

## SOUTH BEND – ELKHART REGION: VISION WITH VELOCITY

In 2008, unemployment skyrocketed to over 20%, putting Elkhart County on the map for the fastest employment decline in the country. In 2011, South Bend was listed among other dying cities by Newsweek. Regional collaboration was scarcely considered. Fast forward to 2014, when we slowly started to move ahead from the final row, a position that had plagued us in the decade prior. When IEDC's Regional Cities Initiative (RCI) was announced, it was then that civic and business leaders across Elkhart, Marshall, and St. Joseph counties came together to pursue, for the first time ever, a multi-county regional approach to economic development and quality of place.

### FUELING THE TANK.

In 2015, we defied expectations by being selected as one of the three RCI award regions, surprising both insiders and outsiders alike. In 2018, the South Bend - Elkhart Regional Partnership commissioned TEconomy to conduct a study and develop an investment plan that would help secure the region's economy for long-term, sustainable economic growth and community prosperity. They encouraged the region to build linkages between the region's industrial base and its research assets, thereby improving key facets of the innovation ecosystem; to diversify industry growth; and to create a culture and ecosystem where entrepreneurs and new businesses can thrive.

By 2019, after reflecting on the economic challenges of 2008 – 2011, we collectively committed to never allow such hardships to recur. This led to the establishment of the Labs for Industry Futures and Transformation (LIFT) Network, catalyzed by a \$42.4 million regional award from the Lilly Endowment. LIFT focuses on leveraging the region's strengths in research, technology, and advanced manufacturing to accelerate the commercialization of new technologies, support entrepreneurship, and create high-quality jobs. To date, LIFT has leveraged over \$120M in new investments in tech and talent and 1,300 post-secondary students have engaged with companies.

As we emerged from the throes of a global pandemic in 2021, we secured a \$50 million maximum READI 1.0 allocation, a testament to our resilience and determination. Over the past three years we have rebounded and shown 3% job growth, with recent project announcements including the GM/Samsung EV project happening on the western border of the region, infusing \$3.5 billion in capital and adding 1,900 new jobs. Complementing inbound companies are those growing within the region, including AM General, who recently announced an \$8.5 billion Department of Defense contract, with all production happening in the region.

Preparing for our region's READI 2.0 application, we swiftly mobilized, leveraging existing stakeholder infrastructure developed over the last 10 years. A READI 2.0 steering committee oversaw the engagement process with municipal and anchor partners,

reviewed the stakeholder engagement results from 200 participants at six community workshops, and informed the region's application. The READI Steering Committee includes all members of the Northern Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA), LEDO partners, and stakeholders drawn from the Regional Partnership's various councils and committees. The RDA, now in its eighth year, has aptly helmed all three major regional funding opportunities. The RDA, and the Regional Partnership's long-standing councils and committees, anchor partners, and philanthropic partners will lead implementation of our plan.

Today, we stand poised and prepared, having revved our regional engine, and having cultivated a spirit of collaboration. With the backing of the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) and catalyzed by READI 2.0 funding, we are ready to unleash our full horsepower in pursuit of our shared regional vision.

### KICKING THE TIRES.

While we have a determined outlook, there are also shared challenges. Educational attainment rates, demand for accessible childcare far exceeding supply of centers and providers, and wage stagnation present serious challenges across the region, particularly as manufacturing shifts towards Industry 4.0. Efforts to drive demographic diversity, inclusion, and overall economic participation have had varying levels of success, especially through the lens of education and entrepreneurship.

With dependency on the manufacturing sector for 32% of jobs, the region is left exposed to the potential impacts of automation as the global economy shifts towards Industry 4.0, an opinion echoed by the January 2019 Brookings report, which found that Indiana would be one of the top two states for task exposure to automation.

### STARTING THE ENGINE.

As with our READI 1.0 Regional Economic Development Strategy, *Smart Connected Communities 2030*, we are keeping our north star focused on increasing the region's per capita personal income to at least the national average by 2030. Our region's past performance with PCPI strongly contributes to the state's target PCPI. Our current PCPI growth rate of 4.43% (based on 10-year average) exceeds the state's historical rate of 3.85%. Our 2022 PCPI of \$57,073 represents 99% of the state's figure. Applying a baseline growth rate, in 2025 our PCPI will meet the state's goal of a \$2,750 annual increase. In 2025 our baseline projected PCPI will overtake the state's projected baseline; in 2029 our baseline would overtake the state's READI 2.0 target of \$77,180.

The goals and strategies captured in our plan, and aligned with the state's priorities, include:

**Attracting and Retaining Talent:** We will double down on population attraction efforts,

targeting the 33,000 higher education students in our region and “boomerang” talent – those from here or have an affinity for here, and attracting companies building the future economy, bringing with them high-wage, high-demand jobs.

While many counties in the state have been losing population, our region has maintained a tepid population growth rate of 0.24%. With a PCPI growth rate exceeding the state’s and growing employment, igniting population growth remains our final regional challenge. We strongly expect the tailwinds of READI 1.0, sizable recent job announcements, and implementation of our READI 2.0 plan will drive our rate upwards to support the state’s goal more robustly.

**Equipping Talent of the Future:** We will intensify investment in work-based learning initiatives, expand access to educational opportunities, and forge strategic partnerships to increase post-secondary attainment, address skills gaps and cultivate a talent pipeline for targeted industries.

Our growth rate for individuals with bachelors’ degrees (2.02%) exceeds our population growth rate. In a base-case scenario, we will have grown from a 17.1% share to 20.4% at the end of 10 years, which is a change of 3.3% in the ratio. Our plan will lift us to the state’s goal of 3.5%. Our current initiatives to support work-based learning and certificate attainment are aptly positioned to increase skills acquisition and career progression for current and future workers.

**Driving Innovation and Entrepreneurship:** Building upon our legacy of innovation, we will foster an ecosystem conducive to entrepreneurship, supporting startups and small businesses through access to capital, resources, and talent programs.

The pace of regional business establishments has moved from an average 1.33% growth rate 2019 – 2021 to more than double that rate for 2021 – Q1 2023 at 3% growth. Between 2020 and Q1 of 2023, over \$211M of capital has been infused into the innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem, including NSF research awards to higher education institutions, SBIR/STTR awards, Manufacturing Readiness Grants (MRG), and Elevate Ventures investments. Locally-sponsored research at Notre Dame has increased by 2.3x to over \$1.3M per year.

**Accelerating Industry Diversification:** By identifying and capitalizing on emerging trends and opportunities, we will foster growth and diversification within key sectors, such as advanced manufacturing, healthcare, technology, and tourism.

The region anticipates adding 23,000 jobs by 2027 and 48,000 jobs by 2032. Given that almost every CICEP TEconomy report produced for IEDC in the last 2 years for its targeted industries denotes jobs within manufacturing NAICS codes, we anticipate that a substantial number of our current jobs are represented within these targeted industries. Even if only a

fifth of the region's projected jobs in 10 years fall within the manufacturing sector, our plan positions us effectively to contribute to the state's employment goal.

**Enhancing Infrastructure:** We will invest in housing and critical infrastructure projects both traditional and in support of the digital economy to improve connectivity, mobility, and accessibility, laying the groundwork for sustained economic growth and community development.

Our ten-year past performance rate of total housing units is 0.25%, which is far below projected demand. Though a pro-rata deployment of new housing units could be considered as meeting the state's goal, which we are equipped to do, especially with rental units, we must exceed the state's targeted housing growth rate to satisfy regional projected demand.

### IN THE FINAL LAP.

In the South Bend – Elkhart region, there's a different feeling in the air. From a new phase of the University of Notre Dame's role in economic development and applied research, with the University's recent acquisition of the former Tribune Building in downtown South Bend; to Lilly Endowment's College and Community Collaboration program for which six of our nine higher education institutions are eligible; to the private investments happening like those into the Madison Lifestyle District in South Bend and the River District in Elkhart; we're in the midst of a renaissance.

