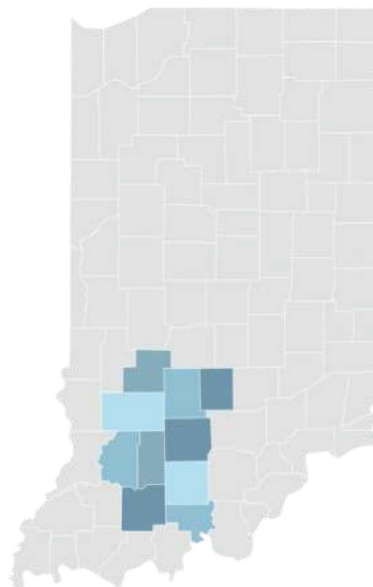


The Indiana Uplands: Essential to Indiana's Economy of the Future Executive Summary

Given its abundance of forests, parks, rolling hills, and expansive waterways, those unfamiliar with the Indiana Uplands might mistakenly characterize this region as only a vacation and recreation destination. Over the past decade, however, economic analyses conducted regularly by TEconomy Partners provide evidence that this region is an increasingly important innovation driver for the state. With multiple highperforming industry sectors, aligned regional leadership, and a coordinated strategy for growth, data confirms that the Indiana Uplands is a "region on the rise." Uplands firms are thriving, and the region has a prominent role in state/national initiatives, including CHIPS+Science, Microelectronics Commons, medical device and pharmaceutical development, including vaccines, and Industry 4.0.

An important indicator of opportunity in the Uplands is the significant new investments made by economic anchors in recent years. Indiana University's \$111 microelectronics investment, NSWC Crane's high-profile role in the CHIPS+Science Act, and the acquisition of two of our leading biopharma companies prove that the Uplands region is fertile ground for innovation investment. Not counting these recent purchases, the top 25 projects in Uplands Biomedical and Manufacturing sectors have generated \$1.09B in CapEx over the last five years.

In developing our READI 2.0 plan, it has become clear that now is the time for the Uplands to push forward and assert its role as a region essential to Indiana's economy of the future. Our \$75M ask is big, but our potential is bigger.



Vision and READI 2.0 Goals

Our vision for the Uplands is to grow our capacity as a national innovation hub with quality of place assets that attract and retain the best and brightest talent. Achieving this will require a focus on advanced technologies (Goal 1), given the specialization, growth, and unique positioning sectors hold here. Leveraging the economic opportunities and community benefits that derive from sector growth will require a coordinated, resolute focus on place-based strategies (Goal 2), talent (Goal 3), and activating the creative-class (Goal 4). READI 2.0 funding will position this region to accomplish the goals detailed below, creating multi-generational impact and elevating outcomes for both the region and state.



Goal 1: Leverage advanced technologies to position the Indiana Uplands for economic opportunity and continued growth across its key employment sectors: advanced manufacturing, life sciences, and national security and defense.

Strategies: Infrastructure/facilities to support attraction and growth in high tech/high wage areas; establish Uplands as a national center for microelectronics research, testing, and development; support R&D through unique facilities and infrastructure; deploy talent and quality of place strategies to support advanced technologies clusters

Action Plans: Complete essential infrastructure at WG Technology Park; develop network of highly specialized shared test facilities; grow talent programming and partnerships; develop housing and physical infrastructure at WestGate Technology Park; improve physical environments for downtown redevelopment, housing, community gathering, outdoor recreation.

Goal 2: Develop and enhance quality of place assets to support economic opportunity and growth.

Strategies: Increase supply and infrastructure for rental/owner-occupied housing; grow access to quality early learning/childcare; improve air and surface transportation; improve quality of place; expand access to healthcare

Action Plans: Support high-density housing development; blight remediation; infrastructure for regional airports, highway interchanges, electric vehicles; invest in healthcare and recreation facilities; increase capacity for early learning/childcare

Goal 3: Grow Uplands talent pipeline through educational programming and targeted attraction and retention strategies that build upon existing robust programming.

Strategies: Expand education and workforce initiatives; grow post-secondary programming aligned with high-growth sectors; develop sector-specific training programs/facilities; deploy talent attraction/marketing initiatives

Action Plans: Expand digital fabrication and entrepreneurship programming through labs and student-run businesses; create sector-aligned post-secondary degree programs; develop/equip controlled environment training facility(ies) at WestGate and higher-education campuses; support sector-specific training programs like BioTrain or other Industry 4.0 relevant programming

Goal 4: Increase economic vitality across the Uplands through a focus on unique cultural, artistic, physical, and livability assets.

Strategies: Grow the livability of cities and towns for diverse populations, defined by age, race/ethnicity; attract and retain creative class, through visual, performing, and literary arts, filmmaking, architecture, and graphic design; convene regional arts/culture task force and conduct landscape assessments

Action Plans: Invest in community gathering spaces and leverage for arts/cultural events; expand cultural centers and festivals; identify arts/cultural/historic districts and develop/invest to improve, revitalize, or expand; Engage local and regional entities in supporting temporary or permanent public-art



Regional Assets and Unique Qualities:

Numbering 370,000 residents, the Uplands region is the sixth largest of Indiana's 15 READI regions. Its 10 READI counties and 40 cities and towns are primarily rural, stretching across 4,000 square miles. All but one Uplands County is categorized as rural or rural-mix; eight counties are considered disadvantaged. Despite our rural nature, the story of this region is not defined by perceived barriers. Rather, the outsized impact that the region exhibits and the accelerated trajectory of its sectors provides evidence for the importance of investing in this region.

- Four Upland's advanced industry clusters are highly specialized, with location quotients that exceed that of the state and nation (Biomedical, National Security/Defense, Furniture, Food Processing/ Manufacturing). The Automotive/Heavy Vehicle sector also significantly outperforms the nation.
- Medical Device and BioPharma rank first and second, respectively, for manufacturing capacity in small U.S. MSAs.
- The region's defense cluster has been on a steep growth trajectory, providing national leadership in areas of DoD prioritization, including microelectronics and hypersonics. As of 2022, the sector's employment concentration is three times that of other Indiana locations.

The growth of jobs and capital expenditures in regional high-wage key employment sectors has been exceptional. While 5.5% of Indiana's population resides in the Uplands, 17.7% of the state's jobs in Biomedical, 16% in National Security/Defense, and 26% in Furniture Manufacturing exist in the region. Employment metrics in key sectors continue to grow as private and public investments in the region accelerate. From 2012 to 2023, Automotive/Heavy Vehicles jobs grew by 212%, National Security and Defense by 16.6%, and Biomedical by 23.2%. Except for biomedical, job growth in the region's key sectors has outpaced that of the state.

Coupling job growth with growing innovation capacity offers a more complete picture of the region's essential role in driving current and future outcomes for the State of Indiana.

- From 2012 to 2023, the region saw a rapid increase in patent activity, with total patents of 7,951. The Uplands claims 17.9% of the state's patents in its key sectors. Biomedical in the region is responsible for 34.4% of Indiana's patents, National Security/Defense 17.7%, and Furniture 27.4%.
- Venture capital investment is also increasing dramatically. From 2020 to 2023, \$170 million was invested in over 80 venture deals, far outpacing the prior eight years (\$37 million invested).

Both IU and Naval Surface Warfare Center Crane (NSWC Crane) have made major strides as innovation drivers and have been highly engaged in the region's and state's economic development strategy:

- IU's Research and Development (R&D) expenditures increased by 32.5% from 2018 to 2022, outpacing total U.S. R&D growth by 8.9%. IU is also launching the Faculty 100 initiative, which will add 100 faculty members with entrepreneurial and commercialization track records in key areas.
- NSWC Crane, a premier federal laboratory, continues adding DoD-wide contract authority, attracting significant interest in partnerships with industry. Sixty-five percent of NSWC Crane's 3,914 employees and 2,849 contractors are scientists, engineers, and technicians, with 60% growth in PhDs over the last five years.



WestGate@Crane Technology Park, located just outside the gates of the naval base, is an emerging innovation hub for the region and the state. Driven by the innovation activity of NSWC Crane, academia, and the private sector, this state-certified technology park is experiencing rapid growth as a nucleus for DoD-relevant microelectronics, advanced packaging, and hypersonics. The region's largest READI 1.0 investment is supporting infrastructure needed at WestGate for a microelectronics and advanced packaging facility. WestGate One will open in early 2026 and house multiple companies employing several hundred employees with salaries averaging \$100,000/year. In addition to WestGate One, five additional projects at the park are in the planning phase. Funding from READI 2.0 would facilitate the completion of the infrastructure necessary to advance this critical state asset and help Indiana capture additional federal investments from Microelectronics Commons and Commerce Department's CHIPS Program.

