



Vision for the Future:

Northwest Indiana stands at the precipice of an era defined by strategic growth and inclusive prosperity. Building on the successful momentum of our foundational strategy, “IGNITE the Region- Northwest Indiana’s Strategy for Economic Transformation,” we have crystallized our 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. Building on the five pillars of IGNITE: Business Development & Marketing, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Placemaking, Talent, and Infrastructure we added five new core strategies that will help propel us forward towards economic diversification, nurturing innovation, attracting talent, enhancing infrastructure, and elevating our quality of life. These five strategies are:

- 1) Advanced Energy Sector-** Advance alternative energy technologies that are affordable and sustainable. Build out infrastructure to better leverage assets and cultivate energy investment and innovation in the region. This strategy builds upon the Mach2 Hydrogen Designation from the Department of Energy and the billions of dollars in solar projects happening in Northwest Indiana. It also facilitates infrastructure to drive investment in advanced energy and advanced energy research and development.
- 2) Investment Ready Assets-** Identify and make ready quality land development and assembly in Northwest Indiana. Attract and support sustainable development in industrial, commercial, and residential development. Build out our Transit Development Districts, our enhanced commuter rail system, and advanced industries to lead to economic and population growth. Create a revolving loan fund to facilitate brownfield remediation and land assembly to ease the path for commercial, residential, and industrial growth. We have received an EDA Fellow to work with our region over the next 3 years to augment this work as well.
- 3) Opportunity Campuses-** Develop multi-partner campuses providing education, social services, childcare, and entrepreneurship opportunities to enhance workforce readiness and economic advancement across Northwest Indiana and grow the community from within. Create a space where people know they belong and provide the tools to help them thrive. By bringing the community together, an internal support network can grow and ideas can be shared and capitalized on more freely. These campuses will incorporate partners in a space where they can be nimble and focused on driving dramatic change for the community.
- 4) Sustainable Destination Development-** Refine, develop, and enhance assets that improve accessibility for visitors and residents to our natural assets. Turn visitors into vacationers and vacationers into residents. Northwest Indiana sees over 4 million visitors annually to the Indiana Dunes State Park and Indiana Dunes National Park. We enjoy amenities such as The Jasper-Pulaski Fish & Wildlife Preserve which attracts 30,000 people who come to view over 20,000 Sandhill Cranes make their migratory trek between October and December. Northwest Indiana produces over 750,000 gummy bears an hour and attracts people from all over the globe to marvel at the Wonka like experience. Capitalize on day trip visitors by incentivizing additional amenities and lodging to extend stays in our communities.dramatic change for the community.



5) Industry Innovation & Creative Culture- Amplify Northwest Indiana’s creative and cultural experiences, provide necessary resources to spur industry innovation, and support a vibrant startup ecosystem. Continue to invest in the assets that make Northwest Indiana the most dynamic economic environment in the Midwest. Expand the economic and industrial diversity of Northwest Indiana. We are named partners in two Tech Hub Designations: The BLOCH Tech Hub, focused on Quantum Commercialization, and the Heartland BioWorks Tech Hub focused on manufacturing biotechnology innovation in human, animal, and plant science. These two designations, in addition to the MachH2 Hydrogen Hub, can revolutionize our region’s existing economy and are already attracting outside investment from companies around the world. Adding these designations to the underutilized assets of the Gary Chicago International Airport and the potential port expansion opportunity at Buffington Harbor creates an opportunity for a Department of Defense investment and research and development opportunities that are unparalleled in the Midwest and provide more secure locations than the coasts. This idea also plays a key component in attracting a creative workforce. In this area, we build on our creative culture where we amplify the Northwest Indiana Symphony, ballet, and theaters and drive opportunities for public art and creative placemaking.

These approaches are more than aspirations, they form the very bedrock of a strategy designed to accelerate our regional growth from a population of 863,000 to over 900,000 within the next 10 years, increase per capita income to meet and exceed State per capita income within the next 5 years and help lift over 3,000 families out of poverty to participate in the workforce and community growth.

Leveraging Regional Assets:

Our region’s uniqueness lies in its diverse economic landscape, blending traditional manufacturing with burgeoning Agri-Tech, advanced manufacturing, tourism, and high-tech industries. We are poised to leverage and more fully engage our assets to meet the demands of tomorrow. Our underutilized assets of the Gary Chicago International Airport and potential port expansion at Buffington Harbor create an opportunity for research and development on aviation and maritime fuel that is unparalleled in the Midwest and more secure than the coasts. Our proximity to Chicago and the rich quality of the place offers the best of both worlds. Northwest Indiana is a close-knit community just a stone’s throw from the third largest economy in the Country which boasts amenities that attract over 49 Million visitors annually. The South Shore commuter rail line and extensive roadways allow our residents to capture the benefits of proximity to Chicago in ways like many Chicago suburbs. However, the Indiana Dunes, Kankakee River, and many other amenities offer more than other Chicago suburbs. Our vision is to implement the core strategies listed to make Northwest Indiana a sustainable destination with creative, and cultural, industrial innovation, an advanced energy sector, and available investment ready assets that are supported by expanding workforce readiness and a surge in employment opportunities, the development of thousands of new housing units, and a marked enhancement in childcare capacities—all of which reinforce our region’s escalating vitality.



Benchmarking Success:

We have looked outward to benchmark our progress, taking cues from global leaders that mirror our potential and ambition. Regions such as Silicon Valley provide a template for innovation-driven growth that could be replicated along the Southern Shore of Lake Michigan as we start to cluster quantum commercialization in partnership with the City of Chicago. We also looked at areas like Madison, Wisconsin, Southwest Michigan, and Northeast Ohio that have some common history and attributes of the region but still out perform our region in some respects. From a transit development perspective, we have studied New Jersey as an area adjacent to one of the country's largest economies and learned lessons from mixed use and mixed rate housing developments that have also been drivers of additional

industrial growth in those areas. These benchmarks are the standards we aim to meet and surpass as we forge a path toward a future where our region is synonymous with economic and social vibrancy.

Strategic Alignment with State Goals:

Our strategic plan mirrors the State's economic priorities, geared towards expanding the impact of 2.0 through meticulous alignment with Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). We are dedicated to propelling the state's agenda by contributing to significant growth in target industries. We will bolster educational attainment, reduce childcare needs, increase per capita income, attract mixed rate housing development, and promote private investment with an emphasis on our unique blend of urban, suburban, rural, and disadvantaged communities.