Our region's unique assets – a collaborative spirit, growing job base, and gorgeous riverfront amenities for work and recreation – are part of our toolkit for meeting the state's READI 2.0 goals and KPIs. Through the lens of the local labor force, the South Bend – Elkhart region represents a point of density for Northern Indiana residents. Of the 306,417 workers employed or living in the region, 59% both live and work within the region, a strength that can be tapped into for current and future planning. The region is a job center, with more workers commuting in daily than out for work, anchored by major employers like Beacon Health System, Hoosier Racing Tire, and Lippert Components.

In 2023, the Regional Partnership led discovery trips to Grand Rapids, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Columbus, and Pittsburgh. These regions have seen significant investments, benefitted from increased attention to federal opportunities like the CHIPs Act and revitalization of downtown and river districts, devoted critical attention to quality of place amenities, and prioritized upskilling or reskilling workforces to meet the demands of new economy jobs. As we have in our past plans, we view the Grand Rapids region as a peer region because it has several traits aligning with our region's identity. These include a strong foundation of manufacturing; a high density of higher education institutions; location in proximity to anchor cities; proximity to natural amenities; and similar labor-shed and workforce patterns.

The SBE region has arrived at an inflection point as it looks towards its future economic trajectory. The time has come for strong investments that will propel the region into the future, prioritizing and building upon the progress of recent years and the region's resilience in the face of the Great Recession and, recently, the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **TAKING POLE POSITION.**

This plan is projected to generate over \$2 billion in direct economic activity over the next six years. As a region, we have studied ourselves and others doing regionalism better, we have planned and re-planned to adapt and be proactive to a post-COVID world. We have:

- + A consistent pattern of execution over the past decade, as recognized through receiving the International Economic Development Council's Bronze Award for Regional Collaboration for our READI 1.0 process and more importantly, the successful completed execution of 27 quality of place projects from Regional Cities changing the shape of our skylines.
- + Deepened regional collaboration to achieve big wins, like the recently announced GM/Samsung EVB plant.
- + A clear understanding of our regional needs: We have an incredibly strong job market, with a gap occurring between job availability and labor force availability. When successful, this plan will bring online the mix of housing attractive to the workforce of the future, amenities to support new and existing residents, and honor our region's identity as a place that is building stuff that matters.

We are the fifth largest READI region, with 525,437 residents, and we're already across the starting line and ready to overtake our obstacles. We need the IEDC to be bold, strategically stack investments to achieve the greatest ROI and continue to be our investment partner to cross the finish line.



**SOUTH BEND | ELKHART**  
REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

**NORTHERN INDIANA**  
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



## Part II: READI 1.0 Evaluation

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

In preparation for our region's READI 1.0 application the South Bend – Elkhart region swiftly mobilized, leveraging existing infrastructure developed through Indiana's Regional Cities Initiative (RCI). Our region emerged from RCI with a solid working partnership among Elkhart, Marshall, and St. Joseph counties and a strong collaborative track record, laying the foundation for the READI program. The region includes the South Bend - Mishawaka metro area, Elkhart - Goshen metro area, and the Plymouth micropolitan area. The combination of geography, culture, opportunity, history, environmental, and economic structural factors contribute to the connectivity and shared economy across the region's communities. During the READI 1.0 application planning process in 2021, the region put out a public call for project ideas – generating 168 responses – in conjunction with a series of community stakeholder meetings. Following the award announcement of \$50M to the region in December 2021, the Northern Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA), supported by the South Bend – Elkhart Regional Partnership (RP), ran a public RFP process for projects. Workshops were held throughout the region to explain the RFP process; one for capital expenditure projects and another series for program investments. This process included a mandatory first step of attending the public educational workshops to inform project leads of READI requirements, including procurement compliance, regional investment priorities, and IEDC's investment priorities. Throughout, RP staff consulted and informed public sector project partners to ensure alignment of their priorities and that public match requirements would be met. The RDA, being a public body, reviewed submissions, debated publicly on project awards, and prioritized projects which adhered to a set number of investment criteria, including transformation potential, talent attraction impact, quality of place impact, and regional collaboration and partnership. Informed by these criteria and READI program goals, the RDA dispersed 84% (\$40,582,565) of the regional award to 17 capital projects, while the remaining funds were designated to 11 program awards. Of that 84%, \$5,580,000.00 (14%) went to Recreation, Trails, Athletics, and Wellness; \$24,300,000 (60%) to Housing projects; \$6,832,565 (17%) to Economic Development; and Arts and Culture \$3,870,000 (10%). The \$48.5M allocations are being leveraged for an additional \$496.8M. Capital project requests exceeded \$81M. By December 2022, the region had obligated all \$48.5M available to projects. As of 2/12/24, 11% (\$5.25M) of the \$48.5M has been fully disbursed. A further 6% (\$2.76M) is in the EY/IEDC disbursement pipeline, and an additional 2% (\$945K) under RP or EY review. All told, 18% of the allocation has been disbursed or will be soon. One economic development project is fully complete: Tolson Center in Elkhart, a \$2.6M READI investment in a \$14.7M project. Potawatomi Zoo has fully disbursed its \$1.07M award and will be hosting a grand opening of the \$10.7M project in late March 2024. Several projects have broken ground but have not yet incurred READI expenses to trigger disbursement cycles. Remaining projects will commence this summer per long-planned parks construction schedules. All 11 program investments are proceeding smoothly.

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

In fall 2023, the RP conducted an intentional feedback loop in preparation for READI 2.0, which illuminated lessons learned from READI 1.0. Fourteen of the 17 capital projects (82%) were interviewed (due to project



timing, 3 remaining project partners were not). Since READI 2.0 will be relevant for capital projects only, programmatic READI 1.0 projects were not interviewed. These interviews included input on project barriers, clarity on IEDC program guidance, potential solutions for increased efficiency in projects' disbursement process time, project level capacity for completing disbursement requests, the amount of time project leads allocated to document review, and improving RP operations. Three lessons stood out. The first was the importance of effective and clear communication to project applicants and awardees regarding the procurement guidelines and paperwork associated with receiving a READI award. A large portion of early disbursement confusion and delays was caused by projects' learning curve around organizing and submitting procurement documentation. In READI 2.0, a primary component will be increasing applicant comprehension of program procurement requirements. The second issue interviewees described was their remaining effort required to complete their capital stack which occurred when their READI award was less than their application request. (The RDA funded only parks and trails projects at full request amount.) In partnership with IEDC, the RP will continue to work with projects which do not receive their maximum request to identify and pursue opportunities to diversify their funding from other sources in their city and the region at large. The third lesson gleaned is that projects desired more transparency on the status of their disbursements throughout the submission and review process. As the RP continues to fine-tune processes for the award recipients supported through READI, we continue to change and increase our communication. Reflecting on the regional allocation process, we learned that despite rigorous front-end education and due diligence with project leads, more communication and "opt-in" features must be adopted to ensure that project applicants are aware that award allocations may be only partial compared to requested fund amounts supplied during application. Secondly, applicants may require additional reminders that the first hurdle for any project application is that it aligns with READI program goals. We are confident that the partnership between the RDA and the RP is the most effective approach and allows for a level of transparency that would not exist without this relationship.

**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 RDA is a corporate and political body formed in 2015. A five-member board experienced in transportation, regional economic development, business, and finance was appointed by the Mayors and Commissioners of the member counties. In 2023, all three counties re-authorized the RDA and re-appointed all five current board members. The RP is the primary driver of regional development activity as the area's regional economic development organization (REDO) and serves as staff for the RDA. Since 2015, and in addition to RCI and READI 1.0 planning, the RP achieved the following planning and regional milestones:- To catalyze economic growth in areas beyond the initial RCI focus, the 2016 Plan for Prosperity, Growth, and Inclusion provided a situational analysis and identified key areas of opportunity.- Regional stakeholders developed the 2018 Ensuring Prosperity for the South Bend - Elkhart Region REDS plan, identified specific strategies, and laid a robust path to achieving the regional goal of increasing per capita personal income.- With a focus on improving key facets of the innovation ecosystem, from workforce and talent to diversified industry growth, the 2018 Tides of Change: Critical Investments Needed to Stimulate Long-term Economic Prosperity in the South Bend - Elkhart Region was conducted by TEconomy Partners. - In 2019, a \$42.4M grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. formed the Labs for Industry Futures and Transformation Network (LIFT), to enhance and link cutting-edge expertise, technologies, workforce development programs, and innovation-based facilities throughout the SBE region.





