal Initiative
- New Market Tax Credit Regional Community Development Entity Initiative
- Indiana Toll Road Quantum Computing Super Highway
- Rensselaer Square Downtown Streetscape Initiative
- Johnson Beach Redevelopment Project
- 15th Avenue Reconstruction Project to Support Infill of Industrial Developments Including the Amazon Fulfillment Center Expansion
- Regional Map of Catalytic Logistical Properties
- Alternative Fuel Regional Projects
- Cargo Logistics Infrastructure Plan
- Gary Airport Logistics Hub
- Gary Airport Crosswind Runway
- Gary Airport Hanger Development Opportunity
- Portage YMCA Park
- Gary Airport Road Realignment
- Michigan Avenue Road Improvement
- Kingsbury Inland Logistics Park LaPorte
- Crossroads of America Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Projects
- Decarbonization First Responders Fleet
- Adams Park Stormwater Wetland & Restoration Project/Wetland Mitigation Bank
- B&E Infrastructure Project Michigan City La Porte
- Lake County Housing Rehab Project Lake
- Water Infrastructure Improvements HWY 39 La Porte
- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Community Partner Groups Initiative
- Revolving Loan Fund: Catalytic Logistical Properties Development
- Infrastructure to I 65 and SR 2 Business Park
- Merrillville Business Park Mississippi Street Reconstruction Project
- Infrastructure to Medical Research Park Munster

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION

- Impact Labs Super Accelerator and STEM Center Hammond
- Youth Entrepreneurship Ecosystem
- NWI Biz Hub Entrepreneur Resource Center
- WE CREATE + INNOVATE Venture Capital Fund
- Rural Entrepreneurship & Innovation Taskforce
- Minority Business Skills Enhancement Program
- Michigan City Innovation Center Michigan City
- Pandemic Recovery Digital Transformation
- 2nd Muse Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING

- Talent and Business Attraction Marketing Platform
- External Headquarters Outreach Program
- The Linc HQ Parking Facility Valparaiso
- Assembling Land for Development
- Demolition Projects for Development
- Capacity Building for Economic Development and Plan Implementation
- Agriculture Value Chain Strategy
- Northwest Indiana Cost Comparison Study
- Schererville Business Park US Hwy 30 Schererville
- East Chicago Gateway Project 3 Million sq ft Distribution East Chicago
- East Chicago Gateway Distribution Training Facility East Chicago

TOTAL IDENTIFIED: \$636,275,051



State of the Region

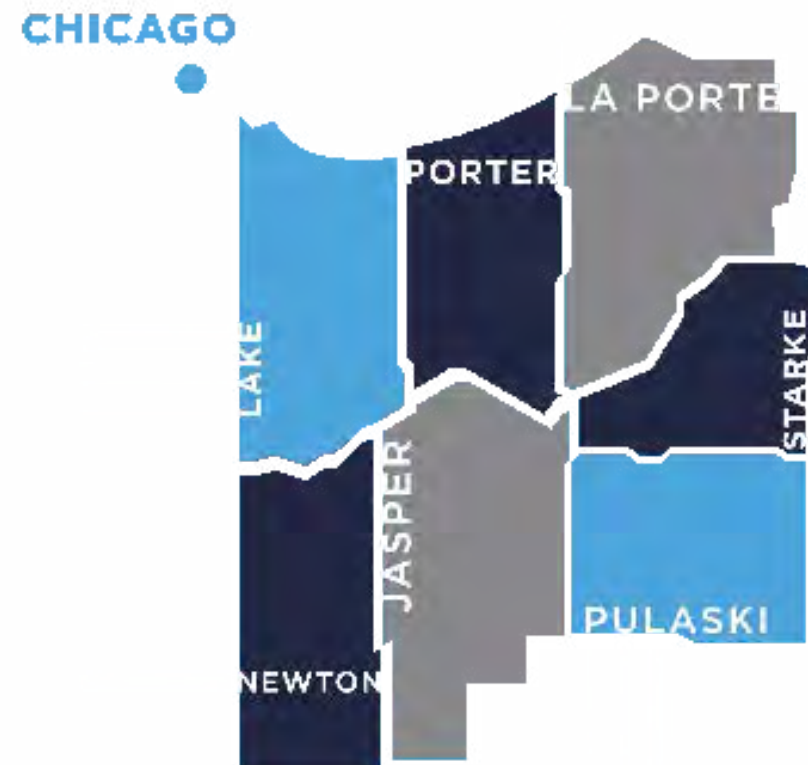
Downtown Valparaiso

welcome to The Region: Northwest Indiana

Northwest Indiana combines an innovative spirit, beautiful Lake Michigan shoreline, and proximity to Chicago and amenities for an affordable, high quality of life. Our communities, each with their own unique flavor, provide Northwest Indiana residents an eclectic style of living. Northwest Indiana communities are ready to welcome you home.

DO BUSINESS, EARN A LIVING, THRIVE.

The seven-county region of Northwest Indiana (Lake, Porter, La Porte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski) flourishes through the collaboration of our economic and community development partnerships. From business development strategies to workforce training, our Economic Development Organizations work together to continually increase business investment and improve the economic climate of Northwest Indiana.



Regional Cities United in One Vision

IGNITE the Region is an ambitious initiative that proposes numerous strategies and actions. It requires teamwork from all of the regional organizations and municipalities. It was not feasible for any one organization to lead and coordinate implementation in such an ambitious plan. Therefore, a new regional implementation coalition consisting of multiple organizations and leaders was formed to coordinate and champion the regional strategy.

As the region's multicounty economic development organization, the Northwest Indiana Forum took the lead in coordinating the implementation of this progressive initiative. With leadership from other organizations including the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority, Center of Workforce Innovations, Society of Innovators, One Region, Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District, the Port at Burns Harbor, the Local Economic Development Council, Purdue University Northwest, Indiana University Northwest, Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission and the Kankakee Valley Regional Planning Commission, great progress has been made on the **IGNITE** plan by breaking down silos and barriers that had inhibited regional economic development cooperation. Our region views **IGNITE the Region** as a fluid document that is continually updated. We have taken a dynamic approach to implementation and have seen 88% of the plan underway or complete in the first three years of implementation.

7 Counties
61 Municipalities
3,472 Total Square Miles

Lake	Porter	La Porte	Newton	Jasper	Starke	Pulaski
Crown Point	Beverly Shores	Kingsbury	Brook	Demotte	Knox	Francesville
Cedar Lake	Burns Harbor	Kingsford - Heights	Goodland	Fair Oaks	North Judson	Medaryville
Dyer	Chesterton	La Porte	Kentland	Remington	San Pierre	Monterey
East Chicago	Dune Acres	La Crosse	Lake Village	Rensselaer	Hamlet	Star City
Gary	Hebron	Long Beach	Morocco	Wheatfield	Bass Lake	Winamac
Griffith	Kouts	Michigan City	Mount Avr			
Hammond	Ogden Dunes	Michiana	Roselawn			
Highland	Portage	Shores	Sumava Resorts			
Hobart	Porter	Trail Creek	Thayer			
Lake Station	Valparaiso	Wanatah				
Lowell						
Merrillville						
Munster						
New Chicago						
Saint John						
Schererville						
Schneider						
Whiting						

WE ARE RURAL, SUBURBAN, AND URBAN.

The Northwest Indiana region is the second largest economy in Indiana representing urban, suburban and rural communities that boasts a \$35 billion economy.

From the nation's 61st national park, Indiana Dunes National Park, which rises from the shore of beautiful Lake Michigan on our northern boundary, to fertile farmlands in our southern agricultural communities, companies from around the world have located to Northwest Indiana to take advantage of our proximity to major markets, affordable commercial space and a highly qualified workforce.

Population at a Glance

A quick look at the people of NWI

From the urban core of northern Lake County to the rural burg of Hamlet, Northwest Indiana is one of the most diverse regions of our state. Covering seven counties with 61 municipalities, our melting pot of opportunity is uniquely positioned to welcome all. Our history is rich in ethnic traditions and hardworking grit. This diversity has given us insight and inspiration to grow together and depend on each other's strengths. The strong manufacturing power of our urban core creates opportunities for processing the bountiful harvest in the more rural areas. There is also opportunity in the regional growth to be symbiotic, letting each area focus on what they do best but weaving it into the plan for the whole.



326,093
Total Households

41.07
Average Age

846,797
Total Population



Indiana Dunes State Park

Highlights

1 Diversity

"Beyond our physical assets, we have something even greater-our people. We come from many nationalities, ethnic and racial backgrounds. Hispanic parades and festivals; Greek, Polish and other eastern European national celebrations; the cultural enrichment and professional achievements of our Asian neighbors. And no place has more spirit or soul than our African American churches every Sunday"

- Calvin Bellamy, retired, Krieg-DeVault

2 Opportunity to Enrich Urban Core

With population shifting from the urban to suburban and rural areas, there is opportunity to reimagine city centers. The Northwest Indiana Forum along with city and municipal leaders need to identify property ripe for investment to grow population density in a meaningful and sustainable way.

3 Population Turnaround

Community leaders are continuing to find ways to stop the "brain drain" and retain our youth to work in all fields both professional and the trades. The 2020 census continues to report the growth in the region, albeit shifting to rural areas. But infrastructure and transportation projects and improvements will result in population growth and retention of NWI residents.

Key Population Trends

Get to know us better

\$55,460

Average Household Income

\$19.41

Average Hourly Wage

\$39,587

Per Capita GDP

399,880

Total Workforce

56.75%

Labor Force Participation

6.57%

Unemployment Rate

2.34

Housing Price to Income Ratio

32.65%

Post Secondary Education Attainment

240

Schools in the Region

Population In-Depth

Getting macular



Population Growth

Nearly all Northwest Indiana municipalities larger than 5,000 residents gained population between April 1, 2010, and April 1, 2020

Governor Holcomb said if region leaders remain focused on continuing to grow the population in Lake, Porter and La Porte counties, push for business investment that will create the jobs needed 10, 20 or 30 years down the line, and stay hungry for change, then Northwest Indiana truly can become the best version of itself. "You're doing this already, and I'm going to start doing a lot more of it, and that is sell, sell, sell," Holcomb said. "The only thing that I think would surpass your standing as it is today is your potential." Governor Eric Holcomb, August 24, 2021



Age

Children under the age of 17 make up about 23% of the population with 17% being school age and 6% being preschool age. The smallest age group for NWI is college age adults (18-24 years of age) at 8.5%. The senior population sits at around 18%. Much can be done through the READI grant to attract the 18-24 and 25-44 demographic.



Housing Availability

The current state of Northwest Indiana's housing market continues to soar. Low taxes, affordable housing, beautiful parks, excellent schools, easy access to healthcare, and the close proximity to Chicago are only a few of the reasons buyers are choosing to call Northwest Indiana home.

The Greater Northwest Indiana Association of REALTORS™ (GNIAR) most recent monthly housing report (June 2021) shows acquiring a house in Northwest Indiana is not as simple as it once was. Inventory of homes across the seven counties showed only 929 homes for sale, as compared to 2,118 in June of last year. That's a 56.1% decrease in supply. Low inventory is a national housing market problem, but it's even more of a problem in Northwest Indiana due to the influx of homebuyers from Illinois.

On a positive note, sellers are in prime position as the median selling price continues to rise sharply. Through the first 6 months of 2021, the median selling price of a home was \$200,000, compared to \$179,900 for the first 6 months of 2020. This is an 11.2% increase in home values.

Demand for housing is so strong, that despite a limited number of homes for sale, total sales have increased 13.5% when comparing the first 6-months of 2021 to the first 6-months of 2020. Buyers are competing fiercely for homes, while sellers are often choosing from multiple purchase offers shortly after listing their home for sale. Although experts can only predict what the market will do, it's likely numbers will continue on the same track for the foreseeable future.



Population In-Depth

Getting macular



Diversity

Northwest Indiana is not only the crossroads of America with our expansive transportation infrastructure, our communities reflect a rich heritage of diversity from around the world. The promise of manufacturing jobs in the early 1900s enticed people from Europe, Central America, South America, Africa and other corners of the United States. Neighborhoods reflected these individual cultures and provided a positive exposure to their food, language, music and religion. Many of our urban communities have had engaged community subgroups that were instrumental in the planning of their cities and towns.

Persons new to our region frequently compliment the educational opportunities presented by the diversity of our region. Summer is a great time when our numerous ethnic food festivals entice visitors to travel to Northwest Indiana to experience a variety of authentic foods without needing a passport.



Chesterton



Lake Michigan

Education

Educational partnerships in Northwest Indiana are on the rise. This is not only out of necessity but from the realization that education is a symbiotic relationship. When the business community distances itself from the educational community, the end result is a misalignment of skills and expectations. Great progress has been made by these groups communicating with each other and planning together. Through READY NWI, area school superintendents are working with the business community, colleges and universities to ensure that Northwest Indiana students are working toward career paths that are meaningful to the needs of the business community. The JAG (Jobs for America's Graduates) and 21st Century Scholars program help students that had never dreamed college or advanced credentialing was attainable. The opportunity is great to amplify existing programs and expand them to more students. Our goal is to get 60% of the population a post-secondary degree or credentialing.

One of the less traditional forms of educational outreach was initiated by the Lake Area United Way through their Level Up program. Level Up meets the working poor where they are and coaches, encourages, supports and directs them to that next level of opportunity. The opportunity to amplify this program and expand it across the seven-county region will not only dramatically impact lives but will have a profound effect on the workforce shortage.

These and many additional programs are working to build a framework for lifelong learning and the tools for our workforce to be prepared for the economy of the future.



Purdue University Northwest

A REGION FOR PUTTING DOWN ROOTS

Improvements in quality of place range from better public transportation with the expansion of the South Shore Line commuter rail, to a wider range of high-end retail, restaurants and breweries, to expanded bicycle trails and green spaces—all of which allow Northwest Indiana to better meet the needs and expectations of the next generation. While Northwest Indiana was once a region many residents hoped to one day leave, we are now seeing people return, choose to remain here, or be attracted into the region. Of all metrics you could use to measure the economic health of a region, the most fundamental one is population growth and net domestic migration. If a region is a place that people want to move into and live, then its economic future is bright.

Quality of Life

Dynamic opportunities for all residents



Northwest Indiana continues to see population growth. In 2020, the region saw tremendous growth as a result of urbanites in Chicagoland moving across the border to call Indiana home. Low property taxes, more home for the dollar, four-star education and outstanding recreation opportunities all contributed to this growth. Transportation improvements are on the horizon with the South Shore Train's double-tracking in the north and the addition of tracks in the Westlake corridor. Healthcare facility additions and improvements continue with added hospitals and improvements across

1 Fairs and Festivals

Hundreds of fairs and festivals take place in Northwest Indiana annually. The most visited and "wackiest" festival, Pierogi Fest, in Whiting celebrates the area's Eastern European heritage. This festival has been recognized on The Food Network, The Travel Channel and CBS Chicago to name a few. Popcorn Fest in Valparaiso boasts its hometown hero, Orville Redenbacher, and celebrates the end of summer while providing hundreds of artisan, food and experience vendors to visitors. Each county has its own 4-H county fair including two of the state's largest in Lake and Porter Counties. Lake County includes demolition derby, monster truck and a variety of specialty food items while Porter County attracts top-name country entertainment including Miranda Lambert, Florida Georgia Line and more. Other notable festivals that celebrate heritage, ethnicity and rural life include Greek Fest in Merrillville, Power from the Past Antique Engine & Tractor show in Winamac and the Annual Great Lakes Grand Prix in Michigan City. Residents are able to find farmers markets and pop-up markets in nearly every corner of the region from Gary to La Porte to Rensselaer to Knox.



the region most notably in Michigan City, Crown Point and Portage. Arts and culture opportunities continue to remain strong with added entertainment venues in communities with intimate downtown venues and large venues alike. The added national park status to the Indiana Dunes created more recreational choices for residents and visitors. Lakefront and trail improvements continue to use abandoned and otherwise useless space to create places for residents to enjoy nature and the region.

2 Proximity to Lake Michigan

Northwest Indiana benefits tremendously from Lake Michigan not only because of its fresh water source but also because of the amenities and recreation it provides residents and visitors. More than 60 miles of beaches and industry make up the landscape of the shoreline. US Steel, Cleveland Cliffs, bp, Port of Indiana and industrial businesses serve our local workforce and provide resources and products for the region, country and the world. Recreation includes miles of beaches with a perfect view of the City of Chicago. The Indiana Dunes State and National Parks offer amenities that rival any beach on the east or west coast. The Indiana Dunes National Park ranks 11th in visitation out of the 63 U.S. National Parks.

Lakefront improvements from the Regional Development Authority funding include improvements at Whiting Lakefront Park. In addition to creating a user-friendly park with a spectacular view, the City of Whiting also added an inflatable playground in Lake Michigan, WhoaZone. East Chicago and Gary also improved lakefront areas with parks, boat launches, access to the lake and building improvements. Portage and Michigan City invested in the beachfront as well as structures that sit directly on the lakefront.



3 Rural & Urban Downtowns

Rural downtowns such as Rensselaer, Kentland, Knox and Francesville have undergone revitalization over the past several years, offering residents the amenities of urban areas while remaining a quiet and slower pace, avoiding the hustle and bustle. The advantage to rural areas in Northwest Indiana is the close proximity to major interstates and thoroughfares such as I-65, I-80/94 and I-90, US 30 and US 41. As these downtown areas experience a resurgence post-COVID, they continue to provide modern amenities including internet access, housing and a first-class education to residents.

Downtown Lowell continues to have the state's largest and longest celebrated Labor Day Parade running for more than 75 years. Rural areas continue to thrive in their own, unique way. Pulaski County has 45 miles of pristine parkland in northern Indiana's Tippecanoe River valley.

Urban cities continue to thrive. Downtown Hammond continues to make road and pedestrian improvements. La Porte recently added an improved, new hospital, Northwest Health. Michigan City has a thriving arts district as well as shopping in boutique shops or at the Lighthouse Place Outlet Mall and array of dining options. Crown Point, Hobart and Valparaiso continue to appeal to residents but also to visitors with shopping, unique dining, attractions and a wide variety of entertainment venues such as public amphitheaters, concert venues and local breweries.



4 Trail Systems

Biking, hiking and water trails abound Northwest Indiana with more than 200 miles of bike and walking trail in varying degrees of difficulty and more than 100 miles of tributaries and waterways for paddling. The Indiana Dunes State and National Parks offer more than 60 miles of trails including sand, wood walkways, bogs and paved trails. The Indiana Dunes has an impressive trail system which can be used for hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and horseback riding.

The Erie Trail is a free access, public greenway in southern Starke County with more than nine miles of paved trail eastward from North Judson to US 35 near Bass Lake. On the rail-banked right-of-way of the former Erie Lackawanna Railroad, the Erie Trail has great views of Kankakee sand country. Cyclists will see rich Indiana farmland, as well as natural groves of oak savannah, wildflowers, prairies and marshlands. The level rail bed allows easy hiking and cycling. The Erie Trail is part of the American Discovery Trail (ADT) that extends from Delaware to California and includes North Judson and Crown Point on the route. The trail is also part of USBR 35 that extends from Ontario to Louisiana.

Adventurers can enjoy hundreds of miles of waterways in Northwest Indiana. Paddlers can experience no-wake lakes or the expansive waters along the South Shore of our Great Lake, Lake Michigan. Streams and rivers intersect throughout the Region, for quick trips or day-long adventures.

Residents and visitors alike enjoy hundreds of miles of blueways with numerous access points, many of which are ADA compliant from the Kankakee River in the south to Lake Michigan in the north. Kayak or canoe along the Kankakee River, recently designated a National Water Trail, covering more than 130 miles from Indiana to Illinois. The Kankakee River is one of the cleanest rivers in the Midwest and there are a number of launch sites along the route.

Northwest Indiana is also home to the Lake Michigan Water Trail, the longest continuous-loop water trail in the world. Along Indiana's border, paddlers can enjoy 30 miles of trail along Lake Michigan. Launches can be accessed from as far west as Whiting and as far east as Long Beach (Michigan City).

WE MEAN BUSINESS

Uniquely positioned in favorable tax climate of Indiana and adjacent to the third-largest metropolitan area in the country, Northwest Indiana showcases forty-five miles of lake front, three Class I railroads, a deep freshwater port, transcontinental fiber, excess water availability for new or expanding water dependent companies, infrastructure of three interstate highways and seven US highways and an international airport. These assets coupled with a hardworking, growing population make NWI a prosperous place for investment.

It is a region ripe for continuing economic growth. Home to more than 20% of the nation's steel production, steeped in rich manufacturing roots, Northwest Indiana has continued to evolve in the advanced manufacturing sector with companies like Urschel Laboratories, Task Force Tips, Monosol, Hitachi Sullair and Arcelor Mittal's R&D center. Through this READI process we would enhance this sector by increasing the product available to prospective companies. We have a 4%-6% vacancy rate in the industrial sector with much of that product being unsuitable for advanced manufacturing use. There is also significant acreage that is in need of remediation, redevelopment and demolition. The industrial parks are filling quickly and this grant would help to remedy some of these pressure points.

Economy at a Glance

We've been active

Northwest Indiana's economy is growing at a rapid pace. We saw more than \$220 million in new committed investment and 1,500 new jobs in 2019 and more than \$260 million and 2,500 new jobs in 2020. The 2020 average wages outperformed each of the seven-county average wages. The largest obstacle to attracting more investment is product.



\$67,310
Median Family Income 2019

51.7%
Job Growth Since 2000

\$35.5B
Regional GDP

Highlights

1 Low Cost of Living - High Quality of Life

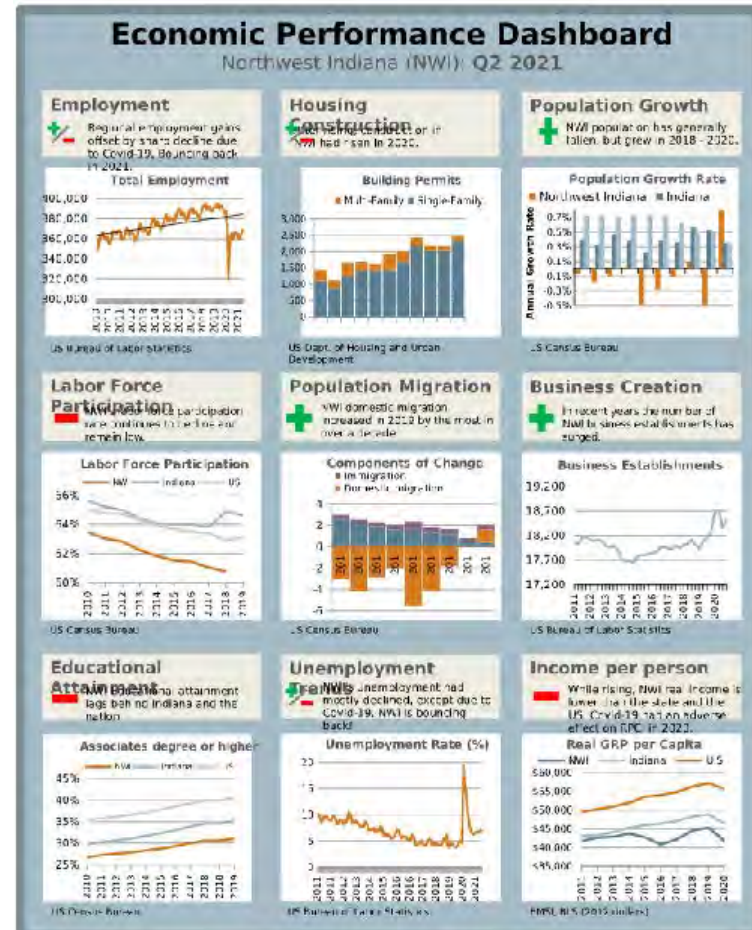
Indiana has a cost-of-living index of 82.1, one of the lowest in the Midwest. That coupled with our proximity to the city of Chicago and our high quality of life is a driving force for the Northwest Indiana economy.

2 Big Industry - Bigger Innovation

Northwest Indiana is known for its industrial heritage. Home to over 20% of the nation's steel production and massive bp oil refinery, we know big industry. We are also the birth place of a steel innovation center that is leading the way on keeping the steel industry competitive and resilient. The Center of Innovation through Visualization and Simulation which is a game-changing effort in training wind turbine installation and repair.

3 Proximity to Chicago

Northwest Indiana is in the Chicago Metropolitan Statistical Area. We enjoy Chicago television stations and many of even cheer on the Bears, Bulls, Black Hawks, White Sox and Cubs. It is a quick commute of around an hour to get downtown. Often the commute from Northwest Indiana is shorter than that of the Northern and Western Suburbs. The improvements to the South Shore Commuter Rail Line will continue to enhance our connectivity to the one of the largest economies in the world, Chicago.



Economy In Depth

Crunching the numbers



Infrastructure

Northwest Indiana is home to immense amounts of infrastructure. With three Class 1 railroads, two short line railroads, a deep freshwater port that connects to the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico, one international and three regional airports, four interstate highways, seven US highways, seven long-haul fiber carriers and a commuter rail system that runs from Chicago to South Bend it is an ideal location for manufacturing, distributing and connecting talent.

Manufacturing

Northwest Indiana is a leader in manufacturing. Indiana houses more manufacturing workers per capita than any other state. More than 20% of the nation's steel is produced right here in NWI. With cluster industries of metals manufacturing, air compressors and food processing, Northwest Indiana continues to grow in the advanced manufacturing sector.

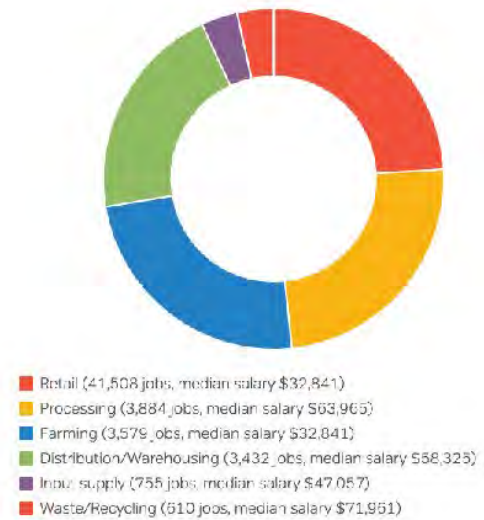
Economy In Depth

Crunching the numbers



Agriculture

Northwest Indiana makes things and grows things. We have an abundance of fertile farm land across the seven-county region. This land is ripe for innovation and added value in the agricultural industry. Northwest Indiana is one of the largest producers of many commodities, including #2 for chicken and egg production and in the top 5 for spearmint, peppermint, hog and corn production. In addition to these lucrative raw materials, we have a 520-acre development that is specifically tailored to the food processing industry, three cold storage facilities in market or coming on line soon and integrated US and interstate highway infrastructure that makes us the true crossroads of America. Our hard-working Hoosiers are doing their part to feed the nation and they are learning to do it more efficiently and effectively than ever. In this proposal we have several specific initiatives to help grow the synergy in our ag economy: the Housing Development at Fair Oaks Farms, the Ag Value Chain Economy, the Northwest Indiana Food HUB, the Rural Entrepreneurship and Innovation, the Farmers Market initiative, the Farm Expansion opportunity, LCEats Local, Little Cal Farming and the Artisan Food Project.



Talent / Workforce

We pride ourselves on our efforts to develop, attract and retain a talented workforce to help businesses succeed. We have more than programs, infrastructure and a welcoming business landscape to attract business; we also have a great quality of life to attract and retain talent. Center of Workforce Innovations provides strategic solutions to existing and new businesses in Northwest Indiana. Partnerships with a number of national and statewide organizations such as WorkOne and the Department of Workforce Development make CWI an efficient and valuable source for talent resources.



Our Rural Communities

The Northwest Indiana region is composed of compelling rural settings

In 2018, the rural counties of Northwest Indiana recognized a need to establish and build strong relationships amongst each other in order to have a unified voice. This has resulted in information sharing and collaboration, these counties have worked on issues like workforce development and entrepreneurship together. Examples of this include traveling to Bowling Green, Kentucky to conduct best practice research as a group and hosting the IEDA for a conference at Fair Oaks Farm in 2019.

In an effort to build a successful regional model, steps will be taken to bring a core set of partners together to develop a shared message on the economic development opportunities that exist in the agricultural arena. The partnership formed includes the counties of Jasper, Newton, Pulaski, and Starke. It is this group that has begun the development of the "rural economic development model," a framework that will guide the development of a regional ag strategy. In time, the strategy will highlight major agricultural assets and work to attract value-added agriculture in the form of agribusiness and food processing facilities and their connected supply chains.

Organized Efforts Around Rural Growth

Our region has taken a holistic approach to economic development and has embraced our rural, urban and suburban areas and highlighted the symbiosis that brings them together. As we blur county lines, we see that much of our region south of US 30 is rural with an agriculturally based value proposition. The READI grant application, Rural Entrepreneurship and Innovation Taskforce, showcases a project that is aligned around rural innovation and entrepreneurship. This will focus on the rural areas in all seven counties, inspiring and encouraging creativity, collaboration and new business growth.

Northwest Indiana's rural communities are not only at the table but leading the charge. The region's growth in agritourism has been remarkable. Fair Oaks Farms is host to 130,000 visitors a year and home to one of our largest industrial parks boasting 520 acres for our target industry of agricultural value chain, also a project targeted in this plan. The growth potential in this industry is a driving force for the future of Northwest Indiana.

In the last five years, the Northwest Indiana Food Council was formed, crafting a mission around helping all size farmers thrive as well as improving food access and security in the seven-county area. In the application, Region Roots Local Farm and Food Hub Distribution and Value-Chain Support, the project focuses on their program of Region Roots, NWI's first local food hub for bulk buyers. This endeavor has given new community to our local farmers and connects them to tourism and other business opportunities. Northwest Indiana's rural communities are not only at the table but leading the charge.



Chesterton

67%

OF OUR AREA IS FARMLAND AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

16%

OF OUR REGIONAL POPULATION LIVES IN A RURAL AREA

68,000

DAIRY COWS IN NORTHWEST INDIANA

Promoting Our Rural Communities

Northwest Indiana approaches economic development promotion of the region with a cohesive plan. Marketing the seven-county area is a vital part of day-to-day work for the Northwest Indiana Forum. The marketing efforts tout projects and properties in each county. All of our promotional materials cover all areas urban, rural and suburban. The seven-countys work hand in hand on the LEDO Council to select conferences and tradeshows to attend throughout the year. Each member understands that when traveling on this plan they are representing the region first then their county or community.

On the tourism front, some of the most treasured and visited areas in Northwest Indiana reside in our rural communities. Newton County is home not only to Fair Oaks Farms but also to Kankakee Sands Bison Nature Preserve where more than 90 bison roam. Jasper County boasts the RenArt Walk which draws visitors from all over the country and the sandhill crane migratory bird sanctuary which draws visitors from all over the world. These natural assets are promoted through the South Shore Convention and Visitors Authority and other organizations. The tourism and economic development marketing will be developed in the new marketing platform should we receive READI grant dollars.



Rensselaer Art Walk

Our Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

We have a reputation for our ideas



A Proven History of Success

The entrepreneurial ecosystem in Northwest Indiana is something we are working very diligently to grow. Through the **IGNITE** program this was one of the most inspiring groups to talk with and learn from. The energy in the room was palpable. The group discussed the need for more opportunities to meet, more structured information, greater access to capital and more start-up and coworking space.

Since the rollout of the plan we have seen an increase in 1 Million Cups events and activities for entrepreneurs at the Main Street and chamber level. 1 Million Cups works with entrepreneurs, empowering them with the tools and resources to break down barriers that stand in the way of starting and growing their businesses. The Small Business Development Center in conjunction with the Northwest Indiana community foundations produced NWI BizHub, an online portal designed to help entrepreneurs and small business owners with free, easy access to the vital assistance, resources and information they need, when they need it. We have also seen additional co-working space open but we need more to reach our goals.

Our **IGNITE the Region** Plan and this READI application call for a dynamic boost to our entrepreneurial ecosystem. The plans for Impact Labs, The Greater South Shore Initiative, Rural E&I and the Youth Entrepreneurship Program will help reshape the economy of Northwest Indiana, putting innovation and entrepreneurship at the forefront of the economic engine for Northwest Indiana and continuing the evolution of great progress and production already existing in our region.



Environment

Quality of place and life provide a reason for population growth and outside investment. Community and recreation opportunities are the first building blocks for our entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Talent

With high quality of life and direct engagement with talent pools through institutional support and a strong marketing platform, we can retain students at higher rates and court innovative out-of-towners who will set down roots in NWI.

Infrastructure

Once high performance concepts are ready to scale at an accelerated rate, our unique advantages in infrastructure will sustain economic growth in the region. With billions of dollars in shipping activity and a network of transportation partners, we're prepared for big ideas.

Funding

Backing the Hoosier state



Starke County

Private & Public Collaboration

The projects in this READI application have been put forth by municipalities, local economic development organizations, private investors and universities. These are truly a collaborative effort of public-private partnerships. Municipalities are willing to use TIF, ARPA and budgetary dollars to bring these projects to fruition. Many have backing from our regional community foundations and philanthropic organizations to add value and depth to their capital stack. Some of the projects fall inside the Transit Development Districts (TDD's) which makes them eligible for an additional layer of funding consideration as well as offering investment and return to those districts.

Market Driven Investments

With our proximity to Chicago and strong tax climate, opportunity for Northwest Indiana is abundant. The year 2020 saw more than 100 project opportunities in Northwest Indiana for buildings 75,000- 500,000 sq ft in size. Many of these projects did not come to fruition due to lack of vacant industrial buildings or shovel ready property. We are beginning to see more speculative development and more capital investment, however, the market is still considered unproven to many venture capital groups so municipalities are excited to work with their tools and READI grant funds to fill the gaps to bring these opportunities to reality.



IGNITE Meeting



Gary/Chicago International Airport

Strike While the Iron is Hot

The time is now to invest in Northwest Indiana. As we look at the needs of the emerging industries, so much of the desired infrastructure already exists in Northwest Indiana. We are improving our commuter rail, quality of life and connectivity to trails and waterways to attract more talent. We are improving our infrastructure for cargo and logistics to better accommodate the needs of ecommerce. We have amazing existing water and highway infrastructure. Our robust fiber assets are ready to make a quantum leap to attract the top level of research and development. We are planning more industrial park expansions through this grant. The workforce initiatives in this plan touch every socioeconomic level of our region, really making an impact to bring the existing workforce in alignment with the current industry needs. We need to strike while the iron is hot and push Northwest Indiana over the tipping point.

Economic Advantages

Strategic community investments



You Could Say We're Unique

With the third-largest population and second-largest economy in the state you could say Northwest Indiana is a powerhouse. Uniquely comprised of seven counties and 61 communities, our region is very different than other parts of the state. We have large urban cities: Hammond, East Chicago, Gary, Whiting, Michigan City, suburban cities, Portage, La Porte, Crown Point, Valparaiso, Hobart, rural cities: Rensselear, Roselawn and many charming municipalities sprinkled throughout. The diversity of our region lends itself to our amazing potential. Our economy has long been driven by its deep manufacturing base, proximity to Chicago and Lake Michigan, multimodal transportation infrastructure and agricultural production and processing sectors. We have scenic natural amenities, well-regarded higher education facilities and healthcare institutions, skilled workforce and a competitive business climate. Our assets all stack up to make us a place people want to live and do business.

There is a growing acceptance in the region that more must be done to revitalize growth and prosperity. The region can no longer rely solely on its traditional activities and strengths to ensure economic vitality. The cause for worry is evident. The region lost population due to out-migration; the labor force has not grown in almost two decades; overall job growth remains stagnant, and much of the region's job creation is occurring in lower-wage service sectors. Poverty and distress also persist in some communities.

Certainly, these patterns are not unique to Northwest Indiana. Some are the consequence of national and global forces that have been building for years and are difficult for local communities to overcome. However, there are numerous examples of regions that have successfully adapted to new economic realities and invigorated economic growth. This is already happening in places throughout Northwest Indiana. Just a few examples include housing redevelopment in Whiting, downtown redevelopment in Michigan City, and agricultural tourism at Fair Oaks Farms. The challenge for Northwest Indiana is to amplify these and other successes regionally, to position the region's amazing assets for new opportunities, and to build a connected and sustained regional economic development partnership.



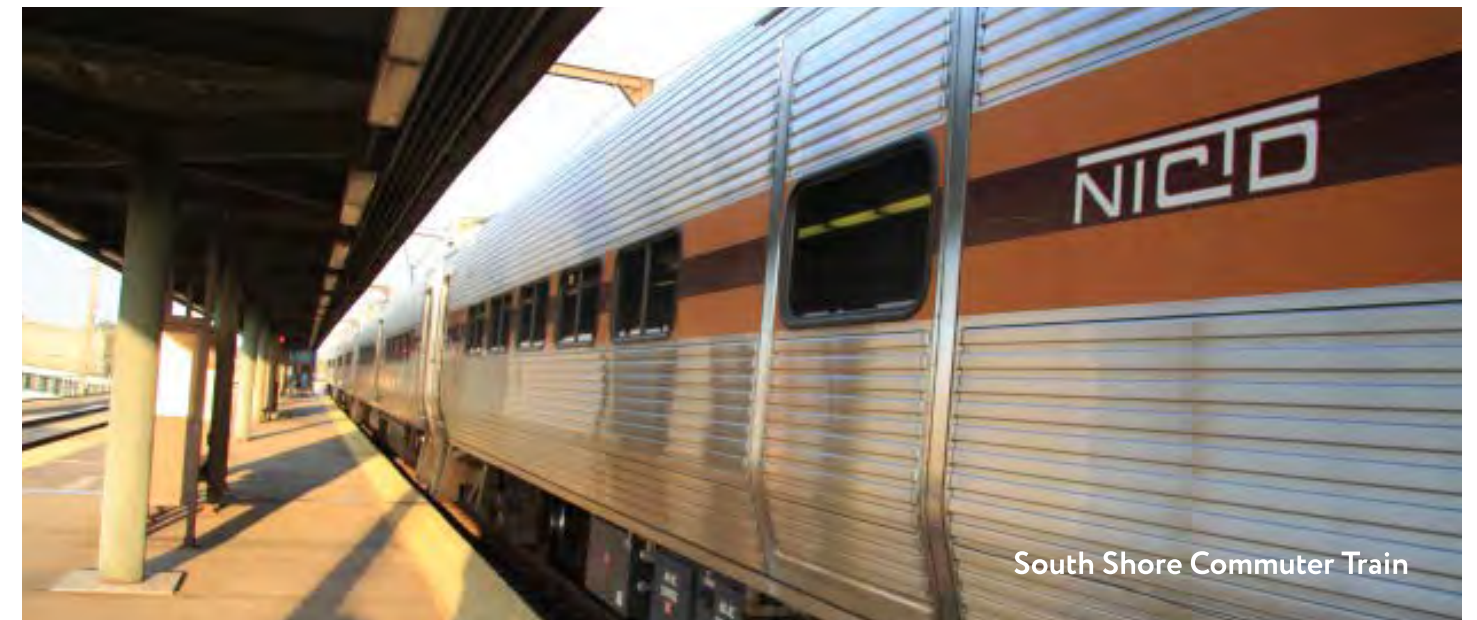
1 Three Class I Railroads Two World Class Short Lines

The proximity of Northwest Indiana to the City of Chicago and Lake Michigan makes it an infrastructure super highway. Norfolk Southern, Canadian National, and CSX serve as major Class I rail providers and Chicago South Shore & South Bend and Indiana Harbor Belt run short lines, through these the Northwest Indiana rail system makes moving cargo seamless. Combining the rail system with the deep freshwater port and the elaborate highway infrastructure makes Northwest Indiana a multi-modal powerhouse.



2 Commuter Rail System

The South Shore Commuter Rail Line stretches more than 90 miles from South Bend to the heart of downtown Chicago. This passenger rail service makes Northwest Indiana an official suburb of Chicago. A combined state, federal and local plan to expand and enhance the railway will improve the commuter traffic both into and out of the city center. The transit development districts around the improved infrastructure will attract talent and investment to our region.



Economic Advantages

Strategic community investments



3 Proximity to Chicago

Our proximity to Chicago has been a driving force for Northwest Indiana for decades. The stark contrast in our state's tax structure combined with the high quality of life and low cost of living makes Northwest Indiana an easy choice for investment. The only thing holding us back is limited inventory.



4 8 Million Tons of Cargo Shipped Annually

The Ports of Indiana-Burns Harbor is strategically located to provide abundant opportunity for growth in steel, agriculture and manufacturing. With unmatched inland access to two major waterways, Class I railroads and eight highways, the port can handle ocean ships, lake vessels and river barges on more than one mile of berthing area. Providing connectivity to the St. Lawrence Seaway, Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico the port hosts more than 30 companies and serves many more throughout the area. The Foreign Trade Zone designation makes it an outstanding opportunity for foreign direct investment. The Ports' \$5.2 billion economic impact and 30,970 annual jobs created make it a critical partner to the Northwest Indiana economy.



5 45 Miles of Lake Michigan Shoreline

Twenty-two of Indiana's 45 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline provide public and ADA accessible uses at local, state or national park beaches. Residents and visitors from around the world enjoy unique scenic recreational experiences. Northwest Indiana welcomes more than 4 million visitors annually to Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore Park and the Indiana Dunes State Park. Swimming, sailing, fishing, kayaking, surfing, hiking, biking, water skiing, camping are among the many recreational activities Lake Michigan provides to residents and visitors. Ecological education experiences are plentiful with more than 350 bird species and 1,400 species of ferns and flowering plants native to these areas.

6 Accessibility

By land, water and air Northwest Indiana is the middle of everywhere. Interstate highways of 65, 80, 90 and 94 ease travel east, west, north and south. The heavy haul routes of US 12, 20 and 30 make industrial loads welcome across the region. The Gary/Chicago International Airport provides great service to general aviation and cargo at the newly located UPS service. Proximity of both O'Hare International and Midway Airports in less than 60 miles round out the opportunity for global presence in the region.

Commuters Patterns

These 4 geographies account for 90% of all commuters in and out of the region.

	IN	OUT
Illinois	16,886	49,330
Michigan	1,084	1,288
St. Joseph County	1,204	3,664
Marshall County	409	1,971
Total Commuting	22,470	61,853
Intra Region	22,470	

SWOT Analysis

Strategic community investments

The Timing is Right

In 2020 the **IGNITE** Implementation Team evaluated the work that had already been accomplished and crafted a plan to bring the remainder of the projects to fruition. One of the key roadblocks was lack of funding for many of the initiatives. In the fall of 2020, the team created a budget for these initiatives deciding that it would be easier to get the individual components funded if we could show the impact these projects would have on the Region and their local communities. We would raise money as a collective and focus on opportunities to move the plan forward; keeping an eye on federal opportunities as well as local investors. The 2021 legislative session presented the first and largest opportunity to date with the READI grant. By July of 2021 the **IGNITE** Implementation Team had built a project scope of more than \$636 million in project needs and a list of dynamic projects that will help reshape the economy of Northwest Indiana.

Roadblocks to Progress

Northwest Indiana has previously been a region of balkanization. Sixty-one municipalities working toward their betterment with little collective visioning for the region as a whole. With the launch of **IGNITE the Region**, much of that changed. Regional organizations saw the vision of how they could participate in the plan and work together to get things done. Since its inception, 88% of the plan is underway or complete but the largest roadblock to success has been resources. We have amazing things happening across our region but with few dollars and staff to promote them. Lack of product is an additional obstacle to success for the region. We have had several business opportunities for new or expanding businesses but lack of industrial product has caused prospects to look elsewhere. Northwest Indiana has typically been a “failure is not an option” mentality, although this creates a solid work ethic, it is a challenging mindset for an evolving economy where innovation and entrepreneurial spirit are critical ingredients. Another impediment to growth in the region has been lack of venture capital. The capital markets see Northwest Indiana as an unproven land and have been hesitant to overcome the perceived risks.

Strengths

- Proximity and connections to Chicago
- Lake Michigan (commercial access, water rights, recreation & tourism)
- Critical infrastructure assets (interstates, port, airports, rail, fiber)
- Manufacturing heritage, skill sets, and mentality
- Natural amenities (dunes, wetlands, agricultural lands)
- Positive business climate and cost of business/living advantages
- Postsecondary education and healthcare institutions
- State and local workforce development programs
- Agricultural base and resources
- Current energy and enthusiasm for regional economic development
- Large, long-term investments by major employers
- Existing regional and local efforts to enhance quality-of-place amenities

Weaknesses

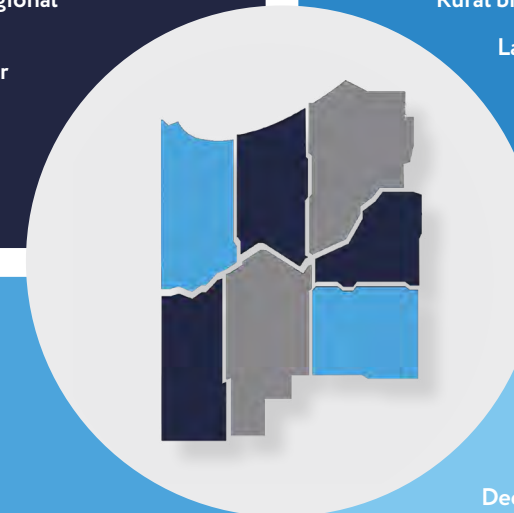
- Stagnant population and net domestic out-migration of residents
- Stagnant job growth
- No main regional center (city)
- Internal and external perceptions of the region
- Poor track record of promoting the region or telling success stories—internally and externally
- Deficient supply of real estate product (industrial & class A office)
- Lack of a sense of urgency around economic development
- Underdeveloped entrepreneurial culture and ecosystem
- Long-term distressed communities
- Rural broadband infrastructure
- Lack of diverse industry mix
- Dominance of the Chicago media market

Opportunities

- Diversifying the regional economic base
- Creating a vibrant entrepreneurship ecosystem
- Supporting innovation within existing businesses
- Enhancing internal and external marketing efforts
- Promoting transit-oriented development along the proposed South Shore Line Double Track NWI and West Lake Corridor commuter rail projects
- Strengthening sector partnerships and career pathways programs to deepen the regional talent pipeline
- Accelerating the reclamation and redevelopment of brownfield sites
- Multicity master plan of commercial and industrial properties
- Developing the potential of Gary/Chicago International Airport as an industrial/cargo/corporate aviation asset
- Leveraging tourism to support industry and talent attraction

Threats

- Global trade disruptions
- Perceptions about workforce availability
- Declining higher education enrollments (statewide)
- Many large employers are now headquartered outside the region
- Invasive species
- Economic impact of COVID-19 or other global disruptors



Current Trends: Infrastructure

Connecting the network of
NWI communities



At the Forefront of Sustainable Energy

The pandemic brought uncertainty in the market and in municipal infrastructure. As we continue to emerge from the dramatic shock, we can evaluate things from a 1000-foot view. There is a need to reevaluate our supply chain infrastructure. Goods and services need to be more readily available and from a diverse realm of suppliers. We need to be better stewards to the environment and those who live in it, building back greener and more diverse to create opportunity for all.

Information is KING. The need for secure reliable data is one of the most critical components to daily life, whether you are making critical business decisions or trying to download the latest episode of *Kominsky Method* on Netflix. The fiber infrastructure is crucial to keep that system sound. Wired highways will continue to be a growing infrastructure need.

Open tolling, autonomous vehicles, mileage-driven funding methods for infrastructure funding all require copious amounts of data.

If information is king then water is the new GOLD. Insuring a clean safe water supply and water resources to meet production needs is a growing concern, Northwest Indiana successfully advocated for the grandfathering of water withdrawal volumes when the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence River Compact was negotiated and ratified by Congress. Due to the implementation of conservation, recycling and production efficiency improvements, many large quantity water withdrawal permitted facilities have excess capacity for use. Provisions are in place to allow for the transfer of water volume for use within the Lake Michigan basin to new and/or expanding water dependent manufacturing opportunities.

The reduction in coal fire generation and generation plants creates the need to build back greener. Northwest Indiana will be home to two of the largest solar installations in the Midwest over the next five years. This will drive the need for a different skillset from our workforce. The move to more renewable energy will continue to drive a need in the battery industry so we can continue to operate a sustainable power grid.

Other Industries That Fit Well With Our Resources, Infrastructure & Location

Healthcare Technology
Advanced Telemedicine
Drug Development
Data-driven healthcare
Nanomedicine
5G- Enabled devices
Tricorders
Digital assistants
Smarter pacemakers
Lab on a chip
Wearables with a purpose

Precision Agriculture
Sensors
GPS/ GNSS
Mobile Devices
Robotics
Irrigation
IOT
Variable Rate Seeding
Weather Modeling
Nitrogen Modeling
Standardization

Semiconductors
Chip design
Chip fabrication
Assembly
Industry 4.0+
Advanced Material Production

Multipassenger robo-taxis could account for
500 billion miles traveled
on US roads by 2030.

57% of companies

believe that supply chain management gives them a competitive edge that enables them to further develop their business.

A projected
9.6 million charge ports
will be required to support 18.7 million EVs in 2030.

Quantum Computing

Quantum computing does not today exist. There is an extremely well-funded process being undertaken by a dozen or more countries and more than a hundred companies to understand and develop quantum computing. The participants in the race truly see themselves as 'saving the world' and the energy surrounding quantum computing is similar to that energy felt by the scientists of the mid-1900's to put a man on the moon.

So many new technologies have been planned and promised. Artificial Intelligence is a mystery to most consumer but they believe they want it. People today think they want self-directed automobiles while, at the same time, the same people think that robots will take their jobs.

Simply stated, the science and the technology are being developed to match consumer demand as quickly as possible. The reality is that it will be 10 or more years before we have a truly useful quantum computing system or technology available for our use.

Some specific group of people will create the quantum computing network that will revolutionize human research capacity.

The state of Indiana has world-class research universities that are involved in the race to create quantum computing. The most substantial groups are working together under a relatively organized research cooperative. Because of our geography, the state of Indiana is in a unique position to participate in the quantum computing research race. By creating a quantum fiber network corridor, we can be agnostic as to who wins the race. We want somebody to win the race and we want to be a part of as many of the racers as possible.

Supply Chain Pressure

The pandemic turned "just-in-time" supply chain on its head making us realize the value in keeping our goods production closer to home. The delays and shortages from overseas deliveries have put a stranglehold on the consumer goods, automotive and construction industry. The need for additional industrial product, distribution locations and rail infrastructure continue to be driving forces to shore up the Northwest Indiana opportunities in this continually evolving market.

Renewable Energy

As the world decreases its desire to be dependent on fossil fuels the need for more renewable and sustainable energy sources grows dramatically. Training for the workers in the renewable energy sector as well as battery production will be integral components to ensuring success and stability in this emerging economy.

Current Trends: Entrepreneurship & Innovation

Making the future a present reality

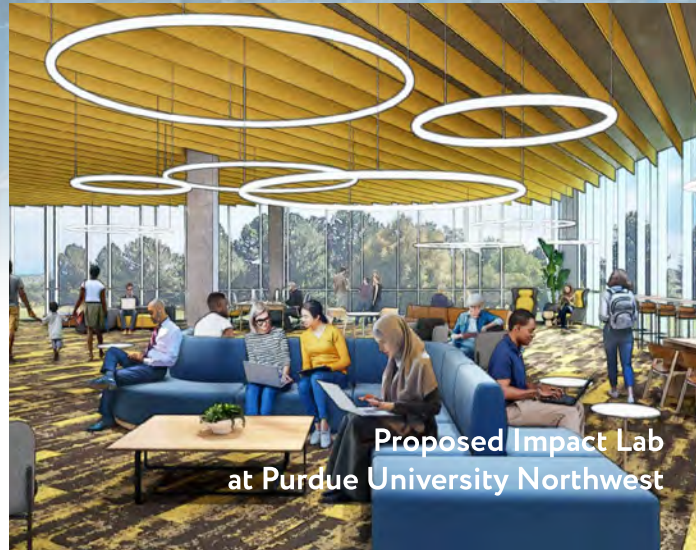


Indiana small businesses employ **1.2 million people.**

There are **38,800 self-employed minority individuals** in Indiana.

Nationally a growing percentage of new entrepreneurs are

Black, Asian or Latino.



Proposed Impact Lab at Purdue University Northwest



Proposed Impact Lab at Purdue University Northwest

SHIVEHATTERY ARCHITECTURE+ENGINEERING

Investments in Innovation Centers

Optimization is the new risk management for all company sizes but certainly for startups. This is why places with shared resources like the Impact Labs are so critical.

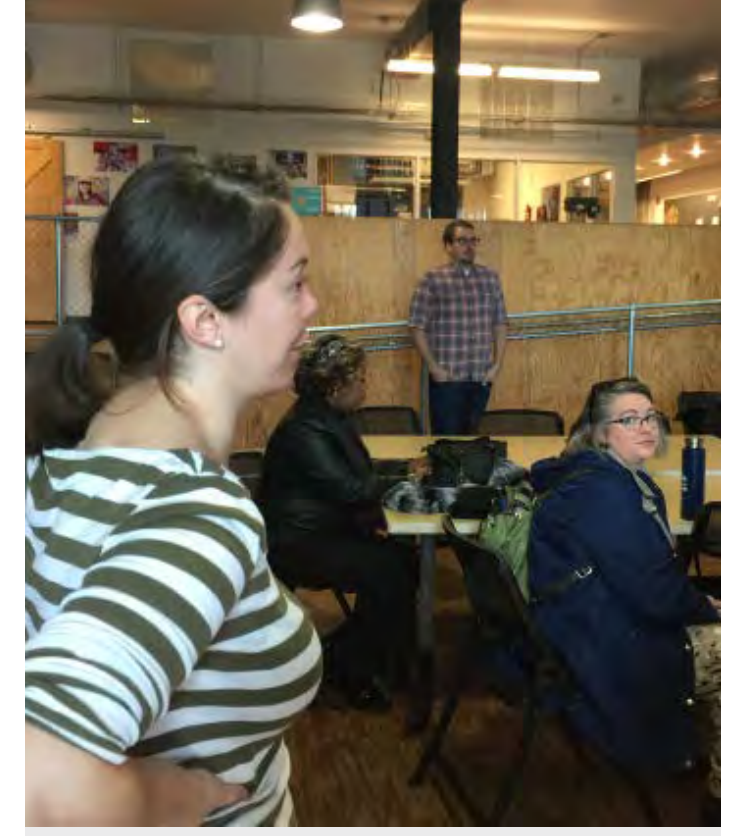
Also, industry-specific startups are seeing the greatest growth so there is good cause to partner with Purdue Northwest and utilize research to focus on electronic component manufacturing and semiconductors. The key to this partnership would bring the technical and non-technical sectors together to build a more well-rounded ecosystem, tying it together with Center for Innovation and Visualization through Simulation and their visualization and simulation tools to help expedite the prototyping and production process. It is important that this space has life and culture as well as online resources available 24/7 for this ever-changing community. Additional programs like NWI BizHub, Youth and Rural Entrepreneurship The Innovation Space at Valparaiso University, Michigan City Innovation Center and the Minority Resource Program will help develop the entrepreneurial spirit at every level, demographic and geography.



Center for Innovation and Visualization through Simulation

Startup Communities

Creating a nest where companies can grow and flourish is imperative to the success of a startup ecosystem. Connecting with peers, brainstorming and access to scalable resources allow companies to thrive without the burden of being a sole company trying to make it alone. Projects such as Impact Labs Super Accelerator and STEM Center, Michigan City Innovation Center, Youth Entrepreneurship Ecosystem, 2nd Muse, NWI Biz Hub, The Makers Space at VU and the Rural Entrepreneurship & Innovation Taskforce plan will help grow the Northwest Indiana economy.



Access to Capital

Capital is an evolving market in the entrepreneurship and innovation sector. While crowd-funding, angel investors and friends & family continue to be the land of opportunity for many start-up companies, it is challenging to get to the next stage of development and production without a venture capital network or true market investment strategy. Projects like the Venture Capital Fund, Impact Labs and the Minority Resource Program will help to give access to growing companies in Northwest Indiana.

Current Trends: Business Development & Marketing

Hard at work supporting growth in rural & urban settings



Agricultural Value Chain

Process, distribution and logistics are some of the most costly components of food supply. Northwest Indiana has a phenomenal amount of crop and herd production but very little processing, storage and distribution. Because we are a one-day drive to 80% of the U.S. population, it is time we started doing more with what we grow. The Ag Value Chain strategy and Northwest Indiana Food Hub is focused on understanding, integrating and marketing our assets to increase productivity and reduce the carbon footprint on these products to market. Farm-to-table, farm-to-process and process-to-distribution will bring Northwest Indiana's bounty to the world.

4-6%
Northwest Indiana's Vacancy Rate on Industrial Product.