Regional Collaboration and Enduring Commitment:

The spirit of collaboration is the cornerstone of our strategy, which has seen broad stakeholder engagement from conception through the implementation phases. This plan is not owned by the Northwest Indiana Forum but by the Region. Stakeholders raise their hands and work hard to move the needle on projects on a day-to-day basis. This collaborative framework is not just for the immediate future but extends over the next five years and beyond, involving key players ranging from local government units to major employers and educational institutions. Their roles and responsibilities are not just outlined but are integral to the strategic implementation of our collective goals.

Conclusion:

Northwest Indiana is a hot destination for businesses – In the last decade, Northwest Indiana has added a net of 1,585 new business establishments (+11%). In contrast, over the same period Cook County, Illinois lost a net of 9,091 (-6%) business establishments. After more than a decade of declining population, in the last four years the population in Northwest Indiana has grown by 2.8%, outpacing the national population growth of 2.0%. Employers, workers, and families are now choosing Northwest Indiana. Over the same period, Northwest Indiana has added an average of 1,300 new residents per year. In contrast, over the previous ten years, the region lost 2,280 residents per year. Real income in Northwest Indiana is rising rapidly despite the recent high rate of inflation. The typical worker in Northwest Indiana has seen their real pay grow by 5.8% since 2019. Higher real income drives greater discretionary spending and boosts future economic growth. Housing construction is accelerating in Northwest Indiana – Over the last four years, an average of 2,400 new residential building permits have been issued per year. Demand for housing continues to outpace supply in Northwest Indiana. Even with record levels of new residential construction, demand for housing is expanding faster than supply. In the last four years, the typical home value in Northwest Indiana has risen 42%, significantly more than a 31% rise in home value across the entire Chicago Metropolitan area. In addition, the typical home value in Northwest Indiana is 4.3% higher than across the state of Indiana. With IGNITE the Region as our catalyst, we will build on this dynamic change. Never before has regional collaboration been stronger or more results oriented. We are not just planning—we are promising a future where innovation flourishes, opportunities abound, and the quality of life is unmatched. Our five key strategies and foundational IGNITE pillars guide us in this pledge. The momentum we have gathered is only the beginning. With the support of the READI 2.0 initiative, we will not just envision but enact a future that sets new standards for economic development and community enrichment.

Part II: READI 1.0 Evaluation

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

In 2017, the Northwest Indiana Forum crafted IGNITE the Region - Northwest Indiana's Strategy for Economic Transformation. Through that process, we engaged over 500 stakeholders in person and an additional 600 via an online survey. The vision of IGNITE states that Northwest Indiana drives its vibrant and inclusive communities by creating the most dynamic economic environment of the Midwest, fueled by innovation, diversity, and talent. The IGNITE plan is composed of 5 pillars and an implementation matrix which was the base for the Northwest Indiana READI 1.0 application. We requested a call for projects and hosted 7 stakeholder meetings with Legislators, Mayors, LEDOs, Business Leaders, and Community Members in the spring of 2021 and by June 25th we had over 260 projects to consider. A team of business and community leaders from the 7-county area of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Jasper, Newton, Pulaski, and Starke, was assembled to review the 260 projects. Emphasis was placed on the project's impact on quality of place, quality of life, quality of opportunity, regionality, sustainability, and additional accompanying investment. The group ranked projects with those ideas in mind and ultimately selected 36 projects with a request for \$52 million. The Northwest Indiana project list has evolved slightly over the last 2.5 years. We were awarded \$50 million and committed to 34 projects. There have been two projects that could not come to fruition due to inflationary pressures. The committee voted to distribute those funds over 5 projects from the READI 1.0 project list. Moving forward 1 of the 5 projects will not be able to spend down the funds in the allotted time so we have added 2 additional projects for a total of 38 projects. The initial \$50 million has enabled over \$700 million of investment around these 38 projects. The impact of these projects extends far beyond the \$700 million of capital expenditures. The Quantum Corridor project has elevated the region to be a named partner in the BLOCH Tech Hub designation with the Chicago Quantum Exchange, Fermilab, and Argonne National Laboratory and inspired the Purdue University Administration to rethink the opportunities around both the Hammond and Westville Campuses of Purdue Northwest. These assets along with several others continue to drive high-tech project opportunities for the region. The Level-Up program, administered by the United Way of Northwest Indiana, has helped over 500 poverty-level participants move into more sustainable employment by securing 245 certifications and helping to create 15 new homeowners. The Prison Relocation project prompted the discussion around the existing Indiana State prisons with the ultimate decision by the Department of Corrections to consolidate the Michigan City and Westville facilities. This project will result in a safer and more efficient system for the State and a powerful redevelopment opportunity for the region. The Tolleston Opportunity Campus is a READI 1.0 project that has given us a template offering our READI 2.0 key strategies: growing communities from the inside out. This opportunity campus meets people where they are and helps them get to the

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

As we transition from READI 1.0 to READI 2.0, our region's journey has been marked by achievements and valuable lessons. Reflecting on these experiences provides critical insights that will enhance the success of our next application. To some extent, all of us were building the plane as we were flying it during the initial



months of READI 1.0. Thus far, over READI 1.0, the time spent on learning and adjusting to reporting requirements and changes has better prepared us for the projects and claim submissions for READI 2.0. We will be better prepared to guide our projects through the approval process and claims disbursements while understanding the variety of project types and reporting requirements. An additional lesson learned is that less is sometimes more. We will work through our project list to secure 10-20 projects, not 30-40. Enhanced Project Screening and Feasibility Analysis: We learned that rigorous screening and feasibility studies are vital. Early in READI 1.0, several projects with potential were deemed infeasible due to logistical, inflationary, or regulatory hurdles. For READI 2.0, increasing the depth of our preliminary analyses will be paramount to ensure that each project has a clear path to successful implementation. Refined Stakeholder Engagement: The inclusivity of stakeholder engagement has been a success, yet the diversity of input occasionally resulted in prioritization challenges. We have continued to refine our engagement strategies to achieve a balance between broad participation and streamlined decision-making processes. This has involved more public input and opportunities for project submissions. Increased public outreach and publicized Zoom webinars about the project submission process were utilized. We have also established criteria for stakeholder feedback to assist with project prioritization. Improved Agility in Project Management: We recognize the need for more agile project management frameworks that can adapt to external pressures. Implementing a proactive risk management approach will help to identify potential disruptions early and develop contingencies to keep projects on track. Also adding 1-2 project managers to the Grants Management team will allow for more productive and efficient grant and claims management. Enhanced Inter-Regional Collaboration & Voice: Through READI 1.0, we were lucky enough to create a regional marketing strategy (Go NWI) emphasizing the value of Northwest Indiana and the State. We will use our Go NWI platform to continue to tell the story of READI 1.0 and 2.0 successes and the growing passion for the movement of IGNITE the Region that is transforming the economy of NWI. Sustainability and Environmental Considerations: Sustainability was an undercurrent introduced in our initial plan. The increasing importance of environmental resilience requires greater focus. Incorporating green practices and sustainability metrics into all projects will not only enhance their longevity but also ensure alignment with broader environmental goals.