The grant brought together the University of Notre Dame (UND), the RP, and other key regional stakeholders in a collaboration to further advance the region.- In October 2019, a brand campaign launched, designed to attract attention from companies and talent and encourage economic growth across the region. The WE+YOU campaign focuses on attracting students, former residents, new talent, and businesses. - In 2020, planning and execution began to produce results, including the region's designation as a 21st Century Talent Region by Indiana and recognition by Elevate Ventures as its "Region of the Year" for the second consecutive year.- A 2021 Regional Belonging Survey established baseline data to understand how regional residents connect with their communities.- In 2022, TPMA was engaged to develop a Labor Market Study to assess current trends and future implications. In 2023, the International Economic Development Council recognized our region for its regional collaboration efforts for READI 1.0 with a Bronze Award. RP staff have backgrounds in economic development, marketing, grants administration, philanthropy, and workforce development. RP has 1.5 team members dedicated to staffing the RDA, with additional staff support from leadership, operations, and marketing. The RP receives funds to support its work from a variety of sources, with the READI administrative fee representing a portion of the budget. The RP is led by a strong board of directors and committed investors that pledge on four-year cycles. The RP does not foresee any major changes or additional support needed to enhance the organization's long-term viability and sustainability.



### 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	525,437 (2022)
Total employment (U.S. Census Bureau)	3,020,345	266,178 (2022) USING BLS FIGURES, NOT 5 YEAR CENSUS
Per capita income (Bureau of Economic Analysis)	\$ 51,645.95	\$ 57,073.00
Total population with bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau)	1,253,299	90,118 (2022)
Total housing units (U.S. Census Bureau)	2,911,562	217,711 (2022)
Total rental housing units (U.S. Census Bureau)	680,964	58,852 (2022)
Total owner-occupied units (U.S. Census Bureau)	1,097,622	137,071 (2022)
Number of new business start-ups (Small Business Development Center)	150,067	12,066 (2022)

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.

In Marshall County, which has a smaller number of providers, the Marshall County Early Childhood Coalition works on business viability, profitability, and sustainability of childcare providers. This work includes connecting them to state grant opportunities and convening providers to share business strategies and address gaps. In late 2023, the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration's Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning made three grants in the county from the new Employer-Sponsored Child Care Fund. The largest was to United Way of Marshall County for \$750,000 to launch a TriShare Childcare pilot program. TriShare splits the cost of childcare three ways: one-third is paid by the parent, one-third by the grant, and one-third by the business. The Ready to Grow St. Joe coalition, housed at St. Joseph County's United Way, spearheads efforts to improve provider quality. This focus includes professional development and community-wide onboarding processes for new providers to address workforce retention. Working with the



City of South Bend, several cycles of grant funding have been available to support providers' goal to improve quality. Both the YMCA and the United Way are planning new centers, which may become READI 2.0 projects. In Elkhart County, demand far exceeds seats available by a 3 to 1 ratio. Ecosystem support organizations work with providers to enhance their capacity and interest in becoming formally licensed, which will result in more seat capacity. The prevalence of second- and third-shift employees and Spanish-speaking providers who are exempt adds complexity to childcare access.

**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).**

Our region's innovation ecosystem largely consists of startups spun out of UND and native entrepreneurial activity in the manufacturing sector. While that industry faces an automation threat, our innovation ecosystem is evolving due to the LIFT Network, which drives R&D out of the University and into industry. Since 2016, our Headline Innovation Index has increased by 19%, putting us at 124% of the state's Headline Innovation Index. Since 2018, approximately 63 high-potential startups have been launched at UND. Entrepreneurs are supported by Startup South Bend – Elkhart (a backbone convening organization), UND's IDEA Center, and various smaller entrepreneurial support organizations in a largely united manner. UND has, however, struggled to retain many of its startups due to two factors: quality of place and lack of an experienced, educated, high-quality workforce. Between 2020 and Q1 of 2023, over \$211M has been infused into the innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem, including NSF research awards to higher education institutions, SBIR/STTR awards, Manufacturing Readiness Grants (MRG), and Elevate Ventures investments. Between 2000-2015, the region generated 2,022 utility patents, accounting for about 6% of patents in Indiana for the same timeframe (the national rate was 1%). The pace of regional business establishments, when comparing two-year increments, has moved from an average 1.33% growth rate 2019 – 2021 to more than double that rate for 2021 – Q1 2023 at 3% growth. Our region's ISBDC growth continues unabated: 2023 metrics included 420 unique clients served, 29 new business starts, 116 new jobs created, and about \$4M in

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

Thor Industries, Forest River, Inc., Lippert Components, Inc., University of Notre Dame, Beacon Health System, Jayco, AM General, Leman Enterprises, Southwire, Hoosier Racing Tire. These top employers encompass education, health, and manufacturing sectors, alongside rapidly growing companies. Notably, AM General secured a U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) contract worth up to \$8.6B, with production based entirely in our region. Trek10, part of a \$5.7M READI 1.0 program grant to grow our IT workforce, has garnered over \$7M in DOD awards since 2019, bolstering their cloud technology platform. SIMBA Chain, a blockchain spin-off from ITAMCO, a legacy Marshall Co. company, has received significant funding, including \$6M in SBIR phase I and II awards and \$9.5M in phase III, from entities like the Naval Information Warfare Systems Command and others. Recognitions for SIMBA include TechPoint Mira Awards' Best of Tech Winner 2019 and an Elevate Ventures High Potential Startup Grant. The RP convenes the Higher Education Advisory Council whose members are: Indiana University South Bend, Purdue Polytechnic Institute, Goshen College, Holy Cross College, Saint Mary's College, Marian University's Ancilla College, Bethel University, Ivy Tech Community College, and UND. Collectively, these schools represent 33,000 students in the region. The region benefits from three well-resourced community



foundations, [Community Foundation of Elkhart County: \$405M in assets and \$43M in grants in 2023; Community Foundation of St. Joseph County: \$265M in assets, \$12M in giving; Community Foundation of Marshall County: \$44M in assets; \$1.4M in grants]; a number of private foundations, and well-respected United Way agencies.

**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.**

IEDC data indicate only Marshall County is rural. There, the sole Qualified Census Tract (QCT) is in downtown Plymouth; there are no disadvantaged communities targeted census tracts. While Marshall County lacks IHCD defined targeted areas, the county has eagerly leveraged RCI funding, 6 READI 1.0 projects, and OCRA funding support to drive investment. In 2019, Marshall County Crossroads, a cross-sector planning team, became an OCRA Stellar Communities 2019 Designee; that effort continues to inform development strategies across the county. The Marshall County Life Center (a \$12.6M RCI project) resulted in the county's first fully-licensed daycare, new headquarters for its Community Foundation and United Way, and new rooms for workforce training. IHCD provided information (see Census Appendix) on disadvantaged communities indicates St. Joseph County contains 23 census tracts identified as target areas in 2023 (2024 list is not available), 15 of which are QCTs. In Elkhart County, there are 7 target census tracts, 4 of which are QCTs. In both counties, disadvantaged communities largely overlay the QCT map of central city census tracts. Likewise, the state's Opportunity Zone designations overlay the same areas. Aside from READI, municipalities have led multi-year investment into disadvantaged areas and QCTs. In South Bend, the city formulated "complete streets," created dedicated staff teams to support investment in main artery streetscapes and small business support leading to and from downtown. With the UND School of Architecture, Elkhart has collaborated on three full-scale charettes related to downtown and close-in neighborhoods aiming to re-connect low-income areas to city vitality.