WestGate@Crane is also critical to the state's research universities as a vehicle for growing innovation relationships with NSWC Crane. In 2023, like the \$111 million investment mentioned previously, IU is accelerating innovative solutions to national security challenges through collaboration with NSWC Crane. Similarly, in 2023, Purdue University announced a significant commitment to growing its partnership with NSWC Crane at WestGate Technology Park through a focus on microelectronics, hypersonics, and energetic materials.

Innovation and opportunity are not limited to the region's defense sector. A recent study by TEconomy Partners highlights the strides employers in the region's manufacturing sector are making relative to Industry 4.0, including investment in automation/robotics by entities like General Motors and OFS. In addition, investments in biopharma are occurring in the region, including Simtra's acquisition of Baxter's Bloomington facility and Novo Nordisk's purchase of Catalent.

Regional Collaboration

Critical to regional growth is a commitment to collaboration and regionalism that, over the last 12 years, has coalesced stakeholders around a cohesive regional identity. A 2014 strategic plan for economic and community prosperity provided the region's roadmap to sector strategies and improving quality of place. Aligned leadership, trusted partnerships, and commitment to data-driven strategies have allowed a geographically-large region to move forward with a lens of regional coordination that drives impact.

This READI proposal reflects regional stakeholder engagement shepherded by a regional advisory committee and informed by ten+ listening sessions, regional studies, and convenings in topical areas, including childcare and housing. This work builds upon the regular cadence of stakeholder meetings that drive implementation strategies in K-12 pipeline development, training, degree programming, broadband, and other quality-of-life priorities.

While progress has been made, the region continues to play catch up in creating the conditions needed to keep pace with significant industry and employment growth. The Uplands region recently completed an update of its 2019 Regional Housing Study detailing housing needs in every county by type, price, and location. The region requires an additional 16,000+ housing units by 2035 to meet the needs of local employers and overcome housing scarcity barriers in the region. READI 1.0 funding helped establish the Indiana Uplands Regional Land Bank to address blight and stimulate infill development in six counties. READI also funded more than \$7M in housing infrastructure that will bring seven new housing developments to six counties in the Uplands – an important start that has attracted new developers to the region. However, housing continues to be an urgent need that READI 2.0 funding could address with a degree of acceleration that might not otherwise be feasible. Childcare falls into the same category and is equally relevant.

Benchmark Community and Alignment with State's Economic Development Goals

Huntsville and Northern Alabama serve as benchmarks and an aspirational region for the Uplands. Home to a federal laboratory and a research university in a primarily rural 13-county region, the parallels to the Uplands are meaningful. We have much to strive for in comparison. Northern Alabama's transformation began decades ago, and they have the metrics, including population, to prove it. Like Northern Alabama, the Indiana Uplands is proving that innovation can generate investment and outcomes that will elevate this region and the state of Indiana.

As detailed throughout this summary, the Uplands will play an essential role in the growth of per capita income, skilled talent attraction, and educational attainment, aligning with the priorities IEDC has established for Indiana. The vision we have set forth for READI 2.0 is evidence of our commitment to doing more than our part in the growth of per capita income, employment opportunities, and educational attainment. In addition, the region's high-profile wins and increasing national prominence in innovation-focused sectors, our abundant outdoor recreation opportunities, charming communities, and strong regional alignment put us in an excellent position to attract in-demand talent and the creative class.



Part II: READI 1.0 Evaluation

Provide an honest assessment of the region's participation in the first phase of the READI initiative:

The Uplands region started preparing for future opportunities such as READI as early as 2012 when, encouraged by Lilly Endowment, our disparate counties came together to pursue a shared vision for success. A 2-year planning process produced a regional strategic plan, culminating in a catalytic \$42 million investment in 2016 by the Lilly Endowment to formally establish the Indiana Uplands region. Since 2016, Regional Opportunity Initiatives, together with our communities and partners, has been deeply engaged in activities to grow our rural region's potential and possibility through a metric-driven focus on advanced industry sectors, regionalism, transformative school and workforce redesign, and placemaking strategies. Each of these comprehensive endeavors has served to identify regional needs and guide potential strategic investments. When READI 1.0 was launched, our region was ready and eager to identify potential projects for investment. ROI convened a steering committee made up of stakeholders from Uplands key sector employers, institutions of higher education, community/economic development organizations, and subject matter experts to provide guidance, leadership, and direction in the planning and execution of our region's plan with the state's potential investment. A robust stakeholder engagement strategy, spanning community convenings, subject matter expert working groups, and online submissions, ensured a comprehensive representation of projects deployed across the Uplands region. ROI staff conducted meetings to educate and discuss the federal guidance and funding criteria with project leads. Thanks to our focus on regionalism over the previous years, the Indiana Uplands was able to identify and recommend 27 impactful READI 1.0 projects prior to the IEDC allocation deadline (with an estimated \$834 Million in public and private match). Our READI 1.0 portfolio includes \$13.29 million for critical water, sewer, and road infrastructure necessary to accelerate industry investments and innovation districts including WestGate@Crane Technology Park and two projects that supported job creation. Eight distinct housing projects/programs totaling \$9.24 million will add over 400 owner-occupied and rental housing units with infrastructure to create additional housing in the future. Approximately \$3.13 million will enhance or create trails, parks, downtown gathering spaces, and cultural amenities in cities and towns across the Uplands. Finally, \$2.53 million is supporting vital childcare, education, and workforce development projects to prepare our young people, adults, and families for our region's high-wage, high-opportunity jobs. Collaboration created our region in 2012, and we are grateful for opportunities like the READI initiative that strengthen relationships, stakeholder involvement, and regionalism. With over \$4.6 million in READI 1.0 funds disbursed and 66% of projects having requested reimbursement, the Uplands is proud of the collaboration and strategic investment that is propelling this region towards a thriving future.

Identify lessons learned and any issues that, if addressed, would increase opportunities for successful implementation of the region's READI 2.0 application.

ROI remains steadfast in its commitment to optimizing opportunities within the READI program. During READI 1.0, our rural region had little to no direct experience in the use of federal funds. Some communities and nonprofits found themselves grappling with the complexities of financial incentives, federal procurement requirements, and assembling comprehensive financial draw packages. ROI provided educational webinars



and in-person convenings to help communities through the intricate application and procurement process. Despite these complexities, the Indiana Uplands' thorough approach to project selection proved successful in READI 1.0. Projects are proceeding, with several at or near completion. Playgrounds and pickleball courts are being used and homes are already occupied. Should the region receive a READI 2.0 allocation, ROI envisions an even more comprehensive support structure for applicants, including sessions on crafting compelling responses to requests for proposals, navigating the State's procurement process, strategically layering financial incentives, constructing robust reimbursement request packages, and consideration of complementary or alternative funding mechanisms (such as redevelopment tax credits). In addition to administrative improvements, the following lessons have informed our goals, strategies, and action plans for READI 2.0: Infrastructure is the universal barrier to development and growth opportunities in our region. Through READI 1.0, ROI invested over \$20 million in infrastructure projects, with over \$7 million for housing and over \$13 million for innovation districts and industry growth. The remaining infrastructure funds were used for downtown development and to provide water service to an existing neighborhood. Housing availability is the top concern in all Uplands counties, impacting business attraction and retention, school enrollment, and community revenues. While progress has been made both with and in addition to READI assistance, the need for housing continues to be an issue as Uplands employers expand. While expanding infrastructure for job growth and housing development can attract new talent, it needs to be coupled with industry-specific training programs to provide a complete talent ecosystem for Uplands employers. Our region's complete package for optimal growth and prosperity must also include enhanced quality of life amenities, including attractive downtowns and recreation areas, and critical access to quality childcare.

Describe the current capacity of the regional organization as well as strengths, weaknesses, and whether potential changes or support are needed to enhance the organization's long-term viability and sustainability.