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.

The Northwest Indiana Forum is a small but mighty team. The team members focus on being the voice of Northwest Indiana business, marketing the region as the place for business, and staking out and driving bold initiatives like READI. The Forum has been leading the business community since 1979 and will continue to be the catalyst for sound economic development for decades to come. Our regional organization's current capacity is a testament to our strengths and areas for improvement. Our robust network of partnerships with public, private, and civic entities stand as our greatest asset. These collaborations have driven forward our regional initiatives, leveraging the collective resources and expertise for impactful outcomes. Strengths: Our primary strength lies in the region's ability to mobilize diverse stakeholders around common goals. The success of initiatives such as IGNITE the Region has demonstrated our adeptness at strategic planning and the execution of complex, multi-faceted projects across the 7-county region. We have established a strong governance structure that promotes accountability and transparency, ensuring that our operations align with the region's overarching goals. Moreover, our communication channels have been effective in maintaining a continuous dialogue with our constituents, which has been vital for fostering trust and community



engagement. Financially, we have been prudent and innovative, generating major returns on investment and cultivating a culture of financial sustainability that supports our initiatives. Weaknesses: Notwithstanding these strengths, our weaknesses require attention. Firstly, there is a need to enhance our data analysis capabilities. A more data-driven approach will allow for better tracking of progress against our objectives and more informed decision-making processes. Secondly, while our stakeholder engagement is broad, we need to ensure it translates effectively into decision-making and project prioritization. There's a recognized need to streamline these processes to ensure that stakeholder input leads to actionable insights and strategies. Moreover, workforce development, although successful in certain sectors, has not uniformly met the needs of all industries within the region. Tailored approaches to close specific skill gaps remain a challenge. Potential Changes or Support Needed: To address these weaknesses and capitalize on our strengths, several changes and support mechanisms are being considered. 1. Data Analytics Enhancement: Investing in advanced data analytics tools and training will be crucial. This will improve our forecasting, measure the impact of our projects, adapt strategies in real-time, and provide an effective platform for future decision-making. 2. Decision-Making Efficiency: We plan to refine our decision-making frameworks to be nimbler and more responsive by adopting more streamlined consensus-building models. Also, to add more hands-on project management with potentially two additional employees under READI 2.0. 3. Skill Gap Bridging: We aim to forge stronger partnerships with educational institutions and employers to develop training programs that directly support existing industry needs and will allow our region to attract additional investment. 4. Sustainability Measures: Adopting a formal sustainability framework will ensure that our projects are environmentally sound and economically viable in the long term.

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	863,104
Total employment (U.S. Census Bureau)	3,020,345	310,881
Per capita income (Bureau of Economic Analysis)	\$ 51,645.95	\$ 54,719.00
Total population with bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau)	1,253,299	139,232
Total housing units (U.S. Census Bureau)	2,911,562	373,222
Total rental housing units (U.S. Census Bureau)	680,964	88,435
Total owner-occupied units (U.S. Census Bureau)	1,097,622	246,082
Number of new business start-ups (Small Business Development Center)	150,067	805.00

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.

Northwest Indiana has 17,973 childcare seats and 39,210 children under the age of 6 needing care which leaves us at a deficit of 21,237 seats. Our strategy is to incorporate childcare and early learning opportunities into our Opportunity Campuses meeting the childcare and workforce needs inside the communities. These facilities will not only provide childcare for the working but also for those unemployed or underemployed while they improve their skills to be ready to work. We have received a Family and Social Services Administration grant where we will build an employer-driven strategy to help combat this deficit for their workforces, but more help is drastically needed.

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).

Northwest Indiana's innovation ecosystem is primed for growth, with a solid industrial foundation ready to evolve into a more knowledge-driven economy. While there is potential, challenges in areas like venture capital access, mentoring for emerging startups, and a robust innovation network must be navigated to harness the full spectrum of opportunities. Startups are emerging, but the region is yet to tap into its full potential. Key to this evolution will be enhancing the mechanisms for support, including increasing the generation of patents, injecting more funding into research and development, and creating opportunity campuses to bring the services closer to the startup communities. The proximity to academic institutions such as Purdue Northwest, Indiana University Northwest, IVY Tech, and Valparaiso University is a vital asset. These institutions are fertile ground for innovation, producing research, talent, and opportunities for commercialization. Leveraging their resources, expertise, and research capabilities is crucial to fortifying the innovation ecosystem. A notable stride has been the READI 1.0-backed inception of Lower Lincoln in Valparaiso, and the Quantum Communications Corridor, setting the stage for innovation throughout the Region. These two assets along with opportunity campuses can be the driving forces for entrepreneurial synergy and advanced research. With strategic continued investments and initiatives like those from READI 1.0, coupled with leveraging the rich academic resources, Northwest Indiana can accelerate its trajectory towards a robust innovation ecosystem. This approach can lead to a significant upswing in high-skilled jobs, new technologies, and industries, anchoring the region's economic future in innovation and knowledge.