80%
of US Population is within a day's drive of Northwest Indiana.



-3.5%: NWI's Cost of Living Index
The Cost of Living index of Northwest Indiana Cities is lower compared to the national average. The calculations are based on the total cost of energy, food, healthcare, housing and transportation, among other factors.

Marketing Trends

Telling Northwest Indiana's story louder and stronger has never been more important than it is today. The global competition for investment and talent continues to grow. As attentions get threaded by multiple media platforms and social media outlets, the need to meet the market frequently and boldly is critical to our success. We have many wonderful things happening in our region but have been too humble to tell the world. Programs like the Northwest Indiana Marketing Platform, Northwest Indiana Market Study, and Headquarters Outreach Program will help tell our story both inside and outside the region.

Need For Product

Northwest Indiana has a 4-6% vacancy rate in industrial buildings. A natural market generally has a 12-15% vacancy rate. We are in desperate need for additional industrial product. Our major industrial parks saw overwhelming demand in 2019 and 2020 leaving few shovel-ready sites for build-to-suit or speculative development. Projects for consideration to bring more product to our region are: Assembling Land for Development in Gary, Merrillville Business Park Mississippi Street Reconstruction Project, The Link in Valparaiso, Regional Plan for Trail Connectivity to the Munster TDD, Gary Airport Hangar Development Opportunity, Schererville Business Park, East Chicago Gateway Project and Gary Demolition Projects for Development.

Current Trends: Quality of Life & Placemaking

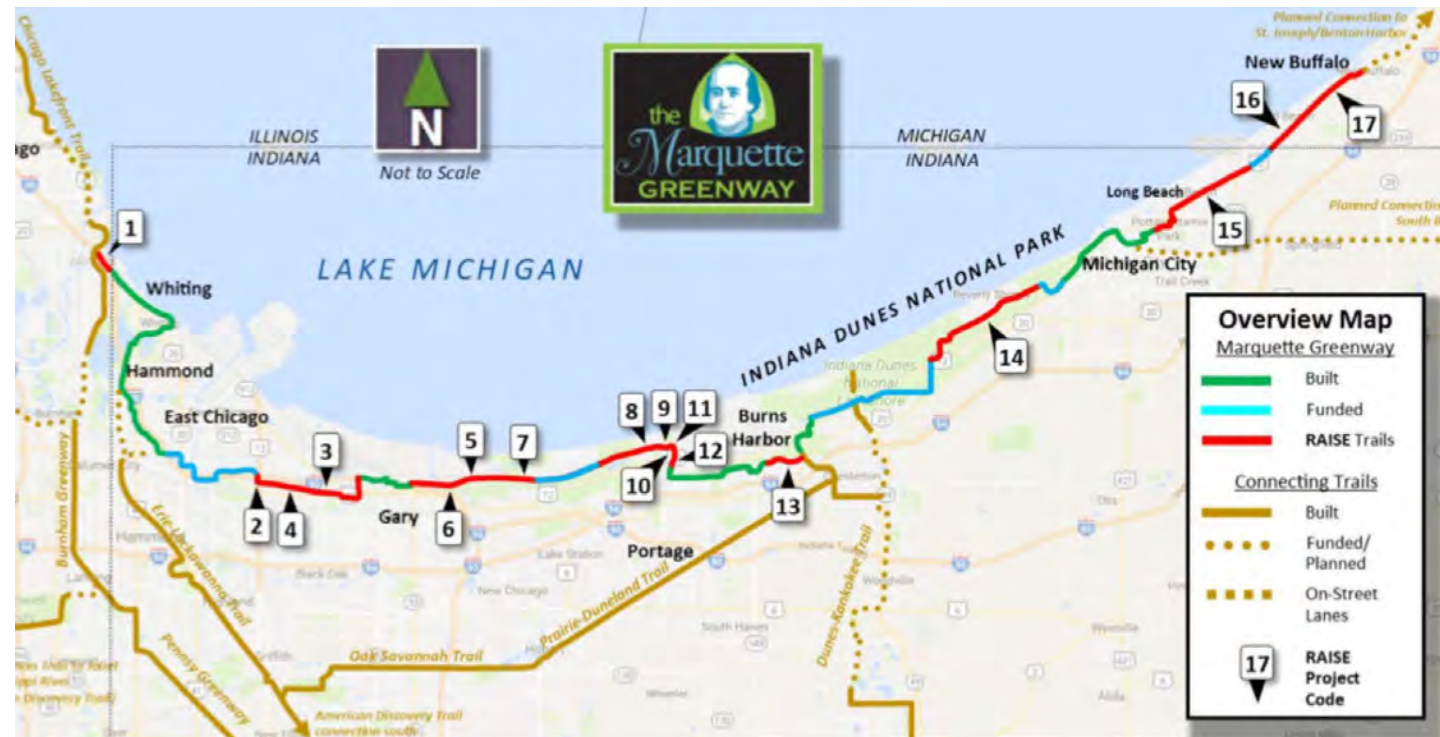
Boosting quality of life through multiple facets

Reclaiming of Natural Amenities

The Marquette Plan's collaborative effort with the lakefront communities created a comprehensive land use vision and guided efforts to make Lake Michigan's shore viable for living and investment. There are many opportunities to grow engagement including the consideration of prison relocation at Michigan City and study of redevelopment for the NIPSCO property as it comes off line, the Marquette Greenway and the East Gary Gateway.



Portage Marina



71% of trail users purchased hard goods related to their trail use and spent

an average of \$507.

48% of trail users purchased soft goods related to their trail use and spent

an average of \$13 per trip.

Connectivity and Walkable Downtowns

Communities grow with connection and communities that offer accessibility, public spaces, comfort and safety thrive. Improvements to welcome visitors, increase walkability and sense of community included this application include: Station Square Walkable Community at Hammond Train Station, Chessie Trail Corridor La Porte to Michigan City South Shore Station, Northwest Indiana Cost Comparison Study, Ivanhoe South Community Development & Education Initiative, Regional Youth Sports & Nature Park, Panhandle Pathway Multi Modal Trail, Johnson Hotel Lakefront Redevelopment Project, Little Calumet River Agriculture/Regenerative Farming Initiative



Congressman Pete Visclosky
Champion of Marquette Plan

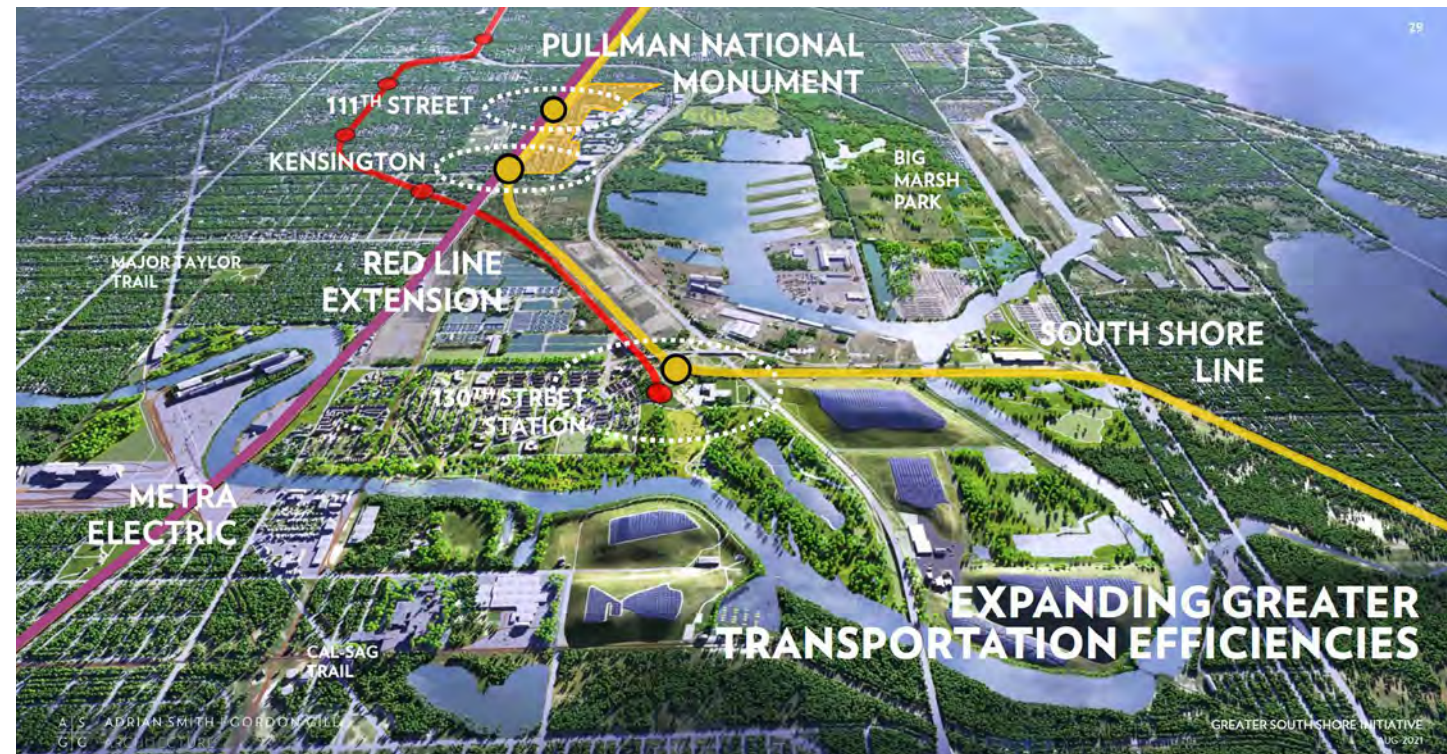
Current Trends: Talent & Workforce

Equipping our workforces with sustainable skillsets



Connectivity to Jobs

Talent is the number one driving factor in site selection for companies looking to make new investments. Northwest Indiana has one of the highest unemployment rates in the state. It is not that there is a lack of job opportunities in Northwest Indiana, there is a lack of skills alignment. Many of the programs that enhance skills are challenging for the layperson to understand. It is critically important that we start meeting community members where they feel comfortable and help them to navigate higher paying and more productive work in the region. This is where programs like Level Up Northwest Indiana-Enhancing our Talent Assets, READY NWI Talent Alignment Program, Work Based Learning Program, Boys & Girls Club Teen Workforce Academy and Tech Center and the Work Release and Mental Health Talent Correction Program come in to help.



90%

of all Jobs for America's Graduate Expansion Program students graduate high school.

38%

of our region's workforce is 55 or over.

40 Region Public School Corporations

are involved in the READY NWI regional education collaboration.

Training for the Future

The marketplace is moving faster and faster, evolving every day. Training a workforce that cannot only perform today's skills but be ready for what's next is a daunting task. The need to create a system of continuous learning and innovation is imperative to compete in today's economy. Ivy Tech, CWI & IBEW Energy Tech Training Academy, Ivy Tech Mechanical Technology Training and Air Compressor Academy, Impact Labs Super Accelerator and STEM Center, Level Up Northwest Indiana-Enhancing our Talent Assets are projects that engage in training tomorrow's workforce.

Diversity and Inclusion

Making sure all voices are heard when planning the community's future not only gives a broader perspective it also helps the plan advance more quickly because more people have ownership in the success of the plan. Northwest Indiana has been a melting pot since the early 1900's. We have more than 100 nationalities, representing different cultures and religions. Our employers are continuing to support gender diversity and skills accommodations in the workforce of Northwest Indiana. Many projects of this plan are designed to serve all people where they are and include them in the process. Some of these projects are Level Up Northwest Indiana-Enhancing our Talent Assets, READY NWI Talent Alignment Program, Employed Worker Upskilling, Jobs for America's Graduate Expansion Program, Boys & Girls Club Teen Workforce Academy and Tech Center.



A photograph of the Michigan City Lighthouse at dusk. The lighthouse is a white, cylindrical tower with a red roof, situated on a rocky island. The sky is a mix of blue and purple, with some clouds. The water is calm and reflects the light. The text "Executive Summary" is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Executive Summary

IT'S TIME

for a regional renaissance

A BIT OF BACKGROUND

The IGNITE the Region plan and the READI grant application have been driven in large part by the Northwest Indiana Forum, the voice of business for Northwest Indiana. In crafting the IGNITE plan we worked with over 500 business and community leaders. This is the space that the community leaders and business community come together to make things happen. This is a collaboration of the public and private sector coming together to move the region forward. We fully understand that the municipalities, institutions, nonprofits and business community must all work together for the highest and best outcomes for the region.

Planning Process

Carefully planned, welcoming all

IGNITE the Region - Northwest Indiana's Strategy for Economic Transformation, is a working plan created with the input of 500 business and community leaders and 400 general public surveys. While we outline the process that brought IGNITE to the READI process it is important to note that monthly pillar meetings, quarterly implementation team meetings and annual stakeholder meetings accompany the daily work of the partner organizations to move the implementation matrix along.



September 2018

Launch of IGNITE

Introduced IGNITE the Region Northwest Indiana's Strategy for Economic Transformation



2020

Quarterly Meetings

Project Review, Quarterly Meetings Activity Report submitted. Budget process began.



March 2018

Kickoff of Planning Process

More than 50 round table meetings, including 500 business & community leaders engaged, 450 surveys submitted



2019

Monthly Pillar Meetings,
Quarterly Implementation Team Meetings
Annual Report Out August 22nd



April 30th, 2021

IGNITE Next Level Meeting

IGNITE leadership team works on budget list



May 19th, 2021

IEDC READI Rollout Zoom Meeting

Mark Wasky and Luke Bosso of the IEDC present the READI opportunity to NWI Stakeholders



June 2nd, 2021

2nd LEDO Meeting

The Northwest Indiana Forum hosted a LEDO Council Meeting to discuss READI project ideas and potential funding mechanisms



June 9th, 2021

Stakeholders Meeting

The Northwest Indiana Forum hosted a regional stakeholders meeting outlining the process and timeline for the READI grant submission

May 5th, 2021

LEDO Meeting

Worked with LEDO team to develop IGNITE Next Level plan



May 24th, 2021

READI Mayors Roundtable

The Northwest Indiana Forum hosted a Mayor's Roundtable to discuss READI project ideas and potential funding mechanisms



June 4th, 2021

Submission of the Regional Declaration Documents

The Northwest Indiana Forum declared intention to submit the READI grant application on behalf of the seven-county region and our partners





June 18th, 2021

Legislators Meeting

The Northwest Indiana Forum hosted a meeting of the Northwest Indiana Legislative Delegation to discuss key projects to impact the economy of Northwest Indiana.



July 7th, 2021

Committee Review

The Northwest Indiana READI Grant Review Committee met to review project applications.



September 30th, 2021

Submission

Northwest Indiana READI application delivered to the IEDC

June 16th, 2021

2nd Stakeholders Meeting

The Northwest Indiana Forum hosted a second regional stakeholders meeting outlining the process and timeline for the READI grant submission.



June 25th, 2021

Project Submissions Due

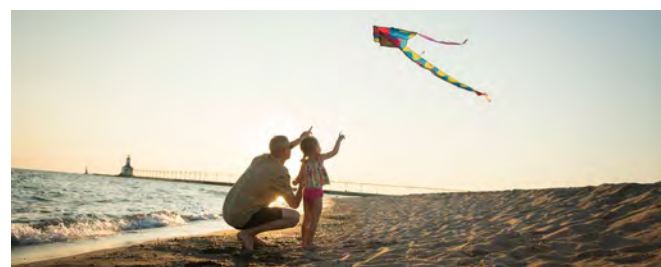
The Regional Partners submitted projects for consideration in the READI application.



July 27th, 2021

Committee Final Review

Final project list approved by the committee for the READI application



On Every Level, A Collaboration

The most exciting thing about **IGNITE the Region** is it is a collaborative effort. The work we do to move the plan forward is done with the work others are doing as well. The Forum and the LEDO community work mostly on the Business Development and Marketing Pillar while the RDA, NIRPC and One Region work on the Placemaking Pillar. Throughout our work, we are cognizant of what the other groups are doing and for

what part of the plan they are taking responsibility. The Pillar groups meet monthly to move their work forward and the Implementation Team meets quarterly to report progress and hold each other accountable. We report out annually to the general public and business community to measure progress, celebrate success, and contemplate what's next. Northwest Indiana is walking hand in hand through this plan.



Planning Process

Putting the team together

Our Key Stakeholders

In 2018 the Northwest Indiana business community came together to create **IGNITE the Region**, Northwest Indiana's Strategy for Economic Transformation. This plan was crafted with the input of more than 500 business and community leaders and general population survey with 400+ community members participating. We met with mayors, legislators, entrepreneurs, large and small manufacturers, healthcare leaders, logistics companies, chambers, young professionals, educators, environmentalists, developers, brokers and regional economic development professionals, among others. The process was funded by a diverse group of more than 60 investors. The process had a leadership team of 54, a steering committee of 15, and an implementation team of 21 steering the work to fruition since 2018. Since the inception of this plan, 88% of the implementation items have been started or completed. The stakeholders have been the driving force for the pillar meetings and real work that is being done to move the region forward.

IGNITE Implementation Team

Leadership

Donald L. Babcock, Purdue University Northwest
Heather Ennis, Northwest Indiana Forum

Placemaking

Ty Warner, NWI Regional Plan Commission
Raeann Trakas, Cleveland Cliffs
Matt Wells, Purdue University Northwest
Marie Foster, One Region
Sherri Ziller, NWI Regional Development Authority

E&I

Gary R. Johnson, Mortar Net Solutions
Jason Allen Williams, Society of Innovators
Maggi Spartz, Unity Foundation
Sheila M. Matias, NWI Leadership Academy

Talent

Linda Woloshansky, Center of Workforce Innovations
Lisa Daugherty, Center of Workforce Innovations

Business Development & Marketing

Matt Saltanovitz, IEDC
Rex Richards, Valparaiso EDC
Stephen Eastridge, Jasper County EDC
Wade Breitzke, +WeCreate Media
Heather Ennis, Northwest Indiana Forum

Infrastructure

Kay Nelson, Northwest Indiana Forum
Ian Hirt, The Port of Indiana, Burns Harbor
Bill Baker, Urschel Land Development

IGNITE Project Steering Committee

Don Babcock, NIPSCO
Wade Breitzke, +WeCreate Media
Tom Collins Jr., Luke Oil
Erica Dombey, Regional Development Company
Heather Ennis, Northwest Indiana Forum
Bill Hanna, Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority
Clarence Hulse, EDC Michigan City
Robert Johnson III, Cimcor
Denarie Kane, City of Hobart
Leah Konrady, One Region
William Lowe, Indiana University Northwest
Michael McCall, Fair Oaks Farms
Matt Saltanovitz, IEDC
Maggi Spartz, Discovery Alliance
Bill Steers, ArcelorMittal
Linda Woloshansky, Center of Workforce Innovations

IGNITE Leadership Group

Kyle Allen Jr., Lake County, Indiana Board of Commissioners
Don Babcock, Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO)
Speros Batistatos, South Shore Convention & Visitors Authority
Julie Bieszczat, Barney Enterprises Management Services
Wade Breitzke, +WeCreate Media
Chris Campbell, Centier Bank
Joe Coar, Tonn and Blank Construction
Tom Collins Jr., Luke Oil
Bert Cook, Greater La Porte Economic Development Corporation (GLEDC)
Rick Dekker, Dekker Vacuum Technologies
Erica Dombey, Regional Development Company (RDC)
George Douglas, Indiana Beverage
Stephen Eastridge, Jasper County Economic Development Organization
Heather Ennis, Northwest Indiana Forum (NWIF)
Cem Gercek, Carmeuse Lime & Stone
Ron Gifford, Starke County Economic Development Foundation
Mike Golando, Cargill
John Girzadas, B. Coleman Aviation
Bill Hanna, Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority
Ian Hirt, Port of Indiana Burns Harbor
Clarence Hulse, Economic Development Corporation Michigan City

READI Project Selection Committee

Sherri Ziller, NWI Regional Development Authority
Bill Baker, Urschel Laboratories
Stephen Eastridge, Jasper County EDC
Wade Breitzke, +WeCreate Media
Heather Ennis, Northwest Indiana Forum
Bert Cook, La Porte Economic Advancement Partnership
Karen Lauerman, Lake County IN Economic Alliance
Don Babcock, Purdue University Northwest
Lisa Daugherty, Center of Workforce Innovations
Jason Williams, Society of Innovators
Matt Wells, Purdue University Northwest
Marie Foster-Bruins, One Region
Bill Sheldrake, Policy Analytics
Tony Oss, Larson-Danielson Construction Company

Robert Johnson, Cimcor
Denarie Kane, City of Hobart
Thomas Keon, Purdue University Northwest
Leah Konrady, One Region
Kris Krouse, Shirley Heinze Land Trust
Paul Labovitz, National Park Service
Richard Leverett, AT&T
William Lowe, Indiana University Northwest
Patrick Lyp, City of Valparaiso
Dean Mazzone, Franciscan Alliance
Michael McCall, Fair Oaks Farms
Stewart McMillan, Task Force Tips
Mike Noland, Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD)
Pete Novak, Greater Northwest Indiana Association of REALTORS (GNIAR)
Nathan Origer, Pulaski County Community Development Commission
Randy Palmateer, Northwest Indiana Building and Trades Council
Craig Phillips, City of Michigan City
Carol Podolak, bNutt
Rex Richards, Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce
Matt Saltanovitz, Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC)
Carolyn Saxton, Legacy Foundation
Dan Vacarri, Gary/Chicago International Airport

Planning Process

Putting the team together

Defining the Region

The Northwest Indiana READI grant application covers Lake, Porter, La Porte, Jasper, Newton, Starke and Pulaski Counties. This is the same geographic territory that the Indiana Economic Development Corporation, the Northwest Indiana Forum, the Center of Workforce Innovations, the Indiana Small Business Development Center and the Greater Northwest Indiana Association of Realtors™ define as Northwest Indiana. Combining the urban, suburban and rural areas of our region give us a comprehensive economy of makers and growers. While we briefly considered doing two applications, ultimately the decision was made that we are better together. Our industries are complementary and our philosophies meld. **IGNITE the Region** helped us define our work so that we can be more productive together.



Board Responsibilities

The Northwest Indiana Forum Managing Board empowered the staff to act on behalf of the seven county region. They are engaged in the process and participated in the stakeholder groups. Monthly reports on process and progress are given at executive and board meetings. The board has committed to working with the municipalities and the private sector to bring these projects to fruition and continue to advance the work of **IGNITE the Region**.



COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS SUPPORT



About the Northwest Indiana Forum

The Northwest Indiana Forum is the regional voice for the business community and premiere source of a full package of services that promote economic development and retention of quality jobs. With more than 130 investor organizations, the Forum's mission is to increase the broad-based wealth in Northwest Indiana through economic development. Funded by investor contributions and grants, an investment in the Northwest Indiana Forum translates to a direct investment in the seven-county region to support growth and economic innovation.

The Critical Success Factors of the Forum

- 1 The Northwest Indiana Forum is the Voice of Business.**
The Northwest Indiana Forum helps to craft the pro-business message for the Northwest corner of the state. With more than 130 investors, the Forum works to advocate for the business community on issues of economic development, environment and regulatory permitting.
- 2 The Northwest Indiana Forum markets Northwest Indiana as THE place for business,** spending about a third of our time marketing Northwest Indiana around the country and at home. In a non-COVID year we organize between 20-30 outbound trips to visit companies, site selectors, brokers and developers to tell the story of Northwest Indiana and share working details of projects to help them find a home in NWI.
- 3 Our Stakeout and Drive Bold Initiatives significantly impact the regional economy.**
The Northwest Indiana Forum has stepped up to take the lead on projects that significantly impact the regional economy. We have been the instigator and shepherd of **IGNITE the Region** bringing together hundreds of region stakeholders to impact per capita income, population growth and attract capital investment. We are the organizers of the READI grant application and while the majority of this work will be done by other companies, partners and organizations, it is the role of the Forum to keep us all on the same page and rowing in the same direction.

Support

Bringing every stakeholder to the table

Sixty-Eight Regional Leaders United in One Vision

Through the **IGNITE the Region** planning process and the READI application process all Local Economic Development Organizations, Mayors and Legislators have been invited to participate in project identification, submission and prioritization. The region is in agreement on the **IGNITE** vision that Northwest Indiana drives its vibrant and inclusive communities by creating the most dynamic economic environment in the Midwest, fueled by innovation, diversity, and talent.



Driven by Stakeholders

The work of **IGNITE the Region** is done in concert with stakeholders around the region. Each of the five pillars is led by a different organization. The business development and marketing pillar is lead by the Northwest Indiana Forum. The entrepreneurship and innovation pillar is lead by the Society of Innovators. The Port of Indiana at Burns Harbor, Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, the development community, Digital Crossroad and Gary/Chicago International Airport play a critical role in the infrastructure pillar. The Center of Workforce Innovations leads the talent pillar. The placemaking pillar is lead by One Region. Each of those pillars played a vital role in identifying the projects of READI. The leaders of each pillar serve on the project selection team.

Engaging Anchor Institutions

Growing the economy is critical to stakeholders across the region. You can see from the Leadership team of **IGNITE** as well as the Managing Board of the Forum, the business community and universities are involved. As we work with universities and the business community the mantra is the same; diversify our economy, attract and grow talent, continue to raise the standard of living for all in Northwest Indiana. Both industry and education have played a role in crafting and implementing **IGNITE** and evolving to the project scope of READI. They will continue to be engaged around the plans as they grow and evolve over the next several years.

Over 130 investors

68 Regional Leaders

Press



Backing by Anchor Institutions

Regional partners committed to the future



Key Community Partners

The Northwest Indiana Forum is the regional voice for the business community and a significant catalyst for initiatives that promote economic development and create and retain quality investment in harmony with the environment. We are also the driving force for bold initiatives that significantly impact the regional economy. With more than 130 investors, an investment in the Northwest Indiana Forum translates to a direct investment in the seven-county region to support growth and economic innovation. Our goals are to RAISE THE PER CAPITA INCOME, ATTRACT & RETAIN QUALITY INVESTMENT, and SUPPORT POLICY THAT LEADS TO QUALITY GROWTH

"This is the time for Northwest Indiana. We have come together under IGNITE the Region and are continuing to move that plan to the next level with this READI grant application. The excitement for our region and its future has never been more palpable."

Heather C. Ennis, President & CEO
Northwest Indiana Forum

The RDA was created to partner with others in the "heavy lifting" required to develop the infrastructure that will make Northwest Indiana economically vibrant. The legislation that created the RDA directs us to focus on our region's collective assets. These regional assets are interrelated as the basic building blocks of a local economy that must become globally competitive.

"Our work in Northwest Indiana on the READI grant was an inclusive and collaborative effort that will ensure any state investment will result in concrete and long-lasting benefits to the residents of the Region and the State of Indiana. It is an example of what we can accomplish when we all work together."

Sherri Ziller, Interim CEO and COO
Regional Development Authority

KIRPC is a voluntary public partnership serving Benton, Carroll, Jasper, Newton, Pulaski, Starke, Warren, and White Counties that provides assistance to local units of government to maximize community and economic development opportunities for the benefit of all citizens.

"Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. The Kankakee Iroquois Regional Planning Commission fully supports the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient."

Edwin Buswell, Executive Director
Kankakee Iroquois Regional Planning Commission



The Society of Innovators at Purdue Northwest aims to contribute to economic and community development throughout the region as the champion of innovation in Northwest Indiana.

"The Society of Innovators is excited to support Northwest Indiana's IGNITE the Region and READI grant strategies. Innovation is alive and well in our region. These programs are bringing area leaders together, allowing us to move even more projects forward that create an even stronger Northwest Indiana for all of our communities."

Jason Williams, Managing Director
Society of Innovators



The Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD) operates the South Shore Line train with service from Millennium Station in Chicago to the South Bend International Airport in South Bend, IN. NICTD is governed by a Board of Trustees representing the four Indiana counties served by the South Shore Line.

"The State of Indiana, under Governor Holcomb's leadership, has been instrumental in securing funding to support the critical improvements in commuter rail service in Northwest Indiana which will allow us to increase the quality of life for residents, double ridership and attract new talent to Northwest Indiana. The READI grant will provide vital funding for projects that will directly and indirectly support NICTD's major infrastructure improvements that include double tracking the South Shore Line and the construction of the new Westlake Corridor service. NICTD stands ready to support the efforts lead by the Northwest Indiana Forum to secure a READI grant for the region served as a logical next step to leverage the historical investment in commuter rail in our region."

Mike Noland, President/General Manager
South Shore Line/Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District



The Ports of Indiana – Burns Harbor's strategic location provides businesses with the opportunity to grow within a port focused on steel, agriculture and manufacturing.

"Northwest Indiana has a fantastic, collaborative IGNITE regional strategic plan that focuses on many key initiatives including Infrastructure, which is very important to the Ports of Indiana," said Ryan McCoy, port director for the Ports of Indiana-Burns Harbor. "The prospect of additional funding through a READI grant would truly advance the group's mission of creating the most dynamic economic environment in the Midwest and help attract, develop and retain talent in Indiana."

Ryan McCoy, Port Director
Ports of Indiana - Burns Harbor



Backing by Anchor Institutions

Regional partners committed to the future



Key Community Partners



Center of Workforce Innovations is a multi-management nonprofit workforce development organization with its finger on the pulse of employment, education, and economic development. They are a catalyst for community and business investment in workforce, education, and economic development building and enhancing collective capacity to succeed in a new global economy.

“As a new leader in Workforce Development, but not a new leader in NWI, it was exciting to see engagement and collaboration amongst so many cross-sector organizations in putting the region’s READI application together. The NWI Forum’s IGNITE the Region- Northwest Indiana’s Strategy for Economic Transformation plan and its outcomes to date provided a great springboard to expand and accelerate innovation and collaboration amongst community leaders in NWI in the READI grant application process and projected deliverables.”

Lisa M. Daugherty, President & CEO
Center of Workforce Innovations

The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) is a regional council of local governments serving the citizens of Lake, Porter, and La Porte counties in Northwest Indiana. It is organized under the provisions of Indiana Code 36-7-7.6.

NIRPC provides a forum that enables the citizens of Northwest Indiana to address regional issues relating to transportation, the environment, and economic development.

“The dynamic energy and positive momentum in Northwest Indiana in recent years has been palpable, even during COVID. The projects represented in this READI grant work together to build on that momentum, making them not only transformative but also sustainable. As Indiana’s gateway to the Chicago economy, Northwest Indiana has a unique opportunity to capitalize on its coastal position for the benefit of the entire state, and the potential accelerated movement on these projects made possible through READI would be game-changing for the future of our region.”

Tyson Warner, Executive Director
Northwestern Regional Planning Commission



The mission of GNIAR is to help our members be productive in their business and achieve ongoing profitability through targeted education and ethical and professional standards. We are the visible voice for the real estate interests of the communities in Northwest Indiana. GNIAR uses its mission to advocate a vision of the future that is in its members and neighbors’ best interests. We strive to maintain an influential presence within its professional, regional and economical community to be a recognized source of information relative to regional economics, community dynamics and real estate market statistics.

“The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.”

Peter Novak, CEO
Greater Northwest Indiana Association of Realtors



The Regional Development Company was certified by the U.S. Small Business Administration in April 1994 to administer the SBA 504 loan program for a seven-county area of Indiana consisting of Lake, Porter, La Porte, Jasper, Newton, Starke and Pulaski Counties. In November 2003, the U.S. Small Business Administration deregulated the Development Company 504 Loan Program, allowing the RDC to operate throughout the State of Indiana.

“The Regional Development Company has been a proud supporter of the Northwest Indiana Forum’s IGNITE the Region Plan since its inception. As a regionally-based SBA lender, the RDC understands how important it is for the communities, businesses and non-profit organizations to come together to create a unified voice. This plan has taken a multi-county approach to economic development, knowing that a win for one city or town is a win for us all. We look forward to seeing the plan come to fruition with the assistance of the READI Grant.”

Erica Dombey, President & Executive Director
Regional Development Company



The Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Center (Indiana SBDC) was created to have a positive and measurable impact on the formation, growth, and sustainability of small businesses in Indiana, and to help Hoosier Entrepreneurs start stronger, grow faster, and work smarter.

“The IGNITE the Region strategic plan really set in motion the momentum that is building in NW Indiana. While we’ve been most involved with Innovation & Entrepreneurship pillar, you can see and feel the progress being made on all fronts. It is powerful that the region is working together so productively. READI funding would increase the speed and impact of all of this.”

Lorri L. Feldt, Regional Director
Northwest ISBDC

Backing by Anchor Institutions

Regional partners committed to the future



Key Community Organization Partners



One Region is a nonprofit, 501(c)3 that strives to grow population, attract and retain talent, and increase household income in Northwest Indiana: Lake, Porter, and La Porte Counties.

"The READI Grant process has shown that Northwest Indiana leadership is a collaborative team ready for the transformational change on the horizon."

Marie Foster-Bruns, President & CEO
One Region



"It has been my pleasure to work with the Northwest Indiana Forum literally since its inception. I believe that for the first time in its long history the Forum, through its work to complete the IGNITE the Region Plan and the formulation of the READI application has reached the strong regional leadership position the founders of the organization intended. The years of work the Forum has done to bring the region together on this application will have a tremendous transformative impact across Northwest Indiana."

Dewey Pearman, Executive Director
Construction Advancement Foundation



The Gary/Chicago International Airport (GYI) is Located minutes from the shores of Lake Michigan and only 25 miles from downtown Chicago. GYI is a full-service airport, capable of serving general aviation, corporate, commercial and cargo users. GYI is a premiere destination for corporate and weekend flyers in the Chicago metropolitan region and Northwest Indiana.

"Northwest Indiana has seen considerable growth over the past several years, and this growth has been assisted due to the careful planning and strategic process the IGNITE The Region team has implemented. The Gary / Chicago International Airport is proud to stand with our community partners in the seven-county region of Northwest Indiana in support of the READI grant."

Duane D. Hayden, Executive Director
Gary/Chicago International Airport Authority



"The resurgence in Northwest Indiana is only just beginning. The READI program will open the floodgates on the untapped potential in our Region. Our plan will build stronger communities and a more vibrant and diverse economy to keep and attract residents and businesses to our amazing Region!"

Tony Oss, Director of Preconstruction
Larson-Danielson



"The process to collect and rank projects for seven counties was a big lift. Thanks to the NWI Forum and all the volunteers who made it happen!"

Maggi Spartz, President
Unity Foundation of La Porte County



"Legacy Foundation has been a supporter of the IGNITE the Region Plan from its initial development to the present. The pillars within the plan include comprehensive projects which move Northwest Indiana forward. Legacy Foundation is a partner with the Northwest Indiana Forum in our financial support for IGNITE the Region plan and for projects identified within the pillars."

Carolyn Saxton, CFRE, President & CEO
Legacy Foundation

Backing by Anchor Institutions

Regional partners committed to the future

Large Employer Partners



"With our IGNITE Plan, our proximity to a major metropolitan city and Lake Michigan, Northwest Indiana is poised to lead the state and the country in economic development at a time when it is needed most. The READI Grant will provide momentum through funding to bring this bold vision for the region to fruition."

Dean Mazzonei, President & CEO
Franciscan Alliance Michigan City



"The IGNITE plan developed initiatives focused on the economic pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing. These pillars were identified and agreed upon by regional leaders as the cornerstones to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been and exciting process to witness."

Patrick Bloom, Vice-President, Government Affairs
Cleveland-Cliffs

Luke Oil

"As a unified group, many NWI corporate and civic leaders worked together to complete the IGNITE the Region Strategy for Economic Transformation. This kind of collaboration, planning and cooperation created a strong foundation for an aligned strategy moving forward and prepared NWI to reach its full potential from programs like READI grant."

Tom Collins, Vice President
Luke Family of Brands

Strack & Van Til

"As a family-owned grocery store business since 1959, Strack's strives to provide services so that our customers are completely satisfied. As part of our commitment to delivering the finest quality of products, Strack's recognizes and supports the agricultural & rural focus of the READI projects. The application process has elevated a number of exciting food related initiatives that will greatly benefit the health and wellbeing of the residents of Northwest Indiana."

Jeff Strack, President
Strack and Van Til



"We at the bp Whiting refinery not only believe a successful READI grant application would help continue this momentum. We also believe it will help realize our shared vision of an improved future for generations of Hoosiers to come."

Donnie Brown, Vice President of Refining
bp Whiting Refinery

Higher Education Partners



High-Quality Education for the Real World

As a premier Metropolitan University, Purdue University Northwest is not only an institution of higher learning, but also a university that is socially involved and serves

as a resource for educating the citizens and improving the health of Northwest Indiana.

PNW's five colleges offer more than 70 areas of study for undergraduate and graduate students. We're consistently recognized among the best regional universities in the U.S. News & World Report Best Colleges rankings.

Currently one out of every 36 jobs in the Northwest Indiana Region is supported by the activities of PNW and its students.

We are strong supporters of the Northwest Indiana Forum's bold, regional plan for economic development, **IGNITE**.

The State of Indiana's new effort under the READI grant program promises to fund many of the **IGNITE** initiatives as well as other exciting regional efforts.

Purdue University Northwest (PNW) is proud to lead and support on-going complementary regional initiatives including:

- Northwest Indiana Society of Innovators
- Leadership Institute at Purdue Northwest
- Center for Innovation through Visualization and Simulation (CIVS)
- Challenger Learning Center
- Commercialization and Manufacturing Excellence Center
- Steel Manufacturing and Visualization Consortium

As part of the READI application we plan to continue our leadership in driving Northwest Indiana's economy higher through two key initiatives in the plan anchored near or on our campuses in Hammond and Westville.

1. Impact Labs Super Accelerator and STEM Center.
2. Quantum Ready Network Corridor

"The funds from the READI grant are going to be truly transformational for Northwest Indiana. In particular, funds for the Impact Labs Super Accelerator and STEM Center will provide an opportunity for new business growth and provide in-roads for new industries which will impact economic development for years to come in NWI. We must diversify to provide more job options and these funds will be an investment in technological and economic change."

Thomas Keon, Chancellor
Purdue University Northwest

WHERE PASSION MEETS PURPOSE



VALPO

At Valpo, all the wide-ranging things that define you come together. You'll reach your full potential. And you'll do it with our total commitment to guide you, inspire you and bring out your absolute best. Our campus defines a culture where no one is left out. And our approach to hands-on, experiential learning gets you out of the classroom and into real life.

"Valparaiso University is excited to partner with Indiana READI to propel our region and state forward. As a university that values servant leadership, we see it as our obligation to support and strengthen the community and region in which we reside."

José D. Padilla, President
Valparaiso University

Backing by Anchor Institutions

Regional partners committed to the future

Higher Education Partners



NORTHWEST



Our purpose is to enhance the quality of life of the most diverse, urban, industrialized region of the state.

- We engage the community in high-quality teaching and scholarship.
- We partner with communities to impact and promote social, economic, and cultural development.
- We inspire and empower a diverse body of students to be active citizens, who apply their knowledge to transform their communities and the world.

“The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.”

Ken Iwama, Chancellor
Indiana University Northwest

Launch a Career at Ivy Tech

With the most career-focused programs in the state of Indiana, Ivy Tech Community College has course options that fit your schedule and can get you on the path to a high-demand career quickly.

Ivy Tech offers a wide variety of programs in high-wage career fields such as Healthcare, IT, Business, Administration, Supply Chain, and more.

Our emphasis on research and applied learning opportunities means our students graduate ready for the next phase of their lives.

“The planning process certainly ignited the region as we looked to improve the advancement of retaining and recruiting skilled workforce in Northwest Indiana. We appreciate the efforts of the NWI Forum for organizing the planning and application process of such an important grant.”

Aco Sikoski, Campus Chancellor
Ivy Tech Community College

Alignment with Current Initiatives

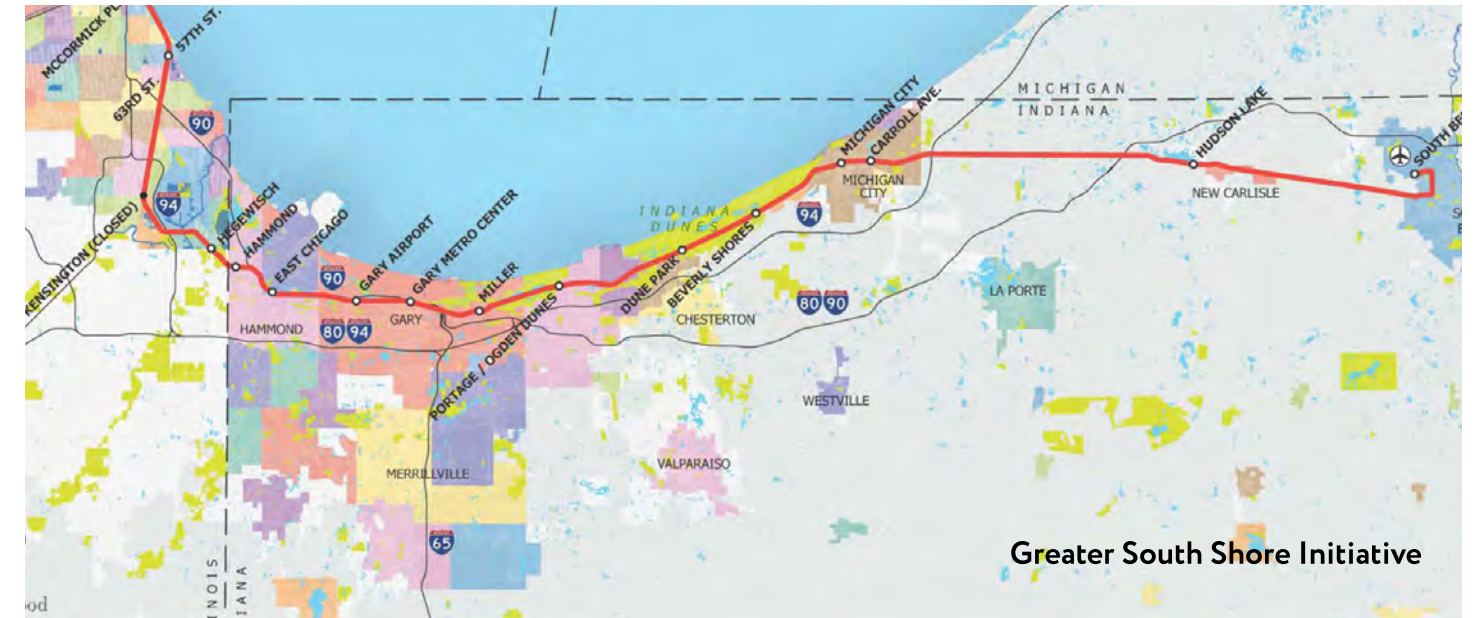
Developments complementary to current state initiatives

1 AgriNovus

AgriNovus is designed to fuel growth in the agbiosciences economy. Our Agricultural Value Chain Project and our Rural Entrepreneurship and Innovation strategies tie directly into the work being done at AgriNovus. In addition, the Fair Oaks Farms Housing Project is an opportunity to continue to grow the talent and workforce so greatly needed by this industry sector.

2 Conexus - Infrastructure

The Northwest Indiana Forum has partnered with Conexus to develop our regional infrastructure plan. Many of the transportation and logistics plans in our infrastructure pillar were crafted with these conversations in mind. We have continued to broaden our scope as we look at fiber, technology and green infrastructure under this umbrella.



Greater South Shore Initiative



Digital Crossroad Data Center

3 Techpoint

Several Northwest Indiana projects fall in line with the Techpoint mission. Our Impact Labs Project will help advance technology and manufacturing startups as well as create space to envision new ideas for existing companies. Our Youth Entrepreneurship Program will help to grow our next generation of innovators. The Greater South Shore Initiative will help to continue to strengthen the infrastructure and drive to grow the tech economy in Northwest Indiana.

4 Indiana Destination Development Corporation

Northwest Indiana is a destination for visitors from around the world. Home to the 61st national park, the largest dairy operation and attraction east of the Mississippi and, most recently, a historic partnership between the National Park Service and the Nature Conservancy to create a better experience for visitors at Kankakee Sands, NWI continues to lead the state in visitor traffic. The IDDC is instrumental in the promotion and growth of tourism in the region and, most importantly, turning tourists into residents.



Bellaboo's, Lake Station

Alignment with Current Initiatives

Developments complementary to current state initiatives

5 ESN- Energy Systems Networking and IEDC Energy

The energy revolution is at our doorstep and many of the projects in the Northwest Indiana READI application are geared toward powering up these opportunities. The Energy Academy at Ivy Tech in partnership with Center of Workforce Innovations and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers will staff the Dunns Bridge Solar and Battery Storage Project in Jasper County. The Indiana Toll Road Quantum Computing Super Highway will drive new technology in the arena of autonomous vehicles. The Crossroads of America Electric Vehicle Corridor will continue to help grow the EV infrastructure needed to have meaningful impact on the environment.

Centered around the 5 E's of the Indiana Economic Development Corporation we have listed the projects that align well with each of the remaining E's outlined by Secretary Chambers.

Environment

- Environmental Justice Stewardship Group
- Brownfield Revolving Loan Fund: Catalytic Logistical Property Development
- Crossroads of America Electric Vehicle Corridor
- Gary Land Assembly for Development
- Ivanhoe South Community Development & Education Initiative
- Marquette Greenway Regional Trail Interstate Connectivity

Economy of the Future

- Indiana Toll Road Quantum Computing Super Highway
- WE CREATE + INNOVATE Venture Capital Program
- Impact Labs & STEM Center
- Rural Entrepreneurship & Innovation Taskforce
- Energy Tech at Ivy Tech
- Agriculture Value Chain Strategy
- Boy and Girls Club Teen Workforce Academy & Technology Center
- Greater South Shore Technology Initiative (GSS)

External Engagement

- Talent and Business Attraction Marketing Platform
- External Headquarters Outreach Initiative
- NWI Cost Comparison Study
- NWI Housing Study
- Minority Business Skills Enhancement Program
- D&I Business Training Program

Entrepreneurship

- Impact Labs Super Accelerator & STEM Center
- Youth Entrepreneurship Ecosystem
- NWI Biz Hub Entrepreneurship Resource Center
- WE CREATE + INNOVATE Venture Capital Program
- Rural Entrepreneurship & Innovation Taskforce
- Minority Business Skills Enhancement Program
- Michigan City Innovation Center
- 2nd Muse Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Enhancer



Benchmark Keys to Success

Developments complementary to READI's initiatives

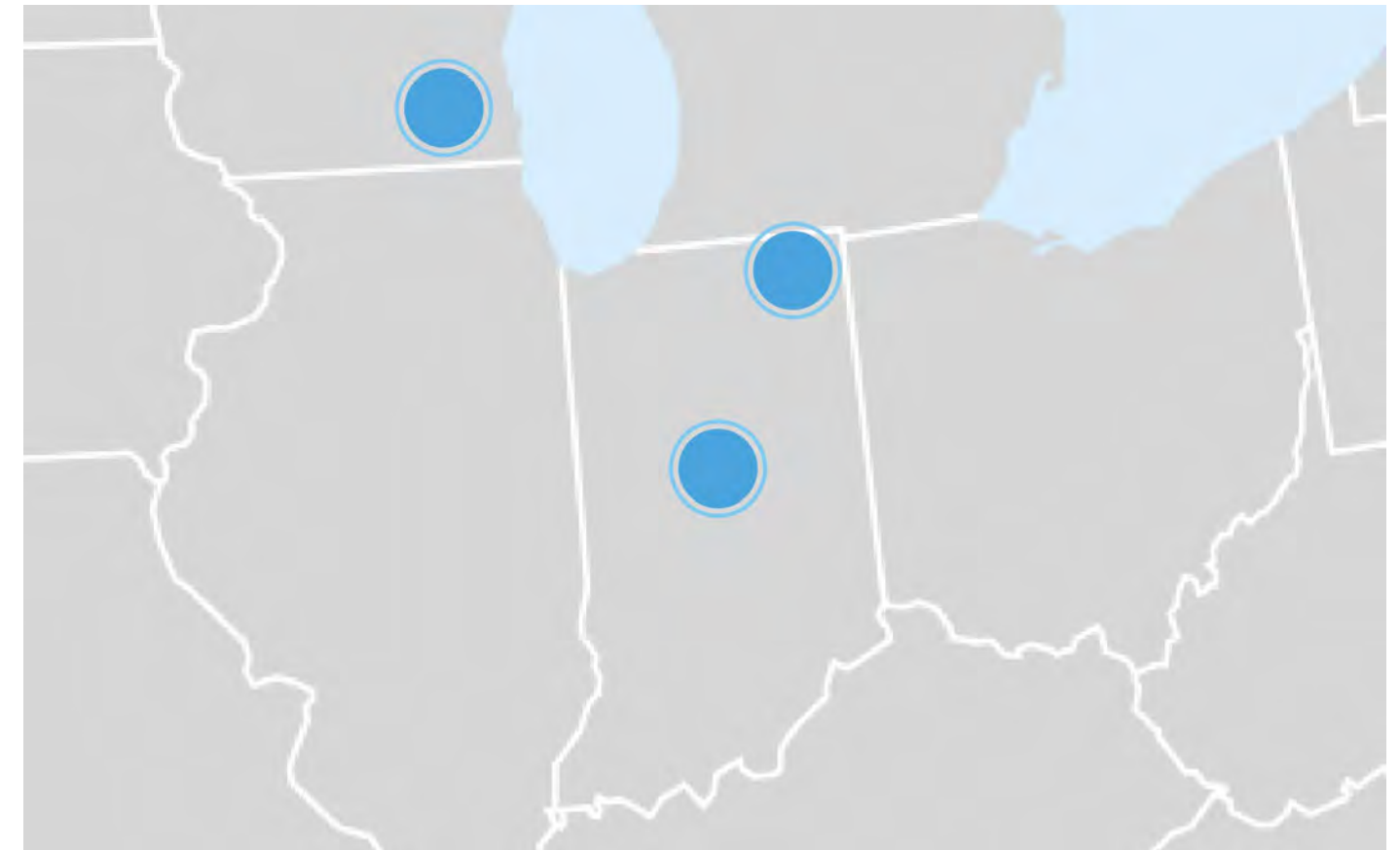
What's Been Proven?

Midwest states remain competitive with tax incentives, financing and innovative ways to solicit skilled workforce and companies that will add value to their communities. Northeast Indiana, including Fort Wayne implemented the Road to One Million plan and identified projects to grow the workforce and attract young talent. These projects not only include business recruitment and retention but placemaking improvements to arts and culture, riverfront development and arts initiatives in rural areas and outdoor recreation complexes. The plan also calls for massive investment into riverfront projects as well as addressing broadband needs in rural areas. The final strategy identified more than \$1.5 billion in place-based investments, prioritizing 38 projects valued at \$400 million. The Road to One Million plan was one of three successful bidders in the Regional Cities Initiative and was awarded \$42 million in state funds. In the first year alone, the region committed more than \$255 million in public and private investment to implement projects across 10 counties.



Wisconsin works with businesses and communities to build an economy that works for everyone by upholding financial stability, educating everyone, supporting healthy living, reinforcing community infrastructure and respecting the environment. Southeast Wisconsin has created an environment where companies want to relocate. Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) recognizes that companies are looking at whether to restructure their current facilities or make a substantial investment in new construction and provides WEDC's Business Development Tax Credit Program. The program provides eligible companies with refundable state tax credits based on the size of their capital investment and the number of jobs it plans to create. Companies relocating would be able to offset some of its tax liability, giving the company additional capital to invest or use as leverage for further financing. This boost would help the company make the best investment it could in both the company and the community. In addition to tax incentives in Wisconsin, the Workforce Innovation Grant Program provides up to \$10 million to regional organizations that develop innovative plans to solve workforce challenges caused by the pandemic.

Hamilton County, Indiana continues to grow and is no longer in the shadows of Indianapolis but instrumental in providing resources to surrounding counties. It has a consistent branding message that combines live, work, play in partnership with economic development and tourism. Municipalities in Hamilton County including Carmel, Fishers, Noblesville and Westfield are consistently in top five rankings in the country to work, start a business and grow a family.



How This Informs Our Approach

Northwest Indiana implemented the **IGNITE** plan when soliciting projects. The **IGNITE** plan began in 2018 and has had substantial movement in the past several years due to hard work and dedication by region leaders and organizations that want to see progress. These include the five pillars: Business Development & Marketing, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Infrastructure, Talent and Placemaking. Similar to Wisconsin's initiative of an Economic Well Being which also focuses on five key areas, **IGNITE** used these pillars when implementing the process and decisions for READI grant applicants in the region. Northeast Indiana's Road to One Million plan also honed in on placemaking initiatives as well as three key initiatives including Business Attraction, Talent Development and Talent Attraction.

Our benchmark peer regions have had success with regional initiatives that meet their objectives and, most importantly, the vision of their communities. When evaluating projects, the NWI Forum and READI grant committee implemented a point system that ranked projects and how they aligned with **IGNITE** pillars. Each project had to meet the goals and objectives of **IGNITE** in order to be considered. Similar to our benchmark peers, the NWI Forum and **IGNITE** used the vision that was already in motion. All projects included one or more of three critical success factors that would increase population, increase investment in our communities or increase per capita income.

Successful regions such as Southeast Wisconsin, Northeast Indiana and Hamilton County, Indiana are not only benchmarks areas but valid competitors. Each of us compete for the same talented workforce, population growth and business development.

A Rural Component

This plan has been uniquely positioned to benefit and uplift our rural areas



Understanding Rural Community Needs

Indiana's rural communities continue to seek to balance the inherently conflicting issues of land use, growth rate, economic prosperity, environmental quality, government services, and quality of life. In Northwest Indiana, Jasper County strives to address the conflict between confined feeding facilities and residential development. Balancing growth and development in Jasper County is vital, while also protecting rural character and the interests of agriculture, residential, and industry by updating the comprehensive land use plan and ordinances while educating county communities, local officials and the general public.

Opportunity Zone designation has been instrumental in balancing rural versus needed growth and development. The designation allows select communities in rural Indiana to attract private, public and/or philanthropic investments that support local priorities. The program is funded by a Rural Business Development Grant from the Indiana U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development. Several Northwest Indiana areas have taken advantage of these programs offered through the Office of Community and Rural Affairs. HUBZone also stimulates development and creates jobs in rural communities. In Newton County, economic development is focusing on six key industries: Warehousing, Logistics, Solar Energy, Agribusiness, Real Estate and Manufacturing. In addition to Newton County, the additional rural areas have LEDOs that are actively soliciting site selectors for potential projects that are in line with their plans for growth. Rural communities also continue to take advantage of rural broadband opportunities including the FCC's \$29 million in funding to rural areas. Northwest Indiana and, more importantly, Indiana has taken great strides in advocating and funding broadband to Hoosier families and businesses in rural areas. The READI grant will provide more opportunity for our rural areas to continue to compete with neighboring states. Increasing investment opportunities, building a skilled, well-paid workforce and increasing population are a few of the parameters included in the projects.



67%

OF OUR AREA IS FARMLAND AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

16%

OF OUR REGIONAL POPULATION LIVES IN A RURAL AREA

68,000

DAIRY COWS IN NORTHWEST INDIANA

How We're Uniquely Positioned to Facilitate Solutions

The Agriculture Value Chain Strategy for Jasper, Newton, Pulaski and Starke counties and the Rural Entrepreneurship & Innovation Taskforce in all seven counties are two projects that are included in the funding request. Additional projects such as the 500+ acres adjacent to Fair Oaks Farms and a housing development are included in the "Proposed Projects" READI application.

Agriculture continues to be a leading Indiana economic driver. Our state is shaped by world renowned agribusiness firms, strong trade and membership organizations, the most productive farmers in the country, thoughtful and skilled leaders in public and private arenas and innovative entrepreneurs. The goal of the regional ag strategy is to identify the agricultural assets and resources that will help develop the policies, infrastructure, sites, and support they need to create long-term improvements in their rural communities. The counties will utilize the Rural Economic Development Model, which will allow them to develop an economic development strategy that will build on an important strength in their rural communities—agriculture.

Complementary Growth in Rural & Urban Settings

The funding is for the beginning stages of implementation for the Ag Value Chain Strategy, included in the READI grant, and includes site analysis, the development of workforce training incentives, economic gardening and ag related marketing and promotion.

Rural Entrepreneurship & Innovation Taskforce project builds a cohesive and intercounty identity for entrepreneurship in rural communities of NWI. The short-term objective is to prioritize the rural economic development programming and resources needs as well as solidify design and costs of programming centers across rural counties. The next level goals would be to roll out the tools and utilize the brand practices to quickly become a stronger more attractive economic force for communities in NWI.