Since the Lilly Endowment's transformative investment in the Indiana Uplands in 2016, giving rise to ROI, the organization has evolved into a trusted regional intermediary. Covering over 4,000 square miles, the expansive Indiana Uplands encompasses 10 READI counties and 40 cities and towns. This vast geography necessitates a unique approach to ensure its initiatives are responsive to the specific needs of Uplands industries, anchor institutions, local governments, and, most importantly, residents. ROI's strengths include topical expertise and organizational capacity, but its true strength lies in its strong relationship across the region. Recognizing that people are the driving force behind genuine change, ROI places an emphasis on building and maintaining these relationships. Understanding the deep care individuals have for their communities, ROI effectively employs tools and processes that bring people together from diverse backgrounds to collaboratively foster demand-driven opportunities for the entire region. The organization excels in convening anchor institutions, employers, communities, stakeholders, and subject matter experts to collectively advance regional development. The primary challenge facing ROI and the Uplands region is the sheer size of the geography, spanning 4,000 square miles. Overcoming logistical hurdles in such a vast area is no small feat, requiring innovative processes and programs that cater to both large cities like Bloomington and smaller towns like Mill Town. Since 2016, ROI has developed various strategies, including the strategic use of technology. While lessons from the challenges posed by COVID-19 have opened up new opportunities for remote collaboration, in-person gatherings remain valuable for ROI to connect with regional stakeholders and facilitate relationship-building among them. Events like the Annual Report to the Region, attended by over 300 people annually, serve as essential platforms for the region to unite in advancing opportunities and fostering exchange of ideas. For



organizational sustainability, ROI strategically collaborates with other entities, sharing physical space and operational costs with the Community Foundation of Bloomington/Monroe County and CDFI-Friendly Bloomington. This model allows for shared expenses and optimizes resources for all three organizations. Key personnel, including the President/CEO, Communications & Marketing Director, and Controller, serve both the Foundation and ROI, further streamlining costs and ensuring operational capacity for all involved organizations. ROI has also diversified its revenue streams. Established with a generous gift from the Lilly Endowment, ROI has leveraged this initial investment to secure over \$3 million in grants for education and workforce development programs. ROI recently received additional operating funding from the Lilly Endowment that includes funding for a dedicated development/grant staff member to diversify internal funding streams and assist regional stakeholders in maximizing programs underutilized by the region such as SBDC loans, Manufacturing Readiness Grants, IHEDA housing programs, OCRA community development programs, and other federal funding all of which underscores the ongoing commitment to sustaining impactful initiatives and long-term viability in the region.



Part III: Review

Keeping in mind the analysis from the previous section, regions should provide the identified data points in this section and describe how these metrics have shifted over the years. The purpose of this section is to use the economic and demographic changes occurring in the region to allow regions to conduct projections of these metrics to determine how they will contribute to the overall success of the READI 2.0 program.

Key performance indicators	Indiana	Region
Total population (U.S. Census Bureau)	6,751,340	369,873
Total employment (U.S. Census Bureau)	3,020,345	155,613
Per capita income (Bureau of Economic Analysis)	\$ 51,645.95	\$ 54,572.00
Total population with bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau)	1,253,299	67,532
Total housing units (U.S. Census Bureau)	2,911,562	167,104
Total rental housing units (U.S. Census Bureau)	680,964	45,899
Total owner-occupied units (U.S. Census Bureau)	1,097,622	102,177
Number of new business start-ups (Small Business Development Center)	150,067	8,081

Please describe the current landscape of childcare within your region. Information could include current challenges to childcare, the number of facilities and/or seats and quality of childcare in your area. Visit the READI website for supplemental information that may be available.

The pursuit of high-quality childcare is not new to the Uplands. ROI has leveraged the in-house expertise and successful Monroe Smart Start (MSS) model in Monroe County. Thanks to earlier seed funding from IU Health, ROI and MSS were able to coordinate an Early Learning Collaborative that included five of the region's IU Health south central counties. This important strategic planning work has continued with additional funding from Lilly Endowment's GIFT VIII that now allows for all 11 counties to develop plans that will ultimately define a regional strategy and support innovative efforts. It is through these strategic planning sessions that we realize there is much work to be accomplished collectively to surpass challenges in the Uplands. Challenges include lack of enough high-quality sites, available seats, qualified workforce, and competitive workforce wages. The region needs an additional 7,426 childcare seats and 2,178 childcare workers. There are 24,786 children under the age of six in the Uplands region, and 63% may need care due to working parents (Brighter Futures Data Center). While 43% of the children who may need care can be served in a regulated program, only 21% can be served at a high-quality program (Indiana Paths to Quality Levels 3 and 4). Unfortunately, many child care providers are unable to offer compensation to attract and retain a qualified workforce. This



wage predicament has evolved into a staffing crisis, leading to a childcare shortage and significant financial losses for the childcare industry and our local economy.

Please describe the current innovation ecosystem within your region. Think about current challenges or barriers to innovation activities, the number of new business start-ups and current resources to increase innovative activities in your area (patents, research and development funding, etc).

Generating an innovation ecosystem is increasingly central to the Uplands economy. One significant anchor is Indiana University. The research that IU undertakes and the talent that it develops helps grow the region's advanced industry clusters. IU's deep expertise in computer science and health sciences enhances the region's ICT, Biomedical, and National Security/Defense Clusters. IU's research grew substantially from 2018-2022 in both fields, with computer and information sciences growing by 56.9% (22.4 points above U.S. rate) and health sciences growing by 42.4% (18.7 points above the U.S.). The second anchor of the innovation ecosystem is NSWC Crane, which generated robust growth of nearly 60% in PhDs from 85 in 2017 to 135 in 2022. Sixty-five percent of NSWC Crane's 3,822 workers are scientists, engineers, and technicians. WestGate@Crane Technology Park facilitates an innovation ecosystem for Crane with academia and more than 60 companies residing in the park. The region has also increased its innovative startups, with more than 80 deals receiving venture capital investment totaling more than \$170 million between 2020 and 2023. This far outpaced the prior eight years, which saw a cumulative investment of \$37 million. This growth has been driven by the activities of The Mill and IU Ventures. Despite our momentum, further investment in placemaking and infrastructure is necessary to attract high-tech companies and creative class workers. And we need to continue to develop stronger talent linkages to ensure that graduates' skills and experiences are aligned with opportunities in the region.

List your top 10 employers. List your civic institutions including higher education and philanthropic organizations. Please specify companies or organizations, not industries.

Top 10 regional employers based on number of employees: ·Indiana University ·NSWC Crane Division ·Catalent (being acquired by Novo Holdings) ·Cook Group ·IU Health Bloomington Hospital ·OFS Brands ·Masterbrand Cabinets ·West Baden Springs Hotel/French Lick Resorts ·Best Chairs Inc. ·Jasper Engines & Transmissions It should be noted that three additional Uplands industries have over 1,000 employees and include: ·Memorial Hospital/Health Care ·Boston Scientific Corporation ·Memorial Audiology Svc Other entities that provide significant impact, but are not included in the Top 10 list include: ·GM Powertrain ·Crane Army Ammunition Activity ·Jasper Rubber Products ·Kimball Electronics ·Baxter Biopharma Solutions (now Simtra BioPharma Solutions) Institutions of Higher Education: ·Indiana University ·Ivy Tech – Bloomington ·Vincennes University – Jasper Philanthropic Organizations – STATS Indiana's Nonprofit Database identifies 5,897 nonprofits across the 10-county region, including: ·Community Foundations: All ten counties ·Other Foundations: Indiana University Foundation, Bloomington Health Foundation, Ivy Tech Bloomington Foundation ·United Ways: Daviess County and South-Central Indiana ·Habitat for Humanity Chapters: Brown, Monroe, and Orange County Community Action Programs: South Central Community Action Program, Pace Community Action Program, Hoosier Uplands Economic Development Corporation, Dubois-Pike-Warrick Economic Opportunity Committee (Tri-CAP), and Lincoln Hills Development Corporation



List the counties or areas that are considered rural and rural-mix. List the counties or areas that are considered disadvantaged communities. Visit the READI website for supplemental information that may be available.

For READI 1.0, 91% of the region’s funding allocation from IEDC was invested in rural & rural-mix counties, and 77% in disadvantaged counties in the Uplands. Eight of 10 Uplands READI counties qualify as rural and one as rural-mix. Only one Uplands READI county (Monroe) is not identified as rural or rural-mix. Rural
 ·Brown·Crawford·Daviess·Greene·Lawrence·Martin·Orange·Owen
 Rural-Mix·Dubois
 Eight of 10 Uplands READI counties are identified as disadvantaged. Dubois and Martin counties are the only counties in the region not considered disadvantaged. Disadvantaged·Brown·Crawford·Daviess·Greene·Lawrence·Monroe – Qualified Census Tract (QCT)·Orange·Owen

Based on the datapoints above, describe how the region’s metrics have shifted since 2021. What are your anticipated projections of change given your READI 1.0 projects?