**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?**

Every metric increased from 2021 to 2022. (See Appendix for 2018-2022 KPI Past Performance and 10-year projections.) Our population grew 0.17% (899); our population with a bachelor's degree grew .67% (602). Employment grew almost 2% (4,770) and has returned to 2019 pre-pandemic level. PCPI growth continued apace at almost 3%. Generally, employment gains outpace population gains: 0.27% population average five-year growth compared to 0.39% in employment. Housing units have endured low average growth rates for past 10- (0.25%) and 5- (0.28%) year marks; 2021-2022 notched 0.37% growth (797 units). Owner-occupied rates lag dramatically, while rental unit growth rates have held steady. We anticipate that READI 1.0 investments will accelerate trendlines in KPIs. Our housing investment will bring on over 600 rental units in three years, which represents one-third of the total units historically brought online each year. Investments in three signature cultural amenities will support accelerated visitor trends; the new Mishawaka Fieldhouse has the potential to yield an additional 30,000 room nights per year. Complementary program and capital expenditure investments into the talent pipeline (see Appendix READI 1.0 project summaries) will have medium- and long-term impact on enrollment and completion rates at our higher education institutions. READI 1.0 related projects alone total \$29M. Baseline data forecasts show 17% of the population with a bachelor's growing at a

similar rate to population growth; just a change from baseline 2.02% to 2.14% in this population would meet the state’s long-term goal of 3.5% change in population share with bachelors’ degree.

**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:** Greater Grand Rapids, Michigan

Key performance indicators	Region	Peer Community
Total population	525,437 (ALL FIGURES 2022)	1,094,198 (ALL FIGURES 2022)
Total employment	266,178 (USING BLS, NOT 5 YEAR CENSUS)	554,991 (USING BLS, NOT 5 YEAR CENSUS)
Per capita income	\$ 57,073.00	\$ 62,131.00
Total population with bachelor's degree or higher	90,118	251,771
Total housing units	217,711	432,268
Total rental housing units	58,852	109,085
Total owner-occupied housing units	137,071	298,720

**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.**

Greater Grand Rapids Area is an 8-county region in Michigan. Grand Rapids is located between Chicago and Detroit and is the state’s second-largest city with a population of 200,000. It is the urban center of a growing region of more than 1 million people. The city is home to over 11,000 workplaces that employ over 273,000 people. Core industries are like our region’s: manufacturing, medical devices/life sciences, and Information Technology. In 2023, the RP conducted 4 board discovery trips to other regions: Pittsburgh, Minneapolis, Columbus, and Grand Rapids (GR). While GR boasts larger population and more employers, our region sees it as a future version of our leading cities. The arts and amenities anchor an effective tourism industry, as well as providing superb quality of place “stickiness” for residents. The innovation engine undergirds a full life sciences sector, not just a healthcare industry, and supports 21st century manufacturing across diverse industries. GR has built out a 10-year tech workforce strategy to move from 6% to 12% of the workforce in the tech industry, creating 20,000 new tech jobs. To achieve this goal, it has developed talent development initiatives including apprenticeships and internships; a local tech council with 50 tech leaders; ecosystem development tied to the CHIPS Act; and growth initiatives that connect business and technologists to one another. GR is placing heavy



emphasis on retaining international students through a partnership with Global Detroit and has established a Global Entrepreneurship in Residence program, a similar model to enFocus in the SBE region. The GR region experienced 8% population growth in the last few years, while immigrant population grew 20% in the same time frame. GR has developed a “welcome plan” inclusive of access to resources, safe and connected communities, and civic engagement, which South Bend has also completed to complement our regional designation as a Welcoming America designated region. Additionally, GR is prioritizing connected transportation to retain its higher education students upon graduation. GR’s placemaking strategy ties districts adjacent to visitor-attracting amenities. This includes attracting a pro sports team and restoring development along the river. GR is targeting international companies in priority verticals and encouraging them to participate in industry-specific tradeshow. GR is also strategically targeting companies with leadership teams that have affinities for the GR region to recruit both the team members and the companies they run to relocate into the GR region. What GR region does to grow its population and attract new companies represents many strategies we have implemented, yet their pace of implementation exceeds ours, due in large part to being the second most philanthropic city in the country. Their transformative projects align very closely with what we envision for our region, and they require the blend of private, public, and philanthropic investments that without one another would bear little fruit but combined create greater impact and opportunities. The regional collaboration, economic development ecosystem, and focused strategies developed by GR have informed much of our revised regional strategies included within this application.

**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.**

Our region experienced tepid population growth over the past decade. Several reasons are at play: 1. Too little housing and too little variety, especially beyond single family homes; 2. Lagging educational attainment levels; 3. Comparatively low levels of industry diversification that diminish overall economic resilience; 4. Limited site availability and/or development-ready sites; and 5. Inconsistent harnessing of diversity of backgrounds, talent and cultures to create a welcoming environment and top-notch talent pool. Employers of all sizes can point to employees they were unable to hire due to lack of housing options. UND’s School of Architecture conducted several charettes pointing to community desire for revitalization of near-core urban housing. The 200 attendees at our READI 2.0 input workshops decisively listed walkable, affordable housing as priority. Elkhart’s 2019 report found that there was a 4,980-unit housing deficit in the City of Elkhart. Our housing data reveal another troubling trend: most owner-occupied housing is owned by White owners (90%), and most rental units are occupied by people of color. The correlation between housing ownership and wealth creation is not new; our region’s percent of rent-burdened population continues to grow. South Bend’s 2021 study noted 50% of target households have AMIs under 100%. Like the state, our region faces a long road to increasing the proportion of bachelors’ degree holders. That is why we have focused so deeply over the last five years on career pathways, early college, CTE, and work-based learning. These strategies increase skills and competencies, and credentials leading to bachelor’s degrees. Recent studies highlight the risk low industry diversification could/will have on our ability to grow. In 2018, TECEconomy highlighted the low patent activity and SBIR/STTR grant funds in the region. The GPS Brookings report flagged the drag on economic growth automation could play on our outsized manufacturing sector. In the past five years, we poured significant



effort into strategies supporting industry diversification through aggressive capturing of the state's MRGs, effective implementation of Lilly Endowment-funded LIFT, and the activation of St. Joseph County's Indiana Enterprise Center (IEC). The availability of larger and more comprehensive sites for national and multi-national employers is important. While GM/Samsung's investment at the IEC dominates headlines, our LEDO and county partners stress the long-term market demand for sites able to accommodate data centers and manufacturing 4.0. Our region is not effectively harnessing all the talent it could. The 2023 American Immigration Council report notes immigrants are more likely to hold a credential yet find it harder to convert that expertise into commensurate employment. Wage labor data from our region's 2022 TMPA report shows certain occupations in healthcare and manufacturing are over-indexed with people of color into jobs paying only \$30-40,000. Our region underperforms in retaining the many international students and employees that UND and other higher education institutions draw. Lack of childcare options is more acute than childcare desert analysis from the Center of American Progress would indicate since many sites do not provide second and third shift slots.