Prior Planning Efforts

Developments complementary to READI's initiatives

South Shore Line

Northwest Indiana participated in the 2016 Regional Cities grant competition. Through a group of regional stakeholders, we developed the West Lake Corridor and Double Tracking projects for the South Shore Commuter Rail Line. Although we were not a grant recipient we did advance the projects through local, State and Federal partnerships. At the instruction of the state legislature, the RDA is establishing Transit Development Districts, or TDDs, in a one-half-mile area around South Shore stations on both the new and existing lines. Once established, they will function similar to TIF districts, providing the RDA with revenue it can use for infrastructure improvements and developer incentives with the districts. Our projects indicate that the two rail projects will spur more than \$2 billion in private investment in the Region. The RDA has worked closely over the past year and a half with all our partner communities to ensure that the districts conform to their goals and aspirations for the community and include the best opportunities to attract private investment. To date the RDA has held eight public engagement sessions and subsequently finalized or nearly finalized TDDs around eight of the 13 stations. The remaining five are in process. We have established a separate website, nwtid.com, to keep the public informed of developments in their communities.



Federal matching funds for the Double Track project, which will fully double track the existing South Shore line from Gary to Michigan City, were secured in January of 2021. Last Spring, NICTD received and rejected two bids for the main construction work on the project. After discussions with the State, RDA and NICTD, the project was modified with an eye towards reducing costs and a new request for proposals was issued in August. Proposals are due in October.

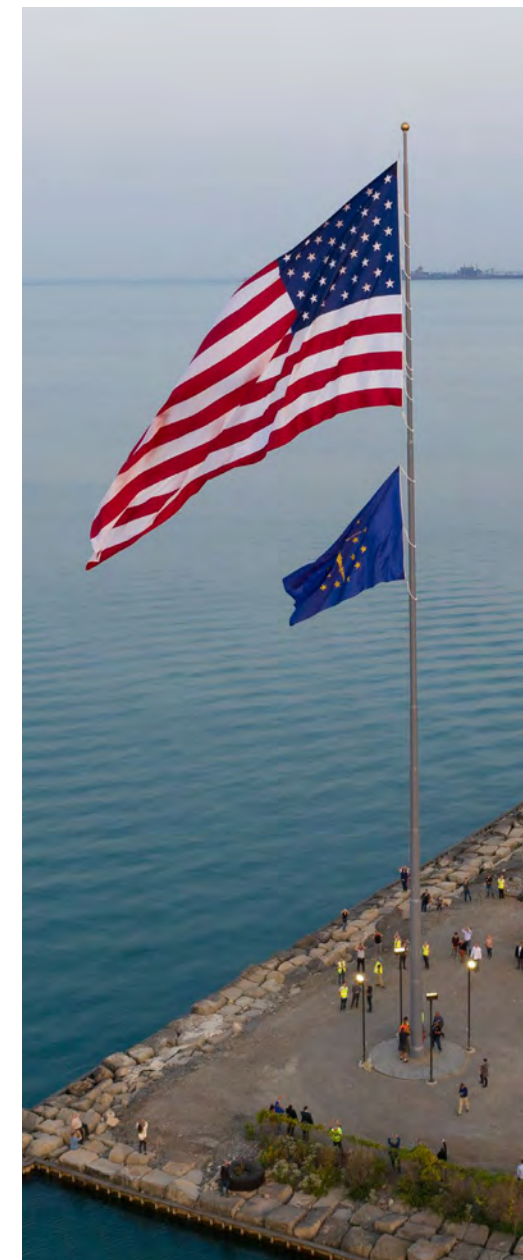
Federal matching funds for the West Lake Corridor, a new nine-mile extension of the South Shore adjacent to the Indiana/Illinois state line that will extend service from Hammond south to Dyer, were secured in late 2020 and a construction proposal from the Paschen Ragnar Benson Joint Venture was accepted to design and build the line. A groundbreaking was held in October 2020. The project is under construction at an estimated cost of \$852 million. It is being funded by a combination of federal, state, local and RDA dollars. These projects will continue to ignite the economy and population growth of Northwest Indiana.



88%
of IGNITE the Region
is in process or
complete

**Projected
\$2 billion**
private investment
in TDD

**7 Counties
Working
Together**



READI IGNITING the REGION

Northwest Indiana is at its tipping point. By investing in projects like the Indiana Toll Road Quantum Computing Super Highway, the Greater South Shore Technology Initiative and the Impact Labs Super Accelerator & STEM Center we can continue to diversify our economy. We will grow our talent force with the Talent & Business Attraction Marketing Platform, the Boys & Girls Club Teen Workforce Academy, the IVY Tech Energy Tech Training Academy and much more. We will make sure programs are accessible to all through the Level Up Northwest Indiana Program, the Diversity Equity & Inclusion Business training, the Minority Business Skills Enhancement program and the expansion of the Jobs for America's Youth program. We will attract more residents to live in Northwest Indiana through great quality of life projects like the Marquette Greenway Regional Trail, the Regional Youth Sports & Nature Park, the Hammond Station Square Train Station and continuing to enhance the growing investment around our commuter rail system. We will attract investment from the private sector with the Agricultural Value Chain Strategy and business park development around the seven-county area. Our innovation will be sparked and fueled by projects like the Rural Entrepreneurship & Innovation Taskforce, the youth Entrepreneurship Ecosystem, the WE CREATE + Innovate Venture Capital Fund and the NWI BizHub project. As you can see, we have many great organizations working diligently to bring this plan and a bolder future for Northwest Indiana together. These READI funds will dramatically impact talent, investment and opportunity for growth for all of the communities of Northwest Indiana.

VISION AND STRATEGY

The Porter Health Amphitheater

IGNITE Pillars

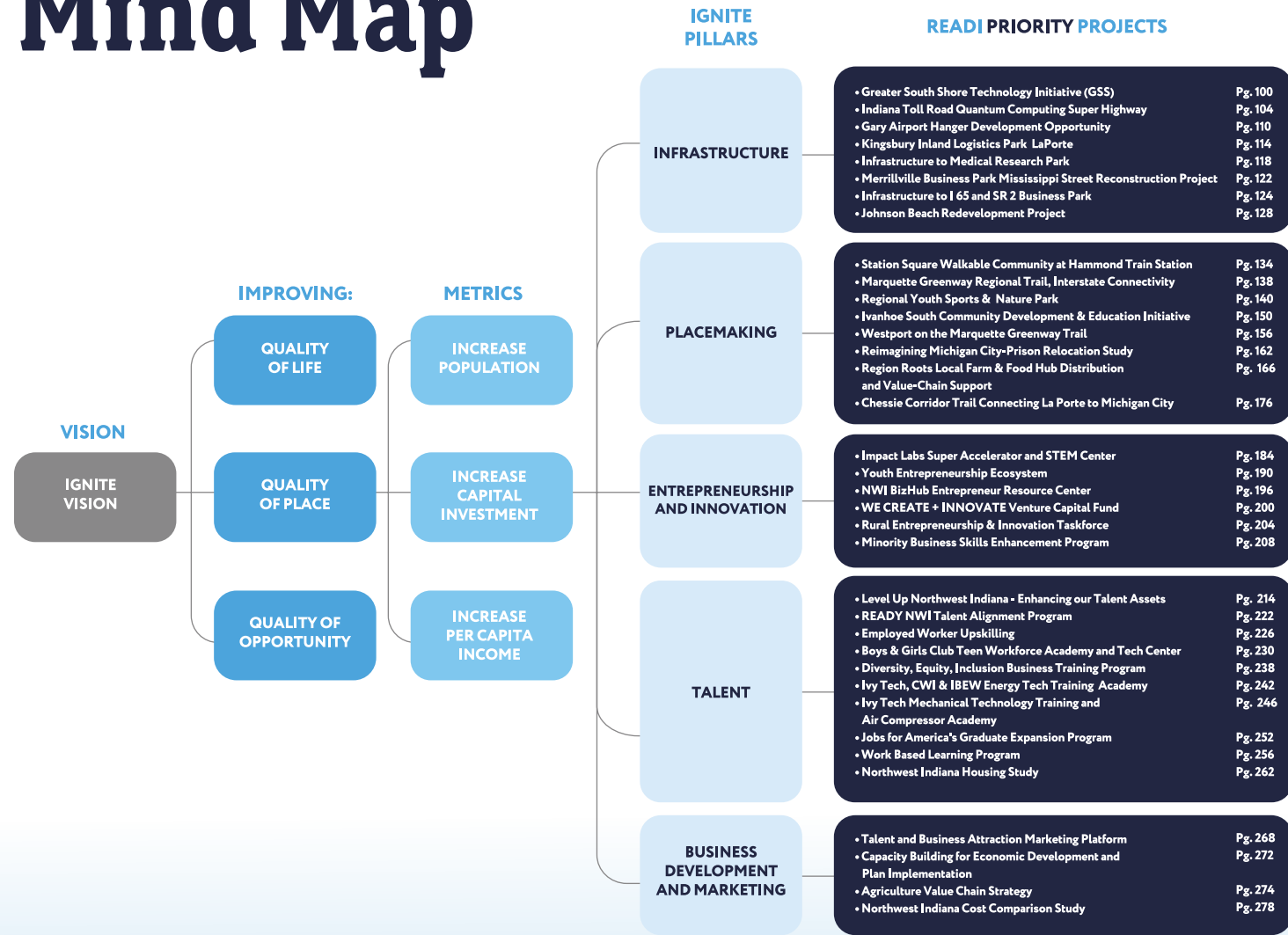
IGNITE Vision

Northwest Indiana drives its vibrant and inclusive communities by creating the most dynamic economic environment of the Midwest, fueled by innovation, diversity, and talent.

IGNITE the Region is built around five aspirational goals that serve as the pillars of future economic vitality and growth for the region. They reflect a holistic view of economic development that addresses business development & marketing, entrepreneurship & innovation, infrastructure, talent, and placemaking. Under each goal are several strategies and actions needed for implementation.

- 1 INFRASTRUCTURE**
Ensure that Northwest Indiana's infrastructure meets the needs of a 21st-century economy.
- 2 PLACEMAKING**
Create the amenities and places that enhance Northwest Indiana's appeal to diverse groups of people.
- 3 ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION**
Foster robust entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystems to propel future economic growth.
- 4 TALENT DEVELOPMENT**
Expand the talent assets of Northwest Indiana and strengthen connections to the region's employers.
- 5 BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING**
Promote robust and sustainable growth by engaging in a proactive, economic development program that supports business retention, expansion, creation, and attraction.

The IGNITE Mind Map



IGNITE Vision

IGNITE Vision: Northwest Indiana drives its vibrant and inclusive communities by creating the most dynamic economic environment of the Midwest, fueled by innovation, diversity, and talent.

IGNITE the Region is built around five aspirational goals that serve as the pillars of future economic vitality and growth for the region. They reflect a holistic view of economic development that addresses business development & marketing, entrepreneurship & innovation, infrastructure, talent, and placemaking. Under each goal are several strategies and actions needed for implementation.

10:1 Grant Match

IGNITE PILLARS	READI PRIORITY PROJECTS
INFRASTRUCTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater South Shore Technology Initiative (GSS) Pg. 100 Indiana Toll Road Quantum Computing Super Highway Pg. 104 Gary Airport Hanger Development Opportunity Pg. 110 Kingsbury Inland Logistics Park LaPorte Pg. 114 Infrastructure to Medical Research Park Pg. 118 Merrillville Business Park Mississippi Street Reconstruction Project Pg. 122 Infrastructure to I 65 and SR 2 Business Park Pg. 124 Johnson Beach Redevelopment Project Pg. 128
PLACEMAKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Station Square Walkable Community at Hammond Train Station Pg. 134 Marquette Greenway Regional Trail, Interstate Connectivity Pg. 138 Regional Youth Sports & Nature Park Pg. 140 Ivanhoe South Community Development & Education Initiative Pg. 150 Westport on the Marquette Greenway Trail Pg. 156 Reimagining Michigan City-Prison Relocation Study Pg. 162 Region Roots Local Farm & Food Hub Distribution and Value-Chain Support Pg. 166 Chessie Corridor Trail Connecting La Porte to Michigan City Pg. 176
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact Labs Super Accelerator and STEM Center Pg. 184 Youth Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Pg. 190 NWI BizHub Entrepreneur Resource Center Pg. 196 WE CREATE + INNOVATE Venture Capital Fund Pg. 200 Rural Entrepreneurship & Innovation Taskforce Pg. 204 Minority Business Skills Enhancement Program Pg. 208
TALENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level Up Northwest Indiana - Enhancing our Talent Assets Pg. 214 READY NWI Talent Alignment Program Pg. 222 Employed Worker Upskilling Pg. 226 Boys & Girls Club Teen Workforce Academy and Tech Center Pg. 230 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Business Training Program Pg. 238 Ivy Tech, CWI & IBEW Energy Tech Training Academy Pg. 242 Ivy Tech Mechanical Technology Training and Air Compressor Academy Pg. 246 Jobs for America's Graduate Expansion Program Pg. 252 Work Based Learning Program Pg. 256 Northwest Indiana Housing Study Pg. 262
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talent and Business Attraction Marketing Platform Pg. 268 Capacity Building for Economic Development and Plan Implementation Pg. 272 Agriculture Value Chain Strategy Pg. 274 Northwest Indiana Cost Comparison Study Pg. 278

TOTAL REQUESTED: \$52,000,000

36 PRIORITY PROJECTS

IGNITE Identified Projects

103 PROJECTS and growing

IGNITE PILLARS

TALENT

READI COMPLETE LIST OF PROJECTS

- Level Up Northwest Indiana- Enhancing our Talent Assets
- READY NWI Talent Alignment Program
- Employed Worker Upskilling
- Boys & Girls Club Teen Workforce Academy and Tech Center
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Business Training Program
- Ivy Tech, CWI & IBEW Energy Tech Training Academy
- Ivy Tech Mechanical Technology Training and Air Compressor Academy
- Ivy Tech Career Coaching and Employer Connections
- Jobs for America's Graduate Expansion Program
- Work based Learning Program
- Boys & Girls Club Facility Michigan City
- Hire Ed Marketing Internship Program
- Northwest Indiana Housing Study
- Work Release and Mental Health Talent Correction Program
- First Things First Early Childhood and Family Educational Program
- IN-MaC Innovation & Design Studio
- Eleven Fifty Academy- Advancing Tech
- Fair Oaks Workforce Housing

PLACEMAKING

- Hohman Avenue Rebuild Walkable Community Project
- Station Square Walkable Community at Hammond Train Station
- Marquette Greenway Regional Trail, Interstate Connectivity
- Marquette Greenway Regional Trail Waymarking Signage Business Application Initiative
- Lake County Eats Local Urban Farmers Market Capacity Building
- Panhandle Pathway Multi Modal Trail Winamac
- Boutique Hotel Adaptive Historical Structure Initiative Valparaiso
- Valparaiso Regional Youth Sports & Nature Park Valparaiso
- Ivanhoe South Community Development & Education Initiative Gary
- Little Calumet River Agriculture/Regenerative Farming Initiative Chesterton to Michigan City Porter
- Amber Flatwoods ADA Trail Destination Michigan City
- Westport on the Marquette Greenway Trail Burns Harbor
- Region Roots Local Farm & Food Hub Distribution and Value-Chain Support
- NWI Food Council - Artisan Food Business Expansion, Development & Recruitment
- NWI Food Council - Farmers Market Coordination in Food Insecure Communities
- NWI Food Council - Farm Expansion, Development & Recruitment
- Northwest Indiana Medical Residency Program
- Rensselear Famers Market Downtown Revitalization Initiative Rensselear
- Singing Sand Connectivity Trail/Marquette Greenway Michigan City
- Housing Opportunities New Affordable Homes Initiative Michigan City
- Washington Park ADA Destination Playground Michigan City
- Meadowbrook Conservation Destination Center Shirley Heinze Land Trust
- Michigan City Prison Feasibility Study Relocation of Facility
- Federation of Block Clubs Neighborhood Beautification Initiative Gary
- Chessie Trail Corridor LaPorte to Michigan City South Shore Station
- Gary Elevated Trail Project to complete Marquette Trail Gary
- City of Valparaiso Trail Development: Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and Downtown District Connectivity Valparaiso
- Gary East Gateway Project Miller Station to the Beach Gary
- Valparaiso Transit Oriented Development Trail Valparaiso
- Regional Plan for Trail Connectivity to the Munster TDD Munster
- Munster Gateway Beautification & Infrastructure Initiative Munster
- Hobart Southlake Sports Complex Hobart
- Dunes Mixed Use Development

IGNITE PILLARS

INFRASTRUCTURE

READI COMPLETE LIST OF PROJECTS

- Port of Indiana Alternative Green Energy Project
- Port of Indiana Multimodal Bulk Warehouse Construction Initiative
- Port of Indiana Rail Truck Maritime Modal Expansion
- Greater South Shore Technology Initiative (GSS)
- Mississippi Street Reconstruction Project/Business Park Development Project
- Regional Economic Development Permitting Portal Initiative
- New Market Tax Credit Regional Community Development Entity Initiative
- Indiana Toll Road Quantum Computing Super Highway
- Rensselaer Square Downtown Streetscape Initiative
- Johnson Beach Redevelopment Project
- 15th Avenue Reconstruction Project to Support Infill of Industrial Developments Including the Amazon Fulfillment Center Expansion
- Regional Map of Catalytic Logistical Properties
- Alternative Fuel Regional Projects
- Cargo Logistics Infrastructure Plan
- Gary Airport Logistics Hub
- Gary Airport Crosswind Runway
- Gary Airport Hanger Development Opportunity
- Portage YMCA Park
- Gary Airport Road Realignment
- Michigan Avenue Road Improvement
- Kingsbury Inland Logistics Park LaPorte
- Crossroads of America Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Projects
- Decarbonization First Responders Fleet
- Adams Park Stormwater Wetland & Restoration Project/Wetland Mitigation Bank
- B&E Infrastructure Project Michigan City La Porte
- Lake County Housing Rehab Project Lake
- Water Infrastructure Improvements HWY 39 La Porte
- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Community Partner Groups Initiative
- Revolving Loan Fund: Catalytic Logistical Properties Development
- Infrastructure to I 65 and SR 2 Business Park
- Merrillville Business Park Mississippi Street Reconstruction Project
- Infrastructure to Medical Research Park Munster

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION

- Impact Labs Super Accelerator and STEM Center Hammond
- Youth Entrepreneurship Ecosystem
- NWI Biz Hub Entrepreneur Resource Center
- WE CREATE + INNOVATE Venture Capital Fund
- Rural Entrepreneurship & Innovation Taskforce
- Minority Business Skills Enhancement Program
- Michigan City Innovation Center Michigan City
- Pandemic Recovery Digital Transformation
- 2nd Muse Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING

- Talent and Business Attraction Marketing Platform
- External Headquarters Outreach Program
- The Linc HQ Parking Facility Valparaiso
- Assembling Land for Development
- Demolition Projects for Development
- Capacity Building for Economic Development and Plan Implementation
- Agriculture Value Chain Strategy
- Northwest Indiana Cost Comparison Study
- Schererville Business Park US Hwy 30 Schererville
- East Chicago Gateway Project 3 Million sq ft Distribution East Chicago
- East Chicago Gateway Distribution Training Facility East Chicago

TOTAL IDENTIFIED: \$636,275,051

An aerial, top-down view of a complex multi-level highway interchange. The central feature is a circular landscaped roundabout with a green lawn and a ring of colorful flowers. Multiple levels of elevated roads and ramps curve around this central area, with several cars visible on the roads. The overall scene is captured in a slightly desaturated, blue-tinted color palette.

Infrastructure

Greater South Shore Technology Initiative (GSS)

Location

Lake, Porter, La Porte and St. Joseph Counties

Managing Partners

Greater South Shore Initiative Leadership Team

Key Stakeholders

The cities and towns in the direct path of the 90-mile along the South Shore Railroad right-of-way corridor, who will be provided a level of expertise and national exposure (and access to potential funding) that would otherwise be unavailable to them if left as individual silos.

Summary

The Greater South Shore Initiative (GSS) emerged from Northwest Indiana leadership and is a direct result of Indiana's commitment to its infrastructure, innovation and essential broadband underpinnings. Senator Todd Young's leadership on the Endless Frontiers Act, paired with the state's remarkable effort behind Double Tracking, make a robust connection of people, data and jobs possible for the southern shore of Lake Michigan. The goal of the GSS Initiative is to explore, on behalf of stakeholders, the potential of a hyper-connected, 90-mile advanced technology and research corridor; one that becomes a top North American destination for business, industry, educational advancement and new households.

The professional team, which includes global leaders in sustainable design, planning and engineering, will do the following:

- Test the concept for physical and economic viability
- Illustrate the concept in a Vision Plan
- Prepare a report that supports the Vision Plan
- Timeline is 8 months
- Cost is \$1 million

The GSS will have benefits for all along the corridor, but with each geographic segment (central, east and west) having a component of special interest.

The GSS will show that growth and sustainability are not only consistent, but that far greater growth is possible with sustainable systems that allow existing assets to be used more efficiently. Redundant, resilient, and fast digital infrastructure - that can measure and manage systems - makes that possible.

Risk of investment in the GSS is reduced because the implications of connected corridors have already been proved, in large part, with many successful examples of linear planning around infrastructure, from Manhattan's High Line to Chicago's 606. However, the Atlanta Beltline may be the most compelling precedent. Simply connecting Atlanta neighborhoods along a 22-mile recreational trail attracted \$4.6 Billion in new investment from 2010-2019. And that was before the new fiber optic loop was completed last month.

• In contrast, the GSS should have even more upside: it is 4 times the length; it connects 2 states and 20+ municipalities (not just neighborhoods) by rail, not just by a recreational path; it is in the nation's 3rd largest GDP/MSA; and it's a cornerstone of a Great Lakes defacto trading bloc, estimated at \$4-6 Trillion.

READI Funds Requested

\$1,000,000

Current Funding Sources

\$2,000,000 from private foundations

Matching Funds

Active fundraising effort to secure \$1m in additional funding from three private foundations representing the three geographic segments of the corridor

In active conversations with Legacy, White, and Knight foundations.

2:1
Match

Greater South Shore Technology Initiative (GSS)

Sustainability & Impact

Regional Impact

The transformation of the greater South Shore of Lake Michigan into a top North American destination for private investment and new households.

Existing IEDC Innovation Programs Involvement

Not directly, though it is highly relevant and supportive of these types of projects.

Increase Population Growth

Market-tested development strategies and distinct projects that will be made available to each municipality in the 90-mile South Shore Commuter Rail right-of-way corridor, will attract public and private investment into new industry clusters and workforce housing in transit development districts.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

Strongly - particularly the state's investment in broadband expansion and emphasis on transit-oriented development along the South Shore Line. NICTD and RDA serve on the steering committee for the project, along with multiple federal MPOs and economic development organizations representing the full corridor.

Rural Impact

Catalytic predevelopment planning to leverage major investments in transportation and fiberoptic infrastructure to stimulate economic development in rural communities in La Porte County.

Success Metrics

The multiplier over time for dollars invested in GSS projects should be comparable to identified model regions/case studies (e.g. the \$590m invested in the Atlanta Beltline project that has generated \$4.6b in additional investment).

Long Term Investment

The GSS Initiative has assembled a project team comprised the world's foremost experts in urban planning, design, engineering and architecture to analyze the highest and best near and long-term use of regional assets to stimulate transformational public and private investment (akin to the Burnham Plan's impact on modern Chicago).

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

Providing an actionable, market-tested master development plan that synthesizes the assets of the entire corridor will create an economy of scale that will be significantly more attractive to outside investment than any single municipality or county.

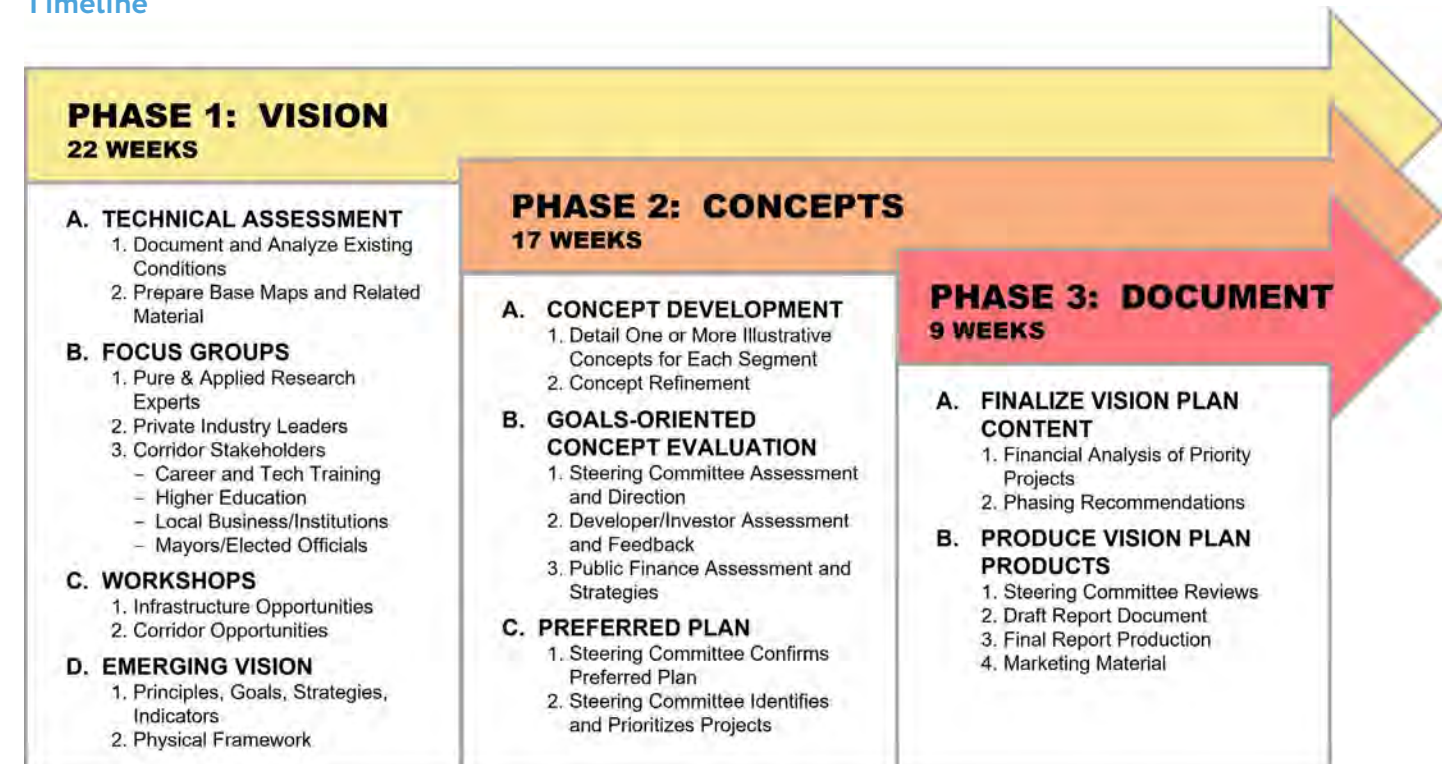
Expand Reach of IEDC's Manufacturing Readiness Grant and Innovation Voucher

Potentially, depending on the types of innovation hubs that could be planned along the South Shore.

Sustainability Plan

Once the GSS Initiative's planning and market testing phase is completed, it will generate substantial momentum and funding for implementation by virtue of the advisory committee attached to the project (comprised of major financial, development, and industry CEOs/principals).

Timeline



Indiana Toll Road Quantum Computing Super Highway

Location

All Seven Counties

Managing Partners

Digital Crossroad and Vivacity

Key Stakeholders

This project aspires to incent the largest hyperscalers and enterprise companies in the world to expand their investment into Indiana. We want the 1,300,000 residents and businesses located in communities of northern Indiana in Steuben, LaGrange, Elkhart, Saint Joseph, La Porte, Porter, and Lake Counties to experience faster internet speed and more certain broadband.

While these commercial applications are very important, we view our biggest and most important stakeholders are the people and residences that today do not have access to real broadband. While we will not be the entity delivering the broadband to those residences and people, we are very proud that we are creating the backbone for the delivery of those services.

Summary

The Improvement of a Public Asset, the Development of a Carrier-Neutral Fiber Backbone, and the Digital Crossroads of America Fiber Network. The Indiana Toll Road (“ITR”) stretches 156.28 miles across northern Indiana with a ‘starting point’ at the Illinois border and an ‘ending point’ at the Ohio border. The ITR is operated by the Indiana Toll Road Commission (the “ITRCC”) under the jurisdiction of the Indiana Finance Authority. This request seeks to improve this publicly-owned asset that will result in the long-term and immediate benefit to the local business and residential communities in the state of Indiana.

Underneath the entire length of the ITR is a high-capacity fiber optic cable. The fiber optic cable was originally installed to improve motorist safety by improving public safety communications. This fiber asset has the potential to improve the connectivity for residents and business along the entire ITR route.

Today there is very little revenue generated for the state from the existing fiber and conduit beneath the ITR. Prior to this initiative, the fiber and the conduit was considered a ‘stranded asset’, meaning that the ITR fiber and conduit had a starting point and an ending point. Prior to our involvement, the ITR fiber and conduit was not actually connected to the backbone of the Internet!

The proceeds from this application will be used to purchase the technology and the software required to link the ITR network to 350 East Cermak Road in downtown Chicago, one of the world’s largest internet communications exchanges. The construction cost for this project is approximately \$1,650,000.00. The money will be used to connect the ITR at mile marker 5 with the Digital Crossroads Data Center (“DX”) in Hammond, Indiana. Once connected to the existing DX network, the ITR fiber asset will be linked to downtown Chicago via DX’s existing fiber network.

The connectivity along the ITR in northern Indiana will be world-class in all respects. Internet speeds along the ITR will be on par with the most advanced networks in the world.

DX Crossroads Network LLC owns and operates the communications network for the Digital Crossroad Data Center located at the former State Line Power Generating Plant in Hammond.

The Digital Crossroad Data Center is a state-of-the-art data center with 105,000 square feet of mission critical data center IT space and 4+MW of power capacity. DX was built to attract the largest enterprise and hyperscale companies in the world to Northwest Indiana.

Digital Crossroad has already invested more than \$7,000,000 to connect NWI to the superhub located at 350 Cermak via a high-capacity, high-speed 1728 strands of dark fiber optic cable that is fully operational with a low latency path over 12 fiber route miles that rivals any other Chicagoland data center. The grant proceeds will connect the ITR assets to the Digital Crossroad assets, thereby using the private investment made by Digital Crossroad to enhance the public asset.

READI Funds Requested

\$4,250,000

Current Funding Sources

\$18,000,000 from private sources

Matching Funds

The private sector spend on the data center portion of this project has already exceeded \$75,000,000 in total. Additionally, the city of Hammond has supported the project with more than \$11,000,000 in local incentive, including an \$8,040,000 Tax-Increment Financing (TIF) bond, the extended use of land for another \$2,000,000 and \$400,000 in cash.

The fiber network portion of the project included \$18,000,000 in total investment for the ITR, including \$7,000,000 in spend by Digital Crossroads and more than \$11,000,000 in spend by other stakeholders in the ITR project. The two private partners involved are Digital Crossroads located in Hammond and Vivacity Networks.

4.24:1
Match

Indiana Toll Road Quantum Computing Super Highway

Sustainability & Impact

Regional Impact

The goal of Digital Crossroad is to be transformative and spur technology investment into Indiana by the largest companies in the world.

The Digital Crossroads Fiber Network will provide an agnostic fiber backbone that will simplify the extension of networks to end users (businesses and residential), carriers and communities across northern Indiana.

This network will NOT compete with the largest enterprise companies that have already made investments into the state of Indiana. This network does NOT compete with companies such as AT&T, Comcast and others. Additionally, this network does NOT incent municipalities or other governmental agencies to create their own networks. This fiber network will allow for an easier and more cost-effective connectin of these 'last mile' facilities to be the backbone of the internet.

This backbone will enable large companies to serve municipalities, schools and libraries, local ISPs, utility providers, wireless carriers' 5G deployments, and others to focus their energy and investment in those last mile connections and their unique service offerings to deliver the promise that broadband applications have to offer. This network will make all these efforts markedly more efficient and less expensive to construct.

Military Attraction / INVet Involvement

Digital Crossroad employs disabled military veterans and uses vendors that are owned and operated by military veterans. Since the inception of the construction of the data center, more than \$12,000,000 has been paid to veterans and their firms.

Expand Reach of IEDC's Manufacturing Readiness Grant and Innovation Voucher

The project expands the reach of the Manufacturing Readiness Grant and Innovation Voucher program by enabling companies to adopt smart, innovative and emerging manufacturing technologies through a world class communications network.

Rural Impact

The funds will be used to benefit the public in general by permitting large carriers to more easily connect to the Internet superhub at 350 E Cermak in Chicago, thereby simplifying the process to deliver broadband to rural customers and creating drastic savings for those carriers and customers over the long run.

The proposed improvement to the ITR network makes Northwest Indiana an attractive location for industries that rely on high speed, high-capacity communications capabilities.

This network will support Indiana agriculture by creating a network capable of handling the data created by precision farming initiatives. The ability to quickly and efficiently analyze data produced on the farm will improve yields and efficiency.

This network will form the connectivity backbone that will facilitate the delivery of broadband and fiber access to rural and low-income communities in Northern Indiana, which will create opportunities for new businesses. As remote work becomes more ubiquitous, this network will help keep the current workforce rooted in Indiana, who will be able to access business applications faster and easier, while attracting new workers from out of state.

Increase Population Growth

Simply stated, the best and brightest minds and companies will locate to areas that include the strongest and most certain broadband access. Creating an open-access metro-optical fiber exchange is a fancy way of saying that areas of the northern part of the state of Indiana will have such broadband access more readily available to them because of this improvement to the public asset of the ITR.

People and companies will more strongly consider moving to Indiana because of this network. The delivery of better broadband is the mission of the largest companies in the world and this network will make it easier for those companies to either make their initial investment or increase their present investment.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

This project most closely aligns with the goals of the Indiana Broadband Strategic Partnership by bringing reliable broadband service to some of the most unserved and underserved communities in Indiana.

This project enhances Governor Eric Holcomb's NextLevel job initiatives. The project will support the flow of information needed for advanced manufacturing. This is an infrastructure project that will support the construction industry in Northern Indiana.

The speed of communication will open the door to tele-health opportunities that cannot be supported by existing infrastructure. The project will create a communications corridor that will support new and existing IT businesses. Finally, this network improves safety along the tollway by enhancing the ITR's "smart road" efforts.

Indiana Toll Road Quantum Computing Super Highway

Sustainability & Impact Continued

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

Development of fiber assets is very capital intensive. The activation of the ITR fiber and conduit will complete the connection to 350 Cermak Road in Chicago, one of the largest and most important superhubs in the world.

Latency is the enemy of fiber users. Today, the latency between these destinations and the 350 E. Cermak superhub is not manageable or definable in any meaningful way. This project will reduce the latency down to a roundtrip speed of 3.6 ms which is so fast that there can be no criticism of access to broadband.

The removal of this barrier to access is essential to economic growth.

From the simple security of a Ring doorbell, the efficiency and safety of a smart meter for water, gas or electricity, enhanced productivity driven by precision agriculture, accessibility to scarce healthcare expertise through remote telehealth and so many more, creating this access to broadband infrastructure will improve lives in innumerable ways.

Existing IEDC Innovation Programs Involvement

The project will improve connectivity at the IEDC Certified Technology Parks located in South Bend, Merrillville, and Hammond. Additionally, this project will advance the goals of the Indiana Broadband Strategic Partnership by bringing reliable broadband service to some of the most unserved and underserved communities in Indiana.

Long Term Investment

This network provides Indiana with a competitive advantage over other commercial markets. These industries include the data center, financial, higher education, and research. Information technology jobs are underrepresented in Northern Indiana; the Data Super-Highway will repurpose the ITR to be a delivery mechanism for opportunity in technology verticals in a region that has been technically forgotten and has largely been seen as an industrial, manufacturing and agricultural corridor.

Our team has already begun working directly with counties, cities, towns, local economic development organizations and even area businesses to help them understand this network and the opportunities created by the Digital Crossroads Fiber Network. We have engaged government officials at all levels to help us with outreach to local economic development organizations, large hyper-scalers and enterprisers. We have already had multiple meetings with people and organizations from Allen County, Michiana and NWI to make certain as many people as possible understand this network.

The project is designed to spur investment and our outreach has already been effective.

Sustainability Plan

Quality of Opportunity

This network will make large companies, telecommunications companies, investment bankers, site selectors and leaders of almost any industry that uses bandwidth to consider Indiana as a highly desirable location to build and grow businesses.

This consideration will continue for at least the next 50 years.

The new high-speed network will provide the opportunities for Hoosier businesses to be more competitive and attract new investments and interest in the state because the experience of accessing mission critical, disaster recovery, and continuity applications will be seamless and real-time. This network will provide low-cost and low-latency (high-speed) access to the Internet and private data, which addresses the current environment of complex, slow and high-cost connectivity.

Quality of Place

The proposed improvement to the ITR network makes Northwest Indiana an attractive location for industries that rely on high speed, high-capacity communications capabilities.

The state of Indiana has made a huge investment into the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District ("NICTD"), also known as the South Shore line. People from Illinois want to lessen their tax burdens, live in safer places and have a higher quality of life. This network is yet another example of Indiana's competitive advantage over other commercial markets.

Quality of Life

This network will form the connectivity backbone that will facilitate the delivery of broadband and fiber access to rural and low-income communities in Indiana, which will create opportunities for new businesses. As remote work becomes more ubiquitous, this network will help keep the current workforce rooted in Indiana, who will be able to access business applications faster and easier, while attracting new workers from out of state.

Success Metrics

Construction will take approximately 6 months. This is a shovel ready project. The route has been identified using existing right of ways. End to end completion for this fiber network will include the 48 strands of fiber for the City of Hammond to tie into.

In the long term, this project will foster growth in technology businesses that will help diversify the economy of Northern Indiana. The project will help technology partners like metro-optical companies and applications service providers in the region.

Gary Airport Hangar Development Opportunity

Infrastructure

Location

City of Gary, Lake County

Managing Partners

City of Gary and The Gary Chicago International Airport

Key Stakeholders

Gary/Chicago International Airport (GCIA)
 City of Gary
 Lake County
 Porter County
 State of Indiana
 Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority (NWIRDA)

All of the above are stakeholders that benefit from growth at the GCIA and will see their previous investments leveraged by this grant.

Summary

We have two economic development opportunities at the Gary/Chicago International Airport (GCIA) for aircraft hangars, one is 47,000 square feet and the other is 19,500 square feet.

The larger hangar is a 40,000 square foot hangar with a 7,000 square foot office. This would bring 17, \$100k+ jobs and relocate 4 corporate jets from Midway (Illinois) to Gary (Indiana). This includes the aircraft of a very high profile Chicago hotel company.

The smaller of the two hangars is for the relocation of an aircraft maintenance company currently located in Pontiac, Michigan. This would bring 12 new jobs with an average salary of \$65k.

READI Funds Requested

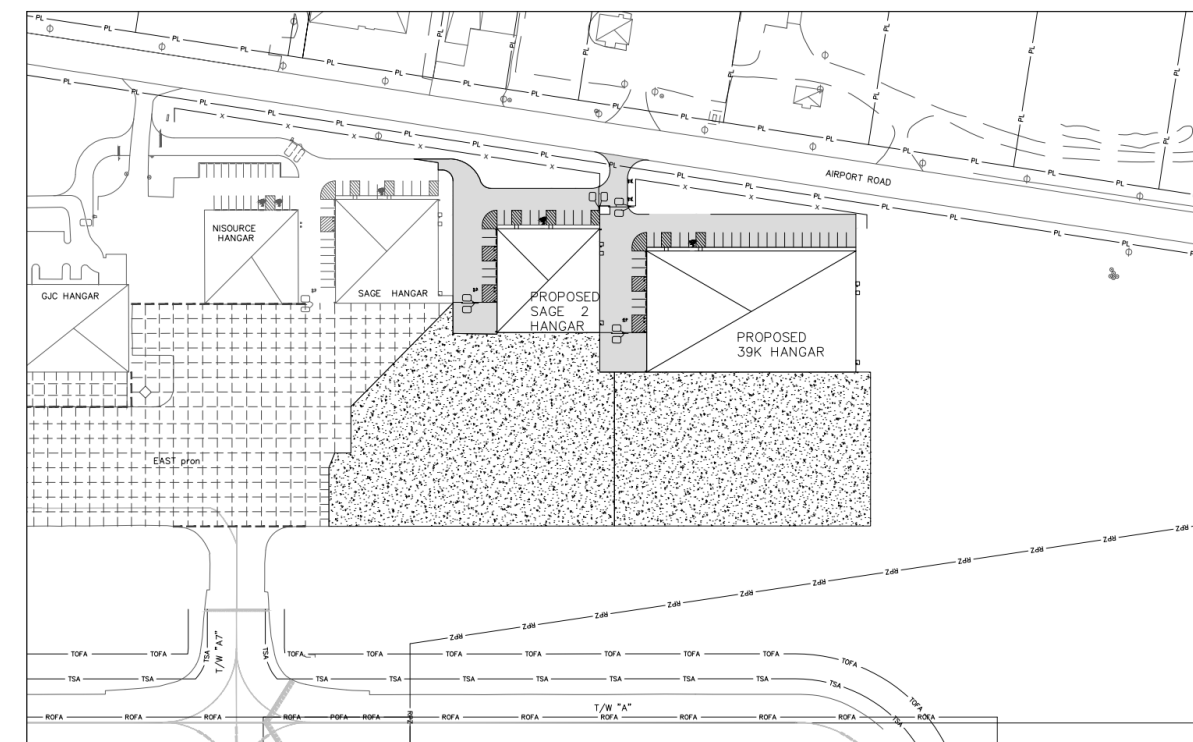
\$1,500,000

Current Funding Sources

\$12,000,000 from private sources

**7.3:1
Match**

Hangar Overhead Layout



Sustainability & Impact

Success Metrics

Tracking new jobs, future job creation, supporting industry growth and airport revenues.

Rural Impact

The project will promote economic growth in the northern Lake County region, thus limiting the impact on urban sprawl on nearby rural areas.

Gary Airport Hangar Development Opportunity

Sustainability & Impact Continued

Sustainability Plan

The revenue from the lease of the hangars will sustain the long-term operation and maintenance of the facilities.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

By providing the necessary capital, hangar construction will attract these companies to Indiana from Illinois and Michigan. Both companies have also been introduced to the IEDC to discuss the incentives Indiana has to offer for such relocations from out of state and new job creation.

Regional Impact

A total 29 new jobs that will offer continual, sustainable, recession-resistant growth for decades to come.

Military Attraction / IN-Vet Involvement

There is typically an abundance of veterans in the aviation industry. 18 of 29 jobs will be filled by veterans. In addition, the GCIA has VBE goals of 5% for any construction project at the GCIA.

Long Term Investment

Both hangars will be leased to aviation companies over a term of at least 30 years.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

NWIRDA has been heavily invested at the GCIA through their core mission of creating an economic engine through growth at the GCIA.

Expand Reach of IEDC's Manufacturing Readiness Grant and Innovation Voucher

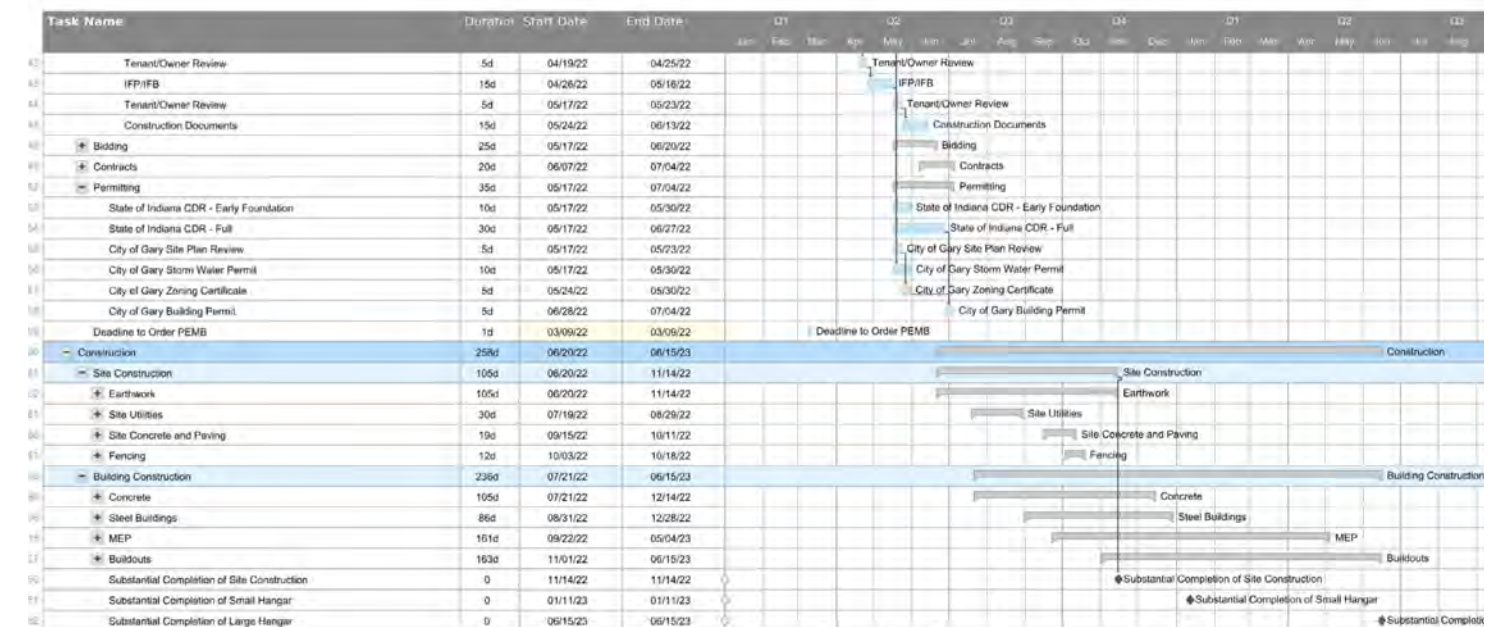
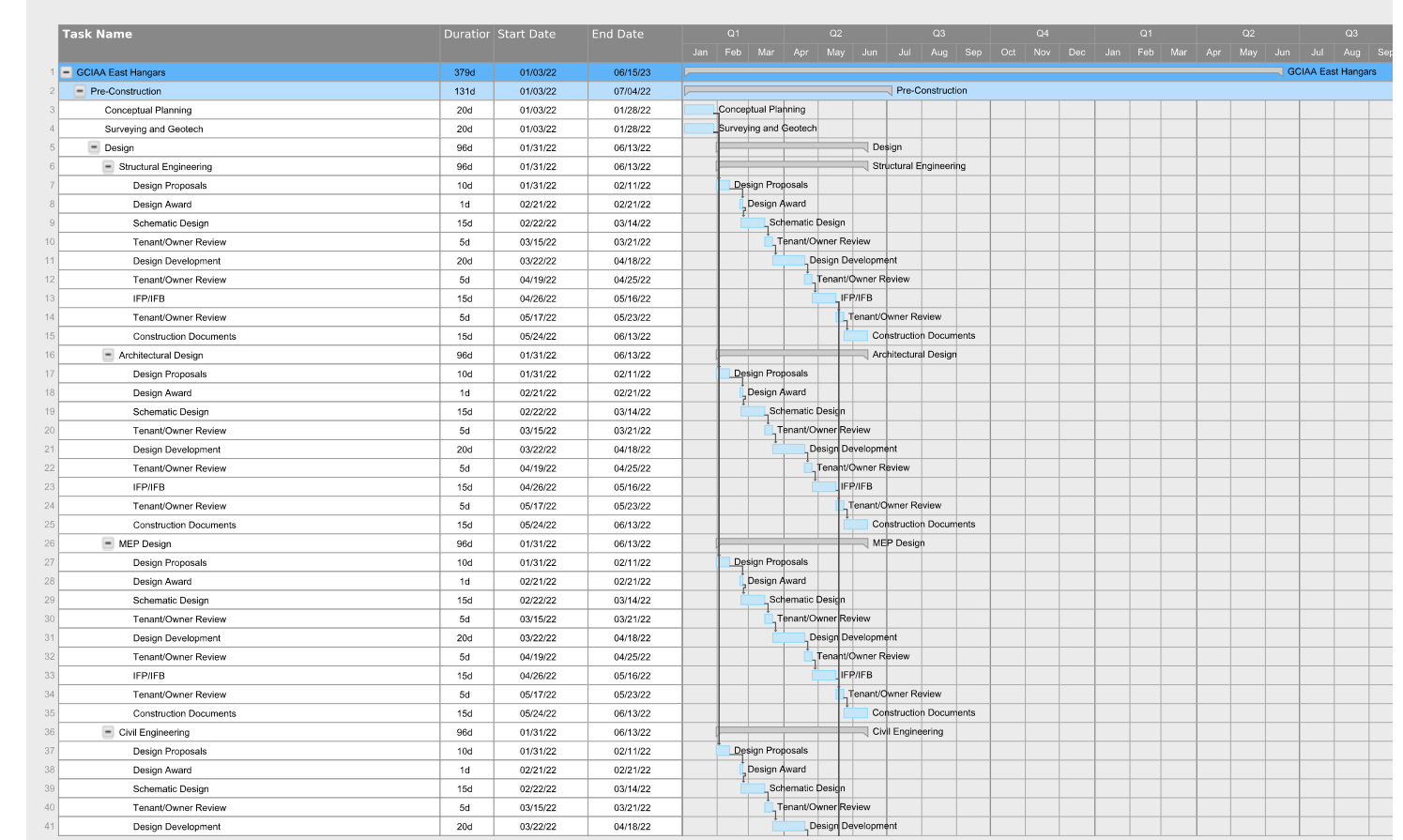
We have introduced both private companies to the IEDC and discussed possible incentive programs.

Increase Population Growth

Job creation and growth at the GCIA will attract additional support businesses and residents back to areas that have over decades seen a population decline.

Timeline

GCIAA EAST HANGARS



Kingsbury Inland Logistics Park

Location

All Seven Counties, La Porte County

Managing Partners

La Porte County Redevelopment Commission

Key Stakeholders

La Porte County stakeholders:

La Porte County - helps create jobs and generate new tax revenue

IEDC-help develop advanced manufacturing and logistics industries

La Porte County agri-business - helps to limit urban sprawl

Private Sector-JBC Rail - currently the project switcher operator allow for additional access and client delivery assistance

Private Sector-**South Shore Freight**-allows for additional access and client delivery assistance

Summary

The Kingsbury Logistics Park (KIP) includes construction of an estimated 4,000 linear feet of new trackage, and bridge connecting CN railroad to CSX railroad within the Park. The Kingsbury Park is +/- 4,000 acres of developable and developed property and utility served. This will be the only inland logistics port that is served by two Class I rail carriers. Previous to these efforts, the County has invested over \$6MM in park improvements. This project is within a La Porte County TIF area and was identified as a public improvement in the "TIF Plan" document.

Located at the intersection of Rt 6 and Rt 35 in La Porte County, this area has been a targeted area for development of heavy manufacturing and logistics over the past 10 years in La Porte County. In fact, La Porte County, through its redevelopment commission owns the rail and/or railroad right-of-way where the public rail improvements have been installed.

Funding from the READI grant will assist in another public private partnership and would be dedicated for a bridge connecting CSX accessible rail to CN accessible rail, thus connecting the entire park to these opportunities.

Timeline

Estimated Project Timeline:

Bridge and track design-ongoing
Construction RFP January-March 2022

April 2022 contracting

Construction: May-October 2022

Anticipated construction to start May 2022

Draw down is anticipated as follows

July 50% of request

Sept. 25% of request

December remaining of request
(subject to acceptance of construction by the county).

READI Funds Requested

\$640,000

Current Funding Sources

\$2,560,000 from Federal, Private, and Local Funds

Matching Funds Breakdown

Initial investment

La Porte County RDC \$6MM (rail infrastructure)

IEDC Grant previous rail improvements \$1MM

Current Grant Requests

Private sector investment \$1MM Kingsbury/JBC Rail Partnership

Anticipated federal or additional private funding \$1MM

La Porte County TIF funding \$560k

READI Grant funds \$640K

4:1
Match

Sustainability & Impact

Sustainability Plan

KIP rail infrastructure is owned by La Porte County Redevelopment Commission (RDC). The RDC has an agreement with a “builder/switcher” of JBC Rail. This operator is responsible for maintenance and operation of all county owned and controlled rail in the park. JBC has existing rail business within the park. Any improvement funded with this grant would also be county owned and would be operated and maintained by the identified switcher.

Rural Impact

The location of the logistics park at the former Kingsbury Arsenal had a positive impact on the rural community by utilizing previously disturbed property for redevelopment. Additionally, with a recent investment in a fertilizer facility, many of the area agribusinesses are able to access these products. The bridge investment will connect the park, connect to CSX, CN and South Shore Freight and allow for the development of logistics, value added and heavy manufacturing. This is the location for logistics and heavy manufacturing. The site is already served by Kingsbury Utility (water and sanitary) and the County has agreements with property owners regarding sale and sale price of property as transactions occur.

Success Metrics

Our project success will be guided by the requirements set forth by the IEDC and the infrastructure grant that the KIP received.

Long Term Investment

The KIP is the only business park with two Class 1 rail carriers serving it. This location should be the focus of region logistics developers in a similar fashion as Joliet Arsenal and the surrounding communities are in Illinois.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

The completion of this project will allow the County to grow toward the IEDC infrastructure grants long term requirements of 500 new jobs, 2 million square feet of logistics/mfg and \$120MM in new investment by 2030.

The development of and continued support for an inland logistics facility is also in line with Conenux’s mission of advanced manufacturing and logistics industries.

Military Attraction / INVet Involvement

Not directly beyond job opportunities and our partnership with Work One.

Expand Reach of IEDC’s Manufacturing Readiness Grant and Innovation Voucher

While there are plenty of acres to be developed at the KIP, it is home to 50 +/- businesses. The La Porte Office of Economic Development is always marketing innovation and incentives to existing businesses via the business retention program.

Regional Impact

Outside of the Port of Indiana, KIP (based on size and access) is the only legitimate inland logistics port in the region. The property is planned for heavy industrial and La Porte County is an attainment area. This location if promoted by the region can and should have the same investment, job creation and economic impact that Joliet Arsenal had on the eastern suburbs of Illinois.

Increase Population Growth

None at this time. This is an infrastructure project that can and will generate job opportunities in the future.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

KIP offers safe, clean, affordable property to develop that is currently served by water and sanitary. It is also located in an Tax Increment Financing district and allows the county the maximum opportunity to utilize that tool for existing business that can expand and new business looking to expand. This is also the only location that is served by utilities that large parcels (250+ acres) can be purchased from one owner.



Infrastructure to Medical Research Park

Infrastructure

Location

Munster, Lake County

Managing Partners

Munster Redevelopment Commission

Key Stakeholders

Munster and area residents or commuters, community leaders, Financial and Saxon Partners, NWI region, Lake County Economic Alliance (LCEA), Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD) and Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO).

Summary

Infrastructure Support for \$160 Million Development at the Former Lansing Country Club (59 developable acres in Munster, IN). Saxon Partners acquired the Lansing Country Club (LCC) within 1 mile of the proposed South Shore Munster Ridge Station on the West Lake Corridor, for a technology and commerce campus. The project plan includes more than 780,000 square feet of modern research/medical, life science/pharmaceutical, headquarters, light manufacturing and related operations with options for supportive mixed use/multifamily housing. The infrastructure improvements provide much needed commercial access to the site which includes a reimagined Fisher Avenue incorporating a round-about with public art for car/employee traffic, expansion of Maple Leave Boulevard for truck/larger vehicle access, as well as water/wastewater, power and fiber connectivity to attract end users, jobs and additional private investment.

READI Funds Requested

\$1,500,000

Current Funding Sources

\$160,000,000 from private funds

Matching Funds

Private through Saxon Partners. The Town of Munster will offer incentives to support the project. Potential future partners may include NWI Regional Development Authority for Transit Development District, Indiana Economic Development Corporation for end user/jobs incentives.

107:1
Match

Sustainability & Impact

Long Term Investment

With initial support for infrastructure, Saxon Partners can put funding toward other areas of the park. The group has a large portfolio of projects and would continue to invest in features, look and feel of the park along with maintaining/managing tenants. More importantly, the park will increase the assessed value of the individual site impacting available property tax dollars to the community; increase property values for area land/residents; and increase payroll tax to the state and local option income to the County.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

The infrastructure improvements assist the LCC project in coming to fruition to attract other industry clusters with higher than average wages, which in turn diversifies the Lake County and NWI economy. This project as a whole can transform how the region is viewed by residents and non-residents alike, providing opportunity to work/live/play in a campus style atmosphere, close to many amenities including the commuter train station which is attractive to talent and workforce of various generations.