Since 2014 ROI has monitored population growth, setting a 10-year goal of 4-7% in our READI 1.0. However, the 2020 Census revealed an 8,300-population loss in Monroe County, with speculation that this decline represents an undercounting of college students affected by IU’s closures during COVID-19. Given IU's current enrollment and building permits/occupancy rates, the Bloomington area appears to be growing substantially. Coupled with investments in key sectors, the Uplands is an emerging hub for career opportunities. Our focus is on enhancing regional amenities, retaining young talent, and attracting STEM professionals. READI 1.0's infrastructure development has been crucial to addressing barriers for corporate expansions and housing, while also providing advanced educational training and quality-of-place enhancements. Together, these investments will activate higher wages, a growing labor force, venture capital, and population growth. Although educational attainment is rising steadily, there is a sense of urgency to quicken the pace. The number of Uplanders 25 or older with a bachelor’s degree or higher increased from 67,592 in 2021 to an impressive 69,111 in 2022. The Uplands now boasts 1,519 additional individuals with advanced degrees yet further growth is essential to match the rapid expansion of key industry sectors. The updated Housing Study highlights an increased need for units beyond the 2019 calculations. Progress has been made, with over 3,300 units added from 2019 to 2021. Ongoing initiatives include 742 units of LIHTC, 756 of mixed housing types and an additional 4,860 in planning or construction, signaling a commitment to addressing housing demands.

Identify a regional community outside of the state of Indiana that is similar to your region to use as a benchmark. Provide the selected metrics in the table below. When selecting a peer community, please consider the following key components for comparison (not all datapoints need to be an exact match): Population size (± 5000), Median income (± \$5000), Industries, Similar assets, General demographics, Geography

Peer Community: North Alabama

Key performance indicators	Region	Peer Community
Total population	369,873	1,178,263
Total employment	155,613	530,576



Per capita income	\$ 50,603.00	\$ 50,231.00
Total population with bachelor's degree or higher	67,532	227,526
Total housing units	167,104	458,909
Total rental housing units	45,899	130,338
Total owner-occupied housing units	102,177	328,571

Based on the identified benchmark community, describe any specific best practices, defining strategies, or measurable goals the community is doing that inspires action for your region.

North Alabama is a larger region than the Uplands, but it shares assets and attributes with our rural region. North Alabama is an aspirational model in its approach to developing an ecosystem with a federal lab, university research and development, technology parks, and collaborative industry sectors. When the Army decided to make Huntsville the guided missile center of the U.S. in 1951, North Alabama was known for its agricultural roots and few industrial employment opportunities for residents. Today, this mission has grown to employ more than 38,000 people. It encompasses NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center and the Army Aviation and Missile Command (AMCOM), a major federal research center responsible for lifecycle management of several critical DoD vehicle and weapon assets. In the same period, the predecessor to the North Alabama Industrial Development Agency (NAIDA) was formed as a regional economic development organization to support the growth of federal investments and adjacent industry clusters. NAIDA works with local economic developers from each of the 13 counties to promote North Alabama. It focuses its efforts on the region's advanced manufacturing industry clusters and leveraging the research assets found at Redstone Arsenal and the University of Alabama, Huntsville (UAH). A significant economic catalyst for the growth of technology companies in the North Alabama region is Cummings Research Park (CPR), the second-largest research park in the U.S. and the fourth-largest in the world. Formed in 1962, CPR seeks to foster a collaborative environment for companies that support Redstone's ground-breaking research. These collaborations are partly driven by the UAH, which has successfully formed 13 applied research centers that collaborate closely with industry. With this model, UAH now stands 9th in the nation in aerospace engineering research and 14th in computer and information sciences research. Today, CPR comprises a vibrant mix of academia, the private and public sectors, retail, hospitality, and housing. CPR is a collaborative and connected ecosystem with over 300 companies, 26,500 employees, and 13,500 students. The economic benefits of North Alabama's research assets expand well beyond the geographic footprint of Cummings Research Park. In 2019, the New and Expanded Industry Report from the Alabama Department of Commerce highlighted that North Alabama (16% of the geographic area of the state) received 38% of the new and expanding manufacturing projects, 43% of all new manufacturing jobs created, and 44% of the capital investment in the state. NAIDA and CPR are exemplars in their approaches to developing a regional innovation ecosystem rather than opting for a fragmented county-by-county approach. In addition, the close working relationship of North Alabama's research assets (UAH and the Redstone Arsenal) serves as a model for the Uplands' innovation assets, including NSWC Crane, Indiana University, and WestGate@Crane. With comparable demographics, regional characteristics, innovation assets, and targeted industry sectors, the Indiana Uplands is on a trajectory similar to North Alabama. North Alabama is a clear precedent for the Uplands when it comes to leveraging close alignment between industry, academia, and government to expand its innovation ecosystem.



Please describe the region's current barriers to growth (e.g., housing challenges, childcare availability, or infrastructure). Think about housing, infrastructure, childcare, and/or other feasibility studies your region has recently completed or conversations and meetings with your regional stakeholders. Examples can be attached as part of the appendix.

Barriers to growth include a lack of housing at all price points, failing and outdated infrastructure, inadequate connectivity, lack of high quality and affordable childcare, declining access to healthcare, talent retention, aging population, declining birth rates, and pace of population growth. A housing shortage and its impact on talent acquisition for critical job vacancies are constant concerns voiced by employers in the region. The 2019 Indiana Uplands Housing Study revealed a need for 14,500 housing units by 2030 to meet future growth projections. While progress has been made, the study exposed how the cost of infrastructure deters development in smaller communities. Related to READI 1.0, the region invested \$7,992,000 in housing developments—\$7,030,000 for supporting infrastructure, primarily sanitary sewer, and \$962,000 for construction costs. Nevertheless, the 2024 Housing Study update shows an even greater housing demand, catalyzed by robust growth primarily in the region's key employment sectors. The update indicates a need for 16,784 units by 2035, both rental and owner-occupied, across all market segments. The absence of missing middle types, particularly attractive to young professionals, becomes a pivotal gap negatively impacting talent attraction. The region's primarily rural and unique natural geographic assets, such as its rolling hills and beautiful limestone bedrock, present a challenge to adequate connectivity when it comes to the ability to affordably lay fiber. The decline in healthcare facilities across all communities creates a direct correlation to the inability not only to serve existing Uplanders the basic need of accessible healthcare but also prevents new talent from moving to the region. The state of Indiana ranks 14th when it comes to attracting talent to the state's postsecondary institutions, yet ranks 42nd in retaining graduates. We must double down efforts to retain graduates in the region and state. Purposeful strategies to increase quality of place so that graduates feel a sense of belonging and a desire to identify as an Uplander or Hoosier long-term is critical. Partnering with postsecondary partners to connect college students to assets and employers well before they graduate is a realistic strategy that can move the needle. Our ability to retain and attract talent, ultimately growing the population can be improved with investments in housing, early learning, infrastructure, training programs, healthcare accessibility, and the retention of post-secondary graduates. While barriers to growth can be challenging, they also have served as motivation for developing a sense of regionalism that drives the region to coalesce. At one time planning and acting in isolation was the status quo, but collaborative strategic development has positioned the region to accelerate at a rapid pace.

Given the regional data and needs assessment, highlight the region's three to five priority needs.

The Uplands region's strategic priorities, outlined in the READI 1.0 Development Plan, \A Region on the Rise,\ remain relevant as the region continues to work towards a vibrant and prosperous ecosystem. A critical insight from regional data, reinforced during county-by-county listening sessions in preparation for READI 2.0, is the correlation between population growth and the region's overall well-being. Addressing the challenge of rural population decline is paramount for sustained success for the Uplands and the state of Indiana. To foster population growth and economic vitality, the Uplands will focus its efforts in four priority areas: 1. Investment in Advanced Technologies: The Uplands region is committed to remaining competitive in the global manufacturing sector by investing in Industry 4.0, microelectronics, innovation districts, research and development, and electric vehicles. The ME Core Facility and WestGate Technology Park are potential READI-funded projects set to strengthen technological advancement in the region. Beyond READI-funded



projects, the Uplands is proactively creating a talent pipeline to meet the growing talent needs of industry clusters as well as projects such as an electric vehicle study aligning with GM's investments in their Bedford facility.

2. Housing and Infrastructure Development: The foundation of population growth lies in creating housing units. Recent updates to the Indiana Uplands Housing Study emphasize the need for 16,784 additional housing units by 2035 to meet current and projected demand. The lack of housing across all price points negatively impacts talent retention and attraction. Infrastructure improvement is a critical challenge, with costs contributing to housing unaffordability, particularly for the workforce housing market segment. Addressing this infrastructure deficit not only supports housing development but also removes barriers to business expansion and job growth.