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

Companies: NIPSCO, Cleveland Cliffs, US Steel, bp, Albanese Candy, Arconic, Franciscan Alliance, Alverno Labs, Blue Chip Casino, Braunability, Hitachi Sullair, Urschel Laboratories
Universities and Colleges: Purdue University Northwest, Indiana University Northwest, Valparaiso University, Ivy Tech, Calumet College of St. Joseph, Ancilla College
Regional Partners: Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority, Center of Workforce Innovations, United Way of Northwest Indiana, United Way of LaPorte County, Society of Innovators, One Region, Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Center, Regional Development Company, Northwestern Indiana Regional Development Commission, Kankakee Iroquois Regional Development Commission
Foundation Partners: Porter County Community Foundation, Unity Foundation, Legacy Foundation, Crown Point Community Foundation, Jasper/Newton Community Foundation, Dean and Barbara White Family Foundation, John W. Anderson Foundation
LEDO Partners: Lake County IN Economic Alliance, City of Hammond, City of Gary, City of Hobart, City of Crown Point, City of Lake Station, Town of Highland, Town of Merrillville, Town of Cedar Lake, Town of Lowell, City of Portage, City of Valparaiso, Duneland Economic Development Corporation, City of Michigan City, City of LaPorte, LaPorte County, LaPorte Alliance for Economic Partnership, Jasper County Economic Development Corporation, Starke County Economic Development Corporation, Pulaski County Community Development Organization, Newton County Economic Development
Tourism Partners: South Shore Convention and Visitors Authority, Indiana Dunes Tourism, LaPorte County Tourism
Labor Partners: Construction Advancement Foundation, Northwest Indiana Building Trades, Local 359
Government: 7 county governments, 16 mayors, 19 Legislators



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.

Northwest Indiana is probably the most diverse area of the state. We are truly urban, suburban, and rural. We have unapparelled potential in our inner cities of Hammond, Gary, East Chicago, and Michigan City, suburban areas like Crown Point, Valparaiso, LaPorte, and rural communities of Rensselaer, Winamac, Fair Oaks, Knox, and DeMotte. Of our 7 counties, 3 are considered disadvantaged counties (Lake, LaPorte, and Starke) and 4 are considered rural (Newton, Pulaski, Starke, and Jasper).

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?

Opportunity is abundant in Northwest Indiana due to the collaborative environment created by IGNITE the Region and the rocket fuel added by READI 1.0. Our proximity to the City of Chicago and reasonable regulatory environment have helped drive population growth at a more rapid pace. Quality Industrial and commercial investment leads far exceed our current vacancy rates. Through READI 1.0 we invested in ten workforce and talent development projects. These workforce programs are working closely with communities and employers to drive dramatic change in employment and quality of life for Northwest Indiana residents. We have invested in seven infrastructure projects that lay the foundation to drive toward a high-tech economy of the future. The six projects focused around entrepreneurship and innovation are already producing start-up companies and lending resources to propel new companies further faster. The four projects dedicated to business development and marketing are changing the way we do business and tell our story. We are attracting attention from around the globe and projects like the Ag Value Chain Strategy are priming the pump for future investment. To add to the investment in the South Shore Commuter Rail Line we have committed to eight placemaking projects which will continue to grow visitors and new residents alike. But we are not done yet. Our region is working together better than at any point in the last 20 years. It is time to double down on these investments and continue to drive positive and promising change for generations to come.

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 (\pm 5000), Median income (\pm \$5000), Industries, Similar assets, General demographics, Geography

Peer Community: Western Michigan

Key performance indicators	Region	Peer Community
Total population	863,104	1,626,731
Total employment	310,881	749,480
Per capita income	\$ 54,719.00	\$ 58,500.00
Total population with bachelor's degree or higher	139,232	515,820

Total housing units	373,222	663,121
Total rental housing units	88,435	142,799
Total owner-occupied housing units	334,517	590,131

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.

We chose to benchmark against Western Michigan which includes Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo regions. We have much in common with them both being manufacturing-based, lakefront communities. They, like us, have some mid-sized cities but no true regional city. While steeped in manufacturing, Western Michigan has done a better job of converting visitors to vacationers and vacationers to residents than Northwest Indiana has. They have seen an increase in visitation and investment through a partnership with the Pure Michigan campaign. They have driven quality-of-life investments in their downtown corridors, particularly in Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo. Western Michigan has connected commerce to its natural assets and enhanced its arts and cultural offerings, all things our key strategies intend to drive for the Northwest Indiana region.

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.

Northwest Indiana is a hot destination for businesses – In the last decade, Northwest Indiana has added a net of 1,585 new business establishments (+11%). In contrast, over the same period Cook County, Illinois lost a net of 9,091 (-6%) business establishments. After more than a decade of declining population, in the last four years population the population in Northwest Indiana has grown by 2.8%, outpacing the national population growth of 2.0%. Employers, workers, and families are now choosing Northwest Indiana. Over the same period, Northwest Indiana has added an average of 1,300 new residents per year. In contrast, over the previous ten years, the region lost 2,280 residents per year. Real income in Northwest Indiana is rising rapidly despite the recent high rate of inflation. The typical worker in Northwest Indiana has seen their real pay grow by 5.8% since 2019. Higher real income drives greater discretionary spending and boosts future economic growth. Housing construction is accelerating in Northwest Indiana – Over the last four years, an average of 2,400 new residential building permits have been issued per year. Demand for housing continues to outpace supply in Northwest Indiana – Even with record levels of new residential construction, demand for housing is expanding faster than supply. In the last four years, the typical home value in Northwest Indiana has risen 42%, significantly more than a 31% rise in home value across the entire Chicago Metropolitan area. In addition, the typical home value in Northwest Indiana is 4.3% higher than across the state of Indiana. All of this said, our region, like many others in the State, is still driving to grow population, increase per capita income, and attract meaningful investment. The barriers to continuing this growth are: 1) Lack of Investment Ready Assets for industrial, commercial, and residential growth. Our strategy includes working to identify and make ready quality land assembly and development in Northwest Indiana. Building out our Transit Development Districts and advanced industries to lead to economic and population growth. 2) Insufficient access to childcare, workforce training opportunities, entrepreneurship centers, and health resources. Through Opportunity

Campuses we will develop multi-partner campuses providing education, social services, childcare, and entrepreneurship opportunities to enhance workforce readiness and economic advancement across Northwest Indiana. 3) Lack of resources to create sustainable destination development. By focusing resources we will refine, develop, and enhance assets that improve accessibility for visitors and residents to our natural assets. Turning visitors to vacationers and vacationers to residents. 4) Enhancing our Advanced Energy Sector. Advancing alternative energy technologies that are sustainable and affordable. Building out the infrastructure to fully leverage assets to cultivate investment and innovation in the region. 5) Our region has been blessed with a large industry that has been the backbone of the American Economy. This has caused a lack of urgency in transitioning to a sustainable advanced economy. Our strategy around industry Innovation and creative culture is to amplify Northwest Indiana's creative and cultural experiences, spurring industry innovation and support a vibrant startup ecosystem.