Infrastructure to Medical Research Park

Sustainability & Impact Continued

Success Metrics

Prior to any formal marketing launch, several companies have shown interest in landing at the LCC. Once infrastructure is in place, initial project success will be shovel/pad ready sites for lease or purchase followed by number of tenants/users and least terms. The plan is to encourage pre-lease “anchor companies” ahead of or during construction as success breeds success. Public use of the open space will also be monitored as it is a benefit to the region as a whole.

Increase Population Growth

The 59-acres are currently unoccupied. The proposed development will deliver close to 780,000 SF to Northwest Indiana which will attract businesses and residents to the Northwest Indiana, Lake County and Munster providing jobs and high wages.

As the mixed use and multifamily housing components come online, they will attract and retain talent in an area with art, culture, entertainment, livable-walkable environment, trails, commuter rail to/from City of Chicago.

Military Attraction / INVet Involvement

Saxon Partners will support hiring of qualified military veterans as part of the construction process and encourage end users to pursue the various state/other veteran hiring programs.

Regional Impact

Munster, Lake County is a highly desirable location within the Chicago metro footprint making the infrastructure component of this project critical to the preparation and pad/shovel ready nature of the development in the immediate future. The site’s proximity to the new commuter line and train station will focus on transit development envisioned by not only the Town of Munster and Lake County but the entire NWI Region. The design of the park will capitalize on 40 acres of existing features becoming a livable, walkable campus with connection to quality of life amenities surrounding the site. The development at capacity is anticipated to employ approximately 2,700 (plus construction jobs) from around the region.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

The development is set to attract key industry clusters which are also a focus of the Indiana Economic Development Corporation in an effort to diversify the NWI economy in tandem with the continuation of legacy industries: refining and steel production.

Sustainability Plan

Saxon Partners is a Commercial Real Estate Investment, Development and Management Company based near Boston, formed over 20-years ago with numerous successful projects in commercial real estate development.

Saxon’s financial strength allows for internal financing of acquisition and development activity.

Public roads will be maintained by the Town of Munster as part of standard operations. Saxon Partners will maintain the common areas of the development.

Rural Impact

The infrastructure improvement project does not directly impact rural communities. However, Munster’s north-centrally located within Lake County along the border, the project offers job opportunities to rural community/area residents as the average commute time in the region is approximately 30 miles.

Merrillville Business Park Mississippi Street Reconstruction Project

Location

Merrillville, Lake County

Managing Partners

Merrillville Redevelopment Commission

READI Funds Requested

\$1,500,000

Current Funding Sources

\$55,000,000 from private sources

**37:1
Match**

Matching Funds

Funding to be secured in the coming months.

- Total project cost estimates below:
- Infrastructure Budget \$7,855,563
 - Grant request \$1.5 Million
 - Sitework & Earthwork for Vertical Construction \$18,000,000
 - Vertical Construction \$165,000,000

TOTAL **\$190,855,563**

Crow Holdings Industrial has a diverse capital stack of partners to select for this project. In addition to traditional limited partner relationships, CHI has secured more than ~\$1.2B in funding from committed accounts and aims to develop close to \$1.5B of Class A product nationally. The Town of Merrillville has offered to provide incentives to assist with this large scale project.

Infrastructure to I 65 and SR 2 Business Park

Infrastructure

Location

Hwy 2 and I-65, Lake County

Managing Partners

Lake County Redevelopment Commission

Key Stakeholders

Team members, community members, and clients. Better infrastructure makes the road safer, appropriate to accommodate significant truck traffic as part of the US Cold operation, and attractive for other potential development in that sector.

Summary

Road Improvements/Expansion of Colorado Street in Unincorporated Lake County to attract additional and further secure \$120 Million investment by US Cold Storage. Lake County Council and Lake County Board of Commissioners are supportive of the US Cold project. The associated infrastructure improvements on Colorado Street are needed to support the US Cold operation and further attract other companies to that area. US Cold anticipates hiring 60-70 people with an average annual salary of \$65,000 plus significant benefits package. At the core of that commitment is improving employee communications, expanding employee and leadership development programs and ensuring that all employees understand their growth potential.

READI Funds Requested

\$1,000,000

Current Funding Sources

\$120,000,000 from private sector investment

Matching Funds

The entire US Cold Project is approximately \$120 Million of private sector investment. The Colorado improvements are roughly \$2-3 Million (could be higher due to higher construction costs). The request is \$1 Million to help offset the total cost.

Primarily private through US Cold. Public money invested through Lake County Council award of 10 year (standard schedule) Tax Abatement on both real and personal property. The Lake County Commissioners support not only the US Cold project but the Colorado Street Improvement project as they oversee the Lake County Highway Department who will contract for the improvements to make the project more affordable.

Sustainability & Impact

Rural Impact

Only miles from the Lake County-Jasper County-Newton County boarder, the Colorado Street project will enhance the developable land space in rural/unincorporated Lake County, create improved transportation infrastructure for the projects along I-65 and Route 2 in rural Lake County including US Cold Storage, and draw additional interest to the other rural areas of Northwest Indiana. In addition, I-65/Route 2 location with improved infrastructure can be viewed as a food/cold storage production and distribution hub that evolves into a full Agri-Biz corridor from the central sector of I-65 (Dawn Foods, Domino's, Quality Pasta all in Merrillville) through Fair Oaks Farm and the remainder of Jasper/Newton Counties. Construction workers both for the Colorado infrastructure and US Cold could come from the more rural areas along with FTE for the US Cold operation.

Existing IEDC Innovation Programs Involvement

Not at this time. However, US cold is working with Purdue University and other institutions on state of the art automation and innovation in the logistics industry.

37:1
Match

Infrastructure to I 65 and SR 2 Business Park

Sustainability & Impact Continued

Success Metrics

The metrics are relatively simple: US Cold completes construction and brings additional food production/distribution partners to their development, hiring more employees and increasing assessed value thus a high return on the grant amount investment. Ongoing, the success of US Cold's operation can be leveraged to attract other businesses to that intersection of I-65 and Route 2 and along the entire I-65 corridor in concert with the Lake County Land Use Strategy for unincorporated areas.

Increase Population Growth

Most FTEs will be hired from NWI/30 mile radius, of which Illinois is a part. There may be some cross border transplants in addition to some workers being relocated from other facilities for specialized work.

Military Attraction / INVet Involvement

US Cold employs many veterans at all levels throughout the corporation. Veteran recruitment is part of the overall HR strategy. In addition the construction/trades groups engaged in the the Colorado Street improvements and US Cold construction typically employ a number of veterans.

Regional Impact

Public investment (or public-private partnership) in infrastructure such as the Colorado Street improvements secures business attraction.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

The improvements to Colorado Street and the US Cold project are in unincorporated Lake County, which has rarely seen this type of large scale project and development.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

US Cold will receive EDGE credits from the IEDC. There are no other state or federal programs involved at this time.

Long Term Investment

The infrastructure will support development in the I-65 and Route 2 sector for US Cold and other corporations interested in co-location or independent opportunities. US Cold cultivates interpersonal, diverse connections among our customers, employees, partners, stakeholders, and community and sustains connections for long-term growth and success. In addition, US Cold plans to incorporate sustainable energy resources into it's operation.

Sustainability Plan

After improvements, Colorado Street will remain a public road maintained by the Lake County Transportation/Highway Department as part of general operation. The infrastructure improvements will assist US Cold with their own operation, potentially drawing other food producers/distributors to the area, and other companies for the remaining available acreage along Colorado Street.

Johnson Beach Redevelopment Project

Infrastructure

Location

Porter, Porter County

Managing Partners

Town of Porter Redevelopment Commission

Key Stakeholders

Town of Porter, Porter County Tourism, Northwest Indiana RDA. This development supports the transit-oriented development objectives outlined in the RDA's strategic plan as it sits within 2-miles of the Dune Park South Shore train station.

Summary

The project will build on recent efforts to vastly improve the amenities on the Lake Michigan shoreline at Porter Beach. It will enhance recent improvements of the Pavilion at the Indiana Dunes State Park, in order to maximize the economic and community development impact of the unparalleled Lakeshore asset in our region.

The Project Site is an approximately 1-acre parcel at 101 Johnson Beach Road and sits adjacent to the renovated Pavilion at the Indiana Dunes State Park. The development will be mixed use, with residential plus restaurant/pub. With both short-term and long-term rental units, it will be the one of the only places on the Lake Michigan shoreline that tourists will be able to visit and stay. The development will include on-site parking, either underground or podium parking, as geology and economics permit. The structure will be 4-5 floors not including parking.

READI Funds Requested

\$2,000,000

Current Funding Sources

\$30,000,000 from private equity

Matching Funds

Matched funds are pending negotiations.

TIF from Town of Porter, Bank Debt, other state incentives as available and possibly the RDA.

15:1
Match

Sustainability & Impact

Long Term Investment

This development will be a catalyst for further development. The necessary infrastructure improvements which will enable this project also creates a foundation for future development.

Increase Population Growth

This development adds an amenity to the Lakeshore that doesn't exist today and will drive tourism. That tourism will expose more people to the advantages of living in the region (natural amenities, commitment to preserving the environment, economic advantages over neighboring states) that makes it more attractive to all. It gives people an opportunity to experience our region before putting down roots.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

Aligns with state's tourism goals, IDEM's wastewater management goals, IEDC's quality of place goals, the state's goal to enhance the attractiveness of the lake shore, and the furtherance of transit oriented development to support the local, state, and federal investment in the South Shore commuter rail.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

The sewer extension needed to enable this development will make future private investment significantly more feasible, since the area is currently on septic.

Rural Impact

This Project Site sits in one of the least dense areas of Northwest Indiana. It is approximately 10-20 minutes from sizable cities.

Johnson Beach Redevelopment Project

EXHIBIT D-MAP WABASH AVENUE ALLOCATION AREA

Economic Development Plan or Wabash Avenue Economic Development Area:
Report on Economic and Tax Impact
Allocation Area Map



Placemaking



Station Square Walkable Community at Hammond Train Station

Placemaking

Location

Hammond, Lake County

Managing Partners

Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority and The City of Hammond

Key Stakeholders

Our key stakeholders supporting the downtown Hammond train station and adjacent park include all municipal leaders, both state and federal elected officials and, most importantly, local businesses and investors that support NWI residents and visitors with their services. Downtown Hammond houses both a county and federal courthouse as well. The Downtown Train Station and Station Square will have an immediate and lasting effect on these stakeholders by increasing their customer base and diversifying their clientele. It will also create a space for them to stay a bit longer in Downtown Hammond, which will lead to additional economic growth.

Summary

The Downtown Hammond Train Station will be a dynamic, elevated train station creating a stunning new landscape in a currently underutilized area. Station Square will be a bustling, park-like interface between downtown Hammond and the station. The square will have a green space to the south and an urban plaza, anchored by retail and commerce, to the north. A new street will be created to connect Russell St. and Fayette St., creating better connectivity. This active green space will be a beautiful, landscaped entrance for the Downtown Station.

Timeline

The public space, Station Square, would be designed and bid out by Nov. 2022 and constructed in 2023 (from March to November 2023).

The downtown train station cannot be constructed until West Lake Corridor’s revenue service commences. NICTD has that date on their website as 2026. However, Hammond is designing the station now and getting ready for shovels in the ground as soon as given the go-ahead.

READI Funds Requested

\$3,000,000

Current Funding Sources

\$3,000,000

1:1 Match

Matching Funds

Funding sources for the public space and train station will come from the City of Hammond’s Capital Improvement Board (CIB) and from the RDA.

Sustainability & Impact

Regional Impact

Hammond’s Downtown Train Station and its companion Station Square will not only impact the immediate area in downtown Hammond but will also have far reaching impact on Northwest Indiana and further. This Westlake Train project is a \$945 million gamechanger for our communities (increased economic development, increased residential, higher quality of life, etc.) and a downtown station and adjacent plaza will draw thousands of people to the downtown area to live, work and play. The addition of the train station and adjacent park creates an immediate sense of place, something that NWI and Hammond leadership has been working on in the 2019 Downtown Master Plan.

Rural Impact

The Downtown Hammond Train Station will provide access to public transportation for members of the rural communities to connect to Chicago. These urban amenities will now be accessed in a way never provided before for the rural communities. Station Square will provide a space for events, entertainment and gatherings for these communities, giving them a broader opportunity to connect with new people and new experiences.

Station Square Walkable Community at Hammond Train Station

Sustainability & Impact Continued

Sustainability Plan

The City of Hammond will design and build its downtown station in conjunction with the Northern Indiana Commuter and Transportation District (NICTD) in accordance to all its specifications. Station Square will also be designed and built by the City. As with all parks in Hammond, the city will also maintain the square's landscaping, cleanliness and security. Hammond understands all public spaces need to feel welcoming and accessible. The City of Hammond is currently securing both public funding, through tax increment financing, and private funding, through investors and developers.

Increase Population Growth

The Downtown Hammond Train Station and Station Square will increase population many-fold in its surrounding area due to the accessibility to public transportation. The station has already attracted two new residential buildings in downtown Hammond with the strong likelihood of more housing both single and multi-family. Station Square will be an ideal gathering spot for these residents, spurring instant economic development through much needed retail and commerce. A sense of place and community is vital to new residents and this area will be a strong draw.

Long Term Investment

Long term investment will include additional street improvements and added housing including single and multi-family units. In addition to housing, downtown Hammond will see a significant investment in retail, restaurants and services downtown.

Success Metrics

According to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Study in 2020, 20,000 jobs are supported per \$1 billion of annual spending on public transportation operations. In addition to jobs created, business productivity gains from access to broader labor markets, in this case, Chicago and reduction in traffic congestion, that costs \$1.2 billion annually. Access to Chicago and other markets, increased housing opportunities within close proximity to transportation and additional infrastructure including retail, services and other businesses are only a few of the success metrics for this project.

Military Attraction / INVet Involvement

Our project will involve veterans and their families, through construction or through ridership and public events. City of Hammond Mayor Thomas M. McDermott Jr. is a veteran himself and strongly advocates for his fellow veterans in Indiana.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

The Downtown Train Station and its adjacent Station Square are aligned with supporting upcoming residential and commercial that will feed into the upcoming TDD through the RDA. Development in the downtown TDD will boost future reinvestment in the area and our project is in direct support of them.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

Hammond's project is a catalyst for economic growth. The train station allows for a smooth public transportation experience and a public open space in an urban core. This will immediately spur economic growth through needed retail and commerce demanded by the commuters and visitors. The City of Hammond encourages new development and growth, provides economic development and incentives to developers interested in bringing projects to downtown Hammond.

Marquette Greenway Regional Trail, Interstate Connectivity

Location

All Seven Counties

Managing Partners

Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission

Key Stakeholders

The primary stakeholders are the 15 Indiana governmental entities where the trail traverses. These include: Hammond, Whiting, East Chicago, Gary, Indiana Dunes National Park, Ogden Dunes, Portage, Burns Harbor, Porter, Porter County, Beverly Shores, Pines, Michigan City, Long Beach and Michiana Shores.

Within these entities are residents and visitors who stand to benefit greatly from the presence of the trail. These benefits have been outlined in detail within answers to previous questions in this application. For communities, the project will improve educational opportunities and outcomes of local students. Increased graduation rates not only help current students achieve better wages and work opportunities, but also changes what would have been a negative statistic for the school's outcomes into a positive. This improved graduation rate improves a school system's ranking, making the community more attractive for talent recruitment.



Summary

The Marquette Greenway is an ambitious project to finish a regional, non-motorized facility which will span 60-miles in length along the “South Shore” region of Lake Michigan from Calumet Park in Chicago, Illinois, eastward through the heart of Northwest Indiana, and into downtown New Buffalo, Michigan.

Residents of the South Shore region have long desired to have an uninterrupted trail connecting these three states, providing access to a wide variety of destinations along the lakefront. The planning of this corridor has been a collaborative effort for more than a decade. In 2005, the Greenway became a focal point in the landmark Marquette Plan: Indiana’s Lakeshore Reinvestment Strategy document and has carried forward as a top priority today. The route was further identified and promoted with the Marquette Greenway Poster Plan in 2009, and again identified as a priority in the Marquette Action Plan in 2017.

The Marquette Greenway will represent an unparalleled multi-use trail experience, traversing through a geographically and socio-economically diverse landscape. It will connect a population of 192,600 residents within a mile and a half of the trail (including 60,000 who are employed within the corridor), to recreational facilities, scenic landscapes, and economic opportunities.

However, connections to the Marquette Greenway are not simply local in nature. Connections to the trail are extensive and cross multiple state boundaries, linking with the 530-mile Grand Illinois Trail from the west; the Burnham Greenway, Erie-Lackawanna Trail, and Dunes-Kankakee Trail from the south; and the Harbor Country Trail network from the east. Taken together, these additional connections link to a population base of well over nine million people.

The diversity of the trail corridor, both geographic and socio-economic, presents an outstanding opportunity to provide new energy in a region still recovering from the decline of the steel industry. The route seeks to maximize access to recreation areas, such as the Indiana Dunes National Park, as well as serve as a major regional link to numerous economic destinations of employment and retail. The proximity of the proposed route of the Marquette Greenway will also allow direct connections to all major industries, with living-wage jobs, along the lakefront.

Today, thirty-four (34) miles of the Marquette Greenway has either already been built or has received funding. The remaining twenty-six (26) miles – the subject of this application – exist in the cities of Chicago (IL), Gary, Portage, Michigan City (IN), and New Buffalo (MI); the towns of Ogden Dunes and Burns Harbor (IN), and counties of Porter (IN) and Berrien (MI). This READI grant application has been proposed to help complete these remaining miles, to be paired with a proposed federal RAISE grant application applied for in July of 2021 which has been attached to this application.

Marquette Greenway Regional Trail, Interstate Connectivity

READI Funds Requested

\$3,000,000

Current Funding Sources

\$15,668,234 from both public and private funds

5.2:1
Match

Matching Funds

The READI grant will be used to offset the local match obligation for the federal RAISE grant as submitted on July 12th. The entire project to complete all existing gaps covering 26 miles of the Marquette Greenway has been estimated to cost \$40,804,916. Of this, \$15,668,234 has been committed from both public and private funds to match this overall cost.

All matching funds committed in Indiana are public funds. These partners include the communities of Gary, Ogden Dunes, Burns Harbor, Beverly Shores, Pines, Michigan City, and Porter County.

Sustainability & Impact

Rural Impact

The route of the Marquette Greenway does not directly connect to rural communities. However, rural trail links to the corridor are planned to connect throughout the Region. These primarily include the Dunes-Kankakee Trail corridor in central Porter County, and the Lincoln Memorial Trail corridor in western La Porte County.

Regional Impact

As stated above in the summary, the Marquette Greenway is a three-state, 60-mile off-road trail connecting to an adjacent population of nearly 200,000, with links accessing the greater Chicagoland region. Taken together the recreational, economic, health and overall quality of life benefits to the Northwest Indiana region are enormous.

Success Metrics

The primary metric will be trail users captured with the placement of counters along the route. NIRPC intends to install at least one counter in each entity to gauge the usage of the trail over time, and to report back regularly. Further studies will be conducted to measure the increase of businesses that locate within ½ mile of the trail corridor, and the jobs created by these enterprises. This would also include new residential structures built near the trail, and an assessment of the property values over time.

NIRPC intends to reach out to all county tourism bureaus, and the Dunes National and State Parks to gauge the increase in visitors to the region based on the location of the trail. An ongoing dialogue involving hotel and camping stays related to those using the trail will be of particular interest.

Sustainability Plan

As with any municipal trail, the onus of maintenance and operations will fall upon the individual public entities where the trail will traverse through. This includes mowing, pavement management and facility upkeep along the route. Additional duties would include snow plowing, signage installation and repairs. Where the trail enters the Indiana Dunes National Park, the NPS will be the responsible entity for upkeep of the facility. Furthermore, the NPS may contract their maintenance services to smaller and less resourced entities along the route to aid with these segments. Candidates include Ogden Dunes, Burns Harbor and Gary.

Additional assistance for maintenance will be sought from local foundations and non-profits. Targets for this funding include the Legacy, Porter County Community and Unity Foundations, Save the Dunes, and Shirley Heinze Nature Trust just to name a few.

NIRPC intends to work closely with all Indiana entities to assure the proper functioning and upkeep of the trail for many years to come.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

People want to live and work in locations that have outdoor amenities such as trails. The Marquette Greenway project is very similar to quality of place initiatives included in the Indiana Regional Cities program overseen by the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC). Since 2015, this program has helped communities transform their regions into better destinations to live, work, and play. Attracting a large, skilled workforce, in part through the creation of quality of place projects such as regional trails, will advance Indiana's economic growth. Also focused on quality of place improvements is the CreatINg Places program begun in 2016 by the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCDA) in conjunction with Patronicity. This place-based crowdgranting program encourages community investment in placemaking. Having quality of place amenities is a critical component in the attraction of talent to Northwest Indiana.

Marquette Greenway Regional Trail, Interstate Connectivity

Sustainability & Impact Continued

Increase Population Growth

The Marquette Greenway project would increase population growth by attracting new residents to Northwest Indiana seeking the amenities the project would offer. The amenities would lead to both direct population growth and indirect population growth. The amenities that would lead to direct population growth are referenced in the RAISE application's Benefit Cost Analysis: recreation, mobility, health, decreased auto use, and safety. People would be drawn to the recreational paradises near the trail including Wolf Lake, the Indiana Dunes National Park, Lake Michigan beaches, and Michigan's Harbor Country, just to name a few. The Marquette Greenway would also increase the mobility for bicycle commuting to work, which translates to 27 additional bicyclists that would choose to bike to work as a result of the project according to the Benefit Cost Analysis.

The mobility benefits would also facilitate non-work trips that would attract new residents such as the ease of visiting schools, shops, civic and religious institutions, friends and relatives, and recreational destinations as mentioned above. New residents would be attracted to the prospect of living healthier lives as a result of increased exercise and decreased auto pollution. The decreased auto use benefits would also mean less reliance on automobiles, which would better position Northwest Indiana to compete for residents alongside Chicago and some of its dense close-by suburbs, which already offer this benefit.

A final direct driver of population growth because of the project would be increased safety for bicyclists and pedestrians, meaning fewer crashes and a safer bicyclist and pedestrian awareness culture. The project is expected to conservatively lead to 7% fewer crashes involving bicyclists and pedestrians within 1.5 miles of the project, which translates to over a \$4.2 million annual benefit in the form of decreased injuries and deaths. The Marquette Greenway project would also lead to indirect population growth, namely by employers choosing to locate near the project because of its amenities who in turn would cause employees to live nearby.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

Barriers to economic growth are stagnant or declining populations, as well as a workforce that is not adequately trained, well educated, or sufficient in number for employment by the businesses being sought to locate to or expand in Northwest Indiana. To avoid these barriers, it is critical to compete for the needed talent against areas of the country that have more amenities available for outdoor experiences or have desirable geographic amenities such as mountains and oceans. Providing a new outdoor amenity that adds to the quality of place for the three-state area is the objective of the Marquette Greenway project. Furthermore, this regional trail takes unique advantage of the geographic amenity that is Lake Michigan and showcases the diversity of land uses in the three states through which it passes.

Long Term Investment

Nationally, multi-use trails are proven engines of economic development. Examples include:

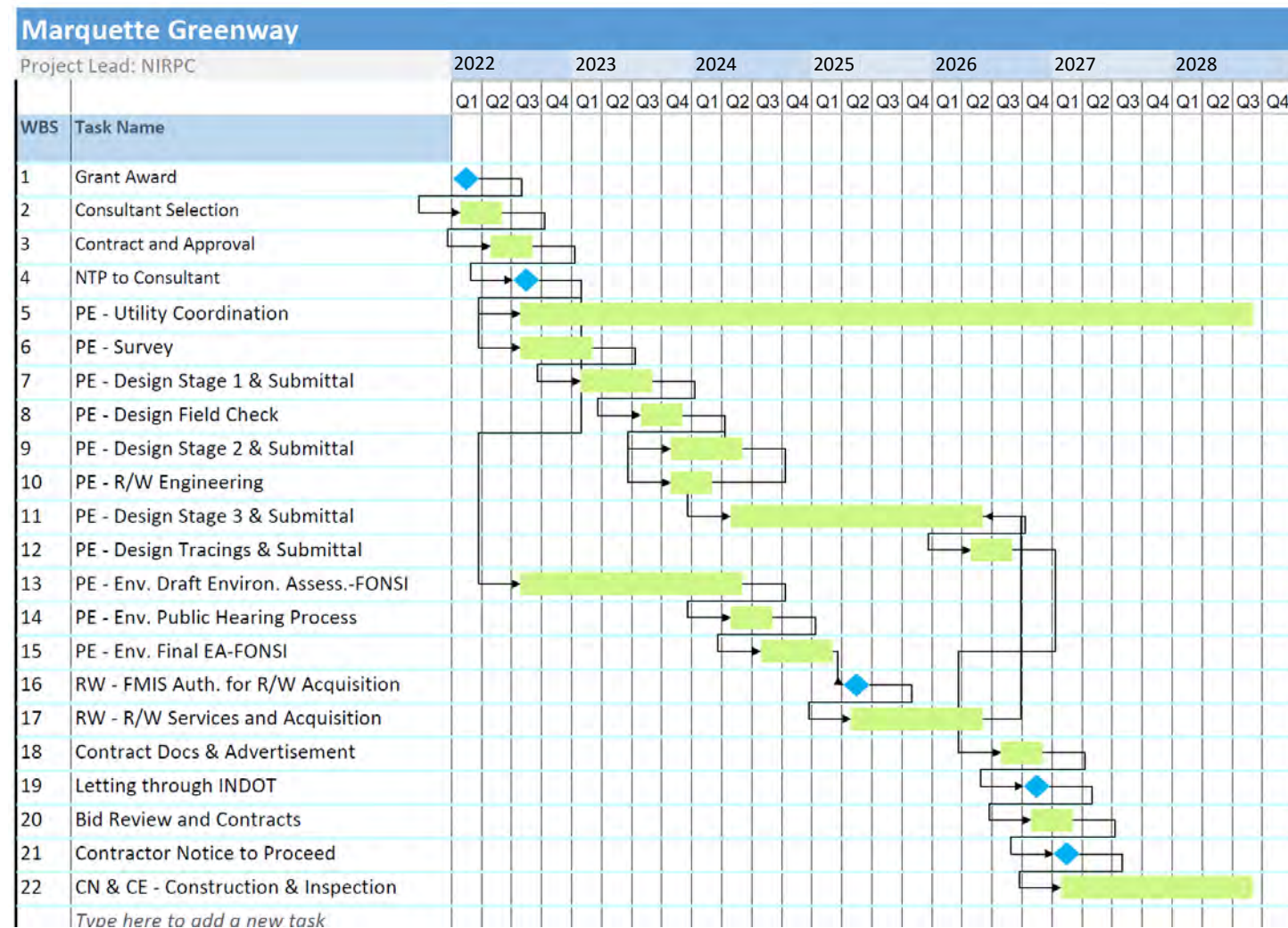
- Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure projects create 8–12 jobs per \$1 million of spending. Road infrastructure projects create 7 jobs per \$1 million of expenditures (Garrett-Peltier, 2011).
- A 2018 study of Helena, Montana's trail impact revealed a \$4.3 million annual impact for the town of 31,000 residents. This is just one example out of hundreds from across the nation of trails playing a vital role in the economy.
- Trails increase property values. In southwestern Ohio, the Little Miami Scenic Trail is associated with higher property value in urban, suburban, and rural settings. Up to a mile away from the trail, for every foot closer to the trail, property value increases by about \$7. A home a half mile from the trail would sell for approximately nine percent less than a home adjacent to the trail. In suburban New Castle County, Delaware, homes within 50 meters of bike paths commanded a four percent price premium.
- Americans spend more on bicycling each year than they do on airline travel. Trail-based tourism is a major economic driver in many small communities, supporting local small businesses through annual revenues of millions of dollars per trail in direct consumer spending in many cases.
- The "Trail Towns" initiative along the Great Allegheny Passage promotes businesses aiming to capitalize off the 700,000 annual trips taken along the rural trail corridor between Cumberland, Md., and Pittsburgh, Pa. Direct annual spending by trail users exceeds \$40 million. This economic infusion has enabled a resurgence of many towns that had declined with the loss of mining jobs and the original railroad.
- In Indianapolis, the Monon Trail is the crown jewel of the city's trail system. It has spurred significant business development along its corridor and has been credited with the revitalization of the Broad Ripple Village neighborhood. A 2004 study found that the amenity value of trails was associated with more than \$140 million in increased property values in Marion County, which includes Indianapolis, Carmel, and other communities transformed by the Monon Trail. (Lindsey et. al. (2004)
- The 2017 Indiana Trails Study analyzed eight major corridors in the state. Based on surveys conducted they reported trail users spent an average of \$3,564 per year on trail-related expenditures, with food and beverage being the most purchased items.

Regarding the Marquette Greenway, the reinvestment opportunities relating to jobs, tourism, brownfield redevelopment and new housing are tremendous. The route of the trail cuts right through some of the most economically depressed areas in Northwest Indiana. These areas suffer from historical disinvestment and poverty. The Marquette Greenway promises true opportunity to turn these areas around and help them once again become viable and thriving neighborhoods to live, work and play.

Marquette Greenway Regional Trail, Interstate Connectivity

Sustainability & Impact Continued

Timeline



Regional Youth Sports & Nature Park

Placemaking

Location

Valparaiso, Porter County

Managing Partners

City of Valparaiso

Key Stakeholders

Valparaiso Parks & Recreation, Americans Baseball League, Valparaiso University, Valparaiso Soccer Club, Valparaiso Pop Warner, Valparaiso School Corporation, Valparaiso restaurants and hospitality businesses. The Youth Sports Park would provide facilities for the above member groups to utilize, organize, and grow their memberships by playing on lit, all season, all-weather, high-quality synthetic fields. Hospitality and restaurant businesses would see approximately 300,000 new visitors to Valparaiso annually.

Summary

The City of Valparaiso recently surveyed citizens regarding highest priorities and public investment to improve quality of life and sense of place. New, enhanced, youth sports facilities received an overwhelming response. Shortly after the feedback was received, the City began an extensive property search and identified an ideal location combining nature and sport.

The property will enable Valparaiso to host eight (8) field turf baseball/softball diamonds ranging from Little League to collegiate dimensions, two (2) multi-sport turf fields, and one additional (1) multi-sport turf field that will be all-season utilizing a temporary indoor bubble structure during winter. The number of fields is necessary to attract regional traveling sports leagues and tournaments. The site also allows for an extensive nature trail/walking path showcasing the property's wetlands, mature trees, and natural topography. The Regional Youth Sports and Nature Park will allow residents and visitors of all backgrounds to enjoy the property's features. We are initially estimating the project to require an investment of approximately \$34,000,000.

Given Northwest Indiana's geographic advantage, nearby interstate system, other youth sports complexes nearby, Valparaiso University and Valparaiso's significant history of professional and amateur sports celebrities, this project touches fundamentally on who we are and where we want to go. One need only look at Indianapolis' investment in amateur sports and more recently Westfield, Indiana's investment in youth sports to see the catalytic possibilities for community and regional growth.

The City is also considering a state-of-the-art indoor fieldhouse to pair adjacent to the Park as a Phase II to this investment. The fieldhouse would host basketball, volleyball, gymnastics, and hockey.

READI Funds Requested

\$5,000,000

Current Funding Sources

\$29,000,000 from Local Private Investors and Philanthropists

The Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission and City of Valparaiso are prepared to provide \$29,000,000 in funds against the \$5,000,000 requested.

5.8:1
Match

Matching Funds

The City of Valparaiso anticipates a significant amount of private philanthropic funds as part of the 80% match.

Downtown Valparaiso Target Redevelopment Zone



Regional Youth Sports & Nature Park

Sustainability & Impact Continued

Sustainability Plan

The City of Valparaiso Parks and Recreation Department will be responsible for maintenance of the park and sufficient funds will be allocated for this effort from the City budget. Any new capital investments needed for the park on an ongoing basis would be the responsibility of the Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission.

The City is also exploring the possibility of a third-party operator for the park to assist in the longevity of the park, growing attendance, and maintenance. Any such agreement would have to be to the benefit of the City through a revenue sharing agreement.

Success Metrics

Metrics include number of visitors to the park, field usage efficiency, cash flow for the park from rentals/memberships. If established metrics aren't being met, the City would pivot to an outside operator or selection of a new operator.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

Currently, this project has no Indiana incentives other than federal American Rescue Plan funds distributed by the State of Indiana

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

The Youth Sports Park can create more economic mobility by attracting growth in the area. Valparaiso has a significant stock of affordable housing and a successful school system. We can create a greater equality of opportunity utilizing our strong growth actors such as the Valparaiso Economic Development Commission, Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce, and the City's Redevelopment Commission and Economic Development Department, which should yield greater growth across the socioeconomic spectrum. Creating higher quality of physical places such as this park also creates equality of opportunity in sport. This also enables their abilities to be successful in other arenas.

Increase Population Growth

A number of Northwest Indiana communities possess a quality of life advantage. Doubling-down on this advantage will significantly help attract more people and talent. Indiana already holds a number of residential and business advantages over the adjacent states - driving more tourism, more visits, and more familiarity with Indiana as a place to live will only result in more businesses following the migration of talent.

Timeline

Valparaiso will control the land for the Youth Sports Park by the end of the year. The sooner we control the land, the sooner we can begin design work and the sooner we can break ground.

Assuming design work in winter months, we would begin moving earth, installing infrastructure, and building the fields between Q2-Q4 of 2022. Goal is to open the park early spring 2023.

Regional Impact

According to market demographics, 327,000 people live within a 30-minute drive to Valparaiso, 6,500,000 within 90 minutes, and within 180 minutes the population exceeds 20,000,000. The opportunity exists to draw more people from the tri-state area into Northwest Indiana combining sports tourism, a well-developed cultural core in our downtown, and capitalizing with the nearby Indiana Dunes National Park (the drive-time between the Sports Park and National Park is 17 minutes).

Conventions, Sports & Leisure International (CSL) estimates the Valparaiso Youth Park will see annual attendance of 300,000 people by Year 3 of the Park's operations based on market analysis and the park's offerings. The opportunity to bring more visitors from Illinois and Michigan specifically is economically valuable to all Northwest Indiana communities, especially those located along I-65, US-30, IN-49, I-90, and I-94.

Additionally, while a sports complex currently exists in Crown Point, we believe that marketing both locations could attract even larger tournaments to the area. Recently, the City of Kokomo and Westfield partnered to leverage Kokomo's new facility to co-brand the locations for additional tournaments. This same partnership would be a possibility and one Valparaiso would like to explore to the benefit of both communities and counties.

Rural Impact

Communities along the major thoroughfares mentioned above would see more visitors and money spent in their towns. Also, we believe more visitors will result in additional job and population growth that will spread to other communities.

Long Term Investment

The project's location is along a major travel corridor (IN-49) with limited surrounding development currently. This eastern corridor has tremendous potential given its connection to I-90 and I-94. Successful and strategic development here would unlock hundreds of millions of real estate and construction opportunities. This quality of life feature would also attract significant residential interest in the surrounding area.

The State of Indiana has placed a premium on talent attraction and quality of life measures. Investing in communities that understand the importance of place-making and growing its population are significant to long term investment. The policies in the City of Chicago and State of Illinois have made the decision easier than ever to move businesses and families to Northwest Indiana. Continued quality of life investments like this park coupled with friendly tax rates and logistical/transportation options are the greatest incentives to continued long-term growth in this city and region.

Ivanhoe South Community Development & Education Initiative

Location

Gary, Lake County, IN

Managing Partners

Shirley Heinz Land Trust

Key Stakeholders

- Local residents – Access to green space, community programming, and walkability improves quality of life and creates desirable communities to live and work.
- Impoverished communities – Greenspace and nature based programming that is free and accessible to all.
- People of Color – Greenspace and nature-based programming that is inclusive and equitable to people of color who have been historically underserved by, and underrepresented in the conservation community.
- Local organizations and institutions – Community activated greenspace to facilitate programming for non-profits, schools, clubs, churches, etc.
- West Side Leadership Academy, Purdue Northwest, Indiana University Northwest – Outdoor living laboratory for nature-based educational programming and research opportunities.
- City of Gary – Public greenspace and green infrastructure managed by a local non-profit.
- Residents within the Calumet Heritage Area – Ecological, historical, and cultural significance to the development and management of the Calumet region as a National Heritage Area.
- Federal partners working on Grand Calumet River Area of Concern – Restoration and preservation of dune and swale habitat is a key element to the Grand Calumet River Area of Concern Remedial Action Plan.
- Northwest Indiana residents – Managed natural areas help improve quality of life and sense of place, protect natural resources, improve air quality, improve water quality, improve wildlife habitat, and enhance climate resiliency.

Summary

Ivanhoe South Nature Preserve (Ivanhoe South), owned and managed by Shirley Heinz Land Trust, protects 50 acres of remnant, globally rare dune and swale habitat in Gary, Indiana. Restoration work has greatly improved ecological conditions through invasive species removal, canopy thinning, and the removal of large amounts of trash and debris.

The City of Gary's history, culture, and ecology are unique and there are many existing assets within the city, such as Ivanhoe South, that are currently under-utilized. Utilizing both the rich cultural heritage and the unique ecological spaces within the city will help to enhance quality of life for residents by building a deep sense of community, pride, and appreciation.

The Field Museum in Chicago led an extensive quality of life assessment for residents of the West Gary community. Through this assessment invaluable feedback was solicited from residents and community stakeholders on current conditions and needs within the West Gary community. Information gathered from this exercise has been used to inform decision-making; strengthen partnerships with the City of Gary, Gary residents, community leaders, and local non-profit organizations.

Below is a summary of the feedback relating to Ivanhoe South that was received through the community engagement process:

- Lack of knowledge that Ivanhoe South exists, or that it is accessible to the public
- Perception of crime, or other undesirable behavior in natural areas
- Perceived threats from wildlife, most commonly snakes, coyotes, spiders, and ticks
- Fear from lack of visibility, due to brush, trees, tall vegetation, and lack of illumination
- Physical inability to hike the trails, or a perception thereof

Our vision for Ivanhoe South is to provide residents, families, institutions, organizations, and students with exceptional access to a remnant dune and swale site of high ecological integrity. We seek funding for access amenities that will make possible opportunities for safe, enjoyable, and educational experiences whether visiting Ivanhoe South independently, or as a part of special programming implemented by Shirley Heinz and/or community partners.

The project will establish improved access to the preserve, create a more welcoming and inclusive environment, improve safety conditions (and the perception of safety), and add amenities that accommodate group programming. Specifically, the proposed activities will:

- Install a sidewalk to improve walkability from West Side Leadership Academy and neighborhoods south of 9th Avenue.
- Install vehicle barriers and lighting to improve safety and protection of resources.
- Install boardwalks with handrails to safely cross the wetland swales along the trail loop.
- Expand the parking area to facilitate visitation and programming.
- Expand the size of the preserve with acquisition of adjacent parcels.
- Create greenspace, amenities, and low impact structures to facilitate gathering space and community programming.
- Create culturally relevant programming for residents, families, and students through an inclusive process with local stakeholders.

Ivanhoe South Community Development & Education Initiative

READI Funds Requested

\$1,040,000

Current Funding Sources

\$208,000 from private donors

1:5
Match

Matching Funds

We do not currently have matching funds restricted for this project. As a non-profit, any matching funds would need to be approved and restricted by the organization's Board of Directors. Shirley Heinze can conduct fundraising, match challenges, donor appeals, and provide in kind contributions by staff and volunteers. However, the current proposed budget for this project is beyond what is within Shirley Heinze Land Trust's capacity to feasibly match 1:1.

Any matching funds provided would be in kind or private/philanthropic in nature. We do not have any federal or state funds allocated towards this project.

Success Metrics

Portions of the proposed project can be measured quantifiably by measuring numbers of:

- Additional acres preserved
- Structures removed
- Parking spots added
- Linear feet of barrier installed
- Linear feet of boardwalk installed/ trail improved
- Number of signs added
- Square footage of added facilities
- Number of programs implemented
- Number of lights installed
- Number of people engaged

In addition, the organization would solicit feedback from partners, residents, and other stakeholders. The trailhead at Ivanhoe South has a sign in box that helps to track visitation and solicit comments from visitors. The organization would also work with partners to be inclusive to the community with project implementation, programming, and soliciting feedback regarding valued community use of the space. Project implementation will also be documented by photographs and record keeping.

Sustainability Plan

Shirley Heinze Land Trust is currently celebrating 40 years of operation. The organization started as an all-volunteer organization in 1981 with a \$30,000 donation. Today it has nine permanent staff members and manages 2,700 acres of natural areas across four counties. We are accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. Accreditation is a rigorous evaluation process that ensures we have sound financial and operation practices to ensure we meet national land trust standards of excellence, uphold public trust, and all of our conservation efforts are permanent. Shirley Heinze Land Trust is currently implementing a 4 year strategic plan (2020-2023). The vision for this strategic plan is "to connect individuals and communities to nature and build understanding and support for conservation". The four main strategies that help to realize this vision include:

- Enhance the impact of our conservation areas
- Engage partners to foster and advance shared conservation goals
- Create programming that connects people with nature
- Build organizational capacity

Ivanhoe South Community Development & Education Initiative

Sustainability & Impact Continued

This current plan succeeds a 2016-2019 strategic plan that focused mostly on increasing organizational capacity by growing financial strength, organizational strength, programming, and partnerships. The current plan also precedes another strategic plan that the board will begin developing in 2023 to be implemented beginning in 2024. Many of the elements of the proposed Ivanhoe South project support goals within the current strategic plan which focuses on engagement and outreach with the communities we serve, engaging people with the work we do, and implementing programming that is relevant and valued by the surrounding communities.

In addition to our strategic plans, reputation, and accreditation status, Shirley Heinze also maintains and updates management plans for each property that we own and manage. Our management plan for Ivanhoe South outlines strategies and goals for restoration, protection, public access, community engagement, and programming. Management plans are updated, at minimum, every 5 years.

Regional Impact

The proposed enhancements to Ivanhoe South Nature Preserve will improve quality of life and sense of place for citizens in and around the City of Gary. Gary has great potential for economic growth. At nearly 50 square miles, it is the third largest city in the state, however, it is 9th largest in terms of population density. Accessible greenspace supports attractive communities for people to live, work, and establish businesses.

Ivanhoe South preserves rare dune and swale habitat is found only in the Northwest Indiana region. Therefore, it is an important part of Indiana’s geological and ecological history. Enhancement of public access amenities and educational programming on the site facilitates a knowledge of our natural history and a pride of place. Additionally, access to green space in developed communities provides opportunity for residents to recreate outdoors and develop a lasting love of nature. Outdoor spaces also provide a living laboratory for our youth to learn about biology, ecology, geology, and other STEM fields.

Increase Population Growth

Access to nature and nature-based programming helps create desirable communities for people to work and live. Desirable communities can help to attract and retain talent in the state.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

Lack of postsecondary education and attainment of advanced STEM degrees by Hoosiers can be a barrier to economic growth. Ivanhoe South Nature Preserve is approximately 0.5 miles from West Side Leadership Academy, the City of Gary’s only public high school. The site is also less than 5 miles from Purdue University Northwest Hammond campus and approximately 6 miles from Indiana University Northwest. Improved walkability, accessibility, and amenities to facilitate gathering space help support nature based educational programming and research opportunities for students. These types of nature based learning opportunities can help support continued education in STEM fields. Increases in postsecondary education and STEM degrees help provide a talented workforce that attracts technology based and innovative industries.

Long Term Investment

Greenspace in developed areas create desirable communities to live, work and play in and offer opportunities for outdoor recreation and community programming. This space helps develop a pride and loyalty to our communities. All Shirley Heinze Land Trust nature preserves are protected in perpetuity. Many sites offer some public access and nature based programming. Therefore, Ivanhoe South and places like it can provide benefits to communities for generations of families. Northwest Indiana has many assets such as biodiversity, natural resources, outdoor recreation, ecotourism, agritourism, history, and culture. Many of these assets are found close to residential communities, industries, and transportation. Utilization of these assets that already exist in Northwest Indiana will help attract and keep future business, industry, and talent that desire, value, and expect these assets and amenities.

Timeline

Action Items	Potential Start	Targeted End	Budget
Sidewalk Connection to Westside Leadership Academy	Jan-22	Dec-23	250,000
Boardwalk/ADA Trail	Jan-22	Dec-23	100,000
Roadside Safety Barriers	Jan-22	Dec-23	30,000
Interpretive Signage	Jan-22	Dec-23	5,000
Acquisition of House (neighbor with severe flooding issues)	Jan-22	Jul-22	75,000
Demolition of Acquired House	Aug-22	Sep-22	20,000
Pavilion and Comfort Station (Restroom Facility)	Jan-22	Dec-23	200,000
Parking Lot Improvements	Jan-22	Dec-23	100,000
Parking Area Lighting	Jan-22	Dec-23	10,000
Maintenance Endowment Fund	Jan-23	Dec-23	250,000
		Total:	1,040,000

Westport on the Marquette Greenway Trail

Location

Burns Harbor, Porter County

Managing Partners

Burns Harbor Redevelopment Commission

Key Stakeholders

The Westport Project is a public-private partnership between the Town of Burns Harbor, project owner, and Holladay Properties, master developer. The two parties have jointly planned the development site and will bond finance the Westport Project together. Burns Harbor will benefit from the creation of the Marquette Greenway trailhead and a “town center” which the community lacks, while Holladay Property will receive financial incentivization to design, build and manage the luxury apartment property and community center. Burns Harbor residents are key stakeholders and engage in this process through workshops and monthly public meetings. Additional partners in support of this project include the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, the National Park Service, Indiana Dunes Tourism, Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority, Northwest Indiana Forum, City of Portage, bp, Duneland Chamber of Commerce and Indiana Dunes Learning Center. Major funders of the three-mile Marquette Greenway and trail corridor are the Indiana Department of Natural Resources including the Lake Michigan Coastal Program, Indiana Department of Transportation, Cleveland Cliffs and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The Indiana Department of Environmental Management is underwriting an electric vehicle station.

Summary

Through public-private partnerships, the Town of Burns Harbor and Holladay Properties propose a \$49.2 million mixed-use development called the Westport on the Marquette Greenway (“Westport Project”) in order to create a downtown that currently does not exist. The Burns Harbor Comprehensive Plan Placemaking 2020 called for the creation of a town center for necessitating economic growth and improving quality of life. In 2018, the Town purchased 28 acres of vacant land, assembling 32 acres for master development at a cost of \$250,000. The following year, the Burns Harbor Redevelopment Commission solicited master developers for the Westport Project and selected Holladay Properties to serve in this role. Burns Harbor and Holladay Properties engaged key stakeholders and the public in planning process that led to the approved Westport Planned Unit Development concept, “Westport on the Marquette Greenway.”

The Westport Project consists of 178 mixed-unit development that will include 40 owner-occupied townhomes, 138 luxury apartment units, a 22,878sf community center with municipal office building, 5,832sf of commercial space, Marquette Greenway trailhead, civic plazas, electric vehicle charging stations, parking and greenspace. Key partners on Westport are the Town of Burns Harbor, Holladay Properties, the National Park Service, Indiana Dunes Tourism, local residents, industry and businesses. Other project supporters include the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority, Northwest Indiana Forum, City of Portage, Cleveland Cliffs, bp, Duneland Chamber of Commerce and Indiana Dunes Learning Center.

The Westport Project fits into the “**IGNITE the Region**” strategy for economic transformation by fueling the placemaking and infrastructure goals, specifically by adding housing, trails and an array of quality-of-place amenities needed to attract talent and private investment, now and over the long term. This Project will help meet the demand for apartments and townhomes and grow the Town’s population by 512 persons, a 27% increase over the 2010 census. Westport will generate 70 construction jobs earning an average of wage of \$23.93 and a handful of ongoing employment at a comparable wage. As an urban infill development, this Project mitigates urban sprawl into rural communities. While the Town pursues this Project for achieving its local vision of sustainable growth, the public-private partnership ensures that both local and regional strategic objectives align and can be met.

To that end, the Westport Project seeks \$1 million in READI funding to support \$48.2 million in local, state and private investment committed for its construction and long-term operations and maintenance. READI funding represents 2% of the Project cost with 98% coming from other sources. Matching funds for the Westport Project are primarily private and public funds. Holladay Properties is committing \$35 million in private investment while Burns Harbor is pledging \$13.1 million of which \$8 million will be derived from bond financing. Other funders contributing a total of \$217,000 include the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, IDNR Lake Michigan Coastal Program and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management thereby aligning to several State of Indiana economic development initiatives.

Sustainability of the Westport Project is paramount, and partnerships are integral to its success. The quality of this development will be measured by transformation in quality-of-place, both perceived and experienced as a high quality-of-life in Burns Harbor and the Northwest Indiana region.

Westport on the Marquette Greenway Trail

READI Funds Requested

\$1,000,000

Current Funding Sources

\$43,000,000 from private and public funds

43:1
Match

Matching Funds

The total cost of the Westport Project is \$49.3 million. Of that amount, Burns Harbor is requesting \$1.0 million in READI funds or 2% of project costs. Burns Harbor and Holladay Properties will provide \$43.3 million in local and private funds to cover 98% of the project costs. Additionally, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Recreational Trail Program and Lake Michigan Coastal Program grants along with the Indiana Department of Environmental Management will contribute \$217,000 or 0.4% toward trail construction, sustainability planning of the Marquette Greenway corridor and an electric vehicle station respectively.

Matching funds for the Westport Project are primarily private and public funds. Holladay Properties is committing \$35 million in private investment while Burns Harbor is pledging \$13.1 million in Town general funds and Redevelopment Commission tax-increment funds of \$8 million will be derived from bond financing. The IDNR Recreational Trails Program will provide \$168,000 towards Marquette Greenway construction, while the Lake Michigan Coastal Program will fund \$40,000 for the long-term trail & corridor plan. The Indiana Department of Environmental Management will fund \$9,000 from the Volkswagen Diesel Emissions Environmental Mitigation Trust for the purchase and installation of an electric vehicle station.

Increase Population Growth

The Westport Project consists of 178 residential units, 138 apartments and 40 townhomes with 1-3 bedrooms offerings. Based on averaging total unit housing between 2-4 persons, the population growth of Burns Harbor is an estimated 512 persons or 27% increase from the current population of 1,922 to 2,434 residents after all residential construction.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

The development is set to attract key industry clusters which are also a focus of the Indiana Economic Development Corporation in an effort to diversify the NWI economy in tandem with the continuation of legacy industries: refining and steel production.

Sustainability & Impact

Regional Impact

The Westport Project will positively impact the region by contributing to the “IGNITE the Region” placemaking and infrastructure goals to fuel economic development. Westport will create a new “town center” anchored by the Marquette Greenway, the first mixed-use development on the regional trail system, and a 22,878sf community center. This Project focuses on major quality-of-life assets being built that will include luxury apartments, townhomes, trailhead, commercial spaces, civic plazas, community center for sports and event rentals, town hall, greenspace and electric vehicle charging stations. These assets will be sustained through robust programming of public arts, farmer’s market, community events, indoor and outdoor sports, festivals, local businesses, brand & marketing and partnerships. Long-term property and facilities management will be the responsibility of both public and private interests. For infrastructure, the Westport Project constructs a half mile of the three miles required to complete the Marquette Greenway east-west connector gap between the Indiana Dunes National Park. The Town has secured funding for the balance of the trail and successfully completed one mile through the Next Level Trails program this year. Both Westport’s placemaking & infrastructure assets will benefit the region.

Rural Impact

Located in northern Porter County, the Westport Project represents 32 acres of infill development that will benefit rural communities by preventing urban sprawl and enhancing quality of life. Designed for minimal environmental impact, the Westport Project will utilize LEED-certified construction for new buildings; leverage existing public and private utilities and infrastructure within the Lake Michigan watershed, the I80/94 & US 12/20 corridors and commuter rail lines; and create core trail, recreation and leisure amenities that will attract and connect residents, visitors and businesses to the Indiana Dunes today, and rural communities over time.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

The Westport Project will address placemaking and infrastructure gaps that inhibit economic development. Burns Harbor and Holladay Properties commissioned a housing study in 2019, that found Northwest Indiana lacks the apartment and townhome inventory to meet the demands of renters and homebuyers. Westport will add 178 housing units as urban infill development. The full construction of the Marquette Greenway will add 3 miles of railway, generating new public access and regional connectivity to area beaches, waterways, parklands, transit stops and recreational, retail and commercial corridors.

Westport on the Marquette Greenway Trail

Sustainability & Impact Continued

Success Metrics

The Westport Project will be measured on the following key indicators and efficacy approach. Project partners will review Westport’s monthly project progress and modify development, investment, marketing and other strategies and tactics to meet or exceed desired results of the first phase of the Project.

1. Population Growth – Collect and measure renter and homeowner occupancy data sources annually and periodically adjust based on US Census estimates.
2. Job Creation/Retention – Collect and measure new or expanding business data annually and periodically adjust based on Town plans, other incentivization strategies and/or business reporting requirements.
3. Average Wages – Collect and measure new and/or expanding business data and periodically adjust based on US Labor Wages data.
4. Commercial Square Footage Growth – Collect and measure new and/or expanded business data and periodically adjust by regional and commercial real estate brokerage.
5. Assessed Valuation – Periodically review Porter County Auditor reports.
6. Tax Increment Generated – Periodically review Porter County Auditor reports.
7. Additional Private Investment for Phase 2 – Track new and/or expanding partnership investments within the Westport Allocation Area.
8. Number of Community Center Users/Members – Periodically review the number of monthly users/members tracked by the Town.
9. Number of Trail Users – Annually survey the number of Marquette Greenway users in coordination with the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission staff and volunteers.
10. Electric Vehicle Charging Usage – Periodically review EV usage tracked by the charging station vendor.

Long Term Investment

The Westport Project established a tax increment finance district to encourage additional long-term investment. Additionally, this Project consists of two phases. This funding request will support Phase I construction. The Phase II plan calls for future mixed-use development of 4 acres of vacant land facing SR149. Westport will serve as both a downtown and a destination, therefore, Burns Harbor and the region will benefit over the long-term. By investing in housing and trails, Burns Harbor hopes to attract new private investment in redeveloping nearly 500 acres of vacant land and brownfield sites in town.

Sustainability Plan

The pillars for sustainability in the Westport Project are partnerships, best practices and social connections. The financial investments in the Project will be protected by various long-term operations and maintenance plans that include but are not limited to property management, facility management, ecological management, deed restrictions, homeowner associations and user fees. The Marquette Greenway will be dedicated as a recreational trail in perpetuity. The Westport Project will build ADA and LEED certified buildings and facilities, include electric vehicle charging stations, utilize green infrastructure, apply stormwater management and manage high quality habitat areas. Burns Harbor received an Indiana Department of Natural Resources’ Lake Michigan Coastal Program grant to create a long-term operations and maintenance plan for the Marquette Greenway trail and corridor. The Westport Project area is historically significant to the Town as the site of its founding and first community center. Westport will be creating a central, pedestrian friendly gathering space for residents, visitors, trail users and businesses to safely come together, indoors and outside. The intentional design of Westport’s multi-mobility not only makes it a livable center but a vibrant regional destination on the Marquette Greenway and to the Indiana Dunes National Park.

Timeline

		2021				
Task Description		September	October	November	December	January
1.0	Submit Grant Application					
1.1	Notice of Award					
1.2	Bond Financing					
2.0	Bidding					
2.1	Permitting					
2.2	Construction - Start					
2.3	Construction - Completion					

		2022											
Task Description		February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	
1.0	Submit Grant Application												
1.1	Notice of Award												
1.2	Bond Financing												
2.0	Bidding												
2.1	Permitting												
2.2	Construction - Start												
2.3	Construction - Completion												

Reimagining Michigan City-Prison Relocation Study

Placemaking

Location

Michigan City, La Porte County

Managing Partners

Michigan City Redevelopment Commission and City of Michigan City

Key Stakeholders

The greater community of Northwest Indiana would benefit from this project. If we could realign these properties, we would be able to attract more talent, investment and opportunity for those already living in the area.

Summary

The Indiana State Prison is located less than a mile from the shore of Lake Michigan and South Shore Commuter Rail Line. This is close proximity to major resident and visitor assets in Michigan City. This project is a comprehensive study of moving the prison out of downtown Michigan City and reimagining that land use for recreation, retail, restaurant and mixed-used space. The prison is also proximal to the NIPSCO Michigan City coal fire generation facility which is scheduled to be shuttered and demolished by 2028. Reimagining the lakefront use in this study and anticipated plan would create an opportunity for Northwest Indiana including enhancing and tying together the Transit Development Districts of the commuter rail line and reclamation of the lakefront called out by the Marquette Plan.

READI Funds Requested

\$350,000

Current Funding Sources

\$100,000

Matching Funds

Match dollars would come from the Michigan City Redevelopment Commission.