3. Talent and Workforce Attraction, Retention, and Development: Regional employers are integral to talent development initiatives. While programmatic aspects of this work cannot be READI-funded, capital assets such as Fabrication Labs and clean rooms will enable the development of advanced technological skills. This partnership extends to the development of high school pathways, post-secondary certificate programs, youth apprenticeships, and the enhancement of STEM and career coaching capacities.

4. Quality of Life Enhancement: Listening sessions underscored the need to continue cultivating an environment that attracts and sustains the desired economy for the Uplands' future. Ongoing investments by ROI, totaling over \$6 million have fueled projects aligning with each county's Quality of Life and Workforce Attraction Plan. However, the needs continue with potential projects emerging from the listening sessions, including a physical resource center for Asociación Latinoamericana del Sur de Indiana (ALASI), an Arts Incubator, expanded bike and pedestrian trails, and the redevelopment of main streets and downtown squares.

The Uplands region remains committed to the holistic growth of the region, understanding that investing in advanced technologies, addressing housing needs, developing talent, and enhancing quality of life are interconnected pillars for capitalizing on the work already completed and that which must follow.



Part IV: Regional Growth Strategies and Action Plan

Please list three to five goals to meet your region's priorities. Also, identify 3-5 strategies to help achieve each identified goal.

Goals	Strategy
<p>Leverage advanced technologies to position the Indiana Uplands for economic opportunity and continued growth across its key employment sectors: advanced manufacturing, life sciences, and national security and defense. This goal aligns with IEDC's KPIs related to per capita income, innovation activities, and growth in employment opportunities.</p>	<p>The Indiana Uplands will make discerning investments to support and accelerate the increasing relevance of the Upland's region as a hub for advanced technologies and the associated innovation that will drive economic and community prosperity.</p> <p>Strategy 1a. Invest in infrastructure and facilities to support attraction and growth in high technology areas of opportunity that will further develop the region's high wage sectors including microelectronics, hypersonics, biomedical, electrification of vehicles, and emerging technologies like carbon capture, utilization, and storage.</p> <p>Strategy 1b. Establish the Indiana Uplands as a national center for microelectronics research, testing, and development, leveraging the region's history of leadership in DoD microelectronics to create a highly aligned ecosystem that gains national prominence in areas including radiation-hardened microelectronics and advanced packaging.</p> <p>Strategy 1c. Support research and development, innovation, and competitiveness through unique facilities and infrastructure that advance existing and emerging technologies in the Uplands.</p> <p>Strategy 1d. Expand and develop talent and quality of place strategies that support the talent development, retention, and attraction requirements of local employers in advanced technologies clusters.</p>



Develop and enhance quality of place assets to support economic opportunity and growth. This goal aligns with the IEDC's KPIs, specifically related to population growth, housing units developed, and childcare capacity.

These strategies establish a foundational framework for growth by delivering essential place-based amenities to cultivate an inviting and welcoming community and region. These strategies are meticulously crafted to align with the Uplands' regional initiatives and articulated goals as outlined in county's Quality of Life & Workforce Attraction plans. Additionally, they are informed by insights derived from the Indiana Uplands Housing Study, county listening sessions, and various other regional plans.

Strategy 2a. Invest in housing projects aligned with high-growth sector employers, fostering talent retention and attraction. Encourage multi-family, missing middle, and small lot single-family developments. Focus on expanding infrastructure to facilitate housing growth, ensuring sustainable development that activates future housing endeavors.

Strategy 2b. Support projects that bolster quality early learning through increased access to high-quality programs. Focus on capacity-building efforts, including infrastructure development for early care and education programs. Enhance business acumen among early childhood educators through coaching, shared services, and quality cohorts. Coordinate regional strategies with operational support from an Early Learning Regional Coordinator, Provider Quality Coach, and Family Navigator/Liaison.

Strategy 2c. Facilitate improvements to transportation infrastructure to enhance the mobility of persons and freight through improvements in regional airports and corridor connectivity. Foster initiatives that contribute to the development of infrastructure amenities, including EV infrastructure installations and interchange developments.

Strategy 2d. Foster downtown improvements that nurture small business and create downtown housing. Promote blight elimination programs to create safer communities, facilitate property redevelopment, and return properties to the tax rolls. Develop community gathering spaces and create amenities that will attract new residents and tourists to the region.

Strategy 2e. Improve access to healthcare, both physical and through telehealth options. Invest in healthcare and recreation facilities to promote a healthy lifestyle to support a thriving and resilient workforce.



<p>Grow the Uplands talent pipeline through K12 and postsecondary programming, as well as implement targeted talent attraction and retention strategies. This goal aligns with the IEDC’s KPIs, specifically related to increasing the educational attainment of individuals 25 years and older with a bachelor’s degree and increasing per capita income.</p>	<p>Strategies to grow the Indiana Uplands talent pipeline will provide much needed solutions for employers who require skills in advanced technologies.</p> <p>Strategy 3a. Implement or expand education and workforce initiatives through the development of a robust PK–16 STEM ecosystem.</p> <p>Strategy 3b. Grow postsecondary programming and partnerships to align with employment opportunities in the region’s high-growth sectors.</p> <p>Strategy 3c. Develop sector-specific training programs and facilities to meet the needs of high-wage employers.</p> <p>Strategy 3d. Advance talent attraction and marketing initiatives to grow population and workforce.</p>
<p>Increase economic vitality across the Uplands through a focus on the region’s unique cultural, artistic, physical, and livability assets. The goal aligns with the IEDC’s KPIs related to population growth, growth in employment opportunities (entrepreneurship), and housing units developed.</p>	<p>These strategies will focus on creating a socially cohesive community with a sense of place, shared history, and new connections in our increasingly diverse region.</p> <p>Strategy 4a. Grow the livability of cities and towns to be more attractive to a diverse population, as defined by age, race, and ethnicity. Create vibrant community arts and celebrations by investing in new and existing community gathering spaces and buildings that can be leveraged for creative entrepreneurship activities and/or events, cultural and festival offerings.</p> <p>Strategy 4b. Attract and retain the creative class and the businesses that employ them, including visual/performing, and literary arts, filmmaking, architecture, graphic design, and marketing.</p> <p>Strategy 4c. Develop a high-tech entrepreneurial ecosystem through the continued deployment of high-speed broadband. Provide access to creative tools and the knowledge needed to innovate and foster entrepreneurial connections.</p> <p>Strategy 4d. Convene a regional arts and cultural task force and conduct a landscape assessment of existing cultural, creative, and physical assets that have the potential to grow community vitality, talent attraction, retention, and new visitors to the region.</p>



Section B: Funding Request: This section should be utilized to estimate and set target goals for READI 2.0. Regions should include funding from other programs that the region or organizations are seeking, such as EPA funding, College and Community Collaboration Grant, Next Level Trails, other federal funding, or any other philanthropic initiatives. READI 1.0 data from projects funded can be used as a baseline to estimate totals below. If projects have been identified for READI 2.0, those can also be utilized to fill in this section.

Overall planned investment required to implement the strategies successfully	\$ 2,256,142,023.00
Requested READI 2.0 funds	\$ 75,000,000.00
Anticipated matching funding sources	\$ 2,181,142,023.00
Private funding	\$ 2,033,551,806.00
Philanthropic	\$ 400,000.00
Local Funding	\$ 80,099,068.00
Other State funding	\$ 34,788,000.00
Federal funding	\$ 32,303,149.00
Percentage of anticipated READI funding towards rural and rural-mix communities	84
Percentage of anticipated READI funding towards disadvantaged communities	73



For each goal/strategy, identify the action plan for proposed implementation. This includes description of specific opportunities/projects and/or examples of the types of investments the region is considering in achieving its goals. Include suggested milestones and timelines for each strategy. (300 words maximum per goal area)

Action plans

Action 1a: Provide resources for infrastructure and facility expansion for advanced technology projects in the region including at WestGate Technology Park and other locations.

Sample Project: Phase Two water/wastewater investments at WestGate for a microelectronics fabrication production and advanced packaging facility for DoD microelectronics. Infrastructure will support five additional private facility investments for R&D, high-intensity testing, and office space. Anticipated CapEx of \$601M, infrastructure completion in 2025; estimated jobs created: 500+.

Sample Project: Infrastructure for industrial project in a disadvantaged community that will create jobs and reduce environmental impacts from manufacturing. Anticipated Cap Ex of \$1B; construction timeline 2025-2027.

Action 1b and 1c: Support development of a network of highly specialized and shared test facilities to enable cutting-edge research and development.

Sample Project: Build out/equip an ME Core Facility at IU Bloomington. Facility will assist researchers and industry in design and fabrication of electronic and optical systems, failure analysis of emerging materials/devices, and offer multi-modal imaging capabilities. The facility will serve industries poised for expansion in the region. Matching funds up to \$22M; anticipated completion by mid-2025; estimated 50 jobs.