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

1. Continue the upward trend of population growth in Northwest Indiana and support the increase with a healthy housing stock at various levels of affordability. Capitalize on the commuter rail investments and revitalization of our downtowns.
2. Close the childcare seat deficit while increasing childcare workers' compensation and the quality of existing childcare assets.
3. Attract meaningful investment in diverse and modern economic sectors: advanced energy, advanced manufacturing, quantum/technology, defense, and Agribusiness, while implementing the infrastructure needs and land requirements to support them.
4. Generate sustainable per capita income to improve quality of life and create opportunities for families to thrive. Create meaningful workforce pipelines to be inclusive of all Northwest Indiana residents driving greater opportunities for everyone.
5. Drive and sustain a creative culture in Northwest Indiana. Attract and retain talent, through enhanced quality of life and quality of opportunity. Push an economy where things are invented and researched not just made and grown.

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>Grow population to 900,000 over the next 10 years to support increased ecotourism, existing and future employment demands, and to add vibrancy to the Northwest Indiana culture.</p>	<p>Grow population to 900,000 over the next 10 years and to do this we must attract approximately 4,000 new residents/ year. All 5 of our above strategies play a role in attracting 4,000 new residents annually to the 7-county region. We need to make sure we have investment ready assets to drive the production of 2,000 housing units annually.</p> <p>We attract over 4 million visitors to the State and National Parks annually. To continue to improve sustainable destination development the number of visitors will increase, their duration of stay will increase and their desire to reside in our region will increase. Growth of the advanced energy sector will not only attract the population looking to escape catastrophic climate events along the coasts but will attract the business community that is looking for a sustainable energy portfolio and the scientists that are driving that economy. As we grow the Hydrogen Hub Designation into a sustainable economic solution, that will attract investment and ideas that will help to grow our economy. Industry innovation and creative culture have been driving population change for the last 15 years. People have been picking cool innovative places to live and then finding jobs. By making NWI the most dynamic economy in the Midwest, we will attract younger and more innovative residents who will continue to evolve our economy. Opportunity campuses are at the core of growing communities. They will work to drive change in the existing community network that will help current residents thrive and thus attract additional residents to grow in the success of the communities.</p>

<p>Attract \$30 billion dollars of meaningful investment to Northwest Indiana in target sector industries of advanced energy, advanced manufacturing, quantum/technology, defense, and Agra business, over the next 10 years diversifying our economy and creating additional opportunities for the State</p>	<p>Attract \$30 billion dollars of meaningful investment to Northwest Indiana over the next 10 years. Northwest Indiana is on the horizon of major economic investment. We are included in the MACH2 Hydrogen Hub Designation, The BLOCH Tech Hub Quantum Commercialization Designation, and The Hartland BioTech Tech Hub Designation. Many of our key strategies facilitate the achievement of this goal. The Advanced Energy Sector plays a big role as we see the advancement of the Hydrogen Hub, which entails a multibillion-dollar investment as well as the opportunities around wind and solar that have produced billions of dollars in investment in our region over the last several years. We are preparing mega site developments in 3 of our counties and this plays directly into our Investment Ready Assets strategy as we work to attract new EVs, battery, data centers, quantum commercialization centers, and other advanced manufacturing. The Opportunity Campuses Strategy strengthens workforce development as well as childcare solutions. Sustainable Destination Development creates the quality of place that the workforce is looking for when relocating. Industry Innovation & Creative Culture Amplifies Northwest Indiana's creative and cultural experiences, providing the necessary resources to spur industry innovation and support a vibrant startup ecosystem. Continue to invest in assets that drive Northwest Indiana to be the most dynamic economic environment in the Midwest.</p>
<p>Generate sustainable per capita income equal to or greater than the State over the next 3 years to improve quality of life and create opportunities for families to thrive. The current regional per capita income is \$58,323 for the State and \$54,719 for the Region.</p>	<p>Generate sustainable per capita income equal to or greater than the State over the next 3 years. The current regional per capita income is \$58,323 for the State and \$54,719 for the Region. As we look to grow per capita income many of our strategies play heavily into this goal as well. Our Industry Innovation & Creative Culture strategy not only attracts higher wage jobs, but it also attracts additional highly educated residents. Building on the creative culture that exists in Northwest Indiana with the Northwest Indiana Symphony, the multiple performing arts centers, the ballet, and the quality of life through outdoor recreation we can amplify this message to attract and grow quality investment in our region. We will use investment ready assets to build out our commuter rail transportation districts and secure more quality housing for the workforce of all income levels. Creating more research and development opportunities around the advanced energy sector will continue to grow the population and income for the 7-county area. The opportunity campuses are the backbone of community engagement and workforce development, making sure that as we create a dynamic new economy, we do not leave the current residents behind.</p>