1:3
Match

Sustainability & Impact

Long Term Investment

This project could truly reimagine Michigan City making it the next hot suburb of Chicago. The commuter rail service transports to downtown Chicago from Michigan City and vice versa in about an hour.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

Attracting talent is critical to all aspects of economic development. Moving the prison will elevate the opportunity to attract talent to one of our beautiful lakefront communities.

Increase Population Growth

The goals of this application are to grow talent, attract investment and raise per capita income. Adding more opportunity for housing development in the transit development districts as well as excellent proximity to Lake Michigan will help us to attract talent and grow the economy of Northwest Indiana.

Rural Impact

This project will offer residents of rural communities improved access to the amenities of the lakefront and downtown Michigan City.

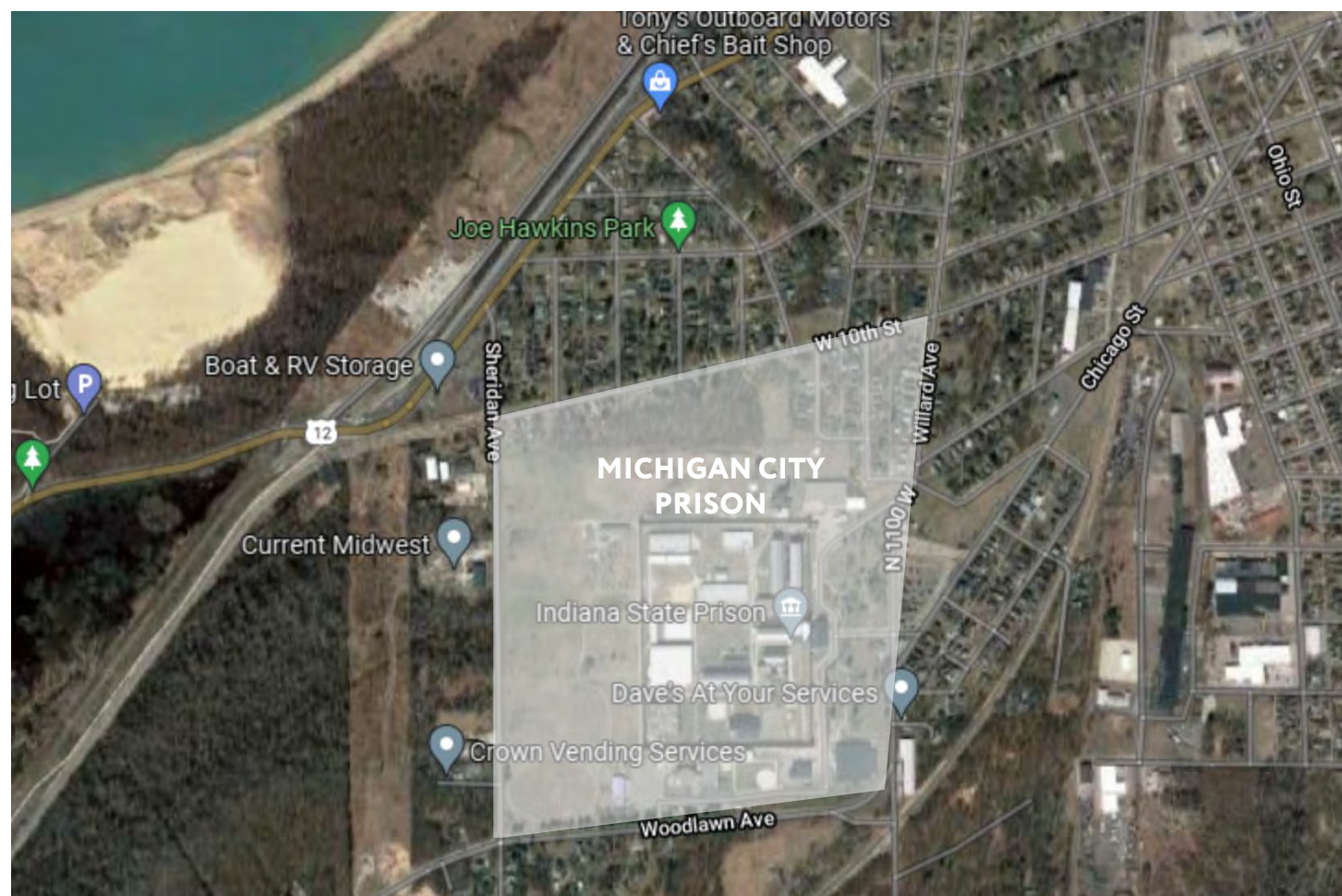
Reimagining Michigan City-Prison Relocation Study

Sustainability & Impact Continued

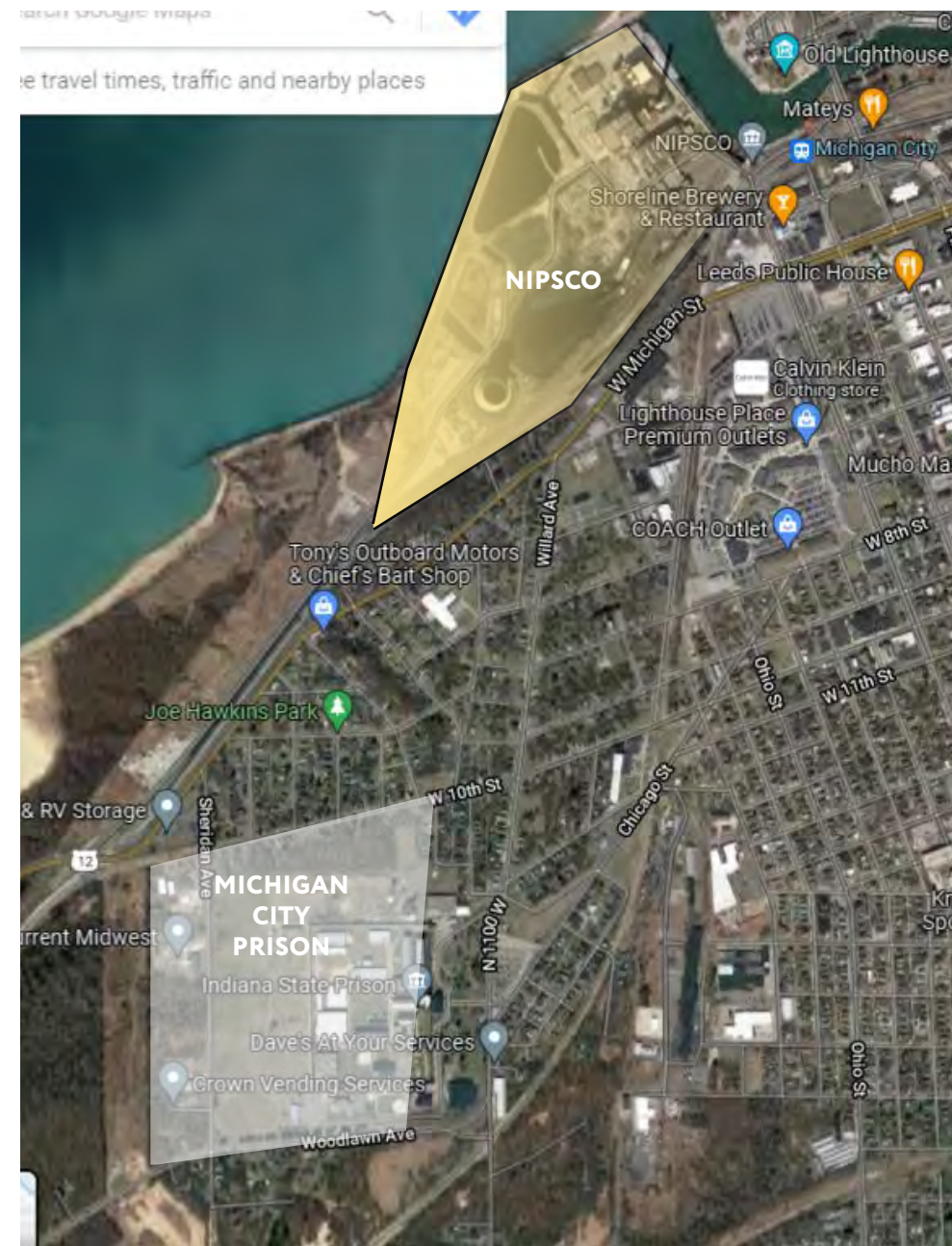
Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

Studying relocation of the prison is the first step in igniting the potential of Michigan City. The prison truly is a barrier to economic growth itself.

Current Michigan City Prison



Proximity to NIPSCO Opportunity



Region Roots Local Farm & Food Hub Distribution and Value-Chain Support

Location

All Seven Counties

Managing Partners

Northwest Indiana Food Council

Key Stakeholders / Benefit Defined

- Rural farmers
- Urban farmers
- Restaurant owners
- Institutional wholesale buyers
- Artisanal producers
- USDA - As the grantor of the Local Food Promotion Program grant that funds the value chain coordination work, they have an outstanding success story to report on the efficacy of value chain coordination and investment in local food systems
- Purdue and Indiana University- As partners and facilitators of the USDA LFPP grant that funded the value chain coordination that supports Region Roots, these state universities have an outstanding success story to report on the efficacy of value chain coordination and investment in local food systems
- Indiana Grown- As grantor of Food Council Development Grant, they have an outstanding success story to report on the marketing and communications of Region Roots
- Chicago Regional Food System Fund - As grantor of 2021 Resilience grant, they have a vested interest in the long term resilience of regional food systems

Summary

Since launching in spring of 2021 Region Roots Local Farm and Food Hub has delivered more than \$16,000 of local fruits and vegetables to NWI businesses. Using an innovative business model that combines a 24/7 online storefront with reliable weekly deliveries, wholesale local food sourcing in NWI is more convenient than ever before. Region Roots is supplied almost exclusively by rural farmers from Lake, Porter, La Porter, Newton, Jasper, Starke, and Pulaski counties. The rapid success of Region Roots is proof of strong market demand for fresh, local food in NWI.

Region Roots Local Farm and Food Hub is operated by the NWI Food Council (NWIFC) and is the first revenue-generating initiative in the non-profit's history. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines a food hub as a "business or organization that actively manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified food products to multiple buyers from multiple producers, primarily local and regional producers, to strengthen the ability of these producers to satisfy local and regional wholesale, retail, and institutional demand." Region Roots oversees the value chain coordination of the entire NWI food system to create a sustainable, thriving and regenerative food system for all in NWI.

Region Roots aggregates fresh fruit and vegetables grown in rural areas and transports produce for sale in urban and suburban restaurants and farmers markets. Buyers reap the benefits of economies of scale such as lower cost and efficient logistics, while producers gain access to markets usually out of reach for small scale farms. Region Roots also provides technical expertise and business planning to remove or lower barriers for farm entrepreneurs. By fostering long term economic viability for rural farmers and increasing food access for urban and suburban communities, Region Roots is supporting vibrant and healthy lives for everyone in the region.

Independently owned restaurants are Region Roots' first wave of wholesale buyers. Not only does this create a flow of money from urban and suburban businesses to rural businesses, it keeps Indiana dollars in Indiana. In future years Region Roots will target large institutional buyers such as schools and hospitals to further support local sourcing and spending.

To continue to grow, Region Roots requires investment in hard and soft infrastructure that facilitates cold-chain food storage. In its first year, Region Roots is operating on a just-in-time model which means food is picked up and delivered on the same day. Cold-chain storage will increase Region Roots' capacity for pickups and deliveries, and will create opportunities for meat producers who often freeze their product to ensure food safety. In addition to hard infrastructure, Region Roots' strategic growth will require human capital to plan, execute and navigate this high-potential market.

Region Roots Local Farm & Food Hub Distribution and Value-Chain Support

READI Funds Requested

\$1,700,000

Current Funding Sources

\$166,000

Matching Funds

68% of matching funds are private from the Chicago Regional Food System Fund.

**1:10
Match**

Sustainability & Impact

Long Term Investment

For many years, private Indiana citizens have been quietly channeling money into local food systems hoping for proof of concept that local food systems can be shaped to improve Indiana quality of life, and that improving quality of life leads to financial returns. While only in its first year, Region Roots is already proving that focused efforts can have a marked impact on local food systems. As Region Roots grows, it will collect data across many years and will be well-positioned to provide evidence that quality of life is improving, and that financial returns follow increased quality of life. Once proof of concept is established, institutional and philanthropic donors will be attracted to Region Roots as a low-risk success story with immense long term potential.

Outside of private investment, the work of the NWI Food Council and Region Roots are frequently compatible with USDA and other federal grants. In order to obtain these grants, certain matching requirements must be met. READI investment would provide the proper match to compete for federal grants that would fund Region Roots and can also be re-granted to other regional initiatives.

Regional Impact

NWI is home to more than 200 farmers producing healthy, fresh foods while also supporting emergency food assistance efforts that combat food insecurity. During the pandemic major food shortages exposed the vulnerabilities in a supply chain that was overly reliant on importing food from out of state. In response to shortages, smallscale farmers quickly adapted their businesses to fill supply gaps. Intending to support innovative farmers' in this challenging moment, the NWIFC fast tracked its food hub initiative to create a centralized tool to coordinate aggregation. Region Roots became operational in 2021 and is currently providing targeted support for food entrepreneurs who have the potential to insulate the region from future food shortages and redress chronic food insecurity in NWI.

Resilient local food systems provide security for communities during trying times and promote local culture during times of calm. Region Roots streamlines the process for restaurants who want to source ingredients locally. This is an important step forward for developing NWI's farm-to-fork initiative.

In addition to supplying the region with fresh, healthy food, Region Roots supports farmers and other food entrepreneurs in creating long-term, profitable business plans. Region Roots lowers barriers to entry and growth by providing wholesale market access, access to affordable equipment, access to technical expertise and mentorship, and access to business planning expertise. Region Roots aims to shorten a new business's path to profitability and make farming a financially secure occupation.

Through targeted recruitment and networking, Region Roots seeks to create entrepreneurship opportunities for socially disadvantaged, beginning, limited resource, and veteran farmers. With funding for additional value chain coordinators (VCC), including a BIPOC-focused VCC, Region Roots will help historically underserved farmers navigate business planning and growth. Region Roots will promote innovation and revitalization/redevelopment of existing vacant, blighted or underutilized assets, such as turning urban brownfields into green farm spaces. Long-term, large scale investments in urban food systems have the potential to convert vacant buildings into indoor farming facilities that would curb the effects of seasonality and weather events like flooding and frost.

Rural Impact

Region Roots Local Farm and Food Hub is already creating pathways for wealth to flow from urban and suburban areas to rural areas by connecting farmers with wholesale buyers. Region Roots is committed to developing the wholesale buying market as a way to direct capital toward rural farmers and rural communities. By increasing the wealth of small and mid-sized farmers, investment will cascade throughout rural communities, improving quality of life and quality of place.

By supporting farmers and lowering their barriers to growth, Region Roots makes rural farming more profitable. This creates opportunities to hire additional labor which will create rural jobs. Additionally, youth will be less likely to move to urban areas for work if they are able to make a living wage in their hometowns.

Region Roots Local Farm & Food Hub Distribution and Value-Chain Support

Sustainability & Impact Continued

Success Metrics

Quantitative Metrics

- Quantity of farmers
- Quantity of wholesale buyers
- Quantity products sold through hub
- Quantity of historically underserved farmers/producers
- Annual sales per farm
- Number of farmers 1st year of farming
- Number of farmers 2-3rd year of farming
- Number of farmers in 4-6 year of farming
- Number of farmers in 7-10 year of farming
- Number of farmers in 11+ year of farming

Qualitative Metrics

- Number of wholesale buyers who purchased local for the first time through Region Roots
- Number of farmers who report increased sales opportunities through Region Roots
- Number of farmers who report increased efficiency through Region Roots

Metrics and data collection methods will be evaluated regularly based on response rate. Methods used and wording of questions will evolve over time as Region Roots further defines data collection objections.

Increase Population Growth

By increasing the profitability and viability of small scale farming, Region Roots Local Farm and Food hub makes professional farming more attractive to current and potential residents in rural communities. This will make families more likely to move to rural communities, and encourage existing farm families to grow due to increased financial security.

By streamlining local food sourcing for restaurants, Region Roots Local Farm and Food Hub is a cornerstone of farm-to-fork dining in NWI. This cultural amenity is attractive for the big city dwellers considering a move to NWI. Lower taxes and a lower cost of living are already very attractive features of NWI. Farm-to-fork dining in NWI offers big city cultural amenities at NWI prices.

Military Attraction / INVet Involvement

Yes, Region Roots is actively recruiting historically underserved farmers including military veterans. We are recruiting within the NWIFC's existing network within NWI by word of mouth, social media postings, and informational webinars.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

Northwest Indiana's farmers who want to grow their business often face the following barriers: access to wholesale markets, access to affordable equipment, access to technical expertise and mentorship, and access to business planning expertise. Lowering these barriers is central to Region Roots Local Farm and Food Hub's mission to make farming a viable and profitable profession. Food hubs are defined by the USDA as a "business or organization that actively manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified food products to multiple buyers from multiple producers, primarily local and regional producers, to strengthen the ability of these producers to satisfy local and regional wholesale, retail, and institutional demand." In addition to meeting the USDA's criteria of food hub operations, Region Roots Local Farm and Food Hub provides tailored support to farmers based on their specific needs.

Region Roots Local Farm and Food Hub lowers regional farmer's barriers to growth in the following ways:

Access to wholesale markets: Region Roots Local Farm and Food Hub has recruited food buyers such as restaurants, urban farmers markets, and other institutional buyers that rural farmers typically don't have access to. Region Roots facilitates the aggregation and delivery so that buyers can purchase from multiple farmers through a single transaction and delivery. This makes local food buying easier and more efficient for the institutional buyers, and provides economic opportunity typically unavailable to rural farmers.

Access to affordable equipment: Other than the cost of land, farmers often cite equipment and labor as their largest operating expenses. Region Root's parent non-profit, the NWI Food Council, operates a farm tool library which provides low-cost access to specialized farm equipment. Access to specialized tools allows farms to reduce the amount of labor needed for planting and harvesting. Affordable access to specialized equipment helps farmers lower their operating costs and increase their efficiency, freeing up time and money that can be used to invest in business growth.

Access to technical expertise and mentorship: Young farmers are often limited in their knowledge of local agriculture and regulations. Region Roots Local Farm and Food Hub is overseen by the NWI Food Council, which has over a decade of combined experience in local food markets. Region Roots connects farmers to the necessary training and certifications, advises on regional regulatory requirements, and makes additional connections as needed. This vast knowledge-sharing helps young farmers reduce business risk and learn from more experienced farmers.

Access to business planning expertise: Farmers often dream of growing their business, but don't know how. Region Roots Local Farm and Food Hub has a full time value chain coordinator (VCC) that serves to connect the dots within the regional food system. The VCC is able to advise on crop efficiency and timing, market saturation of certain products, and market opportunities. By providing long-term, strategic guidance NWI's farms can grow into undersaturated markets where competition is lower.

Region Roots Local Farm & Food Hub Distribution and Value-Chain Support

Sustainability Plan

Region Roots was launched on a shoe-string budget funded by the Chicago Regional Food System Fund's 2021 Resiliency grant and Indiana Grown's Food Council Development grant. The groundwork of Region Roots was made possible through the USDA Local Food Promotion Program grant that has funded the NWIFC's value chain coordinator since 2019.

Region Roots is currently generating revenue and has just under \$100,000 seed funding left to sustain year 1 operations. Revenue is generated as a mark up on food sales, with farmer to farmer sales marked up 10% and farmer to restaurant sales marked up 18%. As Region Roots operations increase in scale and quality, we will continue to reevaluate our pricing structure to optimize farmer returns and provide competitive pricing based on regional demand. To mitigate operational risk, the NWI Food Council has obtained a \$2,000,000 Commercial Protection Insurance Policy to protect the Region Roots operations and employees.

Because Region Roots is focused on making local food affordable and accessible, the business is unlikely to ever be completely financially independent. As a mission based non-profit, this is a reasonable and acceptable business model. Many non-profits achieve financial sustainability without any revenue generation, which puts Region Roots ahead of the curve in terms of financial position. Food is an inelastic good, but local food is subject to elasticity. By recruiting a large cohort of farmers Region Roots is able to create redundancy of inventory that will keep local food prices steady, thus functioning as an inelastic good, which will keep a steady demand and steady cash flow.

Looking toward the future, Region Roots will seek funding and cultivate relationships in both the private and public sectors. For many years, private Indiana citizens have been quietly channeling large sums of money toward local food systems hoping for proof of concept that local food systems can be shaped to improve Indiana quality of life, and that improving quality of life leads to financial returns. While only in its first year, Region Roots is already proving that focused efforts can have a marked impact on local food systems. As Region Roots grows it will collect data across many years and will be well-positioned to provide evidence that quality of life is improving, and that financial returns follow increased quality of life. Once proof of concept is established institutional and philanthropic donors will be attracted to Region Roots as a low-risk success story with immense long term potential.

Outside of private investment, the work of the NWI Food Council and Region Roots are frequently compatible with USDA and other federal grants. In order to obtain these grants, certain matching requirements must be met. READI investment would provide the proper match to compete for federal grants that would fund Region Roots and can also be re-granted to other regional initiatives.

Timeline

Year 1

Q1 2022

- Form Search Committee for Hiring
- Hire and onboard Value Chain Coordinator #1
- Hire and onboard Food Hub Manager
- Begin recruitment and hiring of Executive Director
- Hub Supplier Visits and annual paperwork
- Purchase necessary computers and materials (ongoing throughout project)

Q2 2022

- Hire and onboard Executive Director
- Hire and onboard Delivery Driver
- Hire and onboard Food Waste Coordinator & Delivery Support
- Begin recruitment and hiring of Value Chain Coordinator #2
- Continue Region Roots Local Farm and Food Hub Operations - Year 2 Purchase refrigerated vehicle
- Purchase and make operational refrigerated shipping container #1
- Renew operating insurance

Q3 2022

- Hire and onboard Value Chain Coordinator #2
- Host Local Farm Storytelling Workshops
- Host Farmer-Wholesale Buyer Event to promote relationship building and crop planning

Q4 2022

- Review Region Roots Local Farm and Food Hub annual performance and plan for year 3 improvements and strategy
- Develop strategic goals for all staff in alignment with Food Hub Strategic Plan Work with Executive Director to Create and Implement a development plan

Year 2

Q1 2023

- Employee Performance Reviews and Discussion of Individual Goals and Strategic plans Hub Supplier Visits and annual paperwork

Q2 2023

- Continue Region Roots Local Farm and Food Hub Operations - Year 3 Purchase and make operational refrigerated shipping container #2
- Renew operating insurance

Region Roots Local Farm & Food Hub Distribution and Value-Chain Support

Q3 2023

Host Local Farm Storytelling Workshops
Host Farmer-Wholesale Buyer Event to promote relationship building and crop planning

Q4 2023

Review Region Roots Local Farm and Food Hub annual performance and plan for year 4 improvements
Develop strategic goals for all staff in alignment with Food Hub Strategic Plan Review development initiatives and assess for efficacy

Year 3

Q1 2024

Employee Performance Reviews and Discussion of Individual Goals and Strategic plans Hub Supplier Visits and annual paperwork

Q2 2024

Continue Region Roots Local Farm and Food Hub Operations - Year 4 Renew operating insurance

Q3 2024

Host Local Farm Storytelling Workshops
Host Farmer-Wholesale Buyer Event to promote relationship building and crop planning
Review Region Roots Local Farm and Food Hub annual performance and plan for year 5 improvements
Develop strategic goals for all staff in alignment with Food Hub Strategic Plan Review development initiatives and assess for efficacy

Year 4

Q1 2025

Employee Performance Reviews and Discussion of Individual Goals and Strategic plans Hub Supplier Visits and annual paperwork

Q2 2025

Continue Region Roots Local Farm and Food Hub Operations - Year 5

Q3 2025

Host Local Farm Storytelling Workshops
Host Farmer-Wholesale Buyer Event to promote relationship building and crop planning

Q4 2025

Review Region Roots Local Farm and Food Hub annual performance and plan for year 6 improvements
Develop strategic goals for all staff in alignment with Food Hub Strategic Plan Review development initiatives and assess for efficacy

Year 5

Q1 2026

Employee Performance Reviews and Discussion of Individual Goals and Strategic plans Hub Supplier Visits and annual paperwork

Q2 2026

Continue Region Roots Local Farm and Food Hub Operations - Year 6

Q3 2026

Host Local Farm Storytelling Workshops
Host Farmer-Wholesale Buyer Event to promote relationship building and crop planning

Q4 2026

Review Region Roots Local Farm and Food Hub annual performance and plan for year 7 improvements
Develop strategic goals for all staff in alignment with Food Hub Strategic Plan Review development initiatives and assess for efficacy

Chessie Corridor Trail Connecting La Porte to Michigan City

Placemaking

Location

La Porte, La Porte County

Managing Partners

City of La Porte Redevelopment Commission

Key Stakeholders

Adjacent to the Chessie Corridor are Michigan City and the City of La Porte. Residents of these communities will more readily benefit from the recreational opportunities provided. The Chessie provides a safe, accessible, low cost place to hike, jog, and cycle. These activities have obvious impacts on public health and wellness. Additionally, the Corridor will function as a viable transportation corridor. By incorporating the trail as a connection to the South Shore line, people will be able to avoid congested streets and highways to and from transit. Because we are choosing to preserve the linear greenspace along the Chessie Corridor, trail users can interact with and reap the benefits of being in nature with minimal impact.

More broadly, project stakeholders are all residents and visitors of the region. Trail-based tourism is an ever-growing economic opportunity that the Chessie Trail is well suited for. Visitors to the region will be able to take their bikes off the South Shore Train in Michigan City and see Lake Michigan, travel south to the lakes and trails in La Porte, board the train and bike the Indiana Dunes from the Duneland stop, or the West Beach Trail at the Dunes National Park from the Miller stop. The opportunities and connections are infinite and benefit all stakeholders.

Summary

The Chessie Corridor has been identified as a priority trail corridor in Northwest Indiana. These critical 12.9 miles provide connectivity from the City of La Porte north to the Carroll Avenue South Shore Line stop in Michigan City. Development of this 10' wide non-motorized paved trail will be most successful through effective collaboration between the City of Michigan City, La Porte County, local conservation organizations and landholders, NIRPC, and the City of La Porte. Through our collected efforts, the Chessie Corridor will expand connections to meet the needs of businesses small and large, residents, and visitors more effectively. The trail will provide La Porte County community members non-motorized access to the South Shore line and the increased capacity the Double Track project provides, expanding travel options to and from Chicago and South Bend with ease.

READI Funds Requested

\$7,000,000

Current Funding Sources

\$28,084,939 from a combination of private, local, and foundation funding

4:1
Match

Matching Funds

For Chessie Corridor Phase 3, we anticipate a total project cost of approximately \$35 million. The City plans to source matching funds from partnering local governments, such as Michigan City and La Porte County; non-profits such as the Health Care Foundation of La Porte; and use City resources to provide an additional cash match of up to 10% (\$1.5M). If necessary, the City is willing to apply for other funding sources, such as Next Level Trails, to ensure the completion of the Chessie Corridor Phase 3 Project.

Past, present, and future partnerships include: La Porte Economic Development Partnership, IDEM, NIRPC, The Healthcare Foundation of La Porte, the City of La Porte, SurfAir Wireless, the City of Michigan City, La Porte County and local businesses.

Sustainability & Impact

Increase Population Growth

Only 2.53% of the workforce in La Porte County have “super commutes” in excess of 90 minutes, with 82.8% of workers driving alone to work. By providing alternate means of multimodal transportation, we are appealing to an educated workforce that prefers accessible, amenity-rich neighborhoods. A study published in The Professional Geographer concluded that high-growth firms favor mixed-use, walkable, and transit-rich neighborhoods in both cities and suburbs. These so-called “entrepreneurship ecosystems” are more achievable in areas geographically situated close to a metropolitan area like Northwest Indiana.

Success Metrics

The use of trail counters will allow communities to track usage of the trail corridor and adjust as economic growth occurs in the project area over time. The project’s success will be primarily determined by the number of people using the trail corridor between the two communities. We anticipate citizens to take advantage of the ability to experience all of the cultural destinations that La Porte County has to offer. We will monitor economic changes over time to gauge the trail’s impact on economic growth and access to opportunities.

Chessie Corridor Trail Connecting La Porte to Michigan City

Sustainability & Impact Continued

Sustainability Plan

As the need for non-motorized transportation options in our area grows, so too has the need to build capacity internally to maintain this infrastructure. The City of La Porte spent much of 2020 focused on workforce development, with the addition of a Sustainability and Accessibility Engineer position, equipment purchases for our Parks & Recreation Department to accommodate trail maintenance, and training opportunities for City staff on safe tree management practices. The City is committed to making investments in our people and equipment, growing our team's skillsets from within and equipping us to make impactful maintenance decisions that will be sustainable and consider impacts during planning.

Chessie Trail Phase 3 is no exception. The City of La Porte intends to continue and extend partnerships with LaPorte County, Michigan City, the Healthcare Foundation of La Porte, and local trail groups to ensure the long-term viability of this non-motorized trail project. We envision that the partners listed above would insure the operation and maintenance of this facility through financial and in-kind contributions and development of a trail management plan as part of the overall project. This non-motorized corridor will also assist the La Porte County in reaching environmental and social sustainability goals, specifically in the area of air quality and quality of life. The Chessie Phase 3 trail linking the City of La Porte to the South Shore Corridor and Michigan City will continue to be an effort not just to attract and retain residents, but also will be proposed as a key alternative transportation corridor, thus reducing potential dependence of automobiles.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

The Chessie Corridor parallels the State's Next Level Connections infrastructure program, which identifies linking communities across the state with more hiking, biking, and riding trails as a priority. The Next Level Agenda also prioritizes increased efforts to make Indiana a destination. By investing in trail infrastructure, the City of La Porte and our partners will be making the easternmost portion of the region more recognizable as a "trail-town" destination with inland lakes and natural areas.

These miles of trail are also an important connection between the Urban Enterprise Zone in the Cities of La Porte and Michigan City. Given what we know about the connection between walkability in a community and the opportunities for economic growth, we anticipate trail development to increase economic activity in both UEAs.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

A more inclusive region is necessary for regional economic growth. The Chessie Corridor is one part of a multi-branched effort toward sustained overall growth and linking more people to key segments of the advanced economy. Projects such as this improve our regional infrastructure and encourage local growth as a pathway to opportunities. By attracting young families and residents drawn to an active lifestyle, we are also attracting more innovative industries, which offer better pay and upward mobility. The City of La Porte plans to lead this project in a manner that helps support networks, workers, and communities throughout the region to enable a more diverse and inclusive workforce. We believe the most sustainable path to economic growth is by providing public spaces that give firms and industries a place to thrive and create good jobs. The Chessie Corridor will make an impactful update to the region's ability to accommodate the anticipated population growth and diversity that comes with infrastructure improvements.

Regional Impact

We know the demand for movability extends beyond metro areas and that people of all income levels need to live and be connected to jobs and economic opportunities. These investments in our trail infrastructure will promote walkability/movability, attract a more educated workforce, and spur economic development. Healthcare costs will decrease due to better access to physical activities. Housing values are often \$4,000-\$34,000 more than similar homes in less walkable areas (Cortright, J. Walking the Walk: How Walkability Raises Home Values in U.S. Cities; CEOs for Cities: Washington, DC, USA, 2009). Further, walkability can promote spending on local businesses and accelerate economic development. The 2012 Benchmarking Report on Bicycling and Walking in the U.S. found that pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure projects create eight to twelve jobs per \$1 million of spending, compared to just seven jobs created per \$1 million spent on road infrastructure projects. In summary, we anticipate the approximately 110,000 residents of La Porte County, and the region overall, to benefit from this expanded connection socially, health-wise, and economically. The area will be more appealing for businesses and tourism opportunities, and through the connections provided by the Chessie Corridor, these benefits will be readily accessible.

Long Term Investment

Only 23% of residents across Lake, Porter, and La Porte Counties over age 25 have a bachelor's degree or higher according to census data. Education plays a pivotal role in improving social mobility and is a key way to provide opportunities and improve economic circumstances. The 12.9 miles of trail provided by the Chessie Corridor increases the number of higher education options to locals by expanding the boundaries of what "local" means. Residents of the City of La Porte will have alternate transportation options to attend Ivy Tech Community College Michigan City Campus and Purdue University Northwest. This first step in using the corridor to expand alternate transportation options to access the South Shore Line from the City of La Porte provides more options to accessing higher education. Because employers rely on a strong, local, and appropriately trained workforce, any steps toward addressing barriers to education and opportunity gaps invite further long-term investment and engagement.

Chessie Corridor Trail Connecting La Porte to Michigan City

Sustainability & Impact Continued

Rural Impact

By improving connectivity between places within La Porte County, where the largest industry providing employment is manufacturing, to more populated areas like Chicago and South Bend, opportunities for networking, education, and regional awareness expand with every barrier removed. Michigan City and La Porte are the main employment centers for the larger rural community respectively. Providing those in rural communities with a non-motorized commute option is an ideal way to improve quality of life and sense of place. With a clear vision of all Northwest Indiana has to offer in support of local industry and talent easily available to anyone who travels here, the benefits will be felt regionally.

Timeline

- Design:** 7/31/2021 - 7/31/2022
- Permitting:** 12/31/2021 - 12/31/2022
- Right-of-way Acquisition:** 12/31/2021 - 12/31/2022
- Construction:** 1/1/2023 - 7/31/2024

Entrepreneurship & Innovation

- Tour
- Demonstration
- Component
- Scenario
- Variables
- Transparency
- Help
- Restart

Impact Labs Super Accelerator and STEM Center

Location

Hammond, Lake County

Managing Partners

Purdue University Northwest

Key Stakeholders

Existing NWI businesses: technical and R&D expertise to address business challenges and opportunities .

Start-up ventures: an incubator with the technology and intellectual capital needed to help launch successful new business concepts.

Summary

The Northwest Indiana Forum and Purdue University Northwest are partnering to develop a regional Impact Lab – a “super-accelerator” that will help launch new ventures, scale existing ones, and create an environment where ideas can connect. A new paradigm is needed to help the region move into the next economy – one that centers on innovation, entrepreneurship, and commercialization – and a structure built that will provide the resources needed for these three domains to expand and thrive in Northwest Indiana.

The Need – The “Why”

Northwest Indiana has talent, population, abundant natural assets, and proximity to a major international city; what it lacks are resources and a structure to harness all of these into an innovation ecosystem. The Impact Lab will provide that structure. With Indiana’s overall reputation as a business-friendly state and the population and capital shift accelerating out of Illinois (and other struggling cities and states), Northwest Indiana is well-positioned to become a hub for new investment.

Project Overview - The “What”

The primary revenue generating core of the Impact Lab’s programming focuses on incubating start-up ventures and strengthening, expanding, or scaling existing businesses. The Lab would have a physical facility to house a variety of experts, professional support services, access to capital, and provide space for clients. The Lab would also have a virtual presence to aid those that may not need or want to visit the facility but still seek its expertise and collaboration opportunities.

For existing businesses, the Lab will address the demand for external problem-solving expertise that can create solutions and then test those solutions for viability. The Lab uses existing expertise at Purdue University Northwest to aid in concept design, technology, engineering, and prototype development as well as organization, strategy, finance, marketing, and overall business operations. PNW as part of the world-renowned Purdue University system also benefits from having access to some of the preeminent faculty and facilities in engineering and science the world over.

University Partnership – The “How”

PNW has developed a strong portfolio of assets and experience in the domains of innovation & commercialization, and has long and deep ties to Northwest Indiana communities and businesses. For years, PNW has been an international leader in mechatronics & manufacturing technology, VR/AR simulation and modeling, and tech transfer (or “recombinant innovation”); the Impact Lab will leverage and build upon these existing strengths, and create an organizational structure that maximizes potential synergies in these and other areas.

Impact Lab Programs

Innovation & Commercialization – Start-ups and Scale-ups

R&D/Product/Concept Development

The Lab will be equipped with an advanced manufacturing technology lab, makerspace, and basic scientific research & development lab space; all of these spaces will be overseen by university faculty with expertise in areas needed to support clients’ business needs.

Small Business Consulting & Financing

PNW serves as the host organization for the Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Center (ISBDC), the regional hub for the US Small Business Administration. The ISBDC will be housed in the new Impact Lab, with its team of business consultants and advisors dedicated to assisting entrepreneurs and existing small business owners in building up their companies. PNW will provide direct assistance to Impact Lab clients on marketing and sales through its portfolio of programs, resources, and expertise in the College of Business, which includes the White Lodging Professional Selling Lab, and hosts one of the leading digital marketing programs in the United States. PNW is also positioned to provide legal and IP support through a partnership with the Foundry at the Purdue West Lafayette campus.

With regard to financial incubation, PNW already has strong partnerships with the NWI and Greater Chicago banking sector and the Indiana Bankers Association (IBA), as well as the NWI Regional Development Company (RDC), which oversees the SBA’s 504 loan program that assists regional businesses in accessing capital required for improvements and expansion. This quartet of partners – ISBDC, PNW, IBA, and RDC – will provide the requisite expertise and financial resources needed to assist Impact Lab clients in their ventures. The Lab will provide space and support for personnel from partner organizations who work with Impact Lab clients on financial, marketing, and operational projects/problems.

Impact Labs Super Accelerator and STEM Center

Cross-Industry/Cross-Functional Collaboration Space

Regional demand for off-site training & collaboration space for existing businesses exists. The Impact Lab will be designed for cross-functional teams to access university resources and faculty to generate innovative ideas and solutions in NWI.

Commercial Kitchen

Thanks to its strong partnership with White Lodging over the years, PNW is home to the highly-regarded White Lodging School of Hospitality & Tourism Management (HTM). Faculty and students in the HTM program will provide the expertise needed to assist businesses in the food & beverage industry, and a fully-equipped, public commercial kitchen – a resource that is sorely lacking at present in the region – will provide the test lab for restaurateurs and other food-related businesses. New concepts will be created in the kitchen incubator, which will be piloted through pop-up kiosks in the public dining space (serving the dual purpose of providing on-site food service to other clients and Lab personnel at minimal cost). The scientific lab space provided in the Impact Lab will also create opportunities for craft beverage entrepreneurs (a rapidly growing industry in the region), and partnerships with existing local brewers, distillers, and winemakers.)

Community & Cultural Impact

Non-Profit Leadership Hub

One of the differentiators for the Impact Lab will be its ability to serve as a community leadership training resource and central office hub for regional non-profit partners which are already housed at PNW. The university is home to the Leadership Institute at PNW, Society of Innovators, One Region, and the Northwest Indiana Food Council. This coalition of non-profit organizations, working in close proximity under the same roof, has the potential to drive major impact in critical-need areas for regional development.

Art & Culture Incubator

Indiana University Northwest will be engaged to help develop a viable arts incubator program, with its strengths in areas related to art & culture. One area of the Impact Lab will be dedicated to artist studios, and one of the facilities that is being considered to house the Impact Lab also contains a 1,000+ seat auditorium, making it well-suited to music and theatre productions, public lectures, and film screenings.

READI Funds Requested

\$5,000,000

Current Funding Sources

\$20,000,000 from private and public funding

Matching Funds

Ongoing funding discussion with the city of Hammond, the White Foundation, and a private donor to secure \$20M in additional funding for a 4:1 match. Also access to significant federal grant opportunities already awarded to PNW, and some additional grant submissions in process.

**4:1
Match**

Sustainability & Impact

Existing IEDC Innovation Programs Involvement

Synergy exists with Started Up Foundation's Innovate Within competition, led regionally by the Society of Innovators and supported by the IEDC.

Expand Reach of IEDC's Manufacturing Readiness Grant and Innovation Voucher

Strongly - much of the existing commercialization infrastructure is focused on advanced manufacturing technology and robotics.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

Significant overlap with IEDC priorities and strategy around creating innovation ecosystems

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

Providing resources to underinvested communities focused on training and supporting local entrepreneurs who have historically had limited options to establish new businesses in NWI will help diversify the region's economy and generate new job growth, not just near the lab itself but throughout the entire region.

Impact Labs Super Accelerator and STEM Center

Sustainability & Impact Continued

Regional Impact

The economic development of Northwest Indiana will be positively impacted. Original ideas brought to the marketplace will create new businesses and good-paying jobs. Existing businesses will have access to resources to become more effective and efficient. Many programs that will be housed in the Impact Lab have already provided enormous economic benefit to NWI companies, creating millions of dollars in cost savings for problems solved, new revenue for products developed, and more efficient ways of doing business discovered.

The Impact Lab being located in Hammond also presents a unique opportunity to leverage the diversity of the NWI population to help catalyze entrepreneurship in underserved communities. PNW has a developing relationship with the US Minority Business Development Agency, and as an emerging minority-serving institution (MSI) is positioned to be a driver of economic and social advancement for communities of color in NWI.

Thirdly, when operationalized, the Impact Lab will become the center of a dynamic ecosystem to support innovation and entrepreneurship.

Rural Impact

Significant ongoing EDA-funded project focused on agricultural technology has major commercial implications for rural economies in NWI

Increase Population Growth

Talent attraction and retention is a main thrust of the impact lab vision. By creating a high-caliber innovation center, NWI can attract entrepreneurs from across the country, modeling the success of similar programs in other Indiana communities.

Long Term Investment

Innovation hubs are magnets for private capital due to the high return potential for incubated and accelerated ventures that go through their programs. These ventures in turn create new jobs and tax revenue, creating a virtuous cycle over time.

Military Attraction / INVet Involvement

Not specifically, though multiple veterans have worked with PNW's existing commercialization program

Success Metrics

See attached metrics model

Sustainability Plan

5 year runway to self sustaining by grants, SAFE, rentals, and existing program revenue. Initial one-time funding focused on acquiring and renovating capital asset to house overall program.

Impact Lab	Opportunity	Set-up/One-time costs	Unit Revenue Goal Yearly	Staffing Director Expenses
Building Acquisition	Target site is former Hammond Walmart near new sportsplex and YMCA	\$7,000,000		\$200,000
Site Infrastructure and Renovation	Owner of target site developed Union 525 innovation hub in Indianapolis	\$7,000,000		
Commercial Kitchen and Pop Up Kiosks	Agri and food start ups with selling space	\$2,000,000	\$519,000	\$150,000
Makerspace and Concept/Product Development	CMEC model for product research and development	\$3,000,000	\$519,000	\$150,000
Impact Small Business	CIVS, CBEDS, Leadership Institute, SIO, Classrooms in cross-industry/cross-functional collaboration and co-working space	\$500,000	\$519,000	existing lines
STEM Exploration	Transformation of legacy program into modern youth STEM exploration space & program	\$500,000		existing lines
Commercial Tenants	Models include current long-term leases in preferred site, generating \$300k/year in rental income. Space will also be leased to second stage companies.		\$300,000	
		\$20,000,000	\$1,857,000	\$500,000

Unit continuity minimum revenue and contracting goal	Yearly
10 Leases to clients at \$2500/month	\$300,000
Hourly rentals \$20	\$219,000
	\$519,000

Youth Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

E&I

Location

Lake and Porter Counties

Managing Partners

Society of Innovators

Key Stakeholders

The Society of Innovators at Purdue Northwest
Purdue University Northwest
IGNITE the Region
Boys & Girls Club of Greater Northwest Indiana (BGCGNWI)

The youth entrepreneurship and innovation program aligns with the goals and missions of all stakeholder organizations, enabling us to collectively make a positive impact on our region’s youth and spark future economic and community growth for Northwest Indiana.

Summary

Innovation and economic growth will depend on future leaders with entrepreneurial skills and attitudes. Youth entrepreneurship is a key tool to develop the human capital necessary for the future, unleash the economic potential of youth, and promote sustainable growth. It is critical to the ongoing development of Northwest Indiana’s economy. The Society of Innovators aims to break down barriers to innovation and entrepreneurship. It is critical for our region’s 21st century economic success that all students are not just prepared to take jobs, but to create them.

Our implementation partner is Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Northwest Indiana (BGCGNWI). As a trusted community organization with over 50 years’ experience serving youth, BGCGNWI can help us drive economic development at the community level in new and exciting ways.

Our development partner is the Leadership Institute at Purdue Northwest. We recognize that leadership and innovation are two sides of the same coin. The Leadership Institute will help us prepare great leaders of all ages to excel in an increasingly competitive global environment.

READI Funds Requested

\$500,000

Current Funding Sources

\$1,122,500 from private, philanthropic and local government sources

Matching Funds

Matching funds are all contributed through private sector sources, including: Purdue University Northwest and local corporate sponsors (NIPSCO, Mortar Net Solutions).

**2.25:1
Match**

Sustainability & Impact

Regional Impact

Innovation and economic growth will depend on future leaders with entrepreneurial skills and attitudes. Youth entrepreneurship is a key tool to develop the human capital necessary for the future, unleash the economic potential of youth, and promote sustainable growth.

In a thriving ecosystem, entrepreneurship empowers individuals, improves standards of living, and creates jobs, wealth, and innovation in the economy. However, several barriers still stand in the way for many students and their communities throughout Northwest Indiana.

As technology continues to progress, many economic futurists are predicting developments that will make jobs in numerous sectors increasingly obsolete. The World Economic Forum has found that as much as 65% of children entering primary school today will work in roles that don’t currently exist. Furthermore, a shift away from a manufacture-based economy to service and knowledge economies means a bigger emphasis on soft skills, like critical and creative thinking, problem solving, and negotiation and organization skills. Developing an entrepreneurial skillset gives us the ability to troubleshoot, collaborate, and quickly adapt or ‘pivot’ away from unforeseen changes.

Additionally, understanding inequality from the entrepreneurship point of view is very important because strong evidence suggests that income inequality slows economic growth. Entrepreneurship and income equality tend to move together. Helping young people of color learn more about entrepreneurship can be an effective way to close many of the economic gaps across Northwest Indiana’s communities.

Sustainability & Impact Continued

Rural Impact

The Northwest Indiana region is full of contrasts: urban and rural, industrial and natural, well-established history and forward-thinking innovation. It is evident that our diverse communities all share a determination to make the most of this rich range of resources.

One key finding in our initial youth entrepreneurship pilot planning phase is that there are discrepancies across school systems in Northwest Indiana related to the knowledge of how to teach entrepreneurship & innovation, and the resources available to support young innovators.

In some of Northwest Indiana's urban and rural communities, there are schools that are currently underserved with exposure to entrepreneurship and innovation. In these underserved schools, there are no defined plans to expose students to important innovation or leadership skills, or to engage students in entrepreneurial activities and opportunities. Classes dedicated to entrepreneurship do not exist and there are no resources to support engagement in competitions or other innovation-related programs.

Through our strategic partnership with the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Northwest Indiana, the Society of Innovators will be able to establish a youth entrepreneurship program that can be replicated and scaled across Northwest Indiana and into our more rural communities.

Further opportunities to blend the urban and rural programs will be explored.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

Youth we engage with through BGCNWI will be encouraged and supported to participate in the Innovate WithIN™ pitch competition. This statewide initiative hosted by the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) and the STARTedUP Foundation, are open to high school students across Indiana.

The youth entrepreneurship and innovation program also aligns with the State of Indiana's Entrepreneurship and Innovation Initiative. As Indiana enters its third century, Indiana will grow as the global leader of turning big ideas into reality, attracting investment and nurturing top talent.

The initiative includes a focus on K-12 Education: Through partnerships with school programs, from an early age Hoosiers will learn about the opportunities of entrepreneurship.

Increase Population Growth

Future innovation and economic growth will depend on future leaders with entrepreneurial skills and attitudes. Youth entrepreneurship is a key tool to develop the human capital necessary for the future, unleash the economic potential of youth, and promote sustainable growth.

Multi pronged strategies implementation and involvement at all levels including Government, industry, political, social as well as educational sectors.

Long Term Investment

Many community leaders, including development professionals, public officials, and dedicated volunteers may be overlooking one of their most important economic and community assets: local entrepreneurs. The evidence is that small businesses generate 75% of the net new jobs in the United States. New and improved products, services, or technology created by entrepreneurs enable new markets to be developed and new wealth to be created while stimulating related businesses.

Young people across our communities are some of the most entrepreneurial, a key booster to economic growth through the introduction of innovative technologies, products, and services. Youth across Northwest Indiana are creating their own businesses—sometimes out of necessity—and are seizing opportunities arising from digital diffusion, new technologies, and growing industries. However, to succeed these young people need money, mentors, and markets.

Existing IEDC Innovation Programs Involvement

Youth we engage with through BGCNWI will be encouraged and supported to participate in the Innovate WithIN™ pitch competition. This statewide initiative hosted by the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) and the STARTedUP Foundation, are open to high school students across Indiana.

Students that participate in the InnovateWithIN competition will also be encouraged to participate in other pitch and innovation events, including the PNW BIG Sell. The BIG Sell is Purdue Northwest's annual contest to identify the best new ideas in business. It is open to innovators of all ages.

Success Metrics

Measurements for success will include the following:

- 1) Participation numbers
- 2) Skills development and progress through evaluation
- 3) Student businesses created, jobs created and investment received
- 4) Competition participation including number of applications, number selected to pitch and compete, and competition success

Sustainability & Impact Continued

Sustainability Plan

Through a strategic partnership with the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Northwest Indiana, the Society of Innovators will establish multiple, scalable programs and create revenue-generating models for sustainability.

- 1) After-school entrepreneurship clubs in BGCGNWI locations, eventually expanding through other community partner organizations. Programs and curriculum will consist of leadership and innovation topics and activities with opportunities for local club sponsors.
- 2) Launch a regional high school business plan competition with opportunities for additional grant funding and corporate sponsorship.
- 3) Develop summer leadership and innovation camps. Help students develop summer business ventures to create their own jobs and revenue.
- 4) Curriculum development in partnership with Purdue Northwest will provide opportunities for future licensing.
- 5) Opportunities to develop training programs for Northwest Indiana teachers and administrators that is focused on leadership, innovation and entrepreneurship.

Expand Reach of IEDC's Manufacturing Readiness Grant and Innovation Voucher

No, this program will not directly expand the reach of the IEDC's Manufacturing Readiness Grant and Innovation Voucher.

Military Attraction / INVet Involvement

No, this program will not directly attract or involve military veterans. It is possible that some of the program facilitators receiving a stipend and/or volunteer mentors for the program could be military veterans.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

By partnering with BGCGNWI, the Youth Entrepreneurship Ecosystem hopes to develop, inspire, and create a more inclusive and creative economy that functions for all people and in which they have the financial freedom and mobility to pursue every opportunity.

Though youth and enterprise share many of the same characteristics, such as resourcefulness, initiative, drive, imagination, and ambition, youths have an increased number of challenges when compared to adult entrepreneurs, in terms of launching and running a new venture:

- Less access to capital, whether it be personal savings, investments from family and friends, or access to loans from financial institutes
- Less experience and a narrower range of experiences
- Lack of access to work space
- Less extensive network of contacts
- Reliance on simple tools or no equipment at all

These extra challenges faced by youth entrepreneurs will form the basis and design of our youth entrepreneurship and talent development programs.

NWI BizHub Entrepreneur Resource Center

Location

All Seven Counties

Managing Partners

Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Center and Legacy Foundation

Key Stakeholders

There are 3 categories of key stakeholders. The project implementation team, resource partners, and small business owners/entrepreneurs. Legacy Foundation, Crown Point Community Foundation and Unity Foundation of La Porte County, the Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Center and the Center of Workforce Innovations have united to launch NWI BizHub.

The NWI BizHub resource partners are the organizations who provide support to small businesses. The project benefits each resource partner by providing a resource hub for current and future clients.

Small businesses and entrepreneurs are the primary stakeholders. This project serves them by providing a resource where they can find information about starting or growing their business.

Summary

NWI BizHub connects Northwest Indiana small business owners to the right resources at the right time, no matter where they are in their journey of starting, accelerating, or expanding their business. With more than 65 local resource partners, this collaboratively driven platform connects a large diverse network of primarily nonprofit service providers offering a wide array of business-building services for small businesses. The program provides entrepreneurs and small business owners with free, easy access to the vital assistance, resources, and information they need—when they need it. NWI BizHub has four primary components:

1. **Resource Navigator:** The program’s Resource Navigator tool provides small business owners and entrepreneurs with an easy-to-use search engine comprised of Northwest Indiana’s small business resources. Small business owners simply define the services needed, and toggle through the local resources available.

2. **Resource Guides:** NWI BizHub provides small business owners and entrepreneurs accurate information for various business stages and needs. Resource guides include: starting a business, obtaining funding, and growing your business in Northwest Indiana. Small business owners looking for guidance and information can visit NWIBizHub.com to easily view each guide.

3. **Small Biz Spotlight:** To further connect with local small businesses, NWI BizHub launched the Small Biz Spotlight, which regularly features small businesses. The spotlight is designed to promote the small business being featured while providing a peer-to-peer learning opportunity for small business owners and entrepreneurs.

4. **Community Calendar of Events:** An objective of NWI BizHub is to provide vital information to region small business owners. The community calendar on NWI BizHub was generated to provide a unified location for small business owners to view upcoming relevant events, training, and webinars. The community calendar lists upcoming small business events from local, regional, and national organizations.

In addition to online resources, NWI BizHub connects with small businesses via community events, chamber meetings, and one-on-one meetings.

READI Funds Requested

\$107,800

Current Funding Sources

\$107,800

Matching Funds

Legacy Foundation, Crown Point Community Foundation, Unity Foundation of La Porte County, Lilly Endowment Inc.

Sustainability & Impact

Long Term Investment

NWI BizHub provides direct assistance, resources, and necessary information to Northwest Indiana small business owners and entrepreneurs. Providing a platform for small businesses to start, grow, and strengthen, NWI BizHub enhances the region’s current entrepreneurial landscape.

1:1 Match

Sustainability & Impact Continued

Success Metrics

There are 7 Entrepreneurship Goals that serve as the foundation for the collective action of an entrepreneurial ecosystem, according to the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Building Playbook:

1. Inclusive Field
2. Collaborative Culture
3. Shared Vision
4. Connected Networks
5. Practical Metrics and Methods
6. Universal Support
7. Sustainable Work

The following practical output measures will be considered on a biannual basis.

- Number of entrepreneurs engaged in funded programming
- Usage of the system resources including usage of the program's Resource Navigator

Through measuring these outputs, the key stakeholders expect that the following outcomes will be achieved:

- **Increase usage of entrepreneurial resources**, including usage of the Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Center, as reported by ecosystem partners
- **Increase in the number of new small businesses opened**, as reported through local and state databases
- **Increase in the diversity of entrepreneurs in the region**, as reported by local partners
- **Increased support for entrepreneurs in the ecosystem**
- **Expand NWI BizHub from 3 counties (Lake, Porter, La Porte) to seven counties (Lake, Porter, La Porte, Newton, Jasper, Starke, and Pulaski)**

Long-term, by clearing barriers for entrepreneurs in Northwest Indiana, the goal is to increase the number of successful small businesses, the overall per capita wealth for region residents, and increase the region's identity as a destination for entrepreneurs in Indiana.

Military Attraction / INVet Involvement

NWI BizHub attracts and supports military veteran small business owners and entrepreneurs. The Resource Navigator assists military veterans in finding Northwest Indiana resource organizations that specialize in veteran small business services, including startup, growth, and funding.

NWI BizHub has partnered with Indiana State Representative Mike Andrade to provide area veterans with information on how to become a small business owner or entrepreneur.

Increase Population Growth

According to the Kauffman Foundation, research shows that companies less than one year old have created an average of 1.5 million jobs per year over the past three decades. NWI BizHub provides the thriving networks those entrepreneurs need to grow and succeed. With a healthy entrepreneurial ecosystem, Northwest Indiana will see an increase in employment opportunities. This will not only attract quality employees but retain current talent in the region.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

With over 65 resource partners, and growing, NWI BizHub facilitates access to these resource organizations for established, emerging and startup small businesses throughout the region. The program removes barriers of service visibility and resource accessibility for small business owners and entrepreneurs throughout Northwest Indiana, providing greater opportunity for growth.

Sustainability Plan

The project began with a grant provided by Lilly Endowment Inc. To sustain NWI BizHub, the program will implement a paid advertisement program to for-profit resource partners, such as business attorneys, CPAs, consultants, etc. Corporate sponsorships will also be available. The advertisement and corporate sponsorship programs will be implemented in year two of the program.

Rural Impact

The program's Resource Navigator tool provides small business owners and entrepreneurs the ability to find the best resource in Northwest Indiana to meet the needs of their business. For rural small business owners, NWI BizHub provides access to resources, in an easy-to-use format, that traditionally might not be visible or accessible in the community. NWI BizHub ensures resource partners who focus on Northwest Indiana's rural communities are identified on the Resource Navigator.