Action 1d: Grow programming and partnerships among K-12, postsecondary institutions, and regional intermediaries to provide local employers with the specific talent needed in the areas of advanced technologies.

Sample Projects: Expansion of the Heartland BioWorks Tech Hub's BioTrain program to prepare talent for employment in the life sciences through a focus on smart manufacturing, clean room and sterile process training and other skill sets required in the Uplands. Timeline: TBD. See Goal 3 action plans for talent preparation in microelectronics.

Action 1d: Develop housing and a physical environment at WestGate to include amenities like restaurants, coffeehouses, childcare, recreation, and wellness.

Sample Projects: See Goal 2 for housing, childcare, and quality of place action plans.



Action 2a: Invest in high-density, missing middle and other housing types.

Sample Project: Sudbury Development (Monroe) – Estimated 4,000 units featuring diverse housing types such as multi-family, townhomes, condos, and single-family residences. Potential READI request: infrastructure development. A minimum of 15% dedicated to households at or below 120% AMI. Timeline: Infrastructure completion by 2026; housing by 2027.

Sample Project: Kersteins Homes – Multiple projects in and around Dubois County, offering up to 365 units with a mix of owner-occupied and rental housing. Potential READI request: infrastructure or construction funding. Timeline: 2025 – 2027+.

Action 2b: Enhance early learning access.

Sample Project: Early Learning Facilities Fund – Establish a grant fund to expand capacity in Quality Level 3 or 4 facilities and/or support those needing physical enhancements to achieve at least a Quality Level 3 rating. Timeline: Year-end 2027.

Action 2c: Boost transportation infrastructure development.

Sample Project: Frosty Jones Terminal Building (Dubois) – Replacement of the airport terminal, improving access for area businesses, accommodating Aerospace/Aviation educational and regional CTE programming. Potential READI request: construction assistance. Timeline: 2025/2026.

Action 2d: Enhance Uplands' physical and downtown environments.

Sample Project: Redevelopment of 232 Main Street, Shoals – Transform the historic 232 Main Street building into a community gathering/entertainment space. Potential READI request: structural and exterior repairs. Timeline: 2026.

Action 2e: Enhance healthcare accessibility.

Sample Project: Regional Wellness Center – New construction featuring a fitness center, full-court gymnasium, indoor aquatics center, elevated walking track, group exercise studios, community kitchen, and community rooms. Potential READI request: construction assistance. Timeline: 2027.

Sample Project: IU Health Bedford Hospital – Reconstruction of the facility to expand the Emergency Room, add treatment and observation beds, enhance treatment and support spaces, and improve energy efficiency. Potential READI request: construction funding. Timeline: 2027-2030.



Action 3a. Expand the region's capacity for digital fabrication and entrepreneurship. Build Engineering, Computer Science, and Industry 4.0 pathways in middle/high schools.

Sample Projects: Facility improvements and equipment in regional K12 digital fabrication labs and student-run businesses. Ensure completion of 1-3 labs in each county, every year for three years. Work with three school districts each year to ensure pathways directly align to high demand and high wage careers.

Action 3b. Create new post-secondary degree programs with industry partners that will address skills gaps.

Sample Project: Create stackable postsecondary programs. Implement one new certificate leading to an advanced degree program, each year over the next three to five years.

Action 3c. Develop training facilities at WestGate and on postsecondary campuses for microelectronics and other advanced technologies.

Sample Projects: A training facility and clean room. Purchase equipment such as microelectronics tools. Utilize year 1 for pilot planning and exploration of equipment and exemplary certified or simulated clean room models. In year 2, ensure installation at campus locations.

Action 3c, continued: Work with regional school districts for K12 curriculum embedded microelectronics.

Sample Project: Create K12 vertical alignment for microelectronics and purchase equipment needed for hands-on experiential learning. In year one, work with school districts near Crane to ensure exposure to and experience in microelectronics. By the end of year two, add 1-3 more school districts.

Action 3d. Implement Uplands attraction and marketing strategies in order to increase population and attract new talent to the region.

Sample Project: Develop and deploy a regional, state, and national targeted digital marketing campaign. Expand the Choose Southern Indiana talent attraction incentive program. Grow the program from eight counties to 11 counties by the end of year 1. Ensure 20% increased engagement, each year for three consecutive years.

Action 4a. Invest in new and existing community gathering spaces and buildings that could be leveraged for arts and cultural events, growing diversity and public participation in events, cultural, and festival offerings across our region. Support and expand cultural centers, festivals, and events such as the Latin-centric programming in Huntingburg, Bloomington, Spencer, and Washington.

Sample Project: ALASI Resource Center. Develop a facility to provide services to the growing Latino population in Dubois County and celebrate the cultural heritage while fostering a sense of community for families and children. Potential READI request: Construction funding. Timeline: 2027/2028.

Action 4b. Identify arts, cultural, and historic districts. Develop and invest in strategies to improve, revitalize, market, or expand the potential of each district.

Sample Project: Establish a large-scale arts and culture incubator in Monroe County that would include space for individual artists' studios, a shared workshop with equipment, an exhibition room, and performance arts space. Potential READI request: Renovation funding for facility. Timeline: 2024-2026.

Action 4c. Capitalize on the State's broadband deployment efforts to explore existing or new downtown redevelopment opportunities for high-tech, coworking, and entrepreneurship spaces.

Sample Project: Establish a fund to assist in the development of physical and mobile creative makerspaces



that will provide access to equipment such as 3D printers, laser cutters, and CNC routers. Potential READI Request: Renovation of physical space and/or purchase of mobile space. Timeline: Year-end 2027.

Action 4d: Engage local, regional, and state entities to map assets as well as support and market temporary and permanent public art projects, art performances, and festivals.

Sample Project: Partner with local and state art guilds, CVBs, and commissions to explore ways to combine resources to support and market the region's creative endeavors more efficiently.

A 4:1 match will be required for READI 2.0 investment. Based on this requirement, what is your expected commitment from public and private partners including anchor institutions? What are their expected roles in helping to implement the plan?

The Uplands aspires to meet and surpass expectations set for READI 2.0 funding. Our sample projects boast a match investment ratio of 29.1 to 1, with public and private commitments at 2 to 1 and 27.1 to 1, respectively. This underscores the region's unwavering commitment to growth and development. The example project portfolio demonstrates strategic distribution, with a total investment of \$2,256,142,023. This includes a READI investment of \$75,000,000, private investment of \$2,033,551,806, and public investment of \$147,190,217. The region exceeded the anticipated 11:1 match from the Region on the Rise READI 1.0 plan, achieving a 28:1 ratio as project matured and gained approval in the GMT. The region anticipates that the final match approved from a READI 2.0 investment would again exceed the state's requirements. If the Uplands receives a \$75 million allocation, as noted in more detail below, ROI anticipates prioritizing funding to support the region's goals as follows:

- Goal 1 – Advanced Technologies – 35% or approximately \$26 millionExpected commitments from this goal are \$1,684,933,192 of private and \$50,066,808 of public match. This includes a READI investment of \$15,000,000 in WestGate@Crane infrastructure which will generate a significant private investment and have a considerable impact for the entire region.
- Goal 2 – Quality of Place – 55% or approximately \$41.5 millionExpected commitments from this goal are \$344,418,614 of private and \$94,323,409 of public match. This includes a READI investment of \$20,000,000 and considerable investment estimated to be in excess of \$150,000,000 by housing developers. This funding category also includes a major IU Health project with a large investment from that partner.
- Goal 3 – Talent Pipeline – 5% or approximately \$3.75 millionAs READI 2.0 is restricted to capital projects and infrastructure and this goal is primarily programmatic, match commitments for physical projects tied to this goal are estimated at \$1,250,000 of private match. Programmatic expenditures will increase future public and private investments.
- Goal 4 – Creative Class – 5% or approximately \$3.75 millionExpected commitments from this goal are \$3,350,000 of private match and \$2,800,000 of public match. Drawing from the READI 1.0 Housing match ratios, the housing development initiative anticipates providing \$50,000,000 in public match and \$160,000,000 in private match, primarily sourced from partner developers. Public and private partners committed providing match dollars for these transformational projects:

- Advanced technology entities located or planning to locate at the WestGate Technology Park
- Indiana University and other institutions of higher learning
- County and city/town local governments
- Key sector employers like Jasper Engines, OFS, and Kimball Electronics
- Housing developers including Kerstiens Homes, Sudbury Development Partners, and Cook Group's housing division, Workforce Housing, LLC, that has signaled their desire to continue efforts building workforce housing across Uplands counties
- IU Health and other healthcare entities

ROI staff will work closely with these partners to offer projects that are ready for implementation and through the implementation process. This transformational investment promises a metamorphic ripple effect in the region's economic landscape.