<p>Diversify industrial investment to align with economies of the future. Of the \$30 billion of investment planned to attract over the next 10 years, 2/3 should be in advanced manufacturing, advanced energy, or emerging technologies such as quantum or biomechanics.</p>	<p>Diversify industrial investment to align with economies of the future. Of the \$30 billion of investment planned to attract over the next 10 years, 2/3 should be in advanced manufacturing, advanced energy, or emerging technologies such as quantum or biomechanics. Amplify Northwest Indiana’s creative and cultural experiences, providing the necessary resources to spur industry innovation and support a vibrant startup ecosystem. Continue to invest in assets that drive Northwest Indiana to be the most dynamic economic environment in the Midwest. This idea is about continuing to reimagine the economy of Northwest Indiana. We are named partners in 2 Tech Hub Designations: The BLOCH Tech Hub, focused on Quantum Commercialization, and the Heartland BioWorks Tech Hub focused on manufacturing biotechnology innovation in human, animal, and plant science.</p> <p>These two designations, in addition to the Hydrogen Hub, can revolutionize our region’s existing economy and are already attracting outside investment from companies around the world. Adding these designations to the underutilized assets of the Gary Chicago International Airport and the potential port expansion opportunity at Buffington Harbor creates an opportunity for a Department of Defense investment and research and development opportunities that are unparalleled in the Midwest and more secure than the coasts. This idea also plays a key component in attracting a creative workforce. In this area, we build on our entrepreneurial ecosystem, amplify the Northwest Indiana Symphony, ballet, and theaters, and drive opportunities for public art and creative placemaking.</p>
<p>Reduce childcare deficit by 15% over the next 5 years, by working with employers, philanthropic organizations, and workforce development to create a minimum of 700 additional childcare seats annually and support our growing workforce.</p>	<p>5 Reduce childcare deficit by 15% over the next 5 years. Working with employers, philanthropic organizations, and workforce development to create and staff 700 additional childcare seats annually. Our opportunity campuses play a big role in reducing the childcare deficit. This is a daunting problem, and we are working with employers, community partners, and childcare providers to solve it. We have worked through READI 1.0 to enhance the Level Up program to work individually to help solve childcare needs for working people trying to advance in their careers. We are also building out training facilities in the opportunity campuses that can help educate childcare workers and give them a place to work inside their community. Investment ready assets are also a big component to driving change in the childcare shortage, as we look to develop new housing units, we are being strategic about placement and community needs. Focus on working towards mixed-rate development and integration with childcare centers. This is one of the more daunting goals because it is a people problem. As we try to grow our population, we will continue to need more childcare workers. We will work through the legislative changes happening through SB2 and future bills to attract and employ younger professionals in childcare centers.</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	\$ 4,700,000,000.00
Requested READI 2.0 funds	\$ 75,000,000.00
Anticipated matching funding sources	\$ 4,625,000,000.00
Private funding	\$ 3,000,000,000.00
Philanthropic	\$ 100,000,000.00
Local Funding	\$ 825,000,000.00
Other State funding	\$ 100,000,000.00
Federal funding	\$ 600,000,000.00
Percentage of anticipated READI funding towards rural and rural-mix communities	25%
Percentage of anticipated READI funding towards disadvantaged communities	50%

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

Goal 1 Action Plan: Advance Energy Initiative

1. Capitalize on the MACH2 Hydrogen Hub designation creating carbon sequestration and green hydrogen production attracting research and development around the new energy sector
2. Utilize the existing assets like the airport and port to research alternative aviation and maritime fueling.
3. Invest in additional infrastructure for hydrogen production, storage, and distribution facilities.
4. Create a sustainable advanced energy plan utilizing wind, solar, hydrogen, and other alternative energy solutions
5. Drive advanced energy research and development. Allocate funds for advanced energy research grants and startup incubation programs. Pursue federal and state funding for clean energy initiatives.

Goal 2 Action Plan: Investment Ready Assets:

1. Set up a revolving loan fund for land acquisition, remediation, and infrastructure placement.
2. Create a standing board within the Forum to further brownfield and greenfield identification, remediation, and development.
3. Utilize EDA grant fellow for the next 3 years to identify former efforts by specific communities in Northwest Indiana to locate and remediate brownfields and obtain historical data specific to those efforts, identify sites and grants to remediate brownfields along the Quantum Corridor in Northwest Indiana and work towards returning properties to productive use.
4. Utilize grants for Phase 1 studies on the highest potential sites near regional assets with current economic development interests. Focus on Land Assembly along major infrastructure assets. Grants such as Brownfield Phase 1 Assessment and Phase 2 Clean up grants (EPA), Leaking Underground Storage Tanks (LUST) grants, and Indiana brownfields program (IDEM), may be applicable on a case-by-case basis.
5. Seek credible partners to support the redevelopment process
6. Work with real estate leaders within major industries of NWI (Cliffs, US Steel, bp, etc.) to identify funding and additional potential properties.
7. Affordable Housing Development: Collaborate with developers to create affordable housing options, including apartments, townhomes, and single-family homes, to accommodate newcomers and address housing affordability concerns. Remote Work Opportunities: Promote remote work options in the tourism sector to attract talent from outside the region, especially in roles that can be performed remotely.

Goal 3 Action Plan: Opportunity Campuses

1. Identify high impact regional communities that would benefit most from collaborative workforce/childcare development neighborhood interventions with data analysis. An experienced HUB consultant has been retained by the Center of Workforce Innovations (CWI) and United Way of NWI. The specific communities will be identified based on factors such as community buy-in, job seeker needs, employer engagement, and community impact.
2. Opportunity Hub Sites will be prioritized for buildout based on local collaboration and buy in. Hub projects may have differing development timelines based on the community's level of development toward siting a Hub. Collect community input on the design of the Hub buildouts.
3. For each community, identify specific service gaps and opportunities in individual communities. Ensure that childcare and transportation partners are included to ensure hubs can be utilized by all local community residents. Gary Public Transportation Corp. routes are mapped and changes are explored. Childcare provider research has been pulled and is under review for opportunities.
4. For each community, identify potential partner providers, major employers, needs, and pathways.
5. For each community, identify community economic model(s)
6. Create a regional digital opportunity hub to serve as an all-in-one education, employment, and training portal for current and prospective residents to learn about pathways to good paying jobs in our region. A pathway platform has been procured. CWI is currently building out pathways with employers and WD and training partners
7. Identify suitable properties for siting Opportunity Hubs in the selected high impact communities. Procure/secure construction firms to perform buildout/remodel. Engage City officials, community leaders, and real estate professionals to identify existing properties.
8. Complete organizational, service/opportunity, and collaboration models; complete business plan for specific communi
9. Develop the implementation plan and work program (1-3 years)
10. Start Construction/Remodel

Goal 4 Action Plan: Sustainable Destination Development

For sustainable destination development, we want to convert visitors to vacationers and vacationers to residences.

1. Create additional recreational development: lodging, experiences, and amenities.
2. Develop a convention center.
3. Create better systems for interaction with amenities- wayfinding, parking apps, and alternate transportation.
4. Cultural Innovation Initiatives: Promote initiatives that encourage entrepreneurs to explore and celebrate the cultural diversity of the region, potentially leading to new cultural attractions and experiences.
5. Trail Expansion and Maintenance: Develop and maintain an extensive network of trails, including hiking and biking paths, to connect regional attractions and natural landmarks, such as the Indiana Dunes and local parks.
6. Transportation Connectivity: Enhance public transportation options and connectivity between attractions, including shuttle services, to facilitate easy movement of visitors within the region.
7. Cultural Heritage Preservation: Invest in preserving and restoring culturally significant sites, landmarks, and historical buildings to enrich the visitor experience and maintain the region's unique identity.
8. Camping and RV Facilities: Expand and improve camping and RV facilities to accommodate outdoor enthusiasts exploring the region's natural beauty.
9. Local Art Installations: Integrate local art installations and sculptures into public spaces to enhance the aesthetics of the region and support local artists.
10. Affordable Housing Development: Collaborate with developers to create affordable housing options, including apartments, townhomes, and single-family homes, to accommodate newcomers and address housing affordability concerns.
11. Remote Work Opportunities: Promote remote work options in the tourism sector to attract talent from outside the region, especially in roles that can be performed remotely.