Regional Impact

NWI BizHub bolsters the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Northwest Indiana by supporting programming to clear common barriers faced by entrepreneurs through strengthening the ecosystem, positioning the region as a destination for entrepreneurship and innovation.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

The Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Center is a founding partner of NWI BizHub. Staff at Northwest ISBDC assist NWI BizHub with providing 1:1 support and outreach to small business owners and entrepreneurs utilizing NWI BizHub.

WE CREATE + INNOVATE

Venture Capital Fund

Location

All Seven Counties

Managing Partners

+WeCreate Media

Key Stakeholders

Our key stakeholders begin with our strong talent pools and workforce. Young talent is growing up in our rural communities, going to school in our suburban and urban communities, and leaving for larger metropolitan areas for bigger opportunities. Our workforce is uniquely positioned to bring scale to manufacturing and production, yet there are gaps to be filled to reach our potential capacity. This plan also accounts for anchor institutions, large employers and workforce development agencies who have a vested interest in both retaining talent in the area and increasing our per capita income.

Summary

We have been working on creating a venture fund that focuses on bringing business to Northwest Indiana and the entire state. After initial review with potential investors, we've found there's a demand for structured forms of investment in innovative brands. The venture fund will be focused primarily on second-stage companies that are exhibiting stellar growth, as well as acquiring brands that have success outside the US market and launching them in the United States, headquartered out of Northwest Indiana and supported by our robust infrastructure, production capabilities and supply chains.



READI Funds Requested

\$1,000,000

Current Funding Sources

\$4,000,000 from Private Investors

Matching Funds

Our investor base is comprised of prominent community members, policy makers and large employers who play a key role with a multitude of stakeholders in our area.

Our matching funds are primarily private and philanthropic. We have involved members of our network with a vested interest in the success and growth of our region.

**4:1
Match**

Sustainability & Impact

Existing IEDC Innovation Programs Involvement

Our plan aligns with the Indiana 5G Lab in that it will have vested interest in improving manufacturing capabilities, introducing digital, efficient tools for our agricultural producers, and improving our cities to support an innovative working class, helping build quality of life assets and improving infrastructure. These initiatives will position the fund's portfolio to have access to efficient supply and production chains, as well as improve the basis of courting highly skilled transplants.

Expand Reach of IEDC's Manufacturing Readiness Grant and Innovation Voucher

As this fund will focus on bringing our regional manufacturing activity to its potential capacity, we will have direct involvement in providing or sourcing matching funds relating to applications to the Manufacturing Readiness Grant. We will be an efficient means for sourcing high potential startups with trajectories beneficial to our region and the state as a whole, and account for their sustainability.

WE CREATE + INNOVATE

Venture Capital Fund

Sustainability & Impact Continued

Success Metrics

We will evaluate projected growth on a case by case basis with prospects, and disburse funds accounting for a five to ten year period of growth before positioning for sale and an ROI. We will establish baseline projections that we will reach in accordance to building a network of additional fund investors as well as identifying our first rounds of investments. We will evaluate quarterly performance against our projections and make necessary adjustments to remain on track.

Rural Impact

This fund will involve stakeholders in manufacturing, agriculture and local policy in rural communities. The fund inherently brings urban and rural stakeholders together in the focus of the fund's investments. As we will be evaluating startups and brands in the CPG and manufacturing spaces, regional suppliers and growers will be called on to supply materials for the development of products in production spaces also located in the region. Both cognition and labor roles will be made available to rural residents because of this fund's approach.

Long Term Investment

This fund will work on two levels to court capital investment. First, initial seed funding from READI will sustainably grow over time after allocation to high growth investments, increasing the fund year over year and broadening reach. Secondly, in partnership with communities on a state wide level, we will position Northwest Indiana as an innovation hub, attracting development in the area through location selection and outside investment in prospective NWI companies. Through conversations with partners involved in economic development as well as the IEDC, we see a clear trajectory to regional specialization and highly focused development of entrepreneurial ecosystems which collaborate across regions throughout the state.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

We plan to collaborate on a statewide level with other venture initiatives to combine resources and introduce economies of scale. We will account for active involvement in the Indiana Angel Network Fund to bridge the gap between Indiana investors, the key regional advantages of NWI and promising, high potential startups in the CPG space. In addition to that, we will collaborate with other private-sector fund managers in the Indiana Seed Fund to focus on early stage investments in companies we believe will lead to millions in revenue for our communities.

Regional Impact

A study by Kingston Business School shows that VC investments are in large part supplied through localized and socialized communities, meaning that physical proximity is key for entrepreneurs looking for networks prepared to fund innovative ideas. We will aid local communities in developments of quality of life resources and infrastructure improvements to localize entrepreneurship to pockets of innovation all over the region. This program will also structure a statewide network of entrepreneurs and investors, localizing funding conversations and positioning Northwest Indiana as a center of entrepreneurship. This, in combination with a strong marketing platform, will broadcast to potential sources of investment that we are poised for bringing scale to high potential startups.

Increase Population Growth

Through this venture capital program, the fund management group will be decision makers in the location of headquarters, production facilities and staffing of brands and companies who would be a good fit for the region. This will bring hundreds of jobs and new residents to areas in which physical facilities can be strategically introduced. Our leadership will work in close coordination with local economic development groups to build strong quality of life improvements and recreational opportunities. This in turn will support a healthy entrepreneurial ecosystem, attracting everyone from the sole entrepreneur to large employers.

Sustainability Plan

This initiative is inherently positioned for long term success and sustainable growth. We will leverage the growth already in motion to more effectively broadcast the fund's initiatives, growing our audience and increasing additional private and philanthropic investment. Over the span of the first several years of this fund, we will establish a portfolio of investments and account for sustaining those relationships until profitability and ROI is established. We will re-invest revenue into the fund to compound growth year over year.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

Because of our region's gradual shift away from strong steel and manufacturing activity, we have a wealth of economic assets and considerable potential for scale, but both are underutilized. This fund will be a potent tool in the belt of economic development initiatives focusing on jump starting stagnant opportunities for growth and bringing economies of scale, then increasing accessibility for other entrepreneurial initiatives by bringing down cost of entry to new markets.

Military Attraction / INVet Involvement

As equity partners in early stage startups, we will have policies to follow in accordance with Indiana's veteran workforce goals. Through collaboration with a robust regional marketing platform, we will be able to target veterans directly with the interest of introducing trial by tourism, leading to long term residency. By combining a powerful regional microphone with hiring policies benefitting veterans, we will create opportunities for a higher quality of life for these key stakeholders.

Rural Entrepreneurship & Innovation Taskforce

E&I

Location

All Seven Counties

Managing Partners

Jasper County Economic Development Corporation

Key Stakeholders

Newton, Starke, Pulaski, and Jasper County Economic Development Corporation
ISBDC
Mixdesign
Community Foundation

Summary

This vision of this project is to build a cohesive and intercounty identity for entrepreneurship in rural the communities of Northwest Indiana. Short term objective is to prioritize the rural economic development programming and resource needs as well as solidify design and cost s of programming centers across rural counties. The next level goals would be to rollout the tools and utilize the brand practices to quickly become a stronger more attractive economic force for the communities of rural Northwest Indiana.

Local economic development organizations (LEDO's) leaders will be guided through the processes of robust Discovery and Dot Connecting to achieve a strategic hierarchy of goals. Each individual county will prioritize the brand tools and actions needed to begin effective strategy and implementation ideas. The Discovery process will consist of assessing all the rural counties within the forum, their existing rural and small business development tools, brand assets, and intellectual properties through brand audits and a combination of both formalized and casual conversations. Survey samples will be performed to gain insight into each county's immediate and long-term needs. All our efforts will connect the dots between the existing economic environment, company engagement, communication, and awareness. This discovery process will consist of both formal and informal information gathering. These efforts are an important way to understand the current wins and needs. These findings will all become the "dots" that will be connected as a team to prioritize the tools, determine the physical resources needed and foster the programming changes desired.

READI Funds Requested

\$70,000

Current Funding Sources

\$10,000 from private sources

Matching Funds

The majority of the matching funds come from private sources, as the funds flow through the LEDOs.

1:7
Match

Sustainability & Impact

Rural Impact

The proposed Rural E&I project is intended to provide resources and services to entrepreneurs and innovators in the rural communities of Northwest Indiana, which aren't always reached with current E&I programming throughout the region.

Success Metrics

As we build this program out we will look at things like new patents, business start-ups and population growth.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

By developing programs for underserved residents in rural communities.

Long Term Investment

The Rural E&I project creates new opportunities for long term investment by providing resources to historical underserved pockets of entrepreneurs and innovators.

Regional Impact

The Rural E&I project will enable the entire region to build a stronger and more collaborative network of entrepreneur and innovators within Northwest Indiana, as that group in rural communities gain access to resources not historically available.

Sustainability Plan

Within the purposed plan for this initiative, the model will be developed to include internal and external partners that enable sustainability.

Rural Entrepreneurship & Innovation Taskforce

Rural Economic Development Proposal



Minority Business Skills Enhancement Program

Talent

1:1 Match

Location

All Seven Counties

Managing Partners

Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Center

Key Stakeholders

Cities and towns, local economic development organizations, community foundations. It provides targeted resources to groups who are currently underserved.

Summary

The NWI SBDC team utilized the federal CARES Act funds in 2020 – 2021 to identify the needs to provide specialty small business resources while implementing program opportunities. During the implementation process, the SBDC team identified that minority and underserved businesses often experienced a lower awareness of available resources. As a result, significant benefits were observed when this business community utilized these specialty resources.

The specialty resources are:

- Bookkeeping training and starter software subscription
- General marketing advice via Marketing professionals
- Website development via Digital Marketing professionals

Utilizing business owners from within the underserved communities as business advisors has shown success as an effective tool. With the continuation of this project, employment of part-time advisors from within the targeted communities would be a priority. These advisors would be in addition to the service provided by in person advisors at resource centers in the communities.

Going forward, additional outreach to build upon the specialty resources would include:

- Monthly videocast on short, specific topics of current interest to target markets
- Bilingual (Spanish) advising, webinars and materials
- Webinars/assistance with MBE, DBE and other certifications

READI Funds Requested

\$150,000

Current Funding Sources

\$150,000 from grants

Matching Funds

At present SBDC is a partner in a grant application that will provide a 50% match. Utilization of SBA Core grant funds are anticipated to be utilized for additional grant match funding. The SBDC is partnering with the Legacy Foundation for the Community Navigator grant to sustain in year 2 and beyond.

Grants mentioned above are federal, Small Business Administration. Legacy Foundation is the partner for

Sustainability & Impact

Regional Impact

Nurturing early-stage businesses in minority and underserved communities provides for economic growth and sustainability of the cities and towns. New businesses and the jobs created are measurable impacts that enhance the quality of life for the communities.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

The focus of this project is on removing barriers that minority business owners currently face. We have seen this firsthand during the pandemic, where minority business owners have been less able to access disaster relief funds due to lack of awareness and lack of bookkeeping and needed documents. The project targets black and Hispanic business owners in particular and contributes to their viability and future ability to access capital, create jobs, and invest in their businesses.

Rural Impact

Portions of our service area include underserved businesses located within rural areas with Hispanic populations ranging up to 7%. The bilingual portion of the specialty resources would service these rural areas.

Sustainability Plan

It is anticipated that Year 1 outcomes will enable SBDC to successfully garner funds from stakeholders to continue the project. In Year 2 and beyond, additional grant opportunities such as the Community Navigator grant by the Legacy Foundation and/or the use of ISBDC Core grant funds are options.

Minority Business Skills Enhancement Program

Sustainability & Impact Continued

Increase Population Growth

Economic opportunity and increased income will help maintain population in cities and towns. Supporting Main Street businesses contributes to quality of life in those downtowns.

Military Attraction / INVet Involvement

Approximately 30% of Indiana Veterans are minorities, many who are pursuing business ownership. This project would be available to assist in this pursuit.

Expand Reach of IEDC's Manufacturing Readiness Grant and Innovation Voucher

To the extent that participants are in manufacturing or innovative businesses, this project would assist them in getting to the stage where they are eligible for the grant, voucher and other financial opportunities.

Existing IEDC Innovation Programs Involvement

The ISBDC is funded in part by the IEDC.

Success Metrics

Upon program initiation, successes will be measured by number of business start-ups, capital invested, jobs created and longevity.

Long Term Investment

The project helps strengthen newer and emerging businesses who will be better able to access capital in the future.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

The project aligns with both the State of Indiana Equity, Inclusion & Opportunity initiative and the IEDC Capital Access Program.



Talent Development

Level Up Northwest Indiana - Enhancing Our Talent Assets

Location

All Seven Counties

Managing Partners

United Way of Northwest Indiana

Key Stakeholders

Our key stakeholders are at the table with us on a monthly basis, helping us to develop and implement strategies to address challenges and barriers that our clients face on their pathway to increased income and financial stability. Using a collective impact model, we have formed four working groups and a steering committee comprised of employers, educational institutions, local community reinvestment leaders, training/certification vendors, child care and out-of-school programming providers, faith leaders, and financial institutions. Each working group helps us focus on solving barriers for ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) families working toward financial sustainability:

- The Jobs Work Group members include stakeholders invested in educating, training and employing Level Up participants (e.g., WorkOne, Ivy Tech Community College, Goodwill Excel Center, Community Healthcare System, BMO Harris Bank, among others). The benefits to these stakeholders include student retention, training completion, and qualified employees.
- The Financial Wellness Coalition is comprised of banking institutions, HUD-certified housing counselors, and nonprofit asset building organizations, and local community development departments (e.g., Centier Bank, First Merchants Bank, Northwest Indiana Reinvestment Alliance, Northwest Indiana Community Action—which administers Individual Development Accounts (IDA), Hammond Housing Authority, etc.). The benefit to these stakeholders includes Community Reinvestment Act compliance, new banking customers, and program participants.
- The Child Care and Youth Programming Work Group includes stakeholders from Paths to Quality Level 3 and 4 child care providers, Out-of-School Time program providers, resource and referral partners, early learning experts, and state associations (e.g., Lisa’s Safe Haven Academy, Faith Child Care, Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater NWI, Geminus Corporation CCR&R, Purdue Northwest,

Indiana Afterschool Network and Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children). Benefits to these stakeholders include a platform for advocacy, financial support to help their customers afford child care, and a pipeline of families needing quality child care and youth programming.

- Mental Health Supports Work Group was formed in fall 2020 to address the mental problems experienced by ALICE families, especially parents, that were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Stakeholders include clinicians, school counselors, nonprofit providers, and MSW-granting educational institutions (e.g., Regional Mental Health Center, Pandemic Parenting, Mental Health America of Northwest Indiana, School City of East Chicago, Purdue University Northwest and Indiana University Northwest).
- Our Steering Committee is composed of state and regional leaders vested in workforce development, including a member of Governor Holcomb’s Workforce Cabinet, Skillful Indiana, Northwest Indiana Forum, the Urban League of Northwest Indiana, Purdue University Extension, and Ivy Tech Community College Workforce Alignment.
- Level Up participants themselves are key stakeholders. Each month we meet collectively with participants to listen to barriers ALICE families are experiencing as they pursue better paying jobs and financial stability. We share community resources, training and employment opportunities.
- United Way donors and partners like the James W. and Betty Dye Foundation, the John W. Anderson Foundation, Indiana United Ways, the ArcelorMittal Foundation (now Cleveland Cliffs Foundation), Early Learning Indiana, among others, achieve their philanthropic goals of developing a strong workforce and improving the lives of Northwest Indiana residents.

Summary

The United Way Level Up program helps ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) families thrive. Family Career Navigators and Financial Wellness Navigators work with under-employed individuals to pursue career goals, assess skills gaps, improve financial management knowledge, and provide access to basic needs supports.

Twenty-nine percent (29%) of households in Lake County, Indiana, are considered ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed.) ALICE wages are too low to meet a minimum household survival budget. Because these families are working, their income is too high to meet criteria for most federal poverty assistance, and their work schedules prevent them from accessing assistance and education during normal business hours. Because ALICE families often do not qualify for most forms of financial assistance, they don’t know where to find help when they need it.

In short, ALICE families are stuck in financial instability. This negatively affects our community in terms of home ownership, workforce development, and health outcomes.

The program launched in August 2019 with a goal to support 10 individuals and their families in pursuit of better paying jobs. We anticipated working with families for 18-24 months. In two years, 55% of Level Up

Level Up Northwest Indiana - Enhancing Our Talent Assets

Talent

participants (78/142) have made progress on one or more their goals. On August 8, 2021, we celebrated the “graduation” of 45 Level Up participants who have completed all the goals they intended to accomplish in the program.

In partnership with donors and charitable foundations, United Way offers tuition, child care, and emergency funds, as well as basic needs referrals to support clients while they work toward better paying jobs.

Level Up complements WorkOne’s services to unemployed and underemployed customers by offering tuition for certification programs to those who do not qualify for WIOA or Next Level Jobs funding. Charity Tracker is a web-based, shared case management system that networks community support organizations and facilitates referrals for basic needs like rent, utilities, food, etc. All participating nonprofits and government service providers can coordinate their services holistically around the needs of each family. This system of shared case management reduces the possibility of duplicating services across providers. In addition, all case managers can observe the types of assistance that families are receiving and take steps address the root causes of their distress.

READI NWI funding would deploy six Family Career Navigators and three Financial Wellness Navigators in WorkOne offices throughout Region 1. In addition, this funding would hire a Charity Tracker Database Admin/Analyst and two part time Partner Development Coordinators to focus on onboarding community agencies to Charity Tracker, pulling data, and standardizing processes in the seven counties in Northwest Indiana.

The Level Up program is grounded in ongoing collective impact dialogue and strategy. As the backbone organization, United Way convenes five community work groups to create solutions for ALICE families regarding jobs, child care, financial wellness, mental health, and overall system goals. Additionally, Level Up relies on the communication between Navigators and other social service agencies through Charity Tracker. Charity Tracker’s integrated online resource directory www.resourceroundup.com helps Navigators and families access resources and support.

READI Funds Requested

\$2,000,000

Current Funding Sources

\$1,734,112.53 from private and philanthropic funds

We have committed to maintaining the current level of program funding so that all of the READI NWI grant funding can be devoted to scaling the project across Region 1.

1:1.5
Match

Matching Funds

Our matching funds are private and philanthropic. We derive funding from individual and corporate gifts to the annual United Way workplace campaign. Additionally, we have partnered with the James W. and Betty Dye Foundation to fund scholarships for Level Up participants who do not qualify for Workforce Ready Grants. Other major philanthropic partners include the John W. Anderson Foundation, Indiana United Ways, Early Learning Indiana, and the ArcelorMittal Foundation (now Cleveland Cliffs Foundation).

Sustainability & Impact

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

There are three ways that Level Up can remove barriers to economic growth.

First, Level Up helps people develop in-demand job skills so that they can increase their income and financial stability. Level Up helps low-income working participants discover skills training and education for in-demand jobs. Navigators identify available funding sources including Workforce Ready Grants. Because of the flexibility of philanthropic support generated through the United Way fundraising campaign as well as partnerships with aligned foundations we can provide a wrap-around support to an expanded number of workers that do not qualify for financial assistance for Next Level Jobs.

Second, Level Up helps families gain financial management skills to repair credit and build savings that they can use to invest in small businesses, purchase homes, etc. Through our partnerships with Northwest Indiana Community Action and Northwest Indiana Reinvestment Alliance, Financial Wellness Navigators offer coaching, accountability, and education to participants. Four clients are actively contributing to Individual Development Accounts, and 53 people are engaged in the “Community Savings Challenge” to save \$250 between June 1 – November 30, 2021. Nearly all of our participants set an ultimate goal for

Level Up Northwest Indiana - Enhancing Our Talent Assets

Sustainability & Impact Continued

homeownership. In two years, three participants have purchased homes, and one additional client has her closing scheduled in mid-August.

Third, Level Up takes a two-generation approach to building family well-being. We offer Level Up participants Family Child Care Grants while they are in our program, making progress on their career and financial goals. Family Child Care Grants cover 90-100% of child care tuition/fees at Paths to Quality Level 3 and 4 child care providers.

The federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) offers families financial assistance for child care so that they can work, attend training or pursue higher education. However, CCDF is only available to families up to 127% of the federal poverty guidelines (e.g., just under \$34,000 income/year for a family of four). Many Region 1 working families earn too much to qualify for federal financial assistance, but not enough to work or attend training and pay for child care.

United Way helps families thrive by providing financial assistance for child care to those workers who are skilling up to obtain a better paying job. Child care is a necessary component of workforce development. At the same time, child care costs, while justifiable from a provider perspective, are a barrier to workforce and economic growth. United Way reduces that burden on families.

Investing in quality, affordable child care has an additional benefit for the children as well. Paths to Quality Level 3 and 4 child care providers engage children in a planned curriculum that leads to school READI NWIness. Investing in early childhood development can prevent the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged communities; improve health outcomes; boost earnings in adulthood; and create a 7-10% return on investment through better educational, health, productivity, and public safety outcomes (Heckman, James. www.heckmanequation.org).

Rural Impact

Currently the Level Up program primarily serves one of the most urban centers in Region 1. The majority of our clients reside in the cities of Hammond, Gary, and East Chicago. Through our partnership with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Northwest Indiana, United Way has funded a full-time Family Career Navigator to work with families of club members in Cedar Lake—a rural community near the western State border of Lake County. The organization is in the process of hiring that staff member.

It is our hope to increase our service to rural communities by deploying Navigators in WorkOne offices throughout more rural communities in Region 1.

Regional Impact

The Level Up program is part of the “Talent Connection” strategy in the Northwest Indiana 21st Century Talent Region. Our role is to increase the skills of working adults and help them obtain better paying, in-demand jobs. As participants work on career goals, we encourage simultaneous financial wellness coaching and/or basic financial literacy classes.

Our Navigators work 1:1 with low-wage workers to access training/certification programs that are part of Indiana’s Next Level Jobs priorities funded through Workforce Ready Grants. In addition, because of our philanthropic partnerships, we can offer scholarships to those individuals who do not qualify for WRG funding because they have earned an associate’s or bachelor’s degree. In this way, United Way can complement State funding to expand the talent pool of workers with in-demand skills.

We partner with educational institutions like Ivy Tech Community College, Indiana Tech, DeVry University, MedCerts LLC, DriveCo, etc. to support individuals and cohorts of adult students working toward careers in high demand jobs. Some highlights include:

- 9 Level Up students completed the Certified Production Technician training and earned one or more manufacturing certifications (OSHA 10, Forklift, Safety, Quality, Manufacturing Process, and Maintenance Awareness).
- 11 Level Up students completed coursework for the Certified Clinical Medical Assistant, and 7 have earned the certification.
- 6 Level Up students have just completed coursework for Certified Logistics Technician/Certified Logistics Associate program, and 6 of those have earned CLA, OSHA 10, and Forklift certifications. 5 have earned the CLT certification.

As the Level Up program has evolved in its first two years, 55% of participants (78/142) have made progress working toward one or more their goals. Some key successes include:

- 63 participants have enrolled in higher education or job certification programs.
- 32 participants have increased their wages.
- 28 participants have obtained better-paying, full time jobs.
- 27 people have earned one or more job certifications.
- 10 participants have increased their savings.
- 2 participants have purchased their first homes.

Each Family Career Navigator (FT) can handle a caseload of approximately 40-60 participants per year. We estimate that Financial Wellness Navigators (FT) could handle approximately 90 participants per year. This grant proposal includes adding six Family Career Navigators and three Financial Wellness Navigators to Region 1.

From 2014-2016, the percentage of ALICE households in Region 1 increased from 21% to 28%. Our last

Level Up Northwest Indiana - Enhancing Our Talent Assets

Sustainability & Impact Continued

data indicate that there are 90,864 ALICE households in the seven Northwest Indiana counties. With these READI NWI resources, our proposed outcomes over three years are:

- To help 810 individuals attain better paying, full time employment and maintain it for six months
- To help 535 individuals earn a credential or certification
- To help 650 families create a budget/expense plan and maintain it for six months.
- To help 500 families improve their credit rating.
- To help 260 families save at least \$250.
- To help 30 families attain home ownership.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

Our focus has been to execute on the “Talent Connection” strategy in the Northwest Indiana 21st Century Talent Region, and to align with Next Level Jobs initiative, both accessing and expanding the reach of the Workforce Ready Grants.

Sustainability Plan

Level Up launched as a pilot program in 2019 with funding from donations to the United Way workplace campaign and generous grants from private and corporate foundations. This READI NWI funding will scale the project across Region 1 in partnership with the Center of Workforce Innovations. As success grows we will continue to diversify funding streams.

Military Attraction / INVet Involvement

While this is not a specific goal of Level Up, five of our clients include members of the Army, Army Reserve, and National Guard.

Long Term Investment

While this is not a specific goal of the Level Up program, we believe that both increasing the skilled workforce and helping families become homeowners make the region an attractive, stable place for business investment program, we believe that both increasing the skilled workforce and helping families become homeowners make the region an attractive, stable place for business investment.

Success Metrics

Our proposed outcomes over three years are:

- 810 individuals attain better paying, full time employment and maintain it for six months
- 535 individuals earn a credential or certification
- 650 families create a budget/expense plan and maintain it for six months.
- 500 families improve their credit rating.
- 260 families save at least \$250.
- 30 families attain home ownership.

We maintain and support a shared, web-based case management system called Charity Tracker. All case notes and client progress toward goals are documented here. With our participants’ consent, nonconfidential data about the assistance they receive from any participating nonprofit is visible to case managers in the Charity Tracker network. This enables case managers to work together and communicate about shared clients, and this reduces the potential for duplicating services.

With READI NWI funding, we will hire a full time Database Admin/Analyst to determine consistent systems for data entry across providers in seven counties and report relevant data to secure future funding investments. Additionally, we will recruit two AmeriCorps members to onboard regional service providers to the Charity Tracker platform and populate its integrated online public resource directory www.resourceroundup.com.

READY NWI Talent Alignment Program

Location

All Seven Counties

Managing Partners

Center of Workforce Innovations

Key Stakeholders

Key stakeholders for this program include students, employers, and educators. This program benefits students by improving their educational and employment outcomes. Because of READY NWI, students in the region are more prepared to enter post-secondary education or the workforce upon graduation. During the existence of the program, regional graduation rates have improved, remediation rates have declined, and overall and on-time post-secondary completion rates have risen. These improved education and employment outcomes also serve to improve lifetime earnings potential for region students. For employers, the project results not only in a larger number of students graduating and becoming available for work, but also greater employability skills among those graduates. People with higher levels of educational attainment are more likely to participate in the labor force. By increasing outcomes, READY NWI directly affects the amount of available talent. For educators, the project will improve educational opportunities and outcomes of local students. Increased graduation rates not only help current students achieve better wages and work opportunities, but also changes what would have been a negative statistic for the school's outcomes into a positive. Higher ranking school systems make the community more attractive for talent recruitment. The coalition also provides a forum to share best practices, elevating education opportunities across the region.

Summary

READY NWI stands for 'Regional Education and Employer Alliance for Developing Youth' in Northwest Indiana. The Coalition was created in 2012 to ensure that our high school students graduate prepared to further their education and to obtain degrees and other certifications that meet Northwest Indiana employer needs. READY NWI membership includes more than 70 school corporations and career and technical education programs as well as eight colleges and universities across the seven-county region. While CWI currently provides staff support to the group, the coalition is headed by a leadership team of educators co-chaired by a representative from a secondary and post-secondary institution. READY will be transitioning to a new organization and funding structure. Project funding will be used to sustain the

coalition through the transition to ensure continuity of this transformational region program. Funding will allow for a READY NWI Director and staff support that includes: facilitating all meetings; creating agendas; securing guest speakers; developing improved data tracking for results measurement; recruiting and cultivating relationships with employers, CTE, K-12 and higher education educators; and coordinating Summer Institute. Additionally, we will establish an Employer Advisory Council to better align education programs and employer needs.

READI Funds Requested

\$300,000

Current Funding Sources

\$300,000

1:1 Match

Sustainability & Impact

Regional Impact

READY NWI is committed to ensuring that region high school students graduate academically, socially, and financially prepared to further their education without the need for remediation and to obtain degrees and other certifications that directly meet the needs of Northwest Indiana employers. We are also committed to presenting a full range of affordable post-high school education and training options so that no student is denied access to the education that will be needed for acquiring high-quality jobs in the region. The goal of the coalition is to ensure more region students graduate and that they leave either college or job ready depending on their interest.

We perform this work through partnerships with K-12 schools as well as regional colleges and universities in all seven counties of Northwest Indiana and the regional workforce development system. Through this partnership, NWI's education system is better prepared to take on new opportunities and challenges. The recently adopted Graduation Pathways, for example, presented READY NWI with a unique opportunity to lead the state in adoption by advancing our goals of engaging employers as full partners with K-12 schools and colleges, blending classroom learning with real-world applications in the workplace, and expanding work-based learning opportunities with new internships, community service experiences, work ethic certifications, projects designed by employers, and other means.

READY NWI Talent Alignment Program

Sustainability & Impact Continued

Sustainability Plan

Funding received through the READI grant will be used to sustain the coalition as it is transitioned from an informal project into a stand-alone organization. Current sustainability plans after the expenditure of READI funding include developing a small membership fee for participating schools. The remaining financial support for READY NWI will come from donations by Employer Advisory Council members as well as donations from private regional foundations.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

This program improves the talent pipeline in the region, providing current and potential employers increased access to a skilled workforce. Across the country, access to skilled workers is chief among the barriers to restarting operations at full capacity or making new investments. READY NWI has a proven track record of improving educational outcomes for region high school, colleges and universities. Over the span of the coalition's existence, NWI has regularly bested the state average in high school graduation rates and a greater percentage of post-secondary students in the region are completing their study. These improvements lead to a more prepared workforce for employers, and higher earnings, better opportunities, and less debt for students. READY NWI also strengthens the connection between education and businesses by sponsoring teacher and counselor tours of local employers so that they can better advise students on available opportunities in the region.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

This program aligns with the state's "Big Goal" initiative in partnership with the Lumina Foundation to boost the percentage of the population with a post-secondary credential to 60% by 2025 to meet the demand of employers for more high skill talent. The coalition is focused on increasing high school graduation rates, employability skills, and post-secondary enrollment of high school populations to directly address the demand of this goal. READY NWI priorities also align with the goals of the 21st Century Talent Region for Northwest Indiana. Specifically, this program directly impacts three of the five goals of the Talent Region, increasing graduation rates for minority and under-served high school students, increasing the number of graduates with a post-secondary credential, and increasing the number of internship and other work and learn opportunities available across the region.

Long Term Investment

Access to talent is one of the most important criteria for new business investment. Businesses already unable to find talent and prospective new projects are unlikely to make new investments in the region if they cannot find the necessary talent to operate that investment. The READY NWI coalition improves both the quantity and quality of talent available to existing and potential employers by improving the outcomes of secondary and post-secondary students. The addition of an Employer Advisory Council will further strengthen this group by ensuring alignment between employer needs and educational programs.

Rural Impact

READY NWI counts among its member's school corporations from every county in the region. These rural school corporations are full members along with every urban district in the group and as such, their communities enjoy the same benefits as all other communities represented.

Success Metrics

READY NWI serves as a backbone development and collaboration organization for the region. It is a program unlike any other in the state that brings together all public school corporations, post-secondary institutions, and employers in the region. This collaboration work is directly required to meet the metrics of other regional initiatives, including those in this READI application. Programs such as Employer Upskilling and the expansion of internships and apprenticeships are made possible because of the work of READY NWI. The efforts of this group also directly tie into and impact the goals outlined in NWI's 21st Century Talent Region. Those goals, which this project seeks to improve indirectly include increasing the regions graduation rate for minority students, post-secondary enrollment and attainment rate of region high school graduates, and participation in work and learn activities such as internships. The funding request for this project serves to ensure that the project continues and develops into a formalized organization.

Increase Population Growth

Quality of place is one of the most important factors currently affecting population migration. For families, education opportunities for their children regularly ranks high on the list of quality of place considerations. This project serves to improve educational offerings and outcomes for the region, improving the lives of current residents and reducing out-bound migration as well as increasing our attractiveness for new transplants. By creating a more connected K-12 through post-secondary education ecosystem, the group encourages more students to stay local after high school and remain in the region when they enter the job market. Initiatives of the READY NWI coalition such as the building trades and manufacturing day events serve to increase awareness of employment opportunities available within the region, better illuminating the work opportunities in the region to students that might not necessarily enter college.

READY NWI Handout Link



Employed Worker Upskilling

Location

All Seven Counties

Managing Partners

Center of Workforce Innovations

Key Stakeholders

Key stakeholders for this project include employers, workers, training providers, and local economic developers. This program benefits employers by providing direct support for the establishment of workforce training programs to help fill skill gaps and retain top talent. More broadly, the project will increase the overall education level of our region translating into more highly skilled individuals available for work. This program benefits workers by improving their educational and employment outcomes. Workers completing training programs receive higher wages and more opportunities for advancement. These improved education and employment outcomes also serve to improve lifetime earnings potential for the regional workforce. For training providers, increased partnerships lead to the development of more education program offerings and access to a larger student population. Enrollment at post-secondary institutions in the region has been declining in recent years. By creating new inroads with employers and current workers, these providers gain access to a new segment of the population to serve. Finally, for local economic developers this program will provide another tool in the toolbox for attracting new business investment into our local communities. This program can be leveraged as economic development assets not available in other regions in the state or other states in the country, providing our region with a competitive advantage over those other areas.

Summary

The Employer Upskilling project will serve as an expansion of current regional workforce development activities. Funding currently made available through state and federal workforce training programs include a number of criteria employers and workers must satisfy in order to be eligible for financial resources. This program will allow the regional workforce system to serve a greater number of businesses and workers looking to advance their skills. Funding received through this grant will be targeted at industries and occupations not currently able to be supported through current funding streams. Priority partnerships with businesses will include those that: avert layoff situations; assists employers with upgrading the skills of employees in order to retain or maintain employment; enhance worker wage earning capacity; and/or add to the viability and productivity of the business.

This program will leverage operations currently underway by the regional WorkOne system through the efforts of the Business Services Representatives (BSR) team as well as training providers such as Ivy Tech. BSR's are currently the frontline representatives of the workforce system with employers. They assist and deliver services to small, medium, and large sized businesses, providing job postings, screening and

recruitment, and training engagement. In order to expand the reach of this team to meet the scope of this project, we will establish a referral network in partnership with local economic development organizations current business retention and expansion efforts. The project will also work closely with the Ivy Tech Office of Career Coaching and Employer Connections to align training programs with employer needs.

READI Funds Requested

\$600,000

Current Funding Sources

\$450,000 from Private Investors and Foundations

1:1.3
Match

Sustainability & Impact

Sustainability Plan

This project serves as an expansion of current workforce development initiatives underway across the region. As a result, the project will be sustained by federal and state workforce funding which will be augmented by additional unrestricted funding from private foundations to provide support to those occupations and industries not currently eligible for funding.

Increase Population Growth

The economic vitality and population dynamics of a region are closely connected. This project seeks to increase the economic vitality of Northwest Indiana by strengthening our regional talent pipeline and closing the skills gap between available talent and employer demand. As things currently stand, the ability to access talent is one of the biggest determinants of thriving business operations. Companies able to maintain full staffing levels become more productive, leading to growth. This growth leads to a greater number of regional opportunities, spurring both economic vitality and population growth. An employer training resource with fewer restrictions than what is currently available will help ensure a broader range of industries are able to flourish in the region. This broad base of employment opportunities can help to attract a more diverse population in search of different occupational opportunities.

Sustainability & Impact

Existing IEDC Innovation Programs Involvement

Expanding partnerships between the business community and the education system is a priority of Governor Holcomb's Next Level Agenda as well as the 21st Century Talent Region initiative. This program also aligns with the state's "Big Goal" initiative in partnership with the Lumina Foundation to boost the percentage of the population with a post-secondary credential to 60% by 2025 to meet the demand of employers for more high skill talent.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

This program improves the talent pipeline in the region, providing current and potential employers increased access to a skilled workforce. Across the country, access to skilled workers is critical among the barriers to restarting operations at full capacity or making new investments. Expanding workforce training programs to more occupations and industries makes the region a more attractive home for business relocation and expansion.

These programs fall under business and talent retention initiatives. Regional businesses unable to find or build the talent they need are unlikely to remain in our region. Conversely, a region with a robust talent pipeline is poised to not only retain current employers, but attract new ones as well. Much the same can be said for the workforce as well. Local training programs make local talent less likely to migrate to better opportunities.

Military Attraction / INVet Involvement

Not specifically, but a percentage of businesses served will be required to be women, minority or veteran owned businesses.

Regional Impact

The proposed program seeks to serve both regional workers and companies by increasing the number of employer upskilling programs taking place across the region. Current funding resources in the state of Indiana rank industries based on statewide demand factors which are then translated into zero to five flame ratings with five being highest demand. Often only those highest rated industries qualify for existing funds. The funds requested here will allow businesses that are emerging or in jeopardy, which may not be deemed by the state of Indiana as highest demand for employment to be assisted. By widening the base of companies that can be supported through retraining their workforce, smaller or specialty firms will remain a vital part of our communities. Expanding the resources available to upskill workers will also help current businesses to fill staffing gaps in their operations, and raise the overall educational attainment level of our region. This makes Northwest Indiana more attractive to new investment as prospective companies come to realize our region is the place to be to fill their staffing needs.

From a resident workforce perspective, expanding the number of upskilling programs results in greater opportunities to advance skills, higher wages, more marketable skills, and improved access to good jobs.

Success Metrics

Performance metrics for this program tie success to increasing the number of employer partners as well as the quality of training programs offered. From a partnership perspective, we will measure the number of new employer training programs created. We will also measure the number of workers at those businesses trained. As part of this employer partnership expansion we will also seek to work with a minimum number of women, minority, and veteran owned businesses in the region.

From a program quality standpoint success will be measured by the alignment of programs with employer needs and worker satisfaction. Specific measures used will include credential attainment, job retention after completion, and wage increases for workers.

Long Term Investment

Access to talent is one of the most important criteria for new business investment. Businesses already unable to find talent or prospective new projects are unlikely to make investments in the region if they cannot find the necessary talent to operate that investment. Increased workforce training resources and programs across the region can be leveraged as economic development assets not available in other regions in the state or other states in the country, providing Northwest Indiana with a competitive advantage over those other areas.

Rural Impact

This project serves as expansion of current employer upskilling efforts in the region. Those efforts currently include all counties in the region. A dedicated BSR currently serves the rural counties of the region. This individual support allows businesses in those counties to receive support tailored to their specific needs.

The expanded funding received through this project will allow for an even deeper level of support to be provided to rural counties. The restrictions currently in place on training support funding can often prevent companies from accessing resources. An employer or occupation may be in-demand for the local economy, but not in-demand according to statewide criteria. This funding would allow greater flexibility to support training that would be most transformational in local rural communities.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

Expanding partnerships between the business community and the education system is a priority of Governor Holcomb's Next Level Agenda as well as the 21st Century Talent Region initiative. This program also aligns with the state's "Big Goal" initiative in partnering with the Lumina Foundation to boost the percentage of the population with a post-secondary credential to 60% by 2025 in order to meet the demand of employers for more high skill talent.

Boys & Girls Club Teen Workforce Academy and Tech Center

Location

Gary, Lake County

Managing Partners

Boys & Girls Club of NWI

Key Stakeholders

- **Teens** – structured process resulting in a post-high school plan that turns interests and passions into career pathways.
- **Families** – Access to partners who can move them out of the cycle of working poor and into financial stability.
- **Start-up businesses** – affordable access to technology.
- **Employers** – a pipeline to recruit qualified talent.
- **Communities** - where we have Clubs, our organization is a change-agent for social justice.

Summary

Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Northwest Indiana (BGCGNWI) is engaging partners and leading the development of a regional initiative focusing on the teen workforce pipeline. As a trusted community organization with 67 years of experience serving youth, we are the natural leader to bring together experts to develop the future workforce.

Our inaugural partners to launch a Teen Workforce Academy are well known for delivering results – the Center of Workforce Innovations and their providers, Society of Innovators at Purdue Northwest and Ivy Tech.

Our partner organizations primarily serve adults. But they understand that it's equally important to develop a pipeline of talent beginning at an early age. And they want to work with us to create a teen workforce program. BGCGNWI is the natural leader to convene stakeholders and develop partnerships that focus on teens.

All careers require digital literacy and a basic comfort level in engaging with technology. Ensuring equal access to technology is a foundation in our Teen Workforce Academy. Today, some of our Clubs have tech equipment, but some do not.

We seek to level the playing field by investing in Teen Tech Centers within each Club and/or mobile Centers to serve our teens equally whether they are located in East Chicago, Gary, Hammond, Lake Station, Merrillville, Cedar Lake, Portage, South Haven, Valparaiso or Chesterton. Our flagship Teen Tech Center, in partnership with Best Buy, will be located in our John Will Anderson Gary Club.

We are opening the first Boys & Girls Clubs Best Buy Teen Tech Center (BBTTC) in the state of Indiana in our Gary Club. Opening in early 2022, the state-of-the-art Center will provide cutting-edge technology, where teens can imagine and explore.

Our program partner is the Society of Innovators at Purdue Northwest (SOI). Youth entrepreneurship is a key tool to develop teens. All students deserve a world-class, well-rounded education and entrepreneurship is an integral aspect. SOI will train our teens and our staff to think like entrepreneurs.

To help teens connect classroom instruction and technology with careers, we launched a pilot program around the theme: Kids can't be what they can't see.

Employers opened their doors so teens can see the work they do. In the spring of 2021, we took 30 teens on tours of Cleveland Cliffs Burns Harbor, Hammond Machine and Ivy Tech's precision machining academy. Teens were able to connect the dots and see first-hand some career options available in our community.

Guidance counselors, students and employers agree that this type of exposure is crucial. We are committed to taking 100 teens on 3 unique employer trips over the 21-22 school year.

Digital technology is increasingly prevalent. But some situations prevent or impede access. Our Tech Centers can play a role in the solution. We'd like to explore a business model that provides access to an audience beyond our teens. A social enterprise to generate revenue is critical to our sustainability strategy. It could include usage or profit-sharing agreements with start-up businesses, young entrepreneurs and the general public.

To foster community involvement in our Gary Club, we will encourage partners to use our classrooms for adult education. One such partner is the Eleven-Fifty Academy. The leadership team of the Eleven-Fifty Academy is dedicated to improving the lives of those facing poverty or financial insecurity by improving skills and reducing barriers to entering technology careers. And they are interested in locating a flagship academy in Gary.

Gary is home to our first Club. In 1954, the Steel City Boy's Club opened in the Beveridge school. To honor this history and cement a successful future for the community, we will launch our Teen Workforce Academy in our John Will Anderson Gary Club.

The Club, bordered by Tolleston Park, is an anchor institution in the community. It is identified in Gary's community development plan as an area for investment. The City of Gary has earmarked funds from the Community Development Block Grant to foster neighborhood stability, improve infrastructure and promote revitalization. We believe we can play a role in transforming Tolleston into a vibrant district.

But, the people in Tolleston must be at the center of our conversations. We want them to guide the next

Boys & Girls Club Teen Workforce Academy and Tech Center

steps for our Club. So we will engage them to provide their unique solutions to invigorate the neighborhood rather than impose them. Our grassroots-driven approach will tap into the hearts of the Tolleston residents who are driven by a deeply anchored passion for equality.

READI Funds Requested

\$2,000,000

Current Funding Sources

\$928,000 from private sources

1:2.15
Match

Matching Funds

Best Buy, Legacy Foundation, Crown Point Community Foundation, Lake Area United Way, Korellis Roofing Boeing, Hard Rock Casino, Lowe's, NWI Workforce Board, City of Gary

Sustainability & Impact

Sustainability Plan

With approval from our Board of Directors, we are moving to include social enterprise revenue in our business model. Our BBTTC and satellite centers will allow us to enter into technology usage agreements with start-up businesses and tenant agreements with service providers. Memorandums of Understanding with local employers will move us from a traditional restricted funding model to one with more flexibility to achieve goals and to grow. We will diversify our revenue streams by applying for state and federal dollars to support workforce readiness and redirect local foundation and community grants to other areas of need. We expect this shift to take several years.

Regional Impact

BGCGNWI is ten communities strong. 10,000 annual Club members, times (x) an average family size of 4 = 40,000 people. The average population of the ten communities combined where we have Clubs is 300,000. We have direct relationships and the potential to influence 13% of that population. We believe this is significant and we have a responsibility to join forces with "traditional" economic development entities and do our part through education and by leveraging the brick-and-mortar assets of our Clubs.

Increase Population Growth

Our project has the potential to impact population growth over the long term with cooperation from our employer partners. We envision a partnership where employers offer Boys & Girls Club memberships to employees' children as part of their benefits package. Having a safe afterschool place for their young children and a Workforce Readiness platform available for teens may act as an incentive to bring adults into our workforce.

Rural Impact

Based on the USDA's definition of rural business services, we serve rural members at multiple sites. However, the majority of our members reside and attend school in urban communities. So we anticipate the concentration of direct benefits will be realized in urban communities.

We do, however, have the opportunity to positively impact our airshed by moving to propane vehicles. As a member of the Clean Cities Coalition Network, we are aware that every effort counts – no matter how big or how small.

Did you know we have 19 vehicles consuming approximately 11,000 gallons of fuel per year? We move students from their schools to our Clubs 5 days a week during the school year. That does not account for the teen employer tours for which we need dedicated buses. We have a goal to eventually replace all of our vehicles and we know that will positively impact the air quality which includes our rural communities.

Long Term Investment

Our project focuses on two types of investment – infrastructure and human capital.

Infrastructure: Investment in our Gary Club and the Tolleston area could spur private development along 19th Avenue. Little to no retail exists in the corridor today and housing stock in the area is dilapidated.

Our IT investments in Gary and our other Clubs are intended to support start-up businesses that can not afford the upfront investment in technology. This allows them to invest in their products and services and marketing them to grow their business. If successful, the start-ups will contribute to our tax base and influence consumer spending.

Human capital: Our project delivers the intangible assets and qualities companies can't articulate on a balance sheet – education, mental and emotional well-being, foundational skills like punctuality, problem-solving, people management, communication skills and fundamental culture change around racial equity.

Our project will be scalable and we will welcome expansion through other providers to invest in the communities they serve in Northern Indiana.

Boys & Girls Club Teen Workforce Academy and Tech Center

Sustainability & Impact Continued

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

Families are central to growing the economy. And working families, who do not qualify for most federally funded support programs, are a focus of our project.

Barrier: System Support - The teens we serve at BGCGNWI could be categorized as the “lost middle”. They do not have parents who have successfully navigated Indiana Graduation Pathways on their behalves. They don’t have parents with the time or wherewithal to complete the FASFA application. Club Teens are not enrolled in a career path through a school-based CTE program. Our teens miss out on capitalizing on their potential due to failures outside their control. Our project provides the personal assistance necessary to support them and their parents so they can contribute to our economy.

Barrier: Connectivity - Funding for education in our community is dedicated to formal in-school learning and upskilling for adults. Our public school system does not provide students a direct link between classroom skills, CTE skills and potential employers. Kids can’t be what kids can’t see. Our project is the only one that exposes students to careers by providing behind-the-scenes tours of local employers. In cooperation with school guidance counselors, Indiana Career Connects Interest Assessments and personal engagement with students, we can formally connect the dots to ensure our teens leave high school with a plan leading to a living wage job.

Barrier: Transportation – in partnership with Goodwill Industries, qualifying students who do not have transportation to the Club may receive gas cards, bus vouchers, etc to ensure they come and go safely. For the employer tours, BCG will provide bus transportation so we are not at the mercy of school schedules.

Barrier: Trust – we have been serving families and developing trust for more than 60 years. Many well-intentioned programs fail because the provider is new in our community and/or is not perceived as a “safe and trusted” partner. Our space is perceived as “neutral and non-threatening” and parents already come into our Clubs daily. They have relationships with staff and trust our brand name.

Barrier: Access to Services - we have hired a Family Services Director in cooperation with the Lake Area United Way ALICE initiative. Our Family Services Director will work with our teen families to case manage the needs of their parents and refer them to the Lake Area Unites Way’s Level Up Program. The aim is to break the cycle of working poor by upskilling the parent/s alongside the efforts to prepare the teens for the workforce.

Barrier: Racism – foundational to this project is addressing systematic racism in our education and employment structures. Today, systemic gaps present an opportunity for us to create equity and equality

for everyone, particularly those who identify as black or people of color. Together with Boys & Girls Clubs of America and a local consultant, we are advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to create Clubs and communities that support belonging. Creating an ecosystem that shifts standards for equity requires strategic development and expansive partnership efforts. If we change the value narrative of education and wraparound supports – we can serve communities as they deserve to be served. Our work will develop the cultural leadership skills of our Directors and Leadership Team to navigate community environments and become advocates for equity as we serve students.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

Yes, our project aligns with Indiana’s Innovation & Entrepreneurship Program.

One of IEDC’s goals focuses on K-12 Education – through partnerships with school programs, from an early age, Hoosiers will learn about the opportunities of entrepreneurship.

Our program partner, Society of Innovators at Purdue Northwest, will prepare teens enrolled in our program to submit a project in the Innovate WithIN competition. Innovate WithIN is a pitch competition hosted by the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) and the STARTedUP Foundation for high school students across Indiana.

The Best Buy Teen Tech Center and Satellite Centers may look like STEM labs at first glance, but they are not. The intention is for teens to use the technology to explore their own ideas, passions and learn how technology can aid in their creativity. With leadership from SOI at PNW, we are confident that our spaces will encourage our teens to think like entrepreneurs.

In addition, through rentals/tenancy agreements, we will play a role in creating a Regional Entrepreneurial Culture – another IEDC goal. Our tech spaces can be developed into co-working spaces, incubators and innovation centers in all 10 of our communities.

Existing IEDC Innovation Programs Involvement

Yes, our project is the platform to introduce the Innovate WithIn competition to students in underserved communities of color.

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Boys & Girls Club Teen Workforce Academy and Tech Center

Sustainability & Impact Continued

Success Metrics

In 2019 we served 2,700 teen members. Our 2025 goal is 5,000. But beyond reporting a number, we are committed to strategies and partnerships that contribute to the goals set forth in the NWI Forum's **IGNITE the Region** plan:

- Teens will have a post-high school plan leading to living wage jobs
- Influence improvement in Educational Attainment and Poverty Rate economic indicators
- Participants are gainfully employed in the sector of their choice earning an income comparable to the industry standard average for NWIN
- Gary Club will be remodeled and have tenants to generate revenue
- A community lead, social justice plan is in place for Tolleston and public safety rates and housing stock is improved



Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Business Training Program

Talent

1:2.3 Match

Location

Gary, Indiana

Managing Partners

Urban League

Key Stakeholders

Our key stakeholders are the citizens, organizations, and businesses that we serve. The benefit that we provide to them are strategies, skills, and techniques that promote diversity and inclusion which ultimately encourages civility and benefits all stakeholders.

Summary

The Urban League of Northwest Indiana proposes to provide staff development and training in the areas of Diversity and Inclusion as well as Customer Service. This service has been provided for schools and agencies in Northwest Indiana. We recognize the need to address both diversity and inclusion. Our diversity professional development focuses on awareness training and skills training. We strive to raise awareness by helping individuals see the world through the eyes of someone of a different age, race or gender. The training process also involves specific exercises to help people build skills, such as communicating better with people from diverse backgrounds and reducing the levels of unconscious bias in their decision-making. The Urban League Diversity and Inclusion Professional Development training framework provides staff with the tools and supports to identify and address systemic barriers in order to build a diverse and inclusive workforce broadly representative of the citizens and communities we serve. Through comfortable “keeping it real” sessions, we provide the means to integrate diversity and inclusion values and practices into existing processes.

Our customer service training will focus on assisting staff with techniques for successful interactions with their clients. This training includes an emphasis on dress, speech, body language and other relevant factors for positive interactions with customers. The customer service training includes interactive activities to allow the participant to have hands on experiences.

READI Funds Requested

\$300,000

Current Funding Sources

\$130,000

Matching Funds

Our matching funds are primarily private. Partners include NIPSCO, Lake Area United Way, and Lilly Endowment.

Regional Impact

The Urban League is a non-profit agency focused to improve the quality of life among citizens in several areas including diversity and inclusion. This grant has a direct impact on the social commitment that we have to the community by providing a service that meets the social needs of the clients we serve and thereby has a major impact on the region as a whole.

Increase Population Growth

The Urban League’s Diversity and Inclusion Professional Development training framework provides staff with the tools and supports to identify and address systemic barriers in order to build a diverse and inclusive workforce broadly representative of the citizens and communities we serve. Through comfortable “keeping it real” sessions, it provides the means to integrate diversity and inclusion values and practices into existing organizational processes which provides the gateway to increase population growth in the workplace and community at-large.

Rural Impact

The Urban League is a non-profit agency focused to improve the quality of life among citizens in the Northwest Indiana Region. This grant has a direct impact on the social commitment and development in rural communities.

Military Attraction / INVet Involvement

Our program promotes diversity and inclusion and therefore attracts military veterans, INVets, and all other stakeholders

Long Term Investment

Diversity and Inclusion Professional development is the essential strategy that promotes communication within an organization. Using effective communication, our project encourages long term investment for individuals and the region as a whole.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Business Training Program

Sustainability & Impact

Sustainability Plan

The sustainability plan includes ongoing support with financial commitments from private donors. Additionally, marketing, PR/media outreach, and annual fund development plans will be implemented.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

Without the fear of retribution, barriers' are removed by creating a safe space where people are allowed to share, brainstorm, and discuss roadblocks and obstacles that prevents economic growth.

We strive to raise awareness by helping individuals see the world through the eyes of someone of a different age, race or gender. The training process also involves specific exercises to help people build skills, such as communicating better with people from diverse backgrounds and reducing the levels of unconscious bias in their decision-making.

All of this supports efforts to remove barriers to economic growth for the region.

Success Metrics

The program will use three methods of evaluation which will measure the project's success. One metric of evaluation will begin with the initial application/assessment process. The assessment serves as a pre-test and requires organization leadership to complete an assessment that summarizes the demographics of employees, and provides expectations of the diversity and inclusion awareness training sessions. The second evaluation metric is seen in the polling or post test evaluation that is given at the end of the D&I Awareness Training. The third metric method of evaluation is the post-assessment summary that is discussed with the leadership. This discussion examines the effectiveness of the program curriculum and provides strategies for developing and implementing action plans to move forward processes that promote diversity and inclusion.

Ivy Tech, CWI & IBEW Energy Tech Training Academy

Location

All Seven Counties

Managing Partners

Ivy Tech Community College

Key Stakeholders

Stakeholders include the local community energy companies, namely, Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO) and Rural Electric Membership Cooperative (REMC's), the local high schools and the local and county government. We will also be bringing additional stakeholders as the project expands. Benefits will allow companies to transition to more environmentally friendly infrastructure.

Summary

Energy Technology-Renewable Concentration will utilize education, training, and real-world applications to plan for future talent needs focused on the sustainable energy industry. This program will support the regional leading energy industry with their workforce needs. The existing Energy Technology program at Ivy Tech has been developed in partnership with NIPSCO which offers dual credit opportunities to the local high school, AK Smith Energy Academy students, and non traditional students. This project will enhance existing programming, develop new talent, as well as upskill Indiana energy industry's current workforce.

Indiana is without question a critical component in our nation's plan to develop, install and maintain solar technology. The goal of the Department of Energy Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO) is to accelerate the development and deployment of solar technology to support an equitable transition to a decarbonized electricity system by 2035 and decarbonized energy sector by 2050 (<https://www.energy.gov/eere>). As the nation looks toward the future, Ivy Tech Community College will play a pivotal role as the training institution for solar and renewable technology. Ivy Tech-Valparaiso campus is well-positioned to lead this effort and set training and program standards for other Ivy Tech campuses as well as other colleges to implement this initiative.

Project Activities:

Develop high-value educational and training products that address the full range of technologies needed to support Solar and Renewable Technology. These educational products will encompass the full range of technologies in solar and renewable technology including (i) Theory, maintenance and installation of

photovoltaics (PV), (ii) Systems integration, (iii) Solar-thermal power (CSP) & new technology in renewable technology and (iv) consumer education and preferences with respect to this new technology.

Deliver educational and training programs to both traditional and non-traditional students, including Certificate Programs for specific needs of the current workforce.

Partner with the regional industries in solar and renewable technology to ensure that the graduates of the education/training programs meet the needs of this evolving industry.

Share the educational training material with the high schools to prepare secondary school students for the solar and renewable technology industry.

Content experts contracted to develop solar and renewable curriculum in collaboration with the solar industry.

Support professional development for faculty in the solar and renewable technology.