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

Our region's top four needs are: •Rapid deployment of dense and mixed-use housing stock. •Robust and strategic investment in (re)creating neighborhoods – downtown, downtown adjacent, and rural, that support live/work/play. •Continued investment in activating riverfront/water/natural assets for economic development and recreation. •Accelerate investment in industry diversification, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Our three community foundations are underwriting a region-wide housing study to complement existing municipality's studies, and further cement coordinated regional responses to large investments like the Razor5 investment, where the labor-shed exceeds single county lines. City of South Bend's national leadership in aligning zoning to support infill development and incremental economic development sets the standard for other municipalities. The city has six pre-approved housing plans for developers to use, reducing time and cost spent on architectural renderings and permitting. Every municipal partner involved in READI 2.0 planning is prioritizing planning and investment that will create neighborhoods – using other federal funding opportunities to restore street grids, for example, or working with developers to ensure housing developments contain elements of retail/mixed use and natural green space. Potential READI 2.0 projects include a transformative project to rework a blighted riverfront office park into a neighborhood of residential units and reconnect its major streets to downtown. Linkages to and among neighborhoods is critical. UND and the St. Joseph County Inn Keeper's tax is investing \$3.5M into an \$11.5M "urban trail" connecting the campus to downtown South Bend. During its Stellar Community Designation process, Marshall County created a Trails Master Plan to guide the county's planning and implementation of a county-wide trail system and connecting it to regional trail networks. The South Shore's double tracking project (RCI provided some planning support) will reduce travel times and add service. Transpo and MACOG's recent transit plan study called for increased bus service frequency as part of a broader outlook toward transit-oriented development. One need look no further than the downtown Mishawaka Riverfront to see the impact of thoughtful and significant investment in natural assets and housing can have. Continued investment in green spaces and park amenities was prioritized as much as housing from the 200 attendees at our six READI 2.0 workshops. The RDA prioritized full request allocations for parks projects in READI 1.0, investing \$5.6M in 4 projects. At over 80,000 workers, manufacturing is still 3x larger than any other industry. Area employers secured 21% of MRG Awards, representing \$93M of total investment, a 7:1 private to MRG ratio. While we have doubled down on supporting this industry's pivot to 4.0 capabilities, we must dedicate equal weight to expanding other sectors. Healthcare



and Social Assistance employs approximately 35,000 individuals and is expected to grow 6% in 5 years. With clear leadership from our higher education institutions and strategic ownership by area healthcare CEOs, a Healthcare Sector Partnership is taking form. IU South Bend recently prepared a proposal to Lilly Endowment and other potential funders for a Hub for Healthcare Careers. The proposal is for \$11,121,285, supported by \$48,745,000 in match funding, anchored



# 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><b>Talent Attraction and Retention</b>  <b>Goal: Foster regional economic growth through strategic investments in arts, culture, riverfront activation, trail connectivity, and storytelling – leveraging public-private partnerships and community engagement to create vibrant, connected communities that attract visitors, talent, and investment.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p><b>Places to Be: Enhancing Natural and Cultural Amenities</b>            The investment in physical infrastructure through RCI and READI 1.0 initiatives has transformed South Bend's Howard Park and the Mishawaka Riverfront into cherished community spaces, complementing the beauty of the St. Joseph River. Cultural landmarks such as the RCI funded Goshen and REES Theatres, and READI 1.0 funded Potawatomi Zoo, Morris Performing Arts Center, and Wellfield Botanic Gardens, reflect the pride of our region. Supporting these are well-planned greenways that integrate seamlessly into residential areas, connecting people to leisure and work opportunities.</p> <p>Along with singular and signature greenspaces, we will support investment in our counties' and towns' trails and greenway efforts. Well-planned greenways are embedded in residential and city environs and serve to connect people to leisure and work.</p> </li> <li> <p><b>Downtown Revitalization Support</b>            READI 2.0 sessions underscored the importance of downtown revitalization and mixed-use housing, aligning with resident preferences. Projects like Portage Place, a \$5.5M READI 1.0 endeavor, repurpose historic spaces into vibrant retail hubs, attracting entrepreneurs, and retaining talent. Municipalities are enhancing support with façade improvement grants, riverfront licenses, and beautification initiatives, promoting walkability and fostering a vibrant, inviting atmosphere.</p> </li> <li> <p><b>Telling Our Story and Engaging Communities</b>            The WE+YOU brand and networking initiatives will be amplified through a regional welcome kit for employers, funded by a \$700,000 READI 1.0 award. This \$3.5M project aims to develop marketing assets, connect students to the region, and implement a remote worker strategy over the next three years.</p> </li> </ol>

**Housing**

**Goal: Drive housing-centric economic development by prioritizing connected housing development to meet the region's diverse needs and aspirations, informed by a comprehensive regional housing study and strategic partnerships.**

**1. Prioritize connected housing development**

Our READI 1.0 plan did not have a housing specific goal. That said, \$25M of READI 1.0 went into housing projects for townhomes, mixed use apartments and single-family developments. The RDA's RFP requested housing targeting specific AMI bands. READI 2.0 workshops and municipal partner plans clearly focus on a dramatic and sustained housing need. All three community foundations are supporting a region-wide housing study to be completed in late 2024.

The most consistent request is for walkable, affordable, dense housing. This could take several forms: new construction mixed-use housing located in downtown centers, rehabilitation, and revitalization of neighborhoods close to city centers, and development of new housing in rural towns. Notably, our region benefits from several intensive community planning efforts led by national experts at the UND School of Architecture. For several years, South Bend has invested in the growth of small-scale incremental developers, who collectively rehabilitate and lease older homes close to the city center, which has garnered national attention. While LIHTC projects are always a welcome addition to broaden housing affordability, we will continue to promote additional developments targeting workforce and mid-level AMI bands to improve our region's percent of affordable housing.

**2. Propel smart growth**

The IEC in western St. Joseph County will pull from a large labor shed and drive housing demand throughout our three counties. Smaller communities in northern Marshall County will need to develop smart growth strategies that showcase small town charm and amenities for new residents who seek rural living. Smaller municipalities in Marshall County will partner UND's School of Architecture for a 2024 speaker's series with the goal to launch a charette in May 2025 focused on housing and community regeneration. Likewise, downtown Elkhart, Goshen, South Bend, and Mishawaka will likely provide apartment/townhouse living.

**Entrepreneurship and Innovation**

**Goal: Foster a dynamic ecosystem that catalyzes entrepreneurial growth and innovation while enhancing infrastructure and support systems for key industries, driving economic vitality and prosperity.**

**1. Improve infrastructure for the region’s growing number of companies and people.**

To improve infrastructure for the region's growing population and businesses, critical investments in rail, air, and broadband are paramount. Completion of double tracking to Chicago and re-alignment of the South Shore terminus will transform rail connectivity. Likewise, the South Bend International Airport’s long-term plan envisions and supports continued growth in the transportation, distribution, and logistics sectors, as does the rapid rollout of the IEC. Ensuring effective transit planning and broadband deployment, especially in Marshall County, is essential.

**2. Connect innovation assets deeper within employers, the region’s employee base, and entrepreneurs.**

Enhancing connectivity among innovation assets is crucial for economic development. With UND's involvement in prestigious research consortia and tech hub designations, the region's innovation ecosystem thrives. Regional resources like South Bend's Tech Resource Center and Ivy Tech’s Garatoni Center for Advanced Manufacturing in Elkhart County foster growth in high-tech startups and strengthen the foundation for technological advancement and industry collaboration. Entrepreneurial development will be further expanded through a recently announced Entrepreneurship and Innovation Center at IU South Bend, which was catalyzed by a \$2M Judd Leighton Foundation grant.

**3. Boost foundational assistance for career pathways, innovation, and entrepreneurship in our predominant healthcare and manufacturing industries.**

Accelerating support for healthcare and manufacturing career pathways is vital. While manufacturing benefits from established networks, similar backing is needed for the rapidly growing healthcare sector. Implementing effective work-based learning, equity-focused hiring, and leadership initiatives can transform healthcare into a powerhouse sector, driving economic output and improving residents' health outcomes. A number of our current jobs align with the state's targeted industries. Even if only one-fifth of the region's projected jobs in 10 years fall within the manufacturing sector, our plan positions us effectively to contribute to the state's employment goal.