Goal 5 Action Plan: Industry Innovation & Creative Culture

1. Capitalize on the BLOCH Tech Hub designation creating quantum commercialization centers across the region.
2. Capitalize on the MACH2 Hydrogen Hub designation creating carbon sequestration infrastructure and green hydrogen production attracting R&D around the new energy sector. Utilize the existing assets like the airport and port researching alternative aviation and maritime fueling.
3. Capitalize on the Heartland BioWorks Tech Hub Designation continuing to build the corridor from Indianapolis to Chicago incorporating the biotechnology research at local universities. Work on biotech and quantum solutions with existing industry.
4. Corridor Development- Comprehensive mapping of cultural, innovation, health, and wellness assets to establish corridor anchors that can serve as hubs for economic/social activities.
5. Resource and Capital Accessibility- Streamline processes to connect entrepreneurs with funding sources, including local investors, crowdfunding platforms, and government grants. Partner with financial institutions to create tailored financial products that support startup and growth within the corridors.

6. Infrastructure and Transit Enhancement- Identify and invest in key infrastructure upgrades that facilitate easy transit and connectivity between corridor assets. Prioritize the integration of tech-enabled smart transit solutions within corridors to promote interconnectedness.
7. Talent Development and Engagement- Leverage existing education/training programs that align with the economic opportunities within corridors and explore opportunities for expansion or the creation of new programs. Foster partnerships between local businesses, educational institutions, and training centers to ensure talent development is directly tied to the needs of the corridors.
8. Marketing and Leveraging Corridor Assets based on emerging trends and community input, ensuring a dynamic and responsive creative culture.
9. Local Art Installations: Integrate local art installations and sculptures into public spaces to enhance the aesthetics of the region and support local artists.

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?

In the READI 1.0 process, we have seen a 14:1 match for our project portfolio. We anticipate even stronger activity around our READI 2.0 project portfolio. The dollars that are being attracted to the Hydrogen and Tech Hub Designations from a federal level are currently in the hundreds of millions of dollars of investment. Due to these designations and the improvement of the commuter rail system and our growing economy, we have billions of dollars of private investment in our pipeline over the next 12-18 months. Local governments are working on the necessary infrastructure to facilitate these investments and would also support TIF or abatement considerations as the projects come online. Through IGNITE the Region and our READI 1.0 projects, we have built the infrastructure to be responsive to development needs and to be nimble as we evolve our economy in partnership with the communities and the State.

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

We have been talking about READI 2.0 projects and the evolution of IGNITE the Region since the fall of 2022. We host our IGNITE the Region luncheon annually and speak to over 600 community leaders about the process and progress with both IGNITE and READI. We celebrate the successes and inspire partners to drive solutions for the challenges we are facing. We asked them all to keep dreaming about the future of Northwest Indiana and share those dreams with us. We set QR codes for direct feedback on ideas and visions for the future. In February of 2023, we gathered all of our IGNITE Pillar Leaders to drill down into the visions and opportunities for the region. We hosted 4 leadership workshops, working with Mayors, Legislators, business leaders, civic leaders, and educators to draft the next iteration of IGNITE and create our 5 Key strategies. Leadership teams and pillar leaders crafted the implementation matrix to bring those key strategies to life. We hosted several webinars around our 5 Key strategies and our READI 2.0 project portal went live November 6th. We will be accepting projects until the end of March but asked to have base applications in by January 19th so we could better articulate the need in this application. We have a project selection committee made up of business, education, philanthropic, and civic leadership representing the 7-county area that will review all of the submissions. They will use a rubric to prioritize the list. Key factors in prioritization will be a regional economic impact, impact on State and local KPIs, alignment with 5 Key strategies, alignment with State strategy, sustainability, matching investment, local desire, community engagement, and feasibility. We will be

prepared for a meeting with the IEDC in May to review priority projects and make project selections.

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.

IGNITE the Region has been the driving force for advancement and continued community collaboration in our region. Three regional College and Community Collaboration applications (Lily) were driven by IGNITE. The plan and consequential READI 1.0 investment in the Quantum Communications Corridor connected us to the Chicago Quantum Exchange and was a major component in the BLOCH Tech Hub Designation. Our 5 key strategies are the basis for three of our community foundations working together on a regional Lily Gift 8.

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.

These challenges are met with a spirit of collaboration. Our GO NWI Marketing initiative and local media played a pivotal role in raising awareness and encouraging participation. Virtual platforms allowed for a continuation of dialogue. The active involvement of local leaders, who championed the cause and encouraged constituents to participate, also played a crucial role in overcoming barriers to engagement. As a result of these efforts, the region was able to develop a READI 2.0 plan that was reflective of a diverse set of voices and ideas, paving the way for a strategy that has buy-in from a cross-section of the community and the best potential for successful regional development GO NWI is our marketing voice and we will continue to use it to drive the success and opportunities around IGNITE and READI to the region and beyond. We have hosted numerous community workshops and town halls across various localities, ensuring geographical diversity. These sessions invited residents, business owners, and community leaders to discuss their visions for the region's future. We have also hosted meetings with key stakeholders, including municipal leaders, economic development professionals, legislators, and representatives from anchor institutions like universities and hospitals, providing insight into regional priorities and potential collaborative efforts. We have done Youth Engagement through Innovate WithIN and worked post event with regional high school students to ensure their ideas and solutions are well represented in our plan.

How do you plan to maintain stakeholder engagement?