Collaborate with industry partners and advisory board members to equip the Valparaiso campus with the state-of-the-art technology to become the premier solar and renewable training center.

Develop an outreach activity that will ignite the passion of the best and brightest young people to pursue a career in some aspect of renewable energy technology.

READI Funds Requested

\$750,000

Current Funding Sources

\$248,225 from public and private funding

Matching Funds

Funding is public and private. Partners include NextEra Inc, to collaborate on projects such as the Dunns Bridge Solar Project. Ivy Tech has invested \$135,000 in equipment and will invest \$113,225 in faculty and staff. An estimated 150 individuals should be hired by private industry, with an average salary of \$44,000. (\$6.6M). These wages will be an investment in the community.

1:3
Match

Ivy Tech, CWI & IBEW Energy Tech Training Academy

Sustainability & Impact

Increase Population Growth

The project will bring the new technology to the Valparaiso community which should increase innovation in the field of energy and attract new families to the community to help fill the newly created positions.

Military Attraction / INVet Involvement

Ivy Tech Community College dedicates support personnel and scholarships for veterans as well as awards credit for veterans military experiences and training. The following branches are able to use their benefits at Ivy Tech to cover tuition costs for enrollment: Air Force, Army, Army National Guard, Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard. In addition, spousal benefits may be available through MyCAA. Ivy Tech has departments dedicated to Veteran Affairs and works closely with the Veteran Affairs office and the School Certifying Official (SCO) and/or Veterans Affairs Coordinator (VACO). The SCO/VACO is the person who works directly with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to submit your enrollment for GI Bill® payments. They are also aware of other educational benefits and can help guide our veterans through their education process. Ivy Tech has a dedicated webpage for Veterans with direct links to the Veterans Services homepage and the following state and federal links to assure Veterans have full access to all services available to veterans

Long Term Investment

Our initiative is aligned with the Federal solar infrastructure which should impact local and regional funding and investments in the community. This project will tie in the local government goals to enhance and expand the community.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

This project will allow our campus to move forward with new environmentally efficient technology helping to remove barriers presented with outdated technology.

We are the community college that upskills the local workforce.

Our initiative is aligned with the Federal solar infrastructure which should impact local and regional funding and investments in the community. This project will tie in the local government goals to enhance and expand the community.

Rural Impact

This project will be built in rural communities which will support the workforce with a link to the local high schools. This will also help the at-risk population expand their skill set to obtain better jobs. This will help provide renewable energy to the rural communities in alignment with the federal government energy initiatives. The Dunns Bridge project's impact on the region has a similar impact in rural communities as stated above.

Regional Impact

This project will move toward accomplishing much needed postsecondary credentials aligned with the local industry workforce needs along with statewide goals.

Ivy Tech will partner with industry leading developers, such as NextEra Inc, to collaborate on projects such as the Dunns Bridge Solar Project (as listed on the NextEra website). This project is an innovative solar project in Jasper County, Indiana combining up to 700 megawatts of clean, solar energy with 75 megawatts of battery energy storage, making more renewable energy available to customers for more hours of the day, even when the sun is not shining. As one example in the region, the Dunns Bridge Solar project is more than solar panels and batteries - it represents a significant capital investment in Indiana. Once operational, it will create good-paying jobs and millions in additional revenue for the local community. Education and training will focus on both installation and maintenance, high wage, high demand jobs.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

Yes, the Commission on Higher Education (CHE), and Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) focuses on the high demand careers. Our programs and initiatives offer business support and expertise to companies that are investing and creating jobs in Indiana. We're working to improve our quality of place, infrastructure, available development sites and regulatory assistance to build economic strength and opportunity that grows and attracts new business and talent. The Governors Workforce Council (GWC) and Ivy Tech are focused on creating new high-wage, high-skill opportunities for the next generation of Hoosiers.

Success Metrics

The program will use three methods of evaluation which will measure the project's success. One metric of evaluation will begin with the initial application/assessment process. The assessment serves as a pre-test and requires organization leadership to complete an assessment that summarizes the demographics of employees, and provides expectations of the diversity and inclusion awareness training sessions. The second evaluation metric is seen in the polling or post test evaluation that is given at the end of the D&I Awareness Training. The third metric method of evaluation is the post-assessment summary that is discussed with the leadership. This discussion examines the effectiveness of the program curriculum and provides strategies for developing and implementing action plans to move forward processes that promote diversity and inclusion.

Sustainability Plan

The sustainability plan includes ongoing support with financial commitments from private donors. Additionally, marketing, PR/media outreach, and annual fund development plans will be implemented.

Ivy Tech Mechanical Technology Training and Air Compressor Academy

Talent

Location

All Seven Counties

Managing Partners

Ivy Tech Community College

Key Stakeholders

Local employers will have access to skilled applicants for open positions while offering the opportunity to upskill their current workforce. Local government and Economic Development Corporations (EDC) will have increased skilled labor base in order to recruit and retain employers in La Porte county. We anticipate bringing additional stakeholders as the project expands.

Summary

Ivy Tech has partnered with Michigan City K-12 schools through their Compressed Air Academy offering Dual Credit opportunities. By offering Industrial Technology Mechanical Concentration at the Ivy Tech's Michigan City location we are creating opportunities for the compressed air academy students as well as non-traditional students to complete much needed postsecondary credentials aligned with the local industry workforce needs. Course curriculum includes Safety, Quality, Processes and Production and Maintenance components applicable to local industry. These will be enhanced by the Manufacturing Lab.

Summary of Project Activities:

- Develop and Deliver educational and training programs to both traditional and non-traditional students, including Certificate Programs for specific needs of the current workforce.
- Partner with the regional industries in Industrial technology to ensure that the graduates of the education/training programs meet the needs of this evolving industry.
- Share the educational training material with the high schools to prepare secondary school students for the industrial technology industry.

- Contact experts contracted to develop industrial technology curriculum in collaboration with the industry.
- Support professional development for faculty in industrial technology.
- Collaborate with industry partners and advisory board members to equip the Michigan City campus with the state-of-the-art technology to become the premier training center.
- Develop an outreach activity that will ignite the passion of the best and brightest young people to pursue a career in some aspect of industrial advanced manufacturing technology.

READI Funds Requested

\$275,000

Current Funding Sources

\$1,000,000 from Ivy Tech

Matching Funds

Funding is public and private. Partners include Sullair. Ivy Tech has invested \$749,000 in equipment and \$250,000 in facilities.

3.6:1
Match

Sustainability & Impact

Military Attraction / INVet Involvement

Ivy Tech Community College dedicates support personnel and scholarships for veterans as well as awards credit for veterans military experiences and training. The following branches are able to use their benefits at Ivy Tech to cover tuition costs for enrollment: Air Force, Army, Army National Guard, Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard. In addition, spousal benefits may be available through MyCAA.

Ivy Tech has departments dedicated to Veteran Affairs and works closely with the Veteran Affairs office and the School Certifying Official (SCO) and/or Veterans Affairs Coordinator (VACO). The SCO/VACO is the person who works directly with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to submit your enrollment for GI Bill® payments. They are also aware of other educational benefits and can help guide our veterans through their education process. Ivy Tech has a dedicated webpage for Veterans with direct links to the Veterans Services homepage and the following state and federal links to assure Veterans have full access to all services available to veterans.

Ivy Tech Mechanical Technology Training and Air Compressor Academy

Sustainability & Impact Continued

Sustainability Plan

This is a one-time investment for infrastructure. Ivy Tech has a plan to sustain the equipment in the future through multiple resources, including Carl D. Perkins Grant funding. Future programming will be sustained by the Ivy Tech funding model for academic and workforce programs.

Rural Impact

Establishing a Manufacturing Lab in La Porte county allows for access to Industrial Technology programming that has not been previously available. It allows for our programming coverage to provide access to students and community members from the entire service area – Porter, La Porte, Starke, and Jasper counties. This project will be strategically located in Michigan City to better support the workforce in rural areas. This will also help the at-risk population expand their skill set to obtain better jobs.

Increase Population Growth

Supporting our local employers by developing our local workforce and providing for employment growth, this will lead to more community members choosing to stay and relocate to high-wage areas. Nearly 95% of Ivy Tech graduates remain in their local Indiana communities after graduation, contributing positively to the overall economy.

Long Term Investment

According to the Michigan City Economic Development Corporation, “A key component of bringing in new business is the availability of a strong and diverse workforce. Through partnerships, programs and education, we strive to retain and attract the employees that employers are looking for during the site selection process. Talent development begins at an early age with education, continues with exposure to regional industries and grows with training opportunities throughout a career. The Michigan City community works with Michigan City Area Schools and business leaders to provide a path that will strengthen the area’s workforce today and tomorrow.”

Expand Reach of IEDC’s Manufacturing Readiness Grant and Innovation Voucher

Along with other campuses in the state Ivy Tech is participating in Young Adult Re-entry Program through the Department of Labor- DOL. The funding requested through this initiative will build training capacity through the partnership between Ivy Tech and industry. Ivy Tech’s statewide partnership with Indiana Department of Corrections (IDOC) is a prime example of training focused on employability and in demand technical skills designed for inmates to re-enter society, secure gainful employment, and reduce recidivism.

Success Metrics

Enrollment and completions will be used to measure the success in the credit and noncredit mechanical programming, helping potential students to be more workforce ready.

Regional Impact

Ivy Tech will work with local partners, such as Sullair, local area career centers, and Economic Development entities to collaborate on industrial maintenance projects such as the Compressed Air Academy. This will allow us to expand our training projects to meet industry needs. Education and training will focus on high wage, high demand jobs.

This grant opportunity will provide Ivy Tech program expansion funds to obtain additional equipment necessary for the newly created Manufacturing lab, thus facilitating delivery of the course curriculum as part of the certification training. In addition, providing upskilling opportunities for students to become more workforce ready will have longtime impact in the greater northwest Indiana community, as identified by local industrial partners.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

The expansion of the Manufacturing Lab allows Ivy Tech to deliver programs and training in La Porte county providing upward mobility to potential students to enter into high wage, high demand careers. We are the community college that upskills the local workforce. This project will tie in the local government goals to enhance and expand the community.

Existing IEDC Innovation Programs Involvement

Yes. This project expands the reach of the IEDC Manufacturing Readiness because the Industrial Mechanical program builds on the previously earned Mechatronics Certificate degree program and Certified Production Technician (CPT) credential earned under the Skill Up grant funding which was directed at upskilling incumbent workers. The desire was to continue to further credentials and competencies, but due to the limitations in the service area with critical equipment needs, a certificate was the starting point. The grant helped form a La Porte County Innovation Network of over 20 employer partners, Community Foundation and the Local Workforce service provider. The pathway began in K-12 with CPT, with on-ramps for adult learners and incumbent workers to earn competency based credentials along the way. All employers mapped the demand and hired or created work experiences for the participants. Employers used the pathway to create economic mobility opportunities through an apprenticeship model. Delivering stackable credentials allow students to earn short term credentials, obtain employment to meet employer needs, and then continue their education to earn certificates and associate degrees.

Ivy Tech Mechanical Technology Training and Air Compressor Academy

Sustainability & Impact Continued

State Economic Initiative Alignment

The Commission on Higher Education (CHE), and Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) focuses on the high demand careers. Our programs and initiatives offer business support and expertise to companies that are investing and creating jobs in Indiana. We're working to improve our quality of place, infrastructure, available development sites and regulatory assistance to build economic strength and opportunity that grows and attracts new business and talent. The Governor's Workforce Council (GWC) and Ivy Tech are focused on creating new high-wage, high-skill opportunities for the next generation of Hoosiers.

Jobs for America's Graduate Expansion Program

Location

All Seven Counties

Managing Partners

Center of Workforce Innovations

Key Stakeholders

Key stakeholders for this program include students, employers and community leaders. This program benefits students, specifically at-risk students, by improving their educational and employment outcomes. Many students going through the program might not have even graduated were it not for JAG. By completing the program, these same students not only graduate at a higher rate than their general peers, they attend higher education and move into the labor force at higher rates as well. These improved education and employment outcomes also serve to improve lifetime earnings potential for a population that might otherwise have even graduated high school.

For employers, the project results not only in a larger number of students graduating and becoming available for work, but also greater employability skills among those graduates. People with higher levels of educational attainment are more likely to participate in the labor force. By increasing outcomes, this project directly affects the amount of available talent.

For communities, the project will improve educational opportunities and outcomes of local students. Increased graduation rates not only help current students achieve better wages and work opportunities, but also changes what would have been a negative statistic for the school's outcomes into a positive. This improved graduation rate improves a school systems ranking, making the community more attractive for talent recruitment.

Summary

Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) is a multi-year program targeting at-risk high school juniors and seniors. The goals of the program are to increase completion rates, teach students employability skills, and serve as a bridge to post-secondary education and career advancement opportunities.

Many of the students going through the program were not on track to graduate and at risk of dropping out when they enrolled in the program. Upon completion, 90% of all participants graduate (higher than the overall regional average) and an astonishing 75% of participants went on to full time employment, post-secondary education, or a combination of the two.

Currently available funding is only able to support thirteen JAG programs across three counties in the region. If funded, this program would be expanded to include more schools across the region. This expansion would translate to more students graduating from high school that otherwise would not have as well as more students entering post-secondary school and full time employment.

READI Funds Requested

\$500,000

Current Funding Sources

\$1,650,000 from the State Department of Workforce Development and the Federal Department of Labor

Matching Funds

Funding for this program is provided primarily by the State Department of Workforce Development and the Federal Department of Labor and thus is not applicable as match for the READI Grant application.

**3.3:1
Match**

Jobs for America's Graduate Expansion Program

Sustainability & Impact

Sustainability Plan

This program is currently sustained by funding from the state and federal government. Space for JAG classes is currently provided by the school districts with the programing and teacher salary paid through outside money. We are currently evaluating financial resources available within school budgets as well as outside private funding to maintain the additional programs created through this grant.

Regional Impact

The impacts of the JAG program are three-fold. For students, the program improves education and economic outlooks by increasing completion rates for a population that likely would not have even finished high school. Students going through the program are also more likely to achieve higher educational attainment and full time employment, increasing lifetime income potential. For regional businesses, this program strengthens the talent pipeline making more qualified applicants available than otherwise would have been. Finally, improved educational offerings make regional communities more attractive to new residents looking to relocate.

JAG programs are currently established in high schools in three of the seven counties. If funded, the program would be expanded to include a school in Jasper County and potentially Porter and Newton Counties as well as more schools in the counties currently served.

Long Term Investment

Access to talent is one of the most important criteria for new business investment. Businesses already unable to find talent and prospective new projects are unlikely to make new investments in the region if they cannot find the necessary talent to operate that investment. The JAG program increases both the quantity and quality of talent available to existing and potential employers. By expanding this program, we would be able to serve an even greater number of students further boosting the available talent.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

This program improves the talent pipeline in the region, providing current and potential employers increased access to a skilled workforce. Across the country, access to skilled workers is chief among the barriers to restarting operations at full capacity or making new investments. Expanding this program would serve to increase the number of current residents available as well as attract additional talent by improving the regional education system.

Rural Impact

The impact on rural communities in the region is the same as those of urban communities in the region with programs. There are currently JAG programs at two high schools in Starke county. If funded, the program would be expanded to more rural communities by adding Kankakee Valley High School in Jasper county as well.

Success Metrics

This program already has established metrics of success. For JAG, program includes five goals which include: 90% graduation rate; 75% full time positive outcome rate (Post-Secondary, Job, or Military); 60% full time employment rate; 60% job placement rate; and 35% further education rate. As a region, we have met all five of these program goals, achieving "5 of 5" for the past six years and were the only region to do so in the last schools year. We also tied region 10 (Indianapolis) for the highest graduation rate in the state, and had the highest percentage of students move on to higher education.

New programs created by this funding will follow the same performance criteria.

Increase Population Growth

Quality of place is one of the most important factors currently affecting population migration. Quality of place can mean many different things for different populations, though for families, education opportunities for their children regularly ranks high on the list of considerations. This project serves to improve educational offerings and outcomes for the region, improving the lives of current residents thus reducing out-bound migration as well as increasing our attractiveness for new transplants. Finally, a core aspect of the program's curriculum is to develop leadership skills, public service, and pride in community in students. These aspects of the program serve to make communities where JAG is present more vibrant and engaged.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

This program aligns with the state's "Big Goal" initiative in partnership with the Lumina Foundation to boost the percentage of the population with a post-secondary credential to 60% by 2025 to meet the demand of employers for more high skill talent. The programs outcomes of increased high school graduation, employability skills, and post-secondary enrollment of at-risk high school populations serves to directly address the demand of this goal.

The goals of this program and the expansion through the READI grant also align with the goals of the 21st Century Talent Region for Northwest Indiana. Specifically, this program directly impacts two of the five goals of the Talent Region, increasing graduation rates for minority and under-served high school students and increasing the number of graduates with a post-secondary credential.

Finally, this program supports the new Graduation Pathways requirements in the state by satisfying requirement number two, learn and demonstrate employability skills.

Work Based Learning Program

Location

All Seven Counties

Managing Partners

Center of Workforce Innovations

Key Stakeholders

Key stakeholders for this program include employers, job seekers, and the education system. For employers, the project results not only in a larger number of readily available candidates with the specific set of skills they desire. Looking forward, this program will serve as a way to help alleviate some of the retirement issues we expect across the region in the coming years. Internships, apprenticeships, and other work based learning models create on ramps to fill higher level positions within a company while encouraging knowledge transfer among employees. People with higher levels of educational attainment are more likely to participate in the labor force. By increasing outcomes, this project directly affects the amount of available talent.

This program benefits job seekers by improving their educational and employment opportunities. These improved education and employment outcomes also serve to improve lifetime earnings potential for a population that might otherwise have even graduated high school. A more formalized talent pipeline system, through increased I&A opportunities, would also high paying "good jobs" more available to a greater number of region residents. By creating well defined on ramps and off ramps to opportunities, those who have been traditionally left behind will enjoy the same access as their peers with more available resources.

Finally, for the education system, increased access to work-based learning opportunities helps to smooth the transition from school to the workplace at both the secondary and post-secondary levels. Increasingly, these institutions are measured on their ability to place students in employment after graduation. By increasing students workplace skills and connections, students are more likely to find jobs after school that align with their interests and fulfill employer needs.

Summary

The expansion of work and learn opportunities across the region through increased internship and apprenticeship (I&A) programs has been identified as a priority in the 21st Century Talent Region Initiative. These types of programs benefit employers, students, and job seekers. The project seeks to expanding current internship, apprenticeship, and other work-based learning opportunities in the region by fostering

closer relationships between employers and the education system, adapting successful models to additional industries, and providing back end support for program development and maintenance.

CWI currently serves as an intermediary for registered apprenticeship programs in Northwest Indiana, and employs a full time apprenticeship coordinator to build partnerships with companies. CWI administers multiple apprenticeship programs throughout the region, but we have realized that one person cannot sufficiently serve all employers across the seven-county region while simultaneously developing these new programs.

Through this funding we will hire three county level I&A coordinators to develop new work-based learning opportunities across all counties in the region. CWI and I&A coordinators will work with established regional partnerships such as READY NWI, local trade unions, The Indiana Plan, and industry sector employer partners as well as state wide initiatives such as the Indiana Chamber's Work and Learn Indiana program and the State office of Work-based Learning and Apprenticeship (OWBLA). New partnerships will be developed through ongoing regional employer engagement and program offerings will be expanded to industries not traditionally served by such work and learn models such as health care, technology, and service industries. This project will also seek to increase the diversity of these programs to include those not traditionally represented in apprenticeship programs such as women and minorities.

READI Funds Requested

\$1,000,000

Current Funding Sources

\$210,000 from a federal Apprenticeship expansion grant and others

**1:5
Match**

CWI was awarded a federal Apprenticeship expansion grant through the Department of Labor in December of 2020. These funds total \$100,000 and represent a 1/10 ratio with the request for this project. We continually seek additional funding in this space to serve region residents as well.

Sustainability & Impact

Rural Impact

A dedicated I&A coordinator will serve rural communities in the region to ensure that their specific needs are met. Often, smaller communities require different approaches such as shared interns with wages being paid by multiple companies or pooled apprenticeship programs to lower the cost of the instructional portion of the program.

Sustainability & Impact Continued

Sustainability Plan

Work-based learning has become a priority at the federal, state and local levels. As a result, we will continue use of all dedicated state and federal resources made available to our region to support internship and apprenticeship activities. Additionally, we will develop alternate resources to continue to support and expand programs through foundation and other grant resources as well as contributions from successful employer partners.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

This program improves the talent pipeline in the region, providing current and potential employers increased access to a skilled workforce. Across the country, access to skilled workers is chief among the barriers to restarting operations at full capacity or making new investments. Expanding and formalizing more internship and apprenticeship programs directly translates to increased workforce availability.

These programs can also be understood as talent retention initiatives. Participants in such programs are more likely to remain in the region after they have completed due to ties formed during the program participation.

Finally, participation in I&A programs boost wages and serve to increase economic activity in the region through higher incomes.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

The expansion of work and learn models is a priority at the federal, state and local level. At the state level, this project aligns with the Department of Workforce Development’s Office of Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship (OWBLA) and Governor Holcomb’s Next level Agenda. This project would meet all of the objectives of the OWBLA in the region: Partner with the Department of Labor to expand registered apprenticeships; develop flexible programs that focus on key economic sectors and high demand jobs; and build public-private partnerships to increase business engagement with the education system.

This program also aligns with the 21st Century Talent Region and the Northwest Indiana Regional goal of increasing employer engagement with the education and workforce systems in high-demand industry sectors, to be measured by increasing the number of internship or apprenticeship opportunities available to youth and adults by 10 percent each year.

Increase Population Growth

Increased I&A opportunities secured through regional Coordinators create new work opportunities in the region, retaining current residents and attracting new talent to fill these positions. Internships held by students at regional colleges and universities create lasting ties to companies hosting such opportunities.

Regional Impact

The proposed program seeks to serve both residents and companies across the region by increasing programs with a long track record of success. Internships provide a low risk tool for developing talent pipelines. Internship participants are able to “try out” an industry and occupation while getting paid and developing workplace skills. Internships often lead to better employment outcomes and higher wages for participants. Expanded internships in the region will also lead to increased entry-level opportunities for recent graduates to encourage more regional students to remain in Northwest Indiana. For companies, internships provide a way to identify potential talent prospects without a full commitment. Companies are able to identify top talent to bring on full time once the internship has ended.

Apprenticeships offer many of the same benefits through a more structured program that provides participants with wages while they increase their skills and earning potential. Participants also develop transferable skills through the attainment of industry recognized credentials. Employers are able to offset the risk of funding training for their workforce through duration of service contracts while developing a pipeline of workers for their most in demand positions. These credentials earned also serve to make more progress in attaining the region’s “Big Goal” to have 60% of our population attain a post-secondary credential by 2025 to meet employer demand.

By bringing on additional I&A Coordinators, CWI will be able to better serve companies and job seekers across all seven counties. These coordinators will be distributed across the region allowing all communities to experience the benefits of enhancing these programs. Coordinators will also partner to serve as liaisons between employers with internship opportunities and educators with students to fill slots.

Success Metrics

Metric for success for the project will focus on two main areas of focus, success of the project to expand partnerships and the success of those created programs to train participants and meet the needs of employers.

From the expansion point of view, success will be defined by three main metrics: the number of new I&A opportunities created; the number of new employer partnerships developed; and the percentage of those partnership which are with women, minority, or veteran owned businesses.

From the specific program success determination, we will measure the percentage of participants that successfully complete the entirety of the program, whether it be an internship or apprenticeship. For apprenticeships specifically, we will also measure the percentage of completers that are retained by the company sponsoring the program after completion.

Sustainability & Impact Continued

Long Term Investment

Access to talent is one of the most important criteria for new business investment. Businesses already unable to find talent and prospective new projects are unlikely to make new investments in the region if they cannot find the necessary talent to operate that investment. Dedicated I&A coordinators across the region can be leveraged as economic development assets not available in other regions in the state or other states in the country, provided Northwest Indiana with a competitive advantage over those other areas.


By their very nature, talent development activities are also long term investments. A company will establish an apprenticeship or internship program not to fill ten jobs this year, but to fill ten jobs every year for the foreseeable future. By establishing more of these types of work and learn programs, we will be creating more opportunity across the region for years to come.

Military Attraction / INVet Involvement

While this program is not specifically targeted to military veterans, veterans will receive priority of service when applicable during recruiting for training and job vacancies.

Additionally, from the partnership side, a percentage of all businesses served by I&A Coordinators will be required to be Veteran, Women, or Minority owned businesses.

Registered Apprenticeship Standards



Registered Apprenticeship Standards

National Program Standards National Guidelines for Apprenticeship Standards
 Local Apprenticeship Standards

REGION 1 – CENTER OF WORKFORCE INNOVATIONS AND PARTICIPATING EMPLOYERS

Occupations: *Child Care Development Specialist; CNC Operator, Turning & Milling, Youth*

O*NET-SOC Code(s): 39-9011.00; 51-4034.00 RAPIDS Code(s): 0840; 1094

Developed in Cooperation with the
 U.S. Department of Labor
 Office of Apprenticeship

Approved by the
 U.S. Department of Labor
 Office of Apprenticeship

Registered By: _____
 (For Government Use Only)

Signature: _____
(Sign here manually for National or Local Apprenticeship Standards)

Title: _____

Certified By: _____
 (For Government Use Only)

Signature: _____
(Sign here manually for National Guidelines for Apprenticeship Standards Only)

Title: _____

Northwest Indiana Housing Study

Talent

Location

All Seven Counties

Managing Partners

Northwest Indiana Forum and Greater Northwest Indiana Association of Realtors

Key Stakeholders

Stakeholders include the seven counties of Northwest Indiana requiring diversified housing and worker population growth to meet industry needs as a critical component of economic growth and development. Stakeholders also include the local and regional economic development agencies such as the NWI Forum, as well as the GNIAR, the Greater Northwest Indiana Association of Realtors. Data provided by this study will help guide development efforts moving forward.

Summary

There are many collaborative initiatives across the region that are positioning Northwest Indiana for considerable growth. The expansion and upgrade associated with the South Shore Line will facilitate expansion and allow for the increased flow of people to and from the region and Chicago as they access work, education, and recreation. It is difficult, however, to attract talent to live and work in the region when there is limited housing. The growth of the region depends upon an educated and skilled workforce and access to talent continues to be a main site selection factor for companies interested in locating here. Without enough available housing to attract the right kind of skilled workforce, it will be difficult to realize any significant gain in any other aspects of economic growth in the region.

IUN is proposing to establish a team of researchers who will perform an extensive analysis of the current housing mix and market as well as changing dynamics of local markets. Data will then be utilized by regional development organizations as well as the Greater Northwest Indiana Association of REALTORS™ to advocate for and develop specific housing strategies across the seven-county region.

READI Funds Requested

\$100,000

Current Funding Sources

\$10,000 from private funds

1:10 Match

Matching Funds

Support will be provided as detailed below at 58% of requested funds.

IU Northwest In-Kind Funding

Benefits for Faculty Salaries	39.85% of faculty salaries	\$ 48,884.29
Adjunct Salary	Five course release coverage at \$5,000 per adjunct	\$ 25,000.00
Student assistants	Cost for student assistants	\$ 5,000.00
Facilities and Administration	32% of total requested	\$ 49,654.64
Computer workstation	Cost for technology and software	\$ 5,000.00
Professional development	Conferences/workshops	\$ 3,000.00
Supplies	Misc supplies	\$ 2,000.00
		\$ 89,654.64

Sustainability & Impact

Long Term Investment

The housing study will provide the necessary data for areas of potential housing availability and growth. The job market continues to shift as well as the skilled labor force. In the long-term, the study will provide not only housing for potential employers and employees but the jobs necessary to build homes including development, engineering, building materials and infrastructure.

Northwest Indiana Housing Study

Sustainability & Impact

State Economic Initiative Alignment

The data resulting from this project will be directly applicable to pillars of the NWI Forum's ongoing work on the **IGNITE the Region** project, most notably Placemaking. Applicable goals in this pillar include:

- Maximize the transit-oriented development (TOD) potential associated with the South Shore Line Double Track NWI and West Lake Corridor rail projects
- Support the development of vibrant downtowns and distinct neighborhoods and districts
- Ensure the region encourages and promotes the development of diverse and affordable housing options

The managing board of the NWI Forum include agencies such as the Indiana Economic Development Corporation, NIRPC, Northwest Indiana SBDC, NWI RDA.

Increase Population Growth

Anecdotal evidence indicates that individuals interested in moving within or relocating to the region experience difficulty in finding suitable housing based on all income levels. Performing a comprehensive inventory as well as ascertaining current and projected need will help guide the development of more housing, allowing more people and ultimately more industry to move to the area.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

Understanding the housing landscape can help guide planning to provide the kind of housing that meets the needs of the talent pool. The region cannot continue to grow without diversifying the talent pool. Suitable housing is the first step to support the demand for skilled labor. Additional housing can also provide more equitable access to greater opportunity for residents.

Rural Impact

The scope of the project includes several counties which are predominantly rural. Valid and reliable comprehensive data for these areas can facilitate the strategic, equitable growth of all.



Business Development & Marketing

Portage-based bNUTTY, LLC honored
during Small Business Week

Talent and Business Attraction Marketing Platform

Location

All Seven Counties

Managing Partners

Northwest Indiana Forum & +WeCreate Media

Key Stakeholders

Business owners, especially in the hospitality and tourism market, have a vested interest in this marketing platform's implementation and long term health as it will translate into improved revenue. Local residents will benefit from this platform as it will illuminate recreational opportunities in their backyard and increase pride in what our area has on offer.

Summary

In order to ensure sustainability through community buy-in and an increased pool of stakeholders, we need a marketing platform designed to regularly and consistently communicate with the region's stakeholders, potential investors, residents and visitors. We propose a weekly newsletter designed to share experiences, cultural highlights and opportunities in the area, building increased engagement for local residents and businesses as well as growing our tourism base. This will account for production of marketing collateral, management of the platform and all relevant creative services. It will be the region's most effective microphone to date, unifying each municipality and stakeholder into a one-stop-shop of NWI experiences.



READI Funds Requested

\$500,000

Current Funding Sources

\$2,000,000 from private, philanthropic and local government sources

The group behind this platform are invested in the growth of local towns and cities, the health of our rural communities, increased revenue for small businesses and improvement of quality of life assets.

**4:1
Match**

Matching Funds

Our matching funds are primarily private and philanthropic.

Sustainability & Impact

Long Term Investment

According to a JLL Indiana State Tourism study, tourism and perceived economic opportunity are tied at the hip: "The tourism industry thrives off economic opportunity. Business travel is enormously dependent upon the economic health of area employers. Meetings and conventions configure around topics and local sources that are connected to key industries. Economic opportunity is a driver of tourism, but it is not typically viewed as a targeted strategic area for destination marketing and promotion efforts." Through framing NWI as being high in opportunity and having a high quality of place, we will drive capital investment into the region through tourism.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

One of the greatest barriers to growth for small to medium size local businesses is market awareness. By gradually building our audience, we will over time increase awareness, build and establish loyalty between brands and consumer bases. On a higher level, through marketing the region as a whole, we will position the region as a short drive to Chicago with a wealth of amenities, improving rates of tourism to multiple areas within the region.

Talent and Business Attraction Marketing Platform

Sustainability & Impact Continued

Rural Impact

Our project will directly benefit rural communities by broadcasting their narratives and qualities, boosting interest, and long term investment from out of town transplants and bolstering pride in rural residents with their area's quality of life. We will support rural companies and entrepreneurs by bridging the gap between them and target consumers, increasing revenue across the board.

Increase Population Growth

Through our work with the IDDC, we have learned population growth is directly linked to travel by tourism. Consumers and travelers who both visited Indiana and saw advertising before their visit on average reported higher interest in working, living, starting a business, buying a second home or retiring here. By increasing travel, we will facilitate first impressions with Northwest Indiana communities, backed by a curated guide to best optimize consumer experience. This will spur population growth in residencies - both primary and secondary - students, and talent.

Military Attraction / IN Vet Involvement

This platform will allot publication space to highlight veteran business owners and celebrate our community of veterans. Part of our audience targeting will account for speaking directly to veterans in our messaging. This will mean ample representation of veteran interests, employment opportunities and success stories.

Regional Impact

The regional impact of this platform will be both in brand equity and business growth. We will build and improve perception with outside visitors, increasing tourism revenue and visitor conversions, while also improving local pride with long term residents. This will expose each facet of our communities to all relevant audiences, giving form and voice to undersung amenities and recreational opportunities. Through this messaging platform, we will build trust with our residents and be more effectively able to communicate crucial developments and rally support for future initiatives.

Success Metrics

We will measure program success through metrics associated with the varying degrees of investment a consumer can make in this marketing platform and local businesses. Performance is represented by several markers, including open rates, coupon redemption, amount of time on site, return site visits, etc.

In addition to that, our project's success will be contingent on the successful implementation of profitable verticals and long term financial sustainability. Through careful quarterly evaluations, we will compare performance against revenue projections. As the platform better its performance, we will increase our digital spend and audience reach, improving the breadth of benefits we can bring to regional stakeholders.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

This program does align with our contract with the IDDC to rebrand the State of Indiana and launch a series of ad campaigns. This initiative will work hand in hand with the lessons we learn from marketing the state to the country, positioning us with strategic advantages in the implementation of a successful platform. We will in tandem take key learnings from our localized focus and apply that to our approach with our initiative with the IDDC.

Sustainability Plan

We will work over the first two years of this platform to build a base of sponsorships to sustain overhead expenses. In addition, we will incorporate an advertising platform designed to provide optimal return to our key stakeholders. By growing our digital audience, we'll provide a basis for digital spend with potential partners. This initial investment will be put to use in building trust with a new audience, comprised of key stakeholders all across the region and surrounding areas.

Capacity Building for Economic Development and Plan Implementation

BD & M

Location

All Seven Counties

Managing Partners

Northwest Indiana Forum

Key Stakeholders

The Northwest Indiana Forum has more than 130 investors but our key stakeholders are the 850,000 people who live in Northwest Indiana and rely on our organization to continue to grow the local economy and help bring the partner organizations together around a plan that is regional in scope.

Summary

The Northwest Indiana Forum has lead the **IGNITE the Region** initiative, Northwest Indiana's Strategy for Economic Transformation, as well as the READI grant application. We have been handling the workload including strategic meetings, presentations, reporting to the region, copywriting and editing with a staff of three (3) full-time employees. We are asking for \$775,000 of the READI grant to be given to the capacity building of the Northwest Indiana Forum. This will allow us to add 2.5 staff for three (3) years.

READI Funds Requested

\$775,000

Current Funding Sources

\$200,000 from primarily private funding

Matching Funds

Primarily private with additional support from small grants.

1:4
Match

Sustainability & Impact

Increase Population Growth

The goals of the Northwest Indiana Forum are to grow talent, attract investment and raise per capita income. Adding more resources to enhance that work will help us to attract business, skilled workforce and therefore grow the population with more residents. With additional staff we have the ability to provide concierge type services to potential residents that are relocating to the area.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

Our organization is focused on the growth of the region. Adding capacity to our already dynamic team will help us to continue to **IGNITE the Region**.

Long Term Investment

As we elevate the work being done by the Forum it will attract new long-term investment in Northwest Indiana. Additionally, Forum staff can expand the level of assistance currently provided to retain and expand existing business services.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

This project aligns very closely with the mission of the IEDC. The Forum partners with the IEDC in growing the local economy and attracting quality investment to the State.

Rural Impact

The Northwest Indiana Forum serves the 7-county region, 67% of the area is rural. Expanding the capacity of the Forum will give us more opportunity to assist rural areas with economic development initiatives.

Location

Jasper, Newton, Pulaski and Starke County

Managing Partners

Jasper County EDC, Newton County EDC, Starke County EDC, Pulaski County EDC & KIRPC

Key Stakeholders

- Newton, Jasper, Pulaski, and Starke Counties directly benefit from this project through economic development activity.
- Lake, Porter, and La Porte Counties
- Purdue Center for Regional Development (PCRD)
- Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA)
- Purdue University Extension Office
- Indiana Soybean Alliance, Indiana Corn Marketing Council, and other industry groups.
- Indiana Farm Bureau

Summary

Agriculture, as a leading Indiana economic sector, is shaped by world-renowned agribusiness firms, strong trade and membership organizations, the most productive farmers in the country, thoughtful and skilled leaders in public and private arenas, and innovative entrepreneurs. For Indiana, the agricultural strength is prevalent in the 4 counties of Jasper, Newton, Pulaski, and Starke, that have joined forces to collaborate on the KIRPC Regional Ag Strategy. The goal of the regional ag strategy is to identify the ag assets (raw material) and resources that will help the region develop the policies, infrastructure, sites, and support they need to create long-term improvements in their rural economies. The counties will utilize the Rural Economic Development Model, which will allow them to develop an economic development strategy that will build on an important strength in their rural communities – agriculture.

Site Analysis: Estimated costs for study to be done for each county to evaluate water and wastewater capacity, quality, and availability. This would take data related to specific industries and their water/wastewater needs and compare it to what is currently available in our communities.

Workforce: Building a pool of funds that allocates training dollars specific to the Ag strategy and expanding or relocating firms as the result of the Ag Strategy. Potentially partnering with local universities to develop program and scholarship opportunities for these selected firms.

Economic Gardening: Selecting 3-5 companies from each county to participate in PCRD’s economic gardening program to facilitate their growth and expansion.

Marketing Initiative: The development of a region-level marketing strategy designed to target specific food/processing industries identified in the supply chain to relocate to the Ag region.

READI Funds Requested

\$500,000

Current Funding Sources

\$58,000

**1:8.6
Match**

Sustainability & Impact

Regional Impact

The entire region has investments in Agribusiness and food processing industries, by assisting the rural communities in creating economic opportunities through leveraging the Ag Value Chain. This creates opportunities for both employers and residents throughout the region.

Sustainability & Impact Continued

Rural Impact

This strategy will guide the development of a tool box for rural regions. In time, the tool box will assist regions to discover their major agricultural assets and work to attract 'value added agriculture' in the form of agribusiness and food processing facilities and their connected supply chains. The tool box will focus on the following components:

Assets – Understanding a region's core industry clusters and supply chain is key for attracting and growing investment. Within the context of agriculture processing, the goal is to understand and document the agriculture output of a county and its region. Be it grain, livestock, poultry, hardwoods, fruits/vegetables, or dairy, the key is to determine where counties and regions have a competitive edge relative to the nation, what the existing supply chain looks like, and if the region has a unique agricultural product that could be promoted for a unique market.

'Economic leakage' is a relatively new concept. 'Leakage' refers to the amount of economic activity, particularly the purchase of supplies or other inputs that are needed by industries in a county or region, but are purchased outside of the region. Finding ways to reduce these leakages by expanding existing local businesses or attracting suppliers to the region, represent a critical economic opportunity that can help keep dollars in the region.

Policy – Agriculture processing may require unique policy provisions such as changes to zoning standards or unique environmental provisions. Confined animal feeding operations (CAFO's) may require specific zoning standards that affect water and air policies and affect residential zoning. As ag-based industry clusters become identified and targets are clarified for a region, a collateral activity is a review of existing zoning practices and local policy that may either support or impede attraction of new, targeted industry.

Communities wishing to pursue agriculture processing can draw upon communities that have gone before them and access model zoning standards and ordinances. Furthermore, they can learn from other regions about what has worked and not worked relative to public notification and engagement.

Infrastructure – Agriculture and ag-based business may require a different infrastructure footprint than other industry. Water, waste-water capacity, road surface and capacity, rail service, bridge width and structure may all be unique, depending on the ag business targets for a community and region. Connecting infrastructure requirements to a community's ag-based economic development targets up-front will be critical. Relying on the resources listed above can be a significant advantage.

Sites - The planning and identification of specific industry needs should come together in each community

with the development of sites that meet the unique needs for the ag industry targets. Knowing how an 'ag park' has different specifications from a typical industrial park will be critical and working with local elected officials and leaders to differentiate the community and develop sites that are 'shovel ready' for the targeted ag businesses will position communities to succeed.

Development of an appropriate site should be the culmination of the research and prioritization of assets, the facilitation of appropriate policies, leveraging the existing resources, and implementation of infrastructure plans.

Creating new local synergies among producers, suppliers and processors can create a new economic web within a community. This increased local investment in agribusiness and food processing will have significant spin-off effects, similar to those of a typical manufacturing.

Long Term Investment

The Ag Value Chain encourages long term investment within the rural counties and throughout the region by focusing on supply chain leakages and targeting those as opportunities for economic development efforts.

Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

This project creates synergy between the rural communities and the more densely populated portions of the regions by creating connections between food production, manufacturing skill sets, and the agricultural supply chain. Ensuring that a commodity grown in the region only needs to head to the end user rather than another region or state of additional value creation.

Success Metrics

We will be working on this as we move forward.

Increase Population Growth

Over the long term projections of this initiative, we anticipate seeing population growth due to increased wealth and resiliency in rural communities. Because, this strategy addresses gaps in supply chain and revenue diversification strategies for local farms the anticipated impact is greater wealth retention leading to increased investments in quality of life and social services that many rural communities currently lack. This will generate population growth throughout the region, but also in the rural communities participating in this effort.

Sustainability Plan

As a part of the planning and implementation phases of this initiative our stakeholders are actively engaged with County Farm Bureau boards, as well as the Indiana Farm Bureau organization to to develop relationships and sustainable funding arrangements for this effort as it grows. We are also working with State level producer associations to solidify there financial participation and engagement in this strategy.

Northwest Indiana Cost Comparison Study

BD & M

Location

All Seven Counties

Managing Partners

Northwest Indiana Forum

Key Stakeholders

The seven counties of Northwest Indiana and potential investors are our key stakeholders. This study will give information to help grow and attract investment and population.

Summary

This project will do a comprehensive market study of Northwest Indiana. Being part of the Chicago MSA, it is challenging to get market specific data because most statical analysis includes NWI in Chicago data or into Indiana's general numbers. This study will focus on the seven-county area of Northwest Indiana/ targeted industries and data collection will focus on: advanced manufacturing, transportation, distribution & logistics, office/white collar operations, agri-business (farm to production/distribution) and technology and life science/healthcare. Specific data will include locational assets, transportation and planned improvements, education and training institutions and programs, employment by industry, occupational characteristics including number of employees, earnings, and median wages, location quotients for target industries, labor availability, educational attainment, median housing costs, average office and industrial rents and sales prices, state and local taxes and fiscal condition, utility costs and advantages, shipping costs, state and local business incentives. quality of life advantages will be determined and benchmarked against other regions across the country and developed into marketing material for the economic development community. These materials will be used to use to attract investment and talent to Northwest Indiana.

READI Funds Requested

\$100,000

Current Funding Sources

\$45,000 in private funds

Matching Funds

Private funding from a developer interested in the same information.

1:2.5
Match

Sustainability & Impact

Long Term Investment

Having a cost comparison market study will help to attract investment. Northwest Indiana has a low cost of living with a high quality of life and many opportunities. To attract external investment, it is vital to have 3rd party validation of the antidotal information to use for marketing.

State Economic Initiative Alignment

This project aligns well with the desire of the IEDC and the state to grow capital investment, per capita income and attract talent.

Rural Impact

This project will provide the data necessary to assist attract investment to urban, suburban and rural communities alike.

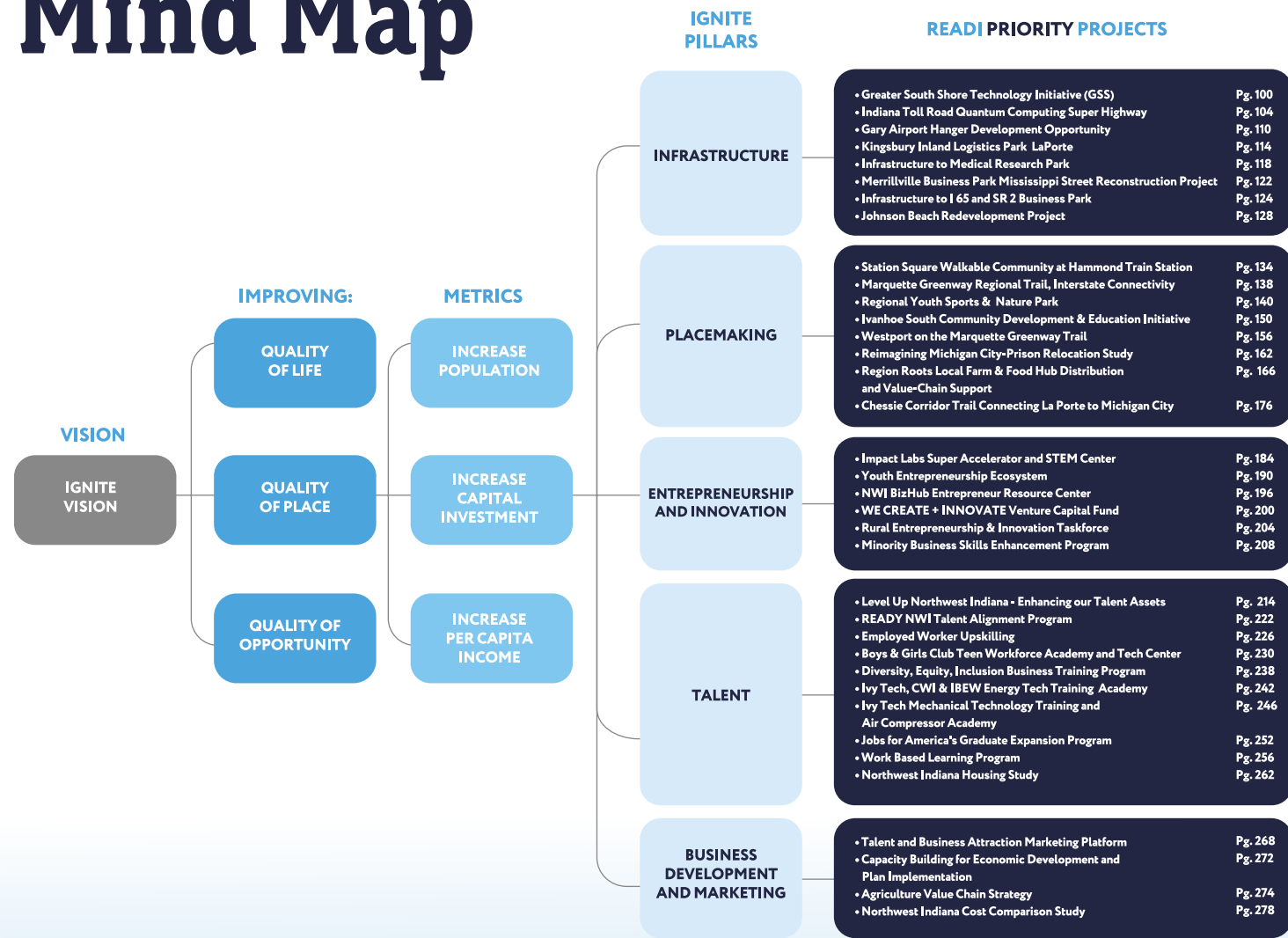
Removing Barriers to Economic Growth

Venture capital and large national developers have been slower to invest in Northwest Indiana. Seen as an unproven market, the more data we can supply the more barriers come down.

Increase Population Growth

By showcasing Quality of Life Advantages and cost of living for Northwest Indiana it will help to grow the population in our region and make a compelling case compared to locations in Illinois and other less competitive areas.

The IGNITE Mind Map



IGNITE Vision

IGNITE Vision: Northwest Indiana drives its vibrant and inclusive communities by creating the most dynamic economic environment of the Midwest, fueled by innovation, diversity, and talent.

IGNITE the Region is built around five aspirational goals that serve as the pillars of future economic vitality and growth for the region. They reflect a holistic view of economic development that addresses business development & marketing, entrepreneurship & innovation, infrastructure, talent, and placemaking. Under each goal are several strategies and actions needed for implementation.

10:1 Grant Match

IGNITE PILLARS	READI PRIORITY PROJECTS
INFRASTRUCTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater South Shore Technology Initiative (GSS) Pg. 100 Indiana Toll Road Quantum Computing Super Highway Pg. 104 Gary Airport Hanger Development Opportunity Pg. 110 Kingsbury Inland Logistics Park LaPorte Pg. 114 Infrastructure to Medical Research Park Pg. 118 Merrillville Business Park Mississippi Street Reconstruction Project Pg. 122 Infrastructure to I 65 and SR 2 Business Park Pg. 124 Johnson Beach Redevelopment Project Pg. 128
PLACEMAKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Station Square Walkable Community at Hammond Train Station Pg. 134 Marquette Greenway Regional Trail, Interstate Connectivity Pg. 138 Regional Youth Sports & Nature Park Pg. 140 Ivanhoe South Community Development & Education Initiative Pg. 150 Westport on the Marquette Greenway Trail Pg. 156 Reimagining Michigan City-Prison Relocation Study Pg. 162 Region Roots Local Farm & Food Hub Distribution and Value-Chain Support Pg. 166 Chessie Corridor Trail Connecting La Porte to Michigan City Pg. 176
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact Labs Super Accelerator and STEM Center Pg. 184 Youth Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Pg. 190 NWI BizHub Entrepreneur Resource Center Pg. 196 WE CREATE + INNOVATE Venture Capital Fund Pg. 200 Rural Entrepreneurship & Innovation Taskforce Pg. 204 Minority Business Skills Enhancement Program Pg. 208
TALENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level Up Northwest Indiana - Enhancing our Talent Assets Pg. 214 READY NWI Talent Alignment Program Pg. 222 Employed Worker Upskilling Pg. 226 Boys & Girls Club Teen Workforce Academy and Tech Center Pg. 230 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Business Training Program Pg. 238 Ivy Tech, CWI & IBEW Energy Tech Training Academy Pg. 242 Ivy Tech Mechanical Technology Training and Air Compressor Academy Pg. 246 Jobs for America's Graduate Expansion Program Pg. 252 Work Based Learning Program Pg. 256 Northwest Indiana Housing Study Pg. 262
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talent and Business Attraction Marketing Platform Pg. 268 Capacity Building for Economic Development and Plan Implementation Pg. 272 Agriculture Value Chain Strategy Pg. 274 Northwest Indiana Cost Comparison Study Pg. 278

TOTAL REQUESTED: \$52,000,000

36 PRIORITY PROJECTS

IGNITE Identified Projects

103 PROJECTS and growing

IGNITE PILLARS

TALENT

READI COMPLETE LIST OF PROJECTS

- Level Up Northwest Indiana- Enhancing our Talent Assets
- READY NWI Talent Alignment Program
- Employed Worker Upskilling
- Boys & Girls Club Teen Workforce Academy and Tech Center
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Business Training Program
- Ivy Tech, CWI & IBEW Energy Tech Training Academy
- Ivy Tech Mechanical Technology Training and Air Compressor Academy
- Ivy Tech Career Coaching and Employer Connections
- Jobs for America's Graduate Expansion Program
- Work based Learning Program
- Boys & Girls Club Facility Michigan City
- Hire Ed Marketing Internship Program
- Northwest Indiana Housing Study
- Work Release and Mental Health Talent Correction Program
- First Things First Early Childhood and Family Educational Program
- IN-MaC Innovation & Design Studio
- Eleven Fifty Academy- Advancing Tech
- Fair Oaks Workforce Housing

PLACEMAKING

- Hohman Avenue Rebuild Walkable Community Project
- Station Square Walkable Community at Hammond Train Station
- Marquette Greenway Regional Trail, Interstate Connectivity
- Marquette Greenway Regional Trail Waymarking Signage Business Application Initiative
- Lake County Eats Local Urban Farmers Market Capacity Building
- Panhandle Pathway Multi Modal Trail Winamac
- Boutique Hotel Adaptive Historical Structure Initiative Valparaiso
- Valparaiso Regional Youth Sports & Nature Park Valparaiso
- Ivanhoe South Community Development & Education Initiative Gary
- Little Calumet River Agriculture/Regenerative Farming Initiative Chesterton to Michigan City Porter
- Amber Flatwoods ADA Trail Destination Michigan City
- Westport on the Marquette Greenway Trail Burns Harbor
- Region Roots Local Farm & Food Hub Distribution and Value-Chain Support
- NWI Food Council - Artisan Food Business Expansion, Development & Recruitment
- NWI Food Council - Farmers Market Coordination in Food Insecure Communities
- NWI Food Council - Farm Expansion, Development & Recruitment
- Northwest Indiana Medical Residency Program
- Rensselear Famers Market Downtown Revitalization Initiative Rensselear
- Singing Sand Connectivity Trail/Marquette Greenway Michigan City
- Housing Opportunities New Affordable Homes Initiative Michigan City
- Washington Park ADA Destination Playground Michigan City
- Meadowbrook Conservation Destination Center Shirley Heinze Land Trust
- Michigan City Prison Feasibility Study Relocation of Facility
- Federation of Block Clubs Neighborhood Beautification Initiative Gary
- Chessie Trail Corridor LaPorte to Michigan City South Shore Station
- Gary Elevated Trail Project to complete Marquette Trail Gary
- City of Valparaiso Trail Development: Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and Downtown District Connectivity Valparaiso
- Gary East Gateway Project Miller Station to the Beach Gary
- Valparaiso Transit Oriented Development Trail Valparaiso
- Regional Plan for Trail Connectivity to the Munster TDD Munster
- Munster Gateway Beautification & Infrastructure Initiative Munster
- Hobart Southlake Sports Complex Hobart
- Dunes Mixed Use Development

IGNITE PILLARS

INFRASTRUCTURE

READI COMPLETE LIST OF PROJECTS

- Port of Indiana Alternative Green Energy Project
- Port of Indiana Multimodal Bulk Warehouse Construction Initiative
- Port of Indiana Rail Truck Maritime Modal Expansion
- Greater South Shore Technology Initiative (GSS)
- Mississippi Street Reconstruction Project/Business Park Development Project
- Regional Economic Development Permitting Portal Initiative
- New Market Tax Credit Regional Community Development Entity Initiative
- Indiana Toll Road Quantum Computing Super Highway
- Rensselaer Square Downtown Streetscape Initiative
- Johnson Beach Redevelopment Project
- 15th Avenue Reconstruction Project to Support Infill of Industrial Developments Including the Amazon Fulfillment Center Expansion
- Regional Map of Catalytic Logistical Properties
- Alternative Fuel Regional Projects
- Cargo Logistics Infrastructure Plan
- Gary Airport Logistics Hub
- Gary Airport Crosswind Runway
- Gary Airport Hanger Development Opportunity
- Portage YMCA Park
- Gary Airport Road Realignment
- Michigan Avenue Road Improvement
- Kingsbury Inland Logistics Park LaPorte
- Crossroads of America Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Projects
- Decarbonization First Responders Fleet
- Adams Park Stormwater Wetland & Restoration Project/Wetland Mitigation Bank
- B&E Infrastructure Project Michigan City La Porte
- Lake County Housing Rehab Project Lake
- Water Infrastructure Improvements HWY 39 La Porte
- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Community Partner Groups Initiative
- Revolving Loan Fund: Catalytic Logistical Properties Development
- Infrastructure to I 65 and SR 2 Business Park
- Merrillville Business Park Mississippi Street Reconstruction Project
- Infrastructure to Medical Research Park Munster

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION

- Impact Labs Super Accelerator and STEM Center Hammond
- Youth Entrepreneurship Ecosystem
- NWI Biz Hub Entrepreneur Resource Center
- WE CREATE + INNOVATE Venture Capital Fund
- Rural Entrepreneurship & Innovation Taskforce
- Minority Business Skills Enhancement Program
- Michigan City Innovation Center Michigan City
- Pandemic Recovery Digital Transformation
- 2nd Muse Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING

- Talent and Business Attraction Marketing Platform
- External Headquarters Outreach Program
- The Linc HQ Parking Facility Valparaiso
- Assembling Land for Development
- Demolition Projects for Development
- Capacity Building for Economic Development and Plan Implementation
- Agriculture Value Chain Strategy
- Northwest Indiana Cost Comparison Study
- Schererville Business Park US Hwy 30 Schererville
- East Chicago Gateway Project 3 Million sq ft Distribution East Chicago
- East Chicago Gateway Distribution Training Facility East Chicago

TOTAL IDENTIFIED: \$636,275,051

September 30, 2021

Indiana Economic Development Corporation
1 N. Capitol Avenue, Suite 900
Indianapolis, IN 46204

RE: 2021 READI Grant Application

Distinguished Members of the Committee,

Thank you for your consideration of Northwest Indiana's READI application.

The \$636 million of projects assembled around this plan is the start to what we believe will be billions in future returns. It seems as if every day new opportunities enhance Northwest Indiana's future. They say luck is when preparedness meets opportunity. By growing this project list, identifying funding sources, and telling Northwest Indiana's story, our 'luck' is just beginning.