**Post Secondary Education:  
Goal: Advance post-secondary attainment and workforce development through work-based learning and CTE integration.**

1. **Intensify Investment in Work-Based Learning.**  
We aim to boost post-secondary attainment through a robust pyramid approach, promoting competency-based learning and scaling work-based learning infrastructure – including apprenticeships. The LIFT Network, bolstered by a transformative Lilly Endowment grant, integrates internship and apprenticeship programs under a unified brand, yielding impressive outcomes such as 100+ apprentices and 500+ employees completing skills training programs over the past two years. In 2020, LIFT’s Digital Skills Accelerator Fund provided grants totaling \$2.9M to eight higher educational partners to develop and deploy a variety of flexible non-degree programs, industry-recognized certifications, and formal degree programs in fields such as data science.
  
2. **Enhance Integration of CTE Pathways with Work and Post-Secondary Education.**  
Well-liked by students and employers alike, our CTE programming across the region exceeds physical capacity. In Marshall County, a READI 1.0 capital project of \$9M (\$1.75 READI) will create reworked and expanded physical space to unleash the uptake of this model. Collaborating with stakeholders, we seek to expand capacity for CTE programs. We aim to enhance integration for CTE graduates, facilitating pathways to full-time employment, apprenticeships, and bachelor’s degrees, ensuring a seamless transition from education to the workforce.
  
3. **Increase internship opportunities, coordination, and efficacy.**  
With nine higher educational institutions, increasing post-secondary attainment levels remains our north star. Across the region, employers are adopting the Regional Internship Program, a matchmaking program that involves a network of partners including regional chambers, enFocus, and higher education institutions providing professional and social programming and shared student recruiting. A READI 1.0 \$300K award, leveraged for \$2.4M, expanded regional internships beyond original LIFT target occupations.



**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	\$ 2,032,219,590.00
Requested READI 2.0 funds	\$ 75,000,000.00
Anticipated matching funding sources	\$ 1,957,219,590.00
Private funding	\$ 903,767,190.00
Philanthropic	\$ 256,184,000.00
Local Funding	\$ 400,343,400.00
Other State funding	\$ 96,900,000.00
Federal funding	\$ 300,025,000.00
Percentage of anticipated READI funding towards rural and rural-mix communities	15%
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

#### TALENT ATTRACTION AND RETENTION

1. Catalyze Arts and Culture Investments:
  - Launch rehabilitation projects like in Marshall County to transform a blighted “Main Street” building into a mixed-use gallery and artist space, supplemented with entrepreneurship programming to foster local talent. (Possible READI 2.0 project)
  - Support the expansion of cultural festivals and performing arts events like South Bend’s Fusion Fest, Marshall County’s Blueberry Festival, and Elkhart’s Jazz Fest to attract more visitors and stimulate the creative economy.
  - Catalyze quality of place entrepreneurship through ecosystem building and connecting entrepreneurs to opportunities.
  
2. Prioritize Riverfront Activation:
  - Over the next five years, focus on redevelopment projects along the riverfront in South Bend, Elkhart, and Mishawaka, converting existing office buildings into mixed-use spaces incorporating housing, retail, and trails to maximize riverfront utilization. Downtown Elkhart and its River District forecasts \$161M of investment.
  - Partner with private investors in downtown Elkhart to develop a \$45M outdoor amphitheater and park (possible READI 2.0 project) adjacent to READI 1.0 and RCI funded projects, enhancing the riverfront experience.
  
3. Support Trail Connectivity:
  - Prioritize “final mile” or “connector” projects to link city and county trails, particularly focusing on connecting urban cores with extensive railway systems.
  - An example project (possible READI 2.0) includes a plan to connect trails from Southwest Michigan through St. Joseph County to Marshall County, leveraging assets like the Continental Divide Trail to boost local tourism.
  
4. Increase WE+YOU Uptake:
  - Continue activation of the WE+YOU brand through targeted campaigns, employer tools creation, and tailored recruiting strategies over the next three years to support both national and local hiring strategies of partner employers.
  - As of 2/14/24 the region has attracted 13 remote workers and their families through a partnership with the cities of South Bend and Elkhart, and the town of Culver.

## HOUSING

1. Complete a Regional Housing Study:
  - Led by MACOG, our regional planning commission, in partnership with our three community foundations and the RP, a regional housing study will be completed in 2024 to inform regional investments.
  
2. Support downtown density and neighborhood resurgence:
  - We will prioritize in-fill of historically redlined neighborhoods like the downtown Benham neighborhood in Elkhart. This neighborhood is anchored by a \$2.6M READI 1.0 investment in Tolson Center, a community center providing wrap-around programming.
  - Catalyze investments into projects like a READI 1.0 awardee, the Portage Place Incubator. This \$5.5M project – adjacent to a QCT – will revive a blighted 100-year-old building with many small business storefronts and create a destination residents can actively engage with.
  
3. Encourage riverfront development and activation:
  - Projects like RCI funded Howard Park have shown us what the transformation of a single large scale public amenity can do for a city. Further development of mixed-use facilities, inclusive of multi-unit dwellings, greenspace along the river, and a re-connected street grid is anticipated to unfold on the opposite side of the river in South Bend.
  - Within the River District of Elkhart, multi-unit mixed-income housing will return to the urban core.
  
4. Support smart growth of housing:
  - In our rural and rural-mix areas of the region, we are encouraging strategic development of single-family homes. Elkhart County’s anticipated Cherry Creek Development (possible READI 2.0), in Goshen, plans to add 1,400+ dwellings, with the majority being close neighborhood single family homes and the balance being condos and townhomes, coupled with first floor retail. Plans include a childcare facility and home designs are being created with “zero threshold” considerations for aging-in-place living.
  - Affordable housing must be developed to meet known demands of large-scale projects, in particular in our rural



## ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION

1. Enhance Downtown Infrastructure:
  - Invest in streetscapes and building refurbishments to create vibrant downtowns that attract workers and residents.
  - Encourage mixed-use projects, providing compelling amenities and support employees' interest in downtown office days, fostering a 24/7 live/work/play atmosphere.
  
2. Activate Anchor Institutions' Entrepreneurship Assets:
  - Our innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem is designed to get innovation out of academic silos and into employers' operational processes. A \$647,000 READI 1.0 investment supported a \$3.5 READI program collaboration among higher education partners with simulation labs and work-based learning.
  - Invest in learning labs to promote hands-on entrepreneurship education and strengthen connections between recent graduates and startups through investment in local training and bachelor's programs.
  - Partner with anchor institutes to repurpose historic sites like the South Bend Tribune building (now owned by UND) into innovation districts, fostering talent, skills, and technology advancement while stimulating downtown regeneration.
  
3. Accelerate backbone support for healthcare and manufacturing:
  - A \$1.4M READI 1.0 investment into a region-wide \$30M manufacturing readiness accelerator will result in the rapid deployment of manufacturing 4.0 technology and create 75 jobs with an average wage of \$60,000+.
  - Our region has received \$11.8M in MRGs, leveraged for \$93M of total investment. We will continue to grow our strong and trusted relationship with Conexus to further resources for our region's #1 industry.
  - A Healthcare Hub – anchored by IUSB and development of the Healthcare Sector Partnership – has developed a regional strategic vision over the past 18 months. The Hub will sit adjacent to the Memorial Hospital Tower project, a \$232M expansion adding 500 healthcare jobs. The Hub will be housed in the \$144M Madison Lifestyle District, a massive 2-city block mixed-use development with a \$11.6M READI 1.0 investment. In five years, the Hub will engage over 25,000

## POST SECONDARY EDUCATION

### 1. Strengthen Capacity for Coordinated Work-Based Learning Efforts:

- We will build out capacity to align and coordinate work-based learning at strategic liaison points like chambers of commerce, the RP, and other partners. The South Bend Regional Chamber applied for an Indiana Commission for Higher Education Career Coaching grant.
- The St. Joseph County Career Hub strategic planning process will soon conclude, with an identified central physical hub for CTE programming in 2024. When the school district passed its \$220M dollar referendum in 2020, \$8.5M was earmarked for a Career Innovation Center. A seed \$60K READI 1.0 program investment has supported some of this intensive planning; a READI 2.0 investment into the build-out of the new physical space is possible. Current planning anticipates 750 students enrolled when the Center is at full capacity. Alignment and integration of CTE programming will also support high school students' ability to enter the workforce directly with relevant credentials and competencies. This pipeline is especially relevant for new projects like the GM/Samsung investment.