Describe the process the region will utilize for intake, prioritization, and evaluation of projects.

The characteristics of our large, rural region require that we work together to succeed together. This region will embrace READI 2.0, as we did READI 1.0, and as we have become accustomed through collaboration, determination, transparency, and adaptability. As has been the case for READI 1.0, we will ensure the region's communities, anchor institutions, and stakeholders are involved and represented throughout the process. We gained experience through the READI 1.0 process that will serve the region well in operationalizing the process for identifying, prioritizing, evaluating, and selecting projects for READI funding. One of the key learnings from 1.0 related to the process of identifying and intaking projects. For READI 1.0, IEDC counseled the region to identify examples of project types that could be funded with funding from the state. To engage our region, we opened a portal to allow regional stakeholders to submit project ideas. The response was overwhelming, more than 270 projects were detailed in portal submissions. While this gave the READI team a great deal of relevant context to inform the READI plan, it also created some unrealistic expectations for stakeholders, all hoping their projects would ultimately receive READI funding. Based on guidance from IEDC that regions should not submit a catalog of projects for READI 2.0, we took a different tact this time. In listening sessions, we focused more specifically on understanding the overarching challenges of the region and asked each group of county stakeholders to identify catalytic or transformational capital projects that would accelerate opportunity in their county and the region. From those projects, ROI staff and the READI steering committee identified 20 projects/project areas that would best serve the region and that the team could begin sourcing for inclusion in our READI plan. Information in hand, we were able to build a core list of projects to inform our READI 2.0 submission and develop a budget that details match dollars from public, private, and charitable sources. While we do know not what level of READI funding will be made available to this region, we have identified specific projects that will be prioritized if funding is awarded. If the Uplands receives a \$75M allocation, we anticipate prioritizing funding to support the region's goals as follows: Goal 1 – Advanced Technologies: Priority Designation: 1; Percent Allocation: 35% Goal 2 – Quality of Place: Priority Designation: 2; Percent Allocation: 55% Goal 3 – Talent Pipeline: Priority Designation 3; Percent Allocation: 5% Goal 4 – Creative Class: Priority Designation 4; Percent Allocation: 5% With lesser funding levels, the percent allocation above would likely need to be revisited as several of the Goal 1 projects offer an outsized impact and would need to be prioritized. It is worth noting that the lower percent allocations for Goals 3 and 4 do not reflect relevance, rather the fact that funding for capital facilities and equipment tends to be of less significance, as compared to programmatic expenses. ROI and the READI Steering Committee would like to duplicate the type of broadly-released RFP process used for READI 1.0 to identify the highest and best uses of funding for housing and quality of place type investments. Supporting applicants through the RFP process allowed our READI team to ensure projects were well-developed and funding ready. This approach resulted in better projects and also likely accounts for the region's success in deploying READI 1.0 funds expeditiously. We anticipate that a significant portion of Goal 2 dollars would be deployed for housing infrastructure and development. Housing continues to be a shared need across the region. It has an immediate impact on individuals, families, communities, and employers and has the potential to directly or indirectly impact almost every metric the region seeks to address. READI 2.0 funding for housing development would be focused on projects that generate a higher number of units. Given our documented need for upwards of 16,000 housing units in the next decade, the evaluation criteria for housing would reflect the following priorities: New Construction: higher density developments; multifamily or small-lot single family homes; minimum of 20 units per READI project New Construction: Missing Middle Housing that could include condos, garden homes, and duplexes; minimum 20 units per READI funded project Infrastructure for housing: must be expandable and



hook-on to sanitary sewer. Blight Remediation: downtown redevelopment, mixed-use properties, housing rehabilitation for substandard properties; bonus if developed in partnership with the Uplands Regional Land Bank. ROI would work closely with IEDC to define how our region might best approach and utilize READI grants, revolving loan funds, and other IEDC financial instruments, such as redevelopment tax credits and small business loans. Our goal will be to leverage READI funding and associated public/private contributions to create significant growth in housing. In evaluating projects, ROI staff will support project intake and initially screen requests to ensure they meet eligibility criteria and align with the region and state's READI goals. Review committees with specialized knowledge and subject matter experts will be engaged as needed to evaluate project proposals and utilize a prioritization framework to best assess and rank proposals for consideration by both the Indiana Uplands READI steering committee and IEDC, as appropriate. Feasibility and economic impact analyses, while employed when helpful. With input and recommendations from the review committees, IEDC, and the Steering Committee, ROI will work with selected project owners to finalize and approve projects for implementation. Once underway, ROI will track progress, including key performance indicators, to ensure compliance with established regional and state goals and objectives. ROI will work closely with project owners to share progress updates, including construction reports, photos, videos, that can be shared with regional stakeholders and the state. Following the completion of projects, ROI will promote ribbon-cutting events, where possible, and develop project stories to share the short-term and long-term impacts of READI projects. To ensure transparency throughout project deployment, ROI will maintain a READI project online dashboard to share process details, projects receiving funding, key project metrics, and impact stories.

If applicable, explain how the proposed or potential investments described above leverage additional investments within immediate proximity of another investment. You may consider a plan to make additional investments within the surrounding area to enhance the viability and economic benefit (e.g., accelerating population growth) of the project's implementation.

This proposal aims to stimulate growth in talent and population while enhancing economic opportunities in the Uplands. Historical data from the Uplands demonstrates that initial investments in a region act as catalysts, attracting further commitments from various entities. Notably, the investments made at WestGate Technology Park have drawn in additional companies, solidifying the park as a preferred location for defense-related businesses. The Indiana Uplands Housing Study showed that undervaluation was a barrier to housing investment in the region. Through READI and the LIHTC program, more than 800 units have been added to the inventory of mixed housing types since 2021. Those investments spurred additional units by private developers, including over 400 units of mixed housing types in three counties by one developer. Investments made in Hopewell and Westcott are enabling expansion of both developments. The influx of new housing is contributing to updated property valuations and serving as a foundation for further investment opportunities. Our proposed downtown redevelopment initiative draws inspiration from successful models of downtown revitalization in our own Uplands communities. A noteworthy example involves revitalizing downtown businesses by incorporating first-floor retail/office spaces and upper-level housing units in a loft-style format. This housing approach has resonated with young professionals to the delight of local employers. Synergy between housing and commercial spaces has offset operational costs, fostering growth of new businesses and attracting more people to the downtown area. It is anticipated that these strategic investments will cause a ripple effect, catalyzing additional investment across the entire region.



Broad stakeholder input in the planning and execution of READI 2.0 projects will be critical for a successful regional development strategy. Describe how the region proactively engaged a diverse group of individuals, organizations, and interest groups during the planning process and how you solicited input when developing the plan. Describe any challenges and how the region came together.

In 2012 a committed group of regional leaders, united around a shared vision for unlocking the potential of southwest central Indiana, now the Indiana Uplands. Focused on economic and community prosperity, goal one was to develop a sense of regionalism and a shared identity. While it initially took some getting used to, today the 48 cities and towns of the Indiana Uplands (40 for READI 2.0) have become accustomed to collaborative thinking and planning. A decade later, stakeholder engagement and shared-planning are firmly ingrained in the region's culture. The ROI Board of Directors, comprised of representation from the region's anchor institutions and key industry clusters, established a READI Steering Committee with representation from anchor institutions and other key stakeholders to provide leadership and regional relevance to the region's READI planning and implementation practices. The READI Steering Committee is playing a pivotal role in the implementation of READI 1.0 and guiding 2.0 planning. To support READI and other regional efforts, ROI regularly convenes regional mayors, LEDOs, and Community Foundations to gain their feedback and provide updates. Starting the READI 2.0 journey in October 2023, ROI coordinated comprehensive county-level listening sessions in each of the region's 10 counties. Attended by a diverse range of stakeholders, these sessions laid the foundation for an updated SWOT analysis that launched strategic planning for the region's READI 2.0 application. Counties and communities shared their hopes and wishes, their wins and their challenges, and helped identify catalytic and transformative projects for next level of READI funding. Organizations represented at these meetings included Community Foundations, Chambers of Commerce, economic development organizations, local governments, elected officials K12 schools, post-secondary partners, employers, and local entrepreneurs. On October 19, Community Foundation leaders convened to decide whether to pursue a regional GIFT VIII leadership grant—a decision that has since galvanized additional collaboration. Leveraging that generous support from Lilly Endowment GIFT VIII planning initiatives, the region seized the opportunity to submit regional proposals on two crucial topics: housing and childcare. ROI hosted an Early Learning Summit on December 14 and a regional Housing Summit on January 23; the resulting work will inform regional plans for READI 2.0 and GIFT VIII. These highly-interactive and thought-provoking summits drew participants from diverse corners of the region, and contributed invaluable perspectives for the READI 2.0 application. Attendees represented housing developers, economic development, childcare providers, and more continue to meet and work towards strategic plans for both childcare and housing. Ongoing regional stakeholder engagement has become a driving force, reflecting region's commitment to inclusivity and ensuring regionally-relevant, demand-driven strategies for success.