Awarding our request of \$52 million would generate more than \$600 million of projects in our seven-county region. Our anchor institutions, key partnerships, and community players all agree that this will create monumental economic impact. Our **IGNITE the Region** plan continues to fuel growth and opportunity in our area. We have proven our ability to work together through this platform.

The State's investment in Northwest Indiana and the **IGNITE** plan will push us over the tipping point to accelerate our growth of talent, investment and per capita income. Helping us to achieve the vision of **IGNITE**:

"Northwest Indiana drives its vibrant and inclusive communities by creating the most dynamic economic environment of the Midwest, fueled by innovation, diversity, and talent."

Again, thank you for the opportunity and your consideration. We look forward to advancing the economy of the State of Indiana with you.

Kindest regards,



Heather Ennis

Northwest Indiana READI Proposal

A Regional Renaissance

Thank you

Impact Analysis of Select NWI READI Projects



Memorandum

To: Heather Ennis, President and CEO
Northwest Indiana Forum

From: David Reynolds, Senior VP
Policy Analytics, LLC

RE: Economic Impact Analysis of NWI READI Projects

Date: September 16, 2021

As part of the READI grant application process, the Northwest Indiana Forum (NWI Forum) engaged Policy Analytics to conduct an economic impact analysis on several of the proposed READI grant projects. In many instances, the READI grant provides funding in support of a broader economic development project. The economic impact analysis conducted by Policy Analytics assumes the broader economic development projects are completed. The following projects were selected for the impact analysis:

- 1. 2 New Hangars at the Gary/Chicago International Airport**
The proposed project would include the construction of two additional hangars at the Gary/Chicago International Airport. The total cost of the project is \$12.5 million and is projected to create 29 new jobs.
- 2. Kingsbury Industrial Park**
The proposed project would provide for the installation of 4000 feet of linear rail connecting the CN railroad to CSX railroad within the Kingsbury Industrial Park. The new rail line is expected to attract an additional \$120 million of economic development within the Park and is projected to create 500 new, on-going jobs.
- 3. Munster Infrastructure**
The proposed project would support a regional connectivity plan for the new Munster Ridge Road train station. The proposed trail would connect existing Illinois and Indiana trails with a shared connection to hospitals, Centennial Village, Maple Leaf Crossing, and Munster High School. The proposed trail is part of the infrastructure package in support of a new \$160 million development project at the Lansing Country Club.

- 4. US Cold Storage**
The proposed project would provide improvements and expansion to Colorado Street in unincorporated Lake County. The improvements would support the proposed development of 80 acres to house the operations of US Cold Storage. The total project cost is \$120 million and is projected to create 60 new jobs.
- 5. Valparaiso Parking Structure**
The proposed project is a parking structure in downtown Valparaiso. The additional parking will support additional mixed-use residential development and office space development. The total project cost, including adjacent development, is \$46 million and is projected to create 75 new jobs.
- 6. Burns Harbor**
The proposed project is a mixed-use development at Burns Harbor. The \$43 million project includes 40 townhomes, a 20,000 sq foot community center and a trail head on the Marquette Greenway Trail.
- 7. Marquette Greenway**
The proposed project would complete the connection of the Marquette Greenway between Chicago and New Buffalo, MI. The \$16 million trail project would connect 130,000 residents within a mile of the trail.

The economic impact estimates in this analysis were modeled using IMPLAN, a professionally accepted input-output model originally developed and maintained by researchers at the University of Minnesota. IMPLAN uses industry linkages derived from current economic data to simulate the effect of increased spending on all sectors of the local economy. This economic impact is measured and quantified in terms of economic output, employment, or labor income.

Economic Output is defined as the total value of industry production or total sales for an industry. Labor Income is defined as all forms of employment income, including wages and benefits. Employment is defined as either full-time or part-time jobs depending on industry norms.

The impact of increased spending or investment is not limited to the first transaction within the community. Once increased spending enters the local economy, it circulates within, providing multiple iterations of economic impact. The economic impact of an investment is classified in three ways: direct impact, indirect impact, and induced impact.

Additionally, this economic impact analysis separates the initial economic impact from the construction of the project and the on-going economic impact resulting from the project. The impact from constructing the projects are one-time impacts which would occur during the construction period. The economic impact resulting from the completion of the projects are on-going and annual. The estimates of project investments and job creation contained in this report rely on data provided by the NWI Forum. Policy Analytics has not attempted to audit or validate the data provided.



Impact Analysis of Select NWI READI Projects

Estimated Impact of Selected Northwest Indiana Economic Development Projects

	One-Time Construction			Ongoing Annual		
	Employment	Labor Income	Economic Output	Employment	Labor Income	Economic Output
Direct						
Economic Impact	4,547	\$ 313,733,924	\$ 532,257,873	3,370	\$ 170,079,593	\$ 346,063,197
Indirect						
Economic Impact	458	\$ 24,756,876	\$ 86,248,770	691	\$ 28,480,873	\$ 98,586,225
Induced						
Economic Impact	1,481	\$ 63,581,520	\$ 200,141,369	870	\$ 37,127,860	\$ 116,866,614
Total						
Economic Impact	6,487	\$ 402,072,319	\$ 818,648,012	4,931	\$ 235,688,326	\$ 561,516,036

The completion of the seven proposed projects would have a tremendous impact to the economy of Northwest Indiana: injecting \$818 million of economic output, generating 6,487 initial construction jobs with a labor income of over \$402 million. In addition to the initial construction impact, the IMPLAN analysis projects an on-going annual economic impact of \$561 million with on-going annual labor income of \$235 million from 4,931 on-going jobs.



APPENDIX

**LETTERS OF
SUPPORT**



Letters of Support



Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority



September 3, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

The RDA was a participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018. Within the IGNITE plan, we identified Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing as the cornerstones on which regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, the RDA fully supports the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Sherri Ziller
Chief Operating Officer/Interim President and CEO
Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority

Construction Advancement Foundation

Construction Advancement Foundation
6050 Southport Road, Suite A • Portage, Indiana 46368
(219) 764-2883 • (219) 764-2885 • www.cafnwin.org

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dewey F. Pearman

September 2, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Suite 700
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of the Construction Advancement Foundation of Northwest Indiana, Inc., I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

The Construction Advancement Foundation of Northwest Indiana was a participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, Construction Advancement Foundation of Northwest Indiana, Inc. fully support the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Dewey Pearman
Executive Director
Construction Advancement Foundation of Northwest Indiana, Inc.

Letters of Support



Chicago South Shore & South Bend Railroad



(219) 874-9000

Chicago South Shore & South Bend Railroad

General Offices
505 North Carroll Avenue
Michigan City, Indiana 46360



Fax (219) 879-3754

September 8, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of the Chicago South Shore & South Bend Railroad, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Each of the aforementioned counties were represented as participants in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, the Chicago South Shore & South Bend Railroad fully supports the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Todd Bjornstad
President
Chicago South Shore & South Bend Railroad

Cleveland-Cliffs



CLEVELAND-CLIFFS INC.
200 Public Square, Suite 3300, Cleveland, OH 44114
P 216.694.5700 clevelandcliffs.com

September 10, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Dear Secretary Chambers:

I am writing on behalf of Cleveland-Cliffs Inc. to offer support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the seven Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski along with the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Each of the seven counties were represented as participants in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan initiated in 2018.

The IGNITE plan developed initiatives focused on the economic pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing. These pillars were identified and agreed upon by regional leaders as the cornerstones to place our focus, planning, and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, which is targeting bold and transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve the region's economic future.

As a company with more than 7,000 employees between Lake County and Porter County, the economic and social wellbeing of Northwest Indiana is critically important to Cleveland-Cliffs. Northwest Indiana stands together ready to implement transformational projects to sustain and advance the region as great place to live, invest and conduct business.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Patrick M. Bloom
Vice-President, Government Affairs
Cleveland-Cliffs

Letters of Support



Crossroads Chamber of Commerce



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Sherry Sink, Superior Ambulance Service

Dr. Todd Terrill, Superintendent of Crown Point Schools

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of Crossroads Regional Chamber of Commerce, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Crossroads Regional Chamber of Commerce was a participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, *if* organization name fully support the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Deann Patena
President/CEO
Crossroads Chamber of Commerce

Crown Point Community Foundation



115 S. Court Street, Crown Point, IN 46307
PO Box 522, Crown Point, IN 46308
p 219.662.7252 f 219.662.9493
w thecpcf.org e info@thecpcf.org

Brad Chambers, Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of the Crown Point Community Foundation, Inc., and our mission to enhance the quality of life in South Lake County, Indiana, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the seven (7) Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

The Crown Point Community Foundation was a participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018. Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent, and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness. Collaboration has been the key to successfully launching and implementing the IGNITE plan.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple strategic projects that share the vision to improve our future now and for generations to come.

We thank you for the creation of the READI grant program and the opportunities it provides to advance our great state. Again, the Crown Point Community Foundation fully supports the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready and poised to expand our efforts to implement more great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Respectfully,

Mary B. Nielsen
President

CREATING A BETTER FUTURE
IN SOUTH LAKE COUNTY





Center of Workforce Innovations



Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of the Center of Workforce Innovations (CWI), I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the seven Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

CWI is a nonprofit organization focused on workforce development that serves the seven-county region represented by this READI application. We also serve as staff to the Regional Workforce Board. CWI was a participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our seven counties that was initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning, and resources. CWI leadership served as a co-chair of the Talent Pillar of IGNITE. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, CWI fully supports the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Lisa M. Daugherty
President and CEO
Center of Workforce Innovations

Center of Workforce Innovations
2804 Boilermaker Court, Ste. E • Valparaiso, Indiana 46383
219.462.2940 Fax: 219.465.6860
www.cwicorn.com

NWI Development Group



Mark Wasky, Government & Community Affairs
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One North Capital, Suite 900
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Re: Downtown Hammond Train Station – READI Program

Dear Mr. Wasky:

This letter is in support of the Downtown Hammond Train Station and the Station Square public space adjacent to the platform station. The Downtown Hammond Train station is anticipated to be an extension of the West Lake expansion project and will be designed and engineered according to NICTD infrastructure improvement. Station Square is bound by the platform to the east, Russell Steet's new termination to the south and a new diagonal street connecting Russell to Fayette, which will include a green scape area as well as a paved plaza.

Momentum is growing in Northwest Indiana and the granting of this READI grant for this project enables both the State and City of Hammond to realize a return on major investments in the region. It is certain it will continue to support in-migration trends from neighboring Illinois residents and business community as well as enhance "quality of life" amenities in the downtown for the NWI region's stakeholders.

The Train Station and Station Square are integral and the major component in the Hammond's Downtown Master Plan created by nationally recognized planner Jeff Speck of Speck & Associates in 2019. Moreover, the Downtown Train Station and Station Square are critical components in moving this plan forward to create a thriving downtown. The granting of the READI grant for this project is consistent and complimentary with the larger investments already made by the state in the region and are essential to the feasibility of the project, the revitalization of downtown Hammond and the significant investment around the South Shore West Lake project that broke ground in October 2020.

In closing, we strongly encourage the Indiana Economic Development Corporation's support of this critical project and that the IEDC award Hammond the READI grants available and any other available Federal, State, County or Local incentives to build this vital infrastructure improvement.

Sincerely,

NWI Development Group
100 Anchor Road,
Michigan City, IN 46360

Letters of Support



Duneland Economic Development Company



Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of the Duneland Economic Development Company, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Each of the aforementioned counties were represented as participants in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, the Duneland Economic Development Company fully supports the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Maura Mundell
President
Duneland Economic Development Company

Digital Crossroad



September 20, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of the entire Indiana NAP and Digital Crossroad ownership and management teams, we offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Tom Dakich has been a participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Congratulations on your recent appointment to head this organization. Your becoming involved in this vital endeavor is an affirmation of our belief that any state or organization run by Hoosiers will be managed with efficiency, integrity and aggressive leadership. This is reason Indiana is, in our opinion, the best place to live in the United States.

We fully support the application submitted by Northwest Indiana and we truly understand that Northwest Indiana stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Thomas P. Dakich

CC: Anne Hathaway
Hathaway Strategies

DIGITAL CROSSROAD
www.digitalcrossroad.com

Letters of Support



Franciscan Health



September 7, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Dear Secretary Chambers,

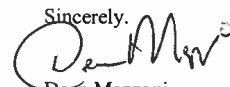
On behalf of Franciscan Health Michigan City, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Each of the aforementioned counties were represented as participants in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones upon which regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, I fully support the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Dean Mazzoni
President/CEO

Gary/Chicago International Airport



September 10, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of Gary / Chicago International Airport Authority (GCIAA), I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

The Gary / Chicago International Airport Authority was a participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, the GCIAA fully supports the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,


Duane Hayden, Executive Director
Gary/Chicago International Airport

Letters of Support



Greater Northwest Indiana Association of REALTORS



800 East 86th Ave. • Merrillville, Indiana 46410

800 East 86th Avenue
Merrillville, Indiana 46410
Tel. 219.795.3600
Fax: 219.795.3611
www.gniar.com

September 17, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of The Greater Northwest Indiana Association of REALTORS®, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

The Greater Northwest Indiana Association of REALTORS® was a participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

As it relates to housing specifically, we hope funding from the READI grant can be used to create and develop a comprehensive regional housing plan that will help shape the future of housing and workforce development in Northwest Indiana.

The purpose of this plan would be to help guide our local communities and counties by providing data driven recommendations that take into consideration the current challenges of our regional housing market, as well as future challenges. The study would provide demographic, housing, and workforce data to assist in the decision-making of our elected officials and investors. Northwest Indiana continues to increase its appeal as a desirable place to live and work, and this type of study is needed to help maximize our potential as a region.



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Gold-Penn, LLC

From the Desk of Helen T. Pennington / Gold-Penn LLC
807 New Buffalo Drive, Schererville, Indiana 46375

September 16, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of Gold-Penn LLC, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Gold-Penn LLC was a participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, I/organization name fully support the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Helen T. Pennington
Vice President & Secretary
Gold-Penn, LLC

Letters of Support



Three Corners Development



7135 Indianapolis Blvd
Hammond, IN 46324
708.535.7716 t
708.535.7791 f

August 6, 2021

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to introduce myself and accepting my letter of support for the Downtown Hammond Train Station and its adjacent station square.

My name is Rob Ferrino and I am a Commercial Developer that specializes in Community Developments. I am presently investing 15 million dollars in the first ground up mixed-use development in Downtown Hammond, an elevation of the project "The Madison" is attached. The project consists of 8,000 SF first floor commercial and (54) condo quality apartments over (4) levels.

The success of The Madison and numerous other residential based projects in Downtown Hamond are highly dependent upon the Downtown Hammond Train Station.

The numerous positive impacts to Downtown Hammond and Northwest Indiana are incredible and are a major factor in my companies investing in Hammond.

Please accept my unconditional support in the Downtown Hammond Train Station and its adjacent station square and thank you for strengthening our community thorough this investment.

Sincerely,

Rob Ferrino
Owner
Three Corners Development

Valparaiso University President Jose Padilla



Valparaiso
University

Office of the President

September 7, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of Valparaiso University, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Each of the aforementioned counties were represented as participants in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, Valparaiso University fully supports the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Jose D. Padilla
President

Kretzmann Hall • 1700 Chapel Drive • Valparaiso, Indiana 46383-4520
phone: 29.464.5115 • fax: 219.464.6776 • jose.padilla@valpo.edu

Letters of Support



Hoepner Wagner & Evans, LLP



James L. Jorgensen
E-mail: jjorgensen@hwelaw.com

Porter County Office
Chase Bank Building
103 East Lincolnway
Valparaiso, Indiana 46383
(219) 464-4961
Fax: (219) 465-0603

Lake County Office
8585 Broadway, Suite 790
Merrillville, Indiana 46410
(219) 769-6552
Fax: (219) 738-2349

www.hwelaw.com

September 3, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of HOEPPNER WAGNER & EVANS LLP, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

HOEPPNER WAGNER & EVANS LLP was a participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018.


Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, HOEPPNER WAGNER & EVANS LLP fully supports the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Very truly yours,

HOEPPNER WAGNER & EVANS, LLP


Electronic Signature
James L. Jorgensen
Valparaiso Office

JLJ:kms

Indiana University Northwest



**OFFICE OF THE
CHANCELLOR**

INDIANA UNIVERSITY NORTHWEST

September 9, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of Indiana University Northwest, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.


Indiana University Northwest was a participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, Indiana University Northwest fully supports the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,


Ken Iwama
Chancellor

Office of the Chancellor 3400 Broadway Gary, IN 46408-1197 (219) 980-6700 fax (219) 980-6670 www.iun.edu



Ivy Tech Community College



Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of Ivy Tech Community College Valparaiso Campus, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Ivy Tech Community College was a participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investment, as well as critical path development under each of these pillars, has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold and transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, Ivy Tech Community College fully supports the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Aco Sikoski,
Chancellor
Ivy Tech Community College – Valparaiso Campus
3100 Ivy Tech Dr.
Valparaiso, In 46383

3100 IVY TECH DRIVE
VALPARAISO, INDIANA 46383
219-464-8514
FAX 219-464-9751

Ivy Tech is an accredited, equal opportunity, affirmative action community college.

Jasper County Economic Development Organization



Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of Jasper County Economic Development Organization (JCEDO), I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

JCEDO was a participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018. Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, I/organization name fully support the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Stephen W. Eastridge
Executive Director
Jasper County Economic
Development Organization

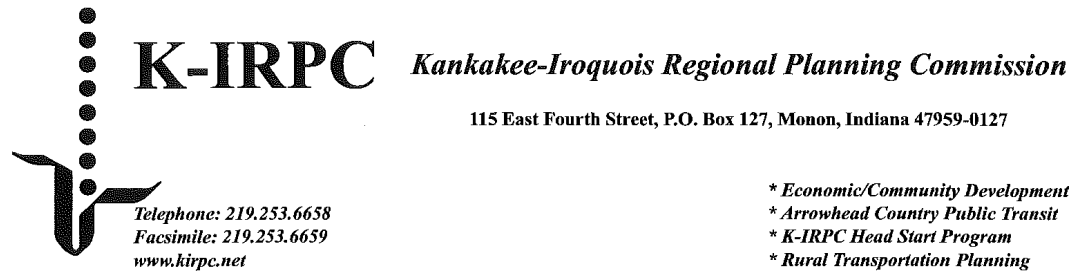
Jasper County
Economic Development Organization

104 W. Washington Street, Suite B.
Rensselaer, IN 47978
219.866.3080 - o
219.866.3010 - F
www.jaspercountyin.com

Letters of Support



Kankakee-Iroquois Regional Planning Commission



- * Economic/Community Development
- * Arrowhead Country Public Transit
- * K-IRPC Head Start Program
- * Rural Transportation Planning

September 10, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of the Kankakee Iroquois Regional Planning Commission, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

KIRPC was a participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, the Kankakee Iroquois Regional Planning Commission fully supports the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Edwin Buswell, AICP
Executive Director
Kankakee Iroquois Regional Planning Commission

Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce



Dave Ryan
Executive Director

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Jeff Williams, Chairman
Allard Truck Rental Corporation
Robert Migliorini, Vice-Chairman
American Precision Services, Inc.
Tim Anderson, Treasurer
Clifton/Larson/Allen LLP
Monica Rubin, Secretary
Small Business Committee Chair
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Calvin Bellamy, Chair
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Senior Director
Monica Garcia, Past Chairwoman
Special Events Committee
Chase
Tamera Liebhart, Chair
Governmental Affairs Committee
BP
David Beach
Eichhorn & Eichhorn, LLP
Peter Nau, Jr., Co-Chair
Manufacturers Committee
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Converge Ventures
Frank Van Til
Van Til's Supermarket
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Cline Avenue Bridge, LLC
Dane Worspai
Hammond Common Council

September 9, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of Lakeshore Chamber, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, Lakeshore Chamber fully support the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Dave Ryan
Executive Director
Lakeshore Chamber

cc: Jeff Williams

A VOLUNTARY PUBLIC PARTNERSHIP SERVING
BENTON - CARROLL - JASPER - NEWTON - PULASKI - STARKE - WARREN - WHITE COUNTIES, INDIANA

5246 HOHMAN AVENUE • HAMMOND, IN 46320 • 219-931-1000 • FAX 219-937-8778
www.lakeshorechamber.com • info@lakeshorechamber.com

Letters of Support



La Porte County Redevelopment Commission



Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of the LaPorte County Redevelopment Commission, we offer our full support for favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application being assembled by the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Each of the projects listed below fall within the NWI Forum's IGNITE strategy. All the projects are in fact ready to move forward immediately, are directed to infrastructure, will be maintained and have matching funds from Federal and local sources including tax increment financing.

421/94 Water and Sewer Connection at Interchange
39 North Water Tower at interchange of 39 and I 90
Kingsbury Logistics Park Rail Bridge Connectivity CSX and CN main lines

Should our organization be chosen, we will have immediate ancillary private sector projects with lasting positive impact in LaPorte County and Northwest Indiana.

Regards,

Matthew Reardon

Matt Reardon
Coordinator
LaPorte County Redevelopment Commission

cc: Randy Novak, RDC President, LaPorte County Council President
Rich Mrozinski, President, LaPorte County Commissioners
Tony Rodriguez, Director, Office of Community and Economic Development

La Porte Economic Advancement Partnership

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204



Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of The La Porte Economic Advancement Partnership (LEAP), I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

LEAP was a participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018. We greatly appreciated the Forum's work to unite our region and to encourage collaboration and partnership across the northern portion of the State of Indiana.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, I/organization name fully support the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Bert Cook
Executive Director
La Porte Economic Advancement Partnership
809 Washington
La Porte, IN 46350

Letters of Support



Lake County IN Economic Alliance (LCEA)



440 W. 84th Drive | Merrillville, IN 46410 | 219/756-4317 | www.LCEA.us

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

The Lake County IN Economic Alliance (LCEA), Lake County's economic development organization representing 19 communities and unincorporated areas, is in full support of favorable consideration of the Northwest Indiana (Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Jasper, Newton, Starke, and Pulaski Counties) Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application submitted in collaboration with the Northwest Indiana Forum.

LCEA's mission is to facilitate economic development efforts for Lake County, the second largest county in the State of Indiana (population approx. 485,000), and to engage in impactful and significant regional projects to support job creation, capital investment, enhancing talent attraction, diversifying the economy, and the overall quality of life in northwest Indiana.

LCEA was a participant in the development of and continues to help implement the IGNITE regional strategic plan for the 7 counties initiated in 2018. The IGNITE pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing are where LCEA and other northwest Indiana leaders place regional focus, planning and human and financial resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these corner stones is an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, offers Northwest Indiana a unique funding mechanism in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future. Furthermore, LCEA strongly believes that the projects within the application will set the tone and serve as a springboard for even more investment and development, additional transformational projects and overall growth with lasting impact on the regional and the State of Indiana economies.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. On behalf of LCEA and Lake County, I ask that the IEDC favorably consider our READI Application. Northwest Indiana stands united and "READI" to implement these key projects if named a successful regional grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Karen M. Lauerman, President & CEO
Lake County IN Economic Alliance (LCEA)

Legacy Foundation



LEGACY
FOUNDATION

Lake County's Community Foundation

September 7, 2021

Mr. Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Dear Secretary Chambers,

I am writing on behalf of Legacy Foundation, Lake County's Community Foundation, in support of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application submitted by a collaboration of representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Legacy Foundation has been a funder and participating partner with the Northwest Indiana Forum's development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties. Representatives from Legacy Foundation served on two of the pillars within the IGNITE plan: Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation and Talent and Business Development. Both pillars have launched a number of projects which benefit our communities.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program and the opportunity for our region to submit a funding application. Again, Legacy Foundation supports the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. We look forward to expanding on our successes and creating a stronger more vibrant region.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Saxton
President & CEO



Confirmed in compliance with national standards for U.S. community foundations

Letters of Support



Mayor Brian Snedecor, City of Hobart



September 9, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of the City of Hobart, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

The City of Hobart was a participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018. Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future. Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, the City of Hobart fully supports the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Brian K. Snedecor
Mayor

BRIAN K. SNEDECOR
MAYOR
MAYORSNEDECOR@CITYOFHOBART.ORG
PH: (219) 942-6112 FAX: (219) 947-4605

414 MAIN STREET
HOBART, INDIANA 46342
WWW.CITYOFHOBART.ORG

Mayor Tom Dermody, City of La Porte



TOM DERMODY

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
801 MICHIGAN AVENUE
LA PORTE, INDIANA 46350

219-362-8220
FAX 219-362-1102

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

September 14, 2021

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of the City of La Porte, thank you for the opportunity to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Again, I appreciate the chance to show my support and ask you for your thoughtful consideration of the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me regarding my strong support.

Sincerely,

Tom Dermody, Mayor
City of La Porte

Letters of Support



Mayor Thomas McDermott, City of Hammond



Thomas M. McDermott, Jr.
Mayor

CITY OF HAMMOND

September 10, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of the City of Hammond, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

The City of Hammond and its Economic Development Department were participants in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, different pillars such as Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Hammond's contribution to IGNITE focuses on Placemaking, through its bold initiatives to revitalize its downtown core. Hammond's recent Downtown Master Plan has spurred development in street and plaza design projects, many new mixed-use residential projects and a new Downtown Train Station on the West Lake Corridor and its adjacent public green space called Station Square.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future, and Hammond is very pleased to be part of the NWI submission.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, I and my team at the City of Hammond fully support the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. McDermott, Jr.
Mayor

5925 Calumet Avenue
Hammond, Indiana 46320

219.853.6301
fax: 219.931.0831
www.gohammond.com
e-mail: mayor@gohammond.com

Mayor Matthew Murphy, City of Valparaiso



Office of the Mayor
166 Lincolnway
Valparaiso, IN 46383
Phone: (219) 462-1161
www.valpo.us

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of the City of Valparaiso, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Valparaiso was a participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, I and the City of Valparaiso fully support the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Matthew Murphy
Mayor
City of Valparaiso

Our City...Our Values
Honestly Accountable Surprisingly Responsive Boldly Proactive Creatively Frugal Respectfully Compassionate



Mayor Jerome Prince, City of Gary



**Mayor
Jerome A. Prince**
City Of Gary, IN



September 14, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of the City of Gary, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Each of the aforementioned counties were represented as participants in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning, and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, the City of Gary fully supports the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Mayor Jerome Prince
City of Gary
504 Broadway, Suite 203
Gary, IN 46402
Ph: 219-881-1302

McColly Bennett Commercial Advantage



Commercial/ Industrial Real Estate & Development

www.mccollybennettcommercial.com

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of McColly Bennett Commercial Advantage, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Each of the aforementioned counties were represented as participants in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, McColly Bennett Commercial Advantage fully support the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Lori Tubbs
President

850 Deer Creek Drive, 2nd Floor
Schererville, IN 46375
Cell: (312) 446-7059
e-mail: Lori.Tubbs@mccolly.com



Michigan City Chamber of Commerce



Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

September 7, 2021

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of the Michigan City Chamber of Commerce, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the counties of Lake, Porter, La Porte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski along with the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Each of the counties were represented as participants in the development of IGNITE, the regional strategic plan initiated in 2018. Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, the Michigan City Chamber of Commerce fully supports the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Katie Eaton
President

200 E. Michigan Boulevard, Michigan City, IN 46360
Phone 219-874-6221 Fax 219-873-1204
www.MichiganCityChamber.com

The Society of Innovators at Purdue Northwest



Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of The Society of Innovators at Purdue Northwest, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

The Society of Innovators was an active participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. The Society serves as pillar champion for Entrepreneurship & Innovation. Developing strategic investments as well as critical paths forward has been an exciting process to help lead.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, the Society of Innovators fully supports the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Jason Williams
Managing Director
The Society of Innovators at Purdue Northwest



Michigan City Economic Development Corporation



Executive Committee:

Linda Simmons
Director of Marketing
Visit Michigan City-LaPorte
Chair

Brenda Temple
VP & General Manager
Blue Chip Casino Hotel & Spa
Vice-Chair

Dennis Kuhn
Executive Vice President
Horizon Bank
Treasurer

Stephanie Oberlie
President & COO
Harbour Trust Company
Past-Chair

Board of Directors:

John Beutner
Manager
Captain Ed's

Dr. Barbara Eason-Watkins
Superintendent
Michigan City Area Schools

Katie Eaton
President
Michigan City Chamber of Commerce

Tim Haas
President
Haas & Associates Consulting Engineers, Inc

Bill Hackney
Publisher
The News-Dispatch
Past Chair

John Hendricks
Gas Field Engineering
NIPSCO

Dean Mazzoni
President & CEO
Franciscan St. Anthony Health

Angie Nelson Deutch
Council Person
Michigan City Common Council

Duane Parry
Mayor
City of Michigan City

Seth Spencer
CEO & Founder
SERA Solutions

Brian Tyllisz
Vice President, Sales
Sullair – A Hitachi Group Company

Executive Director:

Clarence L. Hulse

Two Cadence Park Plaza, Michigan City, IN 46360 • 219-873-1211 • 219-873-1595 fax • www.edcmc.com

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of Michigan City Economic Development Corporation, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Michigan City Economic Development Corporation was a participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, Michigan City Economic Development Corporation fully support the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Clarence L. Hulse

Newton County Economic Development Commission



Newton County Economic Development

September 9, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One North Capital Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Mr. Chambers:

The Newton County Economic Development Commission is writing to inform you of our full support for favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application.

This application was prepared in a collaborative effort by representatives from the seven (7) Northwestern Counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Jasper, Newton, Pulaski, Starke and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Newton County Economic Development was a participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our seven (7) counties that was instituted in 2018.

The READI grant offers exciting funding opportunities in assisting Northwest Indiana by furthering multiple projects that share our vision in improving our future.

Again, in closing, Newton County Economic Development Commission fully supports the Northwest Indiana submitted application and should we be a successful recipient, our region will implement a number of positive and exciting projects.

Respectfully,

Tim Myers
Director, Newton County Economic Development Commission

Tim Myers, Economic Development Director
4117 S 240 W • Suite 100 • Morocco IN 47963 •
888.663.9866 ext 2601 • need@newtoncounty.in.gov
www.newtoncounty.in.gov

Letters of Support



South Shore Line / NICTD



09/03/2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD), the operator of the South Shore Line, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

NICTD was a participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, I/organization name fully support the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. The seven county region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Michael Noland
President
South Shore Line/NICTD

Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO)



Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of Northern Indiana Public Service Company, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Northern Indiana Public Service Company was a participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, Northern Indiana Public Service Company fully supports the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

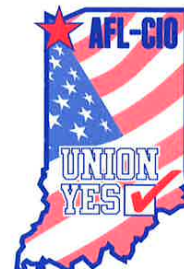
Sincerely,

Richard Calinski
Director of Public Affairs & Economic Development
Northern Indiana Public Service Company

Letters of Support



Northwestern Indiana Building and Construction Trades Council



Affiliated with the
Building and Construction Department, AFL-CIO
**NORTHWESTERN INDIANA
BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION
TRADES COUNCIL**

Ron Ware
President

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Eric Yuhasz
Vice President

Secretary Chambers,

Jeremy Rivas
Secretary - Treasurer

On behalf of Northwestern Indiana Building and Construction Trades Council, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Matt Rhoades
Sergeant - At - Arms

Joseph Pozzi
Trustee

NWI Building and Construction Trades Council was actively involved in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018 and continues to be hands-on in the continued growth within the surrounding regions.

Jeff Hamilton
Trustee

Jason Struzik
Trustee

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

Randy Palmateer
Business Manager

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, the Northwestern Indiana Building and Construction Trades Council fully support the application submitted by Northwest Indiana Forum. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Randy Palmateer
Business Manager
Northwestern Indiana Building and
Construction Trades Council

Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission



6100 Southport Road
Portage, Indiana 46368
(219) 763-6060
www.nirpc.org

September 20, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

RE: READI Grant Application for Northwest Indiana

Dear Secretary Chambers:

As Executive Director of the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC), I am pleased to offer my support for the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration with representatives from across the seven (7) northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

As the regional Council of Governments comprised of all municipalities inclusive of Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties, NIRPC has long championed collaboration among entities in our region across multiple jurisdictions and sectors. The Northwest Indiana Forum, a strong and long-standing partner of NIRPC, has fostered and expanded this kind collaboration in putting together this application, which represents the input of multiple entities who are all committed to seeing the Northwest corner of Indiana excel.

This application is bolstered by the hugely successful and integrally collaborative process the Forum spearheaded in developing *Ignite the Region: A Regional Strategy for Economic Transformation*, initiated in 2018 among leaders in these same seven counties. The *Ignite* strategy identified the pillars of **Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing** as the cornerstones upon which these regional leaders agreed to focus planning and resources. Strategic investments and critical path development under each of these pillars has quickly followed, setting up an upwardly-spiraling momentum of bold, transformative initiatives that would make READI grant support of the projects in this application a solid investment for the future of our region and our state.

Thank you for the provision of the READI program, and for your thoughtful consideration of capitalizing on the benefits of this new momentum in Northwestern Indiana.

Sincerely,

Tyson Warner AICP
Executive Director



Letters of Support



NWI Development Group



Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of NWI Development Group, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Each of the aforementioned counties were represented as participants in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, NWI Development Group fully supports the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Anastacia Fratto
Principal
NWI Development Group
100 Anchor Road
Michigan City, IN 46360

Madison Construction

MADISON

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of Madison Construction, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Each of the aforementioned counties were represented as participants in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, I/organization name fully support the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Rob Ferrino
President
Madison Construction

15657 South 70th Court • Orland Park, IL 60462 • P: 708.535.7716 • F: 708.535.7791 • www.madisonconstruction.net

Letters of Support



One Region Initiatives



1401 US HWY 421 | WESTVILLE | IN 46391
DISCOVER MORE AT ONEREGIONNW.ORG

September 15, 2021

READI Review Committee
1 North Capitol Ave, Suite 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

To the READI Review Committee:

I am submitting this letter on behalf of Northwest Indiana in support of their READI Grant Application. In my capacity as President & CEO of One Region, I work closely with many of the industry leaders that consistently demonstrate that Northwest Indiana has the ability to use the READI grant dollars to multiply their impact.

Northwest Indiana is in a transformational period of growth, creating a new technology-based economy. Through collaboration and strong leadership by local universities, regional partners like the Northwest Indiana Forum, elected officials, and business leaders, Northwest Indiana has had record growth over the last several years in terms of new job creation and capital investment. In 2020 alone, there have been increased job commitments because of the leadership and collaboration found in Northwest Indiana. With the expansion of the South Shore Double Track and the development of the West Lake Corridor, we will continue to see continued population growth and business expansion.

This public investment of dollars has been carefully developed and discussed as a region to be the most effective during this transformational period. Many communities may submit for this grant but Northwest Indiana is prepared to put these funds to action.

I encourage you to name Northwest Indiana as a READI Community.

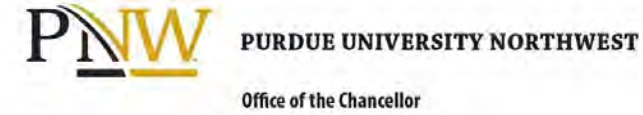
Regards,

Marie Foster-Bruns
President & CEO

ONE REGION INITIATIVES

STRIVE TO GROW POPULATION, ATTRACT AND RETAIN TALENT, AND INCREASE HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Purdue University Northwest



Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of Purdue University Northwest I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

PNW was a participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018. Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. PNW has been highly engaged with the E&I, Talent, and Placemaking pillars, in particular, and it has been truly exciting to witness the significant ongoing progress of these efforts over the last few years.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, offers a timely and needed funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in continuing the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for your consideration of Northwest Indiana's READI grant proposal. PNW fully supports the application submitted by the NWI Forum. Our region stands ready to advance into a more thriving, resilient economic future at a critical moment, and should our application be successful, Northwest Indiana will further accelerate its development as a major driver of prosperity for the entire Hoosier state.

Sincerely,

Thomas L. Keon
Chancellor
Purdue University Northwest



Ports of Indiana



Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers:

On behalf of the Ports of Indiana, I am writing to offer our support for the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from seven Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Each of these counties were represented as participants in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan initiated in 2018. Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development and Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources.

Our collaborative IGNITE plan exemplifies the essence of READI: developing a bold vision for the future that, when implemented, will attract, develop and retain talent in Indiana. Northwest Indiana's vision is to drive its vibrant and inclusive communities by creating the most dynamic economic environment of the Midwest, fueled by innovation, diversity and talent. The READI grant is an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share this vision to improve our future.

The Ports of Indiana supports the Northwest Indiana application. The Ports of Indiana-Burns Harbor stands ready to implement great projects with our partners should we be a successful grant recipient.

Thank you for your consideration,

Vanta E. Coda II
Chief Executive Officer
Ports of Indiana

Pulaski County Economic Development

*Pulaski County
Economic Development*



9 September 2021

Brad Chambers, Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One North Capitol Avenue, Suite 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Dear Secretary Chambers:

On behalf of Pulaski County and the Pulaski County Community Development Commission, I am pleased to offer my full support for the favorable consideration of the Northwest Indiana READI application prepared by the Northwest Indiana Forum and partners from and representatives of our seven member-counties.

Over the last half-decade, our region has engaged in deep soul-searching and evaluated itself as a region, both looking internally and seeking better to understand how we fit into Chicagoland, Indiana, the Midwest, the United States, and the entire world; I am pleased to have represented my community and organization as a member of the steering committee that oversaw the development of our 2018 IGNITE regional strategic plan.

The IGNITE plan identifies Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent, and Business Development & Marketing as the cornerstones on which we will build a new, stronger, more united future — the pillars that will guide our planning and resource allocation. The aligning of local plans and targeted investments with IGNITE has been a rewarding and exciting experience.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, offers an incredible opportunity for us to secure the funding necessary to perpetuate the momentum that we have built as we have developed and begun to implement IGNITE and numerous localized plans across the northwestern corner of the Hoosier State, a region that reaches from highly urbanized neighborhoods to acres and acres of endless pastures, a microcosm of our entire state. The projects included in our proposal will help us to create new opportunities, better places, and a greater quality of life for our residents; to be a model for the rest of Indiana; and to show the rest of the country that, when it's time to make investments for a sustainable future, nobody beats Hoosiers (or Boilermakers, Domers, Cardinals, and Sycamores).

The development of the READI program is indicative of the strong leadership that you are showing at IEDC and the willingness of people of the great state of Indiana to roll up our sleeves and to make amazing things happen. Thank you for this visionary approach to economic development. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient, and I am truly hopeful that Northwest Indiana will be a recipient.

Sincerely,

Nathan P. Origer,
Executive Director

Pulaski County Community Development Commission

P.O. Box 315 • 623 W. 11th Street • Winamac, IN 46996
Phone 574-946-3869 • Fax 574-946-3852

WWW.PULASKIONLINE.ORG

1st Source Bank Support



September 8, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of 1st Source Bank, please accept this letter as evidence of our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) grant application.

This application, prepared in collaboration by representatives from Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum; truly represents the voice of the broader northwestern Indiana region, where our bank has significant business and community interests.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share a common vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, 1st Source Bank fully supports the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. The business and community leaders in our region stand ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Matthew D. Vessely
Regional President
1st Source Bank

F714-IN

Regional Development Company



Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Dear Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of the Regional Development Company (RDC), I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

I was the Board Chair for the Northwest Indiana Forum when we chose to develop the IGNITE regional strategic plan in 2018. My organization is a Certified Development Company administering the SBA's 504 Loan Program, and we serve the entire seven-county region outlined in the IGNITE plan. I felt it was imperative to create an economic development initiative that covered the region known as Northwest Indiana. While our communities differ, from urban to rural, industrial to agriculture, it was important to include all areas and people into the larger plan, to unite us as one region.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning, and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness. I have personally been involved with two pillars, Economic Development & Marketing, through the Forum's Economic Development Committee, and the Entrepreneurship & Innovation, through the Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Center. Seeing these plans come to fruition has been incredibly gratifying for this lifelong Indiana resident, and I know how much more we can accomplish with funding through the READI program.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, the Regional Development Company fully supports the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Erica Dombey, President
Regional Development Company
1757 Thornapple Circle, Valparaiso IN 46385

Letters of Support



Representative Mike Aylesworth



STATE OF INDIANA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THIRD FLOOR STATE HOUSE
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA 46204

Mike Aylesworth
State Representative
200 West Washington Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204
h11@iga.in.gov
317-234-9447
Committees:
Vice Chair, Agriculture and Rural Development
Courts and Criminal Code
Environmental Affairs

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

September 17, 2021

Dear Secretary Chambers,

I am pleased to offer my full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper, and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Each of the aforementioned counties were represented as participants in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan initiated in 2018. Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent, and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future. Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program, I am looking forward to seeing how this impacts our communities. Again, I fully support the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Mike Aylesworth
State Representative
House District 11

Congressman Frank J. Mrvan

FRANK J. MRVAN
1ST DISTRICT, INDIANA

1607 LONGWORTH
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-0007
(202) 225-2461

7895 BROADWAY, SUITE A
MERRILLVILLE, IN 46410
(219) 795-1844

<http://mrvan.house.gov>



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0007

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEES:
CHAIRMAN - TECHNOLOGY MODERNIZATION
HEALTH
EDUCATION AND LABOR COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEES:
HEALTH, EMPLOYMENT, LABOR, AND PENSIONS
CIVIL RIGHTS AND HUMAN SERVICES
CO-CHAIRMAN - CONGRESSIONAL STEEL CAUCUS
CONGRESSIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT CAUCUS

September 8, 2021

The Honorable Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
1 North Capitol Avenue, Suite 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2040

Dear Secretary Chambers,

I write in strong support of an application submitted by the Northwest Indiana Forum, developed in partnership with its seven Northwest Indiana counties, for the consideration of funding offered through the Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative (READI).

Under the leadership of the Northwest Indiana Forum, in its proposal, representatives from Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties are focused upon bringing to fruition the initiatives outlined in the IGNITE Plan. Within the IGNITE Plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Talent, and Business Development and Marketing are identified as the cornerstones upon which regional leaders agreed to place their focus, planning, and resources. Strategic regional investments achieved through critical path development defined under each of these pillars will advance economic development within the seven-county area, particularly given this region's proximity to Chicago and its robust transportation network where interstates and rail provide the connectivity for the Ports of Indiana, the Gary/Chicago International Airport, the South Shore passenger line, and the steel industry to promote trade and commerce.

READI will prove to be the catalyst throughout the state that the General Assembly intended it to be. By targeting bold, transformative initiatives, the Indiana Economic Development Corporation, through the READI grant program, offers the opportunity for Northwest Indiana to implement the IGNITE Plan that will undoubtedly improve the quality of economic opportunity, the quality of life, and the quality of place in the region.

Again, I appreciate your consideration of the application submitted by the Northwest Indiana Forum. Should you need any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me or have the appropriate member of your staff contact Elizabeth Johnson, Director of Projects and Grants, in my Merrillville District Office at 219-795-1844.

Sincerely,

Frank J. Mrvan
Member of Congress

FJM:ej

THIS STATIONERY PRINTED ON PAPER MADE OF RECYCLED FIBERS

Letters of Support



Representative Mike Andrade

STATE OF INDIANA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THIRD FLOOR STATE HOUSE
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA 46204

REPRESENTATIVE MIKE ANDRADE
200 WEST WASHINGTON STREET
INDIANAPOLIS, IN 46204
COMMITTEES:
COMMERCE, SMALL BUSINESS AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
EMPLOYMENT, LABOR AND PENSIONS
VETERANS AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC SAFETY

September 14th, 2021

Sec. of Commerce Brad Chambers
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

As the Representative for Indiana's 12th House District, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Each of the aforementioned counties were represented as participants in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan initiated in 2018. Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, I fully support the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Best,

Mike Andrade
State Representative
District 12

Representative Carolyn Jackson



STATE OF INDIANA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THIRD FLOOR STATE HOUSE
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA 46204

REPRESENTATIVE CAROLYN JACKSON
200 WEST WASHINGTON STREET
INDIANAPOLIS, IN 46204
COMMITTEES:
ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
FAMILY, CHILDREN AND HUMAN AFFAIRS
NATURAL RESOURCES

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

I am pleased to offer my full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Each of the aforementioned counties were represented as participants in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, I fully support the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Carolyn B. Jackson
State Representative
House District #1

Letters of Support



Representative Earl Harris Jr.



STATE OF INDIANA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THIRD FLOOR STATE HOUSE
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA 46204

EARL L. HARRIS JR.
ASSISTANT DEMOCRATIC FLOOR LEADER
200 W. WASHINGTON STREET.
INDIANAPOLIS, IN 46204

COMMITTEES:
WAYS AND MEANS
GOVERNMENT AND REGULATORY REFORM
ROADS AND TRANSPORTATION

September 13, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Dear Secretary Chambers:

I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Each of the aforementioned counties were represented as participants in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan initiated in 2018. Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, I fully support the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Earl L. Harris, Jr.
State Representative
Indiana House District 02

Representative Hal Slager



STATE OF INDIANA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THIRD FLOOR STATE HOUSE
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA 46204

Hal Slager
State Representative
200 W. Washington St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204
E-mail: h15@iga.in.gov
Phone: 317-232-9833
COMMITTEES:
Ways & Means
Environmental Affairs

September 27, 2021

House District 15
Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N Capitol | Suite 700
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Secretary Chambers,

I am writing to express my full support for the Northwest Indiana (NWI) Forum's application for READI funding to support its Ignite the Region (IGNITE) initiative. Since its launch in 2018, I have been a strong advocate of IGNITE, and I believe the entire Northwest Indiana region – and the state as a whole – will greatly benefit from the program's increased capabilities as a result of a READI grant.

Northwest Indiana is in the midst of an incredible economic transformation from its previous manufacturing-heavy economy to a new, innovative economy that aligns with the economic realities we see today. It is no secret that during the past few decades, the region has struggled to combat population loss and address the stagnation of employment opportunities. Thankfully, Northwest Indiana is well underway in its revival, and with the IGNITE plan, the NWI Forum has played a significant role in the evolution of Indiana's second-largest economic region.

When the Indiana General Assembly funded the READI program in our budget bill this year, our goal was to ensure that Indiana has the tools and funding it needs to ensure that our communities are well-equipped to handle the influx of new jobs and talent, as well as to promote projects that contribute to the redevelopment of communities. The IGNITE plan aligns directly with these goals with its five pillars: Entrepreneurship and Innovation; Business Development and Marketing; Infrastructure; Placemaking; and Talent. The NWI Forum has already made tremendous progress on these goals over the past three years, and a READI grant will enable them to implement new projects and enhance their current efforts. For these reasons, I am happy to stand behind the NWI Forum's application.

Thank you for your consideration of the NWI Forum's application for READI funding. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Hal Slager
State Representative
House District 15



Senator Jim Pressel



STATE OF INDIANA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THIRD FLOOR STATE HOUSE
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA 46204

Jim Pressel
200 West Washington Street
Indianapolis, IN 46204
www.in.gov/H20
h20@iga.in.gov
317-232-9850

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

September 2021

As a State Representative from Northwest Indiana, I am pleased to offer my support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Each of the aforementioned counties were represented as participants in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan initiated in 2018. The pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place their focus, planning, and resources on. Watching this group make strategic investments under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness and I know has been a benefit to our community.

This READI grant is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future. I appreciate you providing this opportunity to our region. I fully support the application submitted by Northwest Indiana Forum and look forward to all of the positive results that will come as a result. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Jim Pressel
State Representative
House District 20

Senator Mike Bohacek

State of Indiana

Senator Mike Bohacek
State House
200 W. Washington Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2785
Senate: 317-232-9541
E-mail: S8@iga.in.gov

Senate

Committees:
Corrections & Criminal Law
Insurance & Financial Institutions
Local Government
Judiciary

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, I fully support the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Mike Bohacek

Regards,

Mike Bohacek
Indiana State Senator
District 8
MB/lh

Letters of Support



Senator Ed Charbonneau

State of Indiana

Senator Ed Charbonneau
State House
200 West Washington Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204
State House: (317) 232-9494
E-mail: Senator.Charbonneau@iga.in.gov

September 24, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

I would like to express my support with this letter for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum (Forum).

Each of the aforementioned counties were represented as participants in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan initiated in 2018 by the Forum. Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place their focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The creation of the READI grant during the 2021 Budget Session is a testimony to the forward thinking of this administration to enhance the quality of life for all Indiana residents. The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future. I am pleased that the Forum has led my constituents in this process to submit this application. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Best,

Ed Charbonneau
State Senator District 5

Senate

Committees:
Appropriations
School Funding Subcommittee
Health & Provider Services, Chair
Rules & Legislative Procedure
Tax & Fiscal Policy

Senator Karen Tallian

State of Indiana

Senator Karen Tallian
200 West Washington Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204
(317) 232-9404
s4@iga.in.gov

Senate

Committees:
Corrections and Criminal Law, RMM
Appropriations
Environmental Affairs
Pensions and Labor
Public Policy
Rules and Legislative Procedure

September 13, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Dear Secretary Chambers:

On behalf of my constituents in Senate District 4, I am pleased to offer my full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Each of the aforementioned counties were represented as participants in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan initiated in 2018. Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, I fully support the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Karen Tallian
Indiana State Senator
Senate District 4



Shirley Heinze Land Trust



109 West 700 North
Valparaiso, IN 46385
Phone: 219-242-8558
www.heinzetrust.org

September 13, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

RE: Support for Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI)

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of Shirley Heinze Land Trust, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Shirley Heinze Land Trust was a participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018. Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future. Again, Shirley Heinze Land Trust fully supports the application submitted by the Northwest Indiana Forum as it will undoubtedly improve the quality of life throughout Northwest Indiana, the Chicago Region, and beyond. If you have further questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 219.242.8558 or kkrouse@heinzetrust.org.

Sincerely,

Kristopher Krouse
Executive Director
Shirley Heinze Land Trust

Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission



Brandon Dickinson
166 Lincolnway
Valparaiso, IN 46383
Phone: (219) 462-1161
www.valpo.us

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of the Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the seven (7) Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Valparaiso was an active participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our seven (7) counties initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, I and the Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission fully support the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Brandon Dickinson
Executive Director
Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission

Our City...Our Values

Honestly Accountable Surprisingly Responsive Boldly Proactive Creatively Frugal Respectfully Compassionate

Letters of Support



South Shore Clean Cities



South Shore Clean Cities, Inc.
10115 Ravenwood Drive, Suite B, St. John, Indiana 46373
(219) 644-3690 www.southshorecleancities.org

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

September 7, 2021

Dear Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of South Shore Clean Cities, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the seven Northwestern Indiana counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

South Shore Clean Cities was a participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our seven counties that was initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones on which regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars have been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant - targeting bold, transformative initiatives - is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, South Shore Clean Cities fully supports the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our Region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Carl Lisek
Executive Director
South Shore Clean Cities

Indiana South Shore Convention & Visitors Authority



September 9, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of the South Shore Convention & Visitors Association (SSCVA), I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

The SSCVA was an active participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for abovementioned 7 counties that was initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future. Many of the qualities that the SSCVA focuses upon - placemaking, quality of use and talent retention are included within this project portfolio.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, the South Shore Convention & Visitors Association fully supports the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Cathy Svetanoff
Interim President/CEO and Chief Financial Officer

South Shore Convention and Visitors Authority • 7770 Corinne Drive • Hammond, Indiana 46323
tel 219-989-7770 • 800-AI.L-LAKE • fax 219-989-7777 • www.southshorecva.com

Letters of Support



Starke County Economic Development Foundation



September 9, 2021

Mr. Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of the Starke County Economic Development Foundation, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

The Starke County Economic Development Foundation was a participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, I/organization name fully support the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Ljisa G. Dan
Executive Director
Starke County Economic Development Foundation, Inc.

1915 S. Heaton Street • Knox, IN 46534 • 574.772.5627 800.359.5627 574.772.5912 f
www.scedf.biz

Tonn and Blank Construction, LLC



Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of Tonn and Blank Construction, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Tonn and Blank Construction was a participant in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, Tonn and Blank Construction fully support the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Joseph Coar
Consultant
Tonn and Blank Construction, LLC.

Michigan City | Indianapolis | Fort Wayne | Lafayette
Corporate Headquarters: 1623 Greenwood Ave.
Michigan City, IN 46360
(800) 871-1555 | tonnandblank.com

Letters of Support



Town of Munster



Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of The Town of Munster, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

Each of the aforementioned counties were represented as participants in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning, and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, The Town of Munster fully support the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

Dustin Anderson
Town Manager
Town of Munster, Indiana

1005 Ridge Road • Munster, IN 46321 • (219) 836-6900 • Fax (219) 836-6540 • Police / Fire Emergencies 911
www.munster.org



Unity Foundation of La Porte County



422 Franklin St. Suite C
Michigan City, IN 46360
219-879-0327 • 888-898-6489
219-210-3881 Fax
unity@ufic.net • www.ufic.net

September 9, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of the Unity Foundation of La Porte County, I am pleased to offer our support for the application submitted by the NW Indiana Forum for the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative. (READI) This application was prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum.

The Unity Foundation is the community foundation that serves primarily La Porte County, and works closely with our peer organizations in the 7 county region. We came together with Legacy Foundation, Crown Point Community Foundation and the Porter County Community Foundation to provide funding for the IGNITE regional strategic plan for our 7 counties that was initiated in 2018. We were hopeful that a regional economic development plan would "ignite" good things here. And it has.

I served on the Steering Committee of the IGNITE plan and watched as the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as key areas of focus. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness. I also served on Pillar #2: Entrepreneurship and Innovation and visited several regions around the U.S. to explore their entrepreneurial ecosystems, which led to the development of NWI BIZhub.com.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in keeping the momentum of the Ignite the Region plan and projects.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, the Unity Foundation supports our application and anything that unites and ignites our region!

Sincerely,

Maggi Spartz, President



Excellence. Accountability. Impact.™

Maggi Spartz,
President

Directors:

Paul Applegate, CPA
Elizabeth Bernel
Michael Brennan
Diana Kabelin Corley
Angie Nelson Deuilch
Laura Francesconi
Jon A. Gilmore
James W. Kaminski
Vidya S. Kora, M.D.
Stephanie Oberlie
Dale Parkison, CPA
Ronald J. Rogains
Scott Rice
Kim Sauers
Seth Spencer
Martha Swanson
Edward L. Volk
Barbara Eason-Watkins

Honorary Board
Members:

Daniel E. Lewis, Jr.
Robert Schaefer



A Power for Good

Letters of Support



Lake Area United Way

United Way of Northwest Indiana

Porter County Office
951 Eastport Centre Dr.
Valparaiso, IN 46383
219.464.3583

Lake County Office
221 W. Ridge Rd.
Griffith, IN 46319
219.923.2302

unitedwaynwi.org



September 10, 2021

Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Dear Secretary Chambers,

On behalf of United Way of Northwest Indiana, I am pleased to offer our full support for the favorable consideration of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI) application prepared in collaboration by representatives from the 7 Northwestern counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper and Pulaski counties and the Northwest Indiana Forum. Each of the aforementioned counties were represented as participants in the development of the IGNITE regional strategic plan initiated in 2018.

Within the IGNITE plan, the pillars of Infrastructure, Placemaking, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Talent and Business Development & Marketing were identified as the cornerstones that regional leaders agreed to place our focus, planning and resources. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

The READI grant, targeting bold, transformative initiatives, is offering an exciting funding opportunity to assist Northwest Indiana in furthering the momentum of multiple projects that share the vision to improve our future.

Thank you for the creation of the READI grant program. Again, United Way of Northwest Indiana name fully supports the application submitted by Northwest Indiana. Our region stands ready to implement great projects should we be a successful grant recipient.

Sincerely,

David M. Nicole
Interim President & CEO
Lake Area United Way



AmeriCorps

United Way helps people thrive by bringing our caring community together to solve tough challenges.

bp Whiting Refinery

September 27, 2021



Brad Chambers
Secretary of Commerce
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
One N. Capitol, Ste. 700
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Secretary Chambers,

The bp Whiting refinery is pleased to offer our support for Northwest Indiana's Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative (READI) grant application.

Since the Fall of 2018, members of the bp Whiting refinery team have collaborated with representatives from Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Starke, Newton, Jasper, and Pulaski counties, and with the Northwest Indiana Forum to develop the IGNITE regional strategic plan. That strategic plan serves as the foundation for this application.

The IGNITE plan focuses on the pillars of infrastructure, business development, entrepreneurship, innovation, talent acquisition and other areas critical to the success of the region. Strategic investments as well as critical path development under each of these pillars has been an exciting process to witness.

We at the bp Whiting refinery believe a successful READI grant application would help continue this momentum. We also believe it will help realize our shared vision of an improved future for generations of Hoosiers to come.

We ask that you give thoughtful consideration towards Northwest Indiana region's application.

Sincerely,

Donnie W. Brown Jr.
Vice President Refining—bp Whiting Refinery