### 2. Enhance PSE Enrollment and Bachelor's Degree Attainment Efforts:

- Our nine higher education partners continue to invest in strategies for student access, persistence, and completion. Current projections, tied to robust strategies, project a goal of increasing total enrollment by 6% in the next five years, as colleges and universities continue to grapple with COVID-related enrollment declines. These goals will be further catalyzed by five of our nine higher education partners applying for the 2024 Lilly Endowment College and Community Collaboration (CCC) funding opportunity.
- Goshen College has been accredited as a Hispanic Serving Institution through the Department of Education, (only four in the state) with Holy Cross College recognized as an Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution. We intend to leverage accreditation to attract and retain Hispanic students.

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

During READI 1.0, the RDA, supported by the RP, conducted a full, public RFP process for capital projects once the region received its allocation award. A rigorous review process, guided by predefined investment criteria, including transformation potential, talent attraction impact, quality of place, and collaboration among regional partners, led to the allocation of funds to 17 capital projects and 11 program grantees. LEDO and municipal partners appreciated the transparency of the process, and the process received a wide range of project applicants. The RDA valued the opportunity to review projects in a similar timeframe, with a uniform application being used for all capital expenditure requests. (See READI 1.0 Appendix for SBE application packet.) Given the favorable experience the region had with an RFP process, the RDA anticipates using a similar process during READI 2.0.

### 1. Development of an RFP and Process Timeline

The RP will develop and circulate an RFP in hard copy in advance of an online portal opening for project submission. The RFP will be informed by IEDC's READI 2.0 KPIs and goals, coupled with the region's vision as described in our READI 2.0 application. We anticipate an RFP that will build from the READI 1.0 regional RFP (See appendix for READI 1.0 RFP.) The READI 2.0 Steering committee will also provide input into the RFP development. Applicants will have the opportunity to provide supporting material. Project intake will likely take 2-3 months: one month to circulate the RFP and host educational sessions, and 30-45 days for projects to submit applications. We



anticipate launching this process in May/June 2024. We anticipate prioritization and evaluation to take 30-60 days, depending on the volume of applications and level of coordination during this phase with IEDC. We anticipate working with the IEDC to determine the most effective and appropriate feedback and collaboration on final project evaluation and selection.

**2. Education and Awareness** The RP will hold educational sessions throughout the region to educate project applicants on READI 2.0 guidance and the RFP process. We anticipate holding 4-6 educational sessions, with at least one in every county. As we did in READI 1.0, our municipal and LEDO partners will help publicize the sessions, along with the RP's extensive outreach strategy. In fall 2023, the RP hosted READI 2.0 educational workshops, and we will use the contact database built from that effort to directly invite stakeholders to project application/RFP educational sessions in 2024. During READI 1.0, IEDC and EY staff were co-presenters with us. Over 150 developers, private individuals, public partners, and community leaders attended those sessions. As before, RP staff will be available to meet with projects individually to discuss specific ideas and provide technical assistance. RDA board members are available to talk with prospective applicants as well. Given the lessons learned during READI 1.0, during the workshops and in printed guidance, RP staff will stress the specific attributes documentation and procedures of procurement should a project win an award. New to READI 2.0, we will also cover information about the 25% goals for disadvantaged and rural communities.

**3. Intake and Prioritization** The RP anticipates using secure, reliable, and tested technology for the online portal application. We used this software successfully for idea submission during the READI 1.0 planning phase, during the READI 1.0 awarding phase for program awards, and during the READI 2.0 planning phase for idea collection. The tool allows applicants to save their work, upload supporting documents, and allows staff to easily sort applications into reviewer packets. Project prioritization will follow several steps: 1) determining applicant eligibility and overall fit with READI 2.0 program goals; 2) assessing level of anticipated and secured match to the project; and 3) assessing overall application completeness and cohesiveness. RP staff will assist in sorting and organizing documents for RDA review, prioritization, and evaluation. The RDA will further evaluate and prioritize projects according to regional investment criteria as used in READI 1.0 and RCI project rounds.

**4. Selection** The RDA is a public body and therefore will conduct project selection in a public forum. During READI 1.0, the set of project applications was strong enough to warrant all funding being allocated at once. For READI 2.0, the RDA may consider a rolling application/decision process or assess the timing of proposed projects and allocate funding in tranches. In consultation with the IEDC READI team, this approach was encouraged especially in light of the additional \$250M Lilly gift towards READI. We recognize READI is a partnership between the region and the IEDC and as such, will continue to work in tandem with the IEDC team on project selection.

**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.**

Our investment thesis for projects is led first by state and regional priorities, followed closely by strategic stacking of investments. The RDA has, and will continue to, prioritize "one of one", "but not for", and anchor investments. Examples include the READI 1.0 investment into the Tolson Center in Elkhart's Benham neighborhood. By funding Tolson, the IEDC funded a beacon in a blighted neighborhood. This commitment was quickly followed by the sixth charette process from the UND School of Architecture to envision a built environment that activates community members' ability to become local stakeholders by creating paths to affordable home ownership and entrepreneurship. Now, six months after opening Tolson, the City of Elkhart



has announced a \$14.5M investment into improving infrastructure to attract more private investment and connect the neighborhood to downtown. Through the CCC program, projects are prioritizing links to developments in progress, including the \$232M Memorial Hospital Tower project and Four Winds Field expansion. More details regarding these will be known following Lilly Endowment's award announcements in June 2024. The region's community foundations, in partnership with the RP and MACOG, have come together to pursue GIFT VIII Lilly Endowment awards, having already successfully secured a \$250,000 regional planning grant that is being leveraged to conduct a regional housing study to inform READI 2.0 investments. In our rural areas, transformative developments, like the IEC on the west side of St. Joseph County, will lead to further investments in quality of place like trails and greenspaces.

**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.**

Under the guidance of the RDA, the RP conducted a three-pronged stakeholder engagement strategy, which was supplemented by leveraging ongoing stakeholder relationships and convenings hosted by the RP and partners. (See appendix for READI 2.0 Stakeholder engagement process planning document.)

1. READI 2.0 Steering Committee
2. Stakeholder workshops (open to the public)
3. Municipal partner feedback loops
4. Call for project ideas through workshops and municipal/county partners
5. Anchor/nonprofit partner feedback

A READI 2.0 steering committee provided oversight of the engagement process, reviewed the stakeholder engagement results, and informed the region's application to the IEDC. The READI steering committee included all members of the RDA, LEDO partners, and anchor institution representatives drawn from the RP's other councils and committees. The group met three times formally: in September 2023, with the IEDC in December 2023 during its site visit, and again in January 2024. (See Appendix 2.0 for committee roster and affiliation.)

During fall 2023 and into 2024, RP staff conducted input loops with our municipal partners and stakeholders. These meetings provided an opportunity for municipal partners to share their regional vision, local or county strategies, and highlight any specific projects or investments they anticipated coming online in the short and medium term. The RP co-hosted six workshops across the region during November 2024 with LEDO partners. The workshops covered high level READI 2.0 guidance. Most important, participants provided direct feedback on key strategies they hoped to see come to life in the next 5-7 years. Participants used a "gallery walk" facilitation method to read and prioritize top choice themes or even specific project ideas. In just 30 days, over 200 stakeholders dedicated 2.5 hours to specific workshops to engage with the READI 2.0 planning process. From there, workshop attendees were invited to submit project ideas to the region. Concurrently, RP staff and RDA board members held one-on-one meetings and conversations with partners including higher education institutions, childcare coalition leaders, foundation CEOs, developers, and senior leadership staff educational partners. During ongoing council convenings and RP board meetings, leading stakeholders provided input on priority projects, investment alignment opportunities, and needs assessment. The region did not encounter any major challenges to the planning process. Our three counties have worked together as a region for a decade.