To maintain stakeholder engagement throughout the implementation of READI 2.0, the GO NWI marketing strategy will serve as the central pillar of ongoing communication and involvement. The approach will encompass a mix of direct, personalized outreach, and broad-based engagement initiatives. Key components include Direct Email Campaigns & Websites, regularly scheduled newsletters and updates that will be sent to stakeholders, providing them with progress reports, upcoming event information, and opportunities for feedback. Engagement Events-A series of events, both virtual and in-person, will be strategically held to keep stakeholders informed, involved, and inspired. These will range from informational luncheons to workshops and roundtable discussions. We will continue to have an interactive online platform and a



dedicated section on the GO NWI website will be created for stakeholders to access project updates, submit ideas, and engage in forums for collaborative discussion. Local influencers and leaders will also be identified and empowered to act as community ambassadors, helping to maintain a grassroots level of engagement and bringing diverse community voices into the fold.

How will the organization sustain itself?

The Northwest Indiana Forum has been the voice of Northwest Indiana Business since 1979. We have two organizations operating under the Forum umbrella. The Northwest Indiana Forum, a 501(c)6, membership organization, and the Northwest Indiana Forum Foundation a 501(c)3 receive grants and other charitable contributions to advance economic development in the 7-county region. The membership organization gets funding and sponsorship from over 130 regional investors. Our key critical success factors are to be the voice of Northwest Indiana business, market Northwest Indiana as the place for business, and stakeout and drive bold initiatives that would not happen without the Forum and Foundation. We host 20+ events annually and spend about 30% of our time marketing the region both domestically and around the globe. Through our regional coordination, we have attracted more investors to our organization. People are excited about the movement of IGNITE and continue to want to work together to accomplish the mission and the goals being driven by this plan and the Forum team.

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.

Our plan is not to simply maintain the assets in which the IEDC is investing but to exponentially expand upon them. We have grown the initial investment of READI 1.0's \$50 M into over \$700 M of investment. It has also attracted a pipeline of new industry and research and development that will have a generational impact. As we align our proposed projects with the IEDC we will implement the ventures that have the greatest and longest-lasting impacts for our region and the State. We will utilize community feedback to prioritize asset activation that resonates with local needs and preferences, ensuring assets are used to their fullest potential and are supported by the people they serve. We will work with stakeholders to design and implement programs that drive the utilization of assets, such as community workshops, local business partnerships, and educational initiatives that draw regular activity and interest. Through GO NWI we will create targeted marketing campaigns to raise awareness about the assets, their availability, and their benefits to the community to increase usage and engagement. We will be good stewards of these funds by implementing things that are true to our regionally approved plan and drive outcomes consistent with the State's KPI's. We look forward to the opportunity to grow our region and the State, together.

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.

The expected outcomes of a successfully implemented plan have enormous economic implications both to our region and to the state. As an example, our housing strategy optimally adds 7.5% annually to the regional supply of households, increasing from the current 3,626 residential building permits. If so, our region should see 3,898 new units in 2024 rising to 7,437 in 2033. Per the Zimmerman/Volk housing studies, it is estimated that 19% of these units would attract 3,992 new households from outside the region to Northeast Indiana over the ten-year period. According to IMPLAN analysis, this would generate 1,714 new jobs, \$88,445,597 in new wages, added value of \$162,349,317 to the regional economy and \$286,577,825 in additional economic output. This generates \$15,064,011 in tax revenue for sub-county governments, \$1,209,321 in tax revenue for county governments, \$12,613,475 for the state of Indiana, \$20,720,102 for the Federal Government. (Data from only seven counties was used in the IMPLAN analysis). Similarly for the regional early childhood strategy, our region currently has an estimated 8,987 “work willing” parents staying out of the workforce due to lack of high-quality, affordable childcare. Solving this crisis fully would bring all of these workers back into the workforce and using Lightcast data analysis, can be expected to add \$9,840,182 in State of Indiana income taxes and \$10,271,969 in local income taxes. These workers would generate an additional \$570,664,955 wages to be used in state and local economies.

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	863,104	883,104	900,000
Total Employment	310,881	353,242	405,000
Per capita income	\$ 54,719.00	\$ 60,323.00	\$ 75,000.00
Educational attainment	139,232	176,620	225,000
Total new housing units	2,400/year	2,570/year	2,750/year
New rental housing units	600/year	650/year	650/year
New owner-occupied housing units	1,800/year	1,920/year	1,920/year
Percentage of affordable housing units	35.0	3800%	4000%

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.

Early Learning Indiana's Closing the Gap 2023 County Profiles estimate Northeast Indiana capacity in August 2023 at 18,489. We estimate total demand for childcare at 30,164, resulting in an unmet demand of 11,675. We estimate capacity to increase by 2% year-over-year, resulting in capacity of 20,413 in 2028 and 22,538 in 2033. A 2% year-over-year increase would reduce unmet demand to 10,541 in 2028 and 9,575 in 2033. In the next five years, the RDA will partner with the Northeast Indiana Early Childhood Coalition (NEIECC) to add 144 new seats to address the pressing childcare needs for infants and toddlers through a real estate investment strategy increasing the number of childcare facilities and enhancing their quality. Additional investments to establish new facilities, particularly focusing on infant and toddler care, even in regions with higher capacity, will ensure accessibility of quality childcare services across the region.

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

Based on data from the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), there were a total of 6,149 patents granted to Northeast Indiana applicants from 2001-2022. We estimate 1,120 patents granted from 2023-2027 and 1,102 from 2028-2032 for a total of 2,222 new patents granted during the period 2023-2032. According to Census Bureau Business Formation Statistics, Northeast Indiana saw 89,986 business starts from 2005-2022. We estimate 43,581 business starts from 2023-2027 and 47,547 from 2028-2032 for a total of 91,128 new businesses started in the region during the period 2023-2032. The introduction of Plug and Play Indiana Tech Center with verticals in both MedTech in Warsaw and HardTech in Fort Wayne should accelerate new starts and patents issued and complement activities led by members of the Northeast Indiana Colleges and Universities Network to create applied research and new business ventures in these sectors as well as the creative sector.

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

An economic impact analysis of the proposed Noble County water infrastructure project featured in the Infrastructure for Jobs portion of this Investment Strategy indicates a total economic output of nearly \$375 million from 2024 to 2033. The full report is included in the Appendix under Illustrative Projects.



General Information

Legal Name as registered with Indiana Secretary of State (Region Name)	Northwest Indiana Forum Foundation, Inc.
Business Structure	Corporation 501 (C) 3
List counties within your region	Jasper, La Porte, Lake, Newton, Porter, Pulaski, & Starke
Website	www.nwiforum.org

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