How do you plan to maintain stakeholder engagement?

As noted throughout, maintaining stakeholder engagement is not a goal, but a way of practice for ROI. ROI's commitment to stakeholder engagement is demonstrated through a multi-faceted approach, ensuring that collaborative efforts and shared insights contribute to the sustainable development and progress of the Uplands. As a course of business, ROI maintains stakeholder engagement through a variety of means: ROI Board of Directors – board composition includes representatives from key sector industries, higher education, economic development professionals, and the legal sector, with ex-officio members from national defense. READI Steering Committee – the steering committee includes representatives from key sector



industries, higher education, economic development professionals, and finance and legal sectors. Regional LEDOs, Community Foundation directors, and elected officials through regular meetings. Uplands advisory teams including: Housing Technical Committee, Early Learning Regional Coalition, Ready Schools & Workforce Advisory Teams, Uplands Made & Digital Fabrication Labs Networks, Electric Vehicle Advisory Team, and Digital Inclusion Advisory Team. Topical events including the Early Learning and Housing Summits. Annual Report to the Region – engaged over 300 participates in 2023. Additionally, ROI engages stakeholders through other means including ROI and Uplands newsletters and social media posts. Communication tools help inform stakeholders of ROI's activities, regional announcements, funding opportunities and items of interest. These touches allow stakeholders to feel informed and engaged. ROI actively ensures stakeholder involvement as a standard practice and will continue to engage the region throughout and beyond the life of READI.

How will the organization sustain itself?

In terms of organizational sustainability, ROI places a strong emphasis on engaging stakeholders, particularly through a subcommittee appointed by the Board of Directors. This subcommittee, distinguished by its unparalleled business expertise, collaborates closely with ROI staff on critical sustainability matters. It serves as a valuable conduit for insights into financial governance and risk management, contributing to the organization's strategic resilience. ROI uses a shared-resource model in partnership with two other organizations. This collaborative approach extends to shared space, utilities, and general operating/technology costs. The Foundation/ROI also share staff costs, a strategic move aimed at enhancing the operational capacity. The staff composition of both organizations is selected to ensure complementary expertise, spanning areas such as grant-making, fund development, meeting facilitation using design-thinking protocols, and government grants management. ROI has diversified its revenue streams in recent years. Beyond the initial gift from Lilly Endowment, the organization has successfully secured millions in external grants for education and workforce initiatives, a READI 1.0 grant, and an additional operational grant from the Lilly Endowment. These expanded funding opportunities reflect ROI's growing reputation, unlocking new avenues for collaboration with partner organizations particularly on federal grants. While ROI continues to broaden its program offerings and revenue streams, it remains anchored in its mission: advancing regional economic and community prosperity through education, workforce development, and the enhancement of quality of place. ROI's decision-making framework prioritizes mission alignment over chasing funding opportunities, exemplifying a commitment to building the capacity necessary to pursue and achieve its overarching goals.

If applicable, use this space to describe the plan to maintain, or activate the asset(s) the IEDC is investing in if more information is needed.

N/A



Part V: Outcomes, KPIs and Metrics

Define the region’s expected outcomes if the plan is successfully implemented. Consider the economic development potential of this plan and how this plan demonstrates both regional and local impact.

Expected outcomes from the proposed plan include:

- Increased population growth – Outcomes achieved by investments in key sector industries with high growth potential, adding additional housing units to aid in talent attraction, capitalizing on the quality-of-life amenities in the region. Increase by 58% by 2029.
- Per capita income growth/Growth in employment opportunities – Investments in thriving sectors like defense, advanced manufacturing, and life sciences have growth rates that surpass national averages, leading to higher-wage opportunities for the workforce. Increase to 68,322 by 2029.
- Educational attainment – Grow the population of adults 25 and over with a bachelor’s degree or higher by 2,796 by 2029.
- Housing units developed – Through both READI and non-READI investments, the region will add over 8,000 units in the next five years. Two developments in Monroe County account for approximately half of those units of mixed housing types.
- Childcare capacity – Increasing available high-quality seats, providers, and childcare workforce will encourage existing employers to stay. It will attract new businesses to the region, knowing employees will have childcare options.
- Innovation activities – Large investments by anchor institutions in key innovation sectors will leverage outside investments in the form of growth in grants, contracts, venture capital, and new jobs created. We believe that stronger anchor institutions will lead to new startups that spin out or relocate to the region to do business with our anchors.

Please complete the table below with 5-year and 10-year projections with Indiana’s economic development priorities.

Key performance indicators	Current	5-year projection	10-year projection
Total Population	369,873	167,104	418,718
Total Employment	155,613	158,725	161,900
Per capita income	\$ 54,572.00	\$ 68,322.00	\$ 82,072.00
Educational attainment	67,532	70,328	73,844
Total new housing units	167,104	7,272	14,544
New rental housing units	-	3,086	6,172
New owner-occupied housing units	-	4,186	8,372
Percentage of affordable housing units	0	30	30



Please describe your 5-year and 10-year projections for childcare within your region. Factors you may want to consider: Increase the number of childcare facilities and/or the number of seats in specific counties or regional total with the overall goal of decreasing childcare deserts in the state, Increase quality of childcare.

It's projected our region will have a deficit of 2,178 childcare workers by 2032. Our region has inadequate access (unmet need is 7,426 seats) and 90 high quality sites that collectively serve only 21% of our children. Furthermore, commuter patterns indicate the majority of residents in 6 of the 11 counties are employed outside their community. This will require intentional efforts for expansion projects in locations that better meet the needs of families and employers. Early care and education have the ability to advance the success of our region. Improving access to high-quality care will require a lens on innovation, and we've begun to lay the groundwork. All 11 counties are working on three-year strategic plans that will ultimately define a regional strategy and support innovative efforts such as Tri-share models, microcenters/nearsight homes, shared services expansion, and early learning workforce challenges.

Please describe your 5-year and 10-year projections for innovation activities within your region. Factors you may want to consider: Increase specific number or percentage of new business start-ups within specific counties or increase regional total, Increase number of patent filings or SBIR/STTR activity, Increase in research and development spending of university or other partners

As the home to a Big Ten university, a national laboratory, and several innovative homegrown companies, our region is well-positioned for significant innovation growth. Our strategy is to invest resources to build dominant areas of strength and capture opportunities at scale. This strategy has begun to develop regional competitive advantages that will continue to attract new private sector partners. We expect to drive several metrics: 1. Growth in SBIR/STTR – We expect that within 5 years, the region could capture 12-14 awards per year (up from 6.66) and could be above 20 awards per year in 10 years. 2. STEM-related companies attracted – We expect that within 5 years we will see 15-20 companies establish a presence in the region and 35-40 companies over 10 years. 3. Number of employees at WestGate – We anticipate growing jobs by 40% over 5 years and by 75% in 10 years.

Include additional metrics that are specific to the region if applicable.

Automotive and Heavy Vehicle Equipment-Target an additional \$100 million in capital investment over 5 years and \$250 million over 10 years. Grow regional workforce development initiatives to reduce the ratio of open positions in the sector. Hospitality and Tourism-The numbers of visitors would increase by 15% over 5 years and 35% over 10 years. Capture visitors for longer by developing a more varied and comprehensive asset base. Grow average length of visit by 0.2 days over 5 years and 0.4 days over 10 years. Biomedical-Grow the 66 biomedical firms in the region to 90 by 2029 and 110 by 2034. Growth in the number of patents – achieve 10% growth over next 5 years and 20% growth over the next 10 years. Capital investment target – \$300 million over the next 5 years and \$500 million over 10 years.



General Information

Legal Name as registered with Indiana Secretary of State (Region Name)	Regional Opportunity Initiatives, Inc. (Indiana Uplands)
Business Structure	501c3
List counties within your region	Brown, Crawford, Daviess, Dubois, Greene, Lawrence, Martin, Monroe, Orange, Owen
Website	https://regionalopportunityinc.org/

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