### How do you plan to maintain stakeholder engagement?

As the administrator for the RDA, the RP has a governance and operational structure developed by the RDA and LEDOs. This structure enables the key stakeholders to effectively align their economic development efforts. Representatives from the LEDOs, local government, private industry, and other key stakeholders, along with the committee chairs representing the five strategic drivers, govern the RP as it works to execute the strategies outlined in our READI 1.0 Smart, Connected, Communities 2030 plan. The RP has a robust committee structure that facilitates ongoing regional collaboration and functions to ensure efficient and impactful use of resources and rapid identification of challenges and the coordination of solutions. This structure includes a Board of Directors, including cross-county representatives of the economic development, industry, and philanthropic communities, and a robust suite of advisory councils and committees that provide targeted support to advance impact in areas like higher education, diversity, equity and inclusion, business and talent attraction, entrepreneurship, and innovation. Meetings with key stakeholders are held on a frequent basis, with “convening” being one of the RP’s core capabilities. Through our regional discovery trips to peer regions completed in late 2023, we are adopting additional best practices in 2024 and beyond that create greater sharing across a broader network of the opportunities and insights into which the abovementioned leaders are investing their time and attention. Our full lists of board, committee, and council members are included in the Appendix 2.0 Stakeholder List.

### How will the organization sustain itself?

The RDA is a corporate and political body that was formed in 2015 to apply for and then distribute the \$42M RCI funding to spur investment in quality-of-life projects for Elkhart, Marshall, and St. Joseph counties and the municipalities within the region. A five-member board experienced in transportation, regional economic development, business, and finance was appointed by the Mayors and Commissioners of the member counties and the RP was engaged to administer the work on behalf of the board. In terms of READI grant execution, the RDA is responsible for fiduciary governance, project vetting and approval, and distribution of funds. The RP is the lead in administering strategy and facilitating connections and communications across the region. The RDA’s sole source of funding comes from administrative fees through programs like RCI and READI, with much of those fees going to the RP. The RP has a diverse mix of income streams, including contributions from all three counties, six cities, nine higher education institutions, all three county community foundations, local private foundations, utility partners, and private sector companies. These funds are part of the Regional Opportunities Alliance, with four-year commitments from investment partners recently renewed in 2022. The RP also has grant administration responsibilities for which it receives fees for services and special project awards from other public agencies.

### 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.

Just as we hoped, burgeoning behavior is happening in our region that we saw at full capacity in other more developed and resourced regions we visited across the Midwest during our discovery trips last fall: the private sector is exhibiting more confidence in the regional economy and more appetite to invest in regional development. Three signature cultural amenity READI 1.0 projects - Wellfield Botanic Gardens, Morris Performing Arts Center, and Potawatomi Zoo - all include endowment building as part of their private match



capital campaigns, ensuring long term sustainability. We successfully invested in the built environment to support programming and continued activation of spaces. Examples of this include the Larry and Judy Garatoni Center for Advanced Manufacturing at Ivy Tech in Elkhart County. Through LIFT and other investments, the structure and equipment were secured. Through Ivy Tech's exceptional ability to deliver relevant training courses, the facility has been humming with program delivery to regional employers like Lippert Components since its opening. Further proof of this includes the RCI investment in the Beacon Aquatics Center on the river in Elkhart. This is a "one of one" facility in our region, with a larger than Olympic size pool and proximity to parking and downtown amenities, making it primed to host national competitions. The center is a public-private partnership with annual attendance of over 84,000, 90% of event attendees coming from outside Elkhart, generating 39,000 room nights per year and over \$7M in economic activity created.

# 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 table below reflects projected KPI outcomes using past 10-year trend lines to forecast out 10 years. Full details are in the KPI Appendix document. The \$2B investment in quality of place initiatives will lead to: 1. Job creation of high wage, high demand jobs in economies of the future. The region anticipates adding 23,000 jobs by 2027 and 48,000 jobs by 2032. Given that almost every CICP commissioned TEconomy report produced for IEDC in the last two years for its targeted industries denotes jobs within manufacturing NAICS codes, we assume that a substantial number of our current jobs are represented within these targeted industries. Even if only a fifth of the region's projected jobs in 10 years fall within the manufacturing sector, our plan positions us effectively to contribute to the state's employment goal. 2. Quality of life improvement and prosperity: improving indicators for residents, including increased satisfaction with their community, greater access to amenities, and overall improvements in their living environment. Our 2022 PCPI of \$57,073 represents 99% of the state's 2022 figure. In 2025, our baseline projected PCPI will overtake the state's projected baseline. Further, starting in 2025 our baseline PCPI annual numerical increase will consistently exceed the state's goal of \$2,750. 3. Vibrant neighborhood development: substantial developments in the real estate sector, including higher commercial occupancy rates, increased commercial rents, and improved availability of affordable housing. This will transform the local landscape and attract further investment in the region's built environment.

**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	525,437	531,854	538,350
Total Employment	266,178	289,554	314,982
Per capita income	\$ 57,073.00	\$ 70,881.00	\$ 88,030.00
Educational attainment	90,118	99,594	110,066
Total new housing units	217,711	220,473	223,270
New rental housing units	58,852	62,202	65,743
New owner-occupied housing units	137,071	137,302	137,534
Percentage of affordable housing units	49.72	44.58	39.97





**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.**

Elkhart County's long-term goal is to change the kindergarten readiness trajectory. Past rates show only 40-45% readiness rates. In 2022, five nonprofit partners, including the Community Foundation of Elkhart County, kicked off "Building Strong Brains" to drive that rate upward over the next decade. Increasing provider capacity and quality is a key driver of this campaign. In St. Joseph County, the coalition's focus on quality improvement will continue with national, state, and regional initiatives to support mental health/SEL, science of reading, curricular trainings, and coaching for childcare providers while increasing quality ratings with Pathways to Quality. The proportion of 3- and 4-star providers should grow. Over \$1.1M of recent grants to the Marshall County United Way from Employer Sponsored Child-Care Funds and Early Learning Indiana will add 71 infant/toddler seats and will continue to support its convening power to assist in provider financial sustainability (and therefore increase access) long term.

**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**

UND will substantially grow its ~\$200M annual research budget over the next 10 years. The IDEA Center expects a commensurate increase in the number of high potential startups it launches. The IDEA Center has helped its startups secure over \$11M in SBIR/STTR grants since 2020. With increased support, UND believes its startups will secure far more than the \$11M received to date. In 2023 a venture fund called the 1842 Fund was raised to invest in and support startups from UND and the region. This \$35M fund will likely have a second, larger raise within the next 10 years. The READI 1.0 funded \$30M scope SBE Manufacturing Readiness Accelerator will provide local industries pursuing advanced automation initiatives with access to advisory services and technology to produce flexible automation cells. A further \$1.2M in three READI 1.0 program grantees will provide support into several entrepreneurship ecosystem partners.

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

We are a region rooted in higher education, manufacturing, and entrepreneurship. With advancements in technology and data collection, we are able to begin tracking regional retention of students from our nine higher education institutions, with many of the nine setting goals to both recruit and retain regional students. We track inbound funds including MRGs, NSF, EDA, SBIR/STTR, and venture capital. Additionally, our population age, cost of housing, commuting time, labor force participation, and digital accessibility are all tracked metrics. We will be bringing a regional indicators dashboard online by the end of CY 2024 that includes a matrix of metrics, with comparative analysis against our peer regions.



## General Information

<b>Legal Name as registered with Indiana Secretary of State (Region Name)</b>	Northern Indiana Regional Development Authority
<b>Business Structure</b>	Municipal Corporation
<b>List counties within your region</b>	Marshall, St. Joseph, Elkhart
<b>Website</b>	Southbendelkhart.org

## Primary Contact Information

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