

Introduction

The South Central Indiana Talent Region has long been a manufacturing powerhouse. Since the early 20th century, the region has been producing engines and other components for transportation and mobility applications. In our region today, 19,000 people (or 1 in 5 jobs) are employed in occupations that design, test, and build internal combustion engines (ICE) and related components. In fact, Columbus was recognized as the #1 Manufacturing Hub among all U.S. small metros by the Business Facilities Magazine in 2022. Our strength in manufacturing has led to growth and prosperity for the region. Two of our three counties are growing rapidly, with Jackson County being the fastest growing rural county in the state.

Once considered state-of-the-art, the manufacturing of internal combustion engines is undergoing radical transformation and will soon be the technology of the past, replaced by electric, fuel cell, and other next generation mobility technologies. To ensure that our region continues to prosper, we must embrace innovation and change to remodel our economy around these technologies. Key employers in our region, including Cummins, LHP Engineering, and Forvia, are leading the way through heavy investment in research and development. Our region's priority is to support their innovation efforts. This shift in mobility technologies will require transformation of our workforce. Our region is known for its industrial and mechanical engineers. To support needed innovation, we must attract more computer and electrical engineers. Ultimately, much of our current automotive related workforce will need retraining to support the manufacturing of these new technologies. Educational attainment in the region, although on the rise, still lags the state. Building off successful programs in READI 1.0, regional partners are dedicated to increasing the attainment of certificates and college degrees, especially in STEM-related fields, while also expanding access to advanced training for incumbent workers. To attract and retain skilled workers, we must also invest in housing. Since 2010, our region's population has increased by 6.6%; meanwhile, housing growth has stagnated. Further population growth will be limited unless we can expand housing in the region.

Finally, we recognize that attracting workers is not practical without continual investments in quality of place. Our communities have invested heavily in quality of place offerings, yet there are still significant opportunities to make the region even more competitive through downtown development, public space investments, and engaging recreation amenities.

The Vision

POWERFUL. PROSPEROUS. RESILIENT. The vision of the South Central Indiana Talent Region is tied to three interdependent guiding principles: powerful technologies, prosperous communities, and a resilient future. Straightforward and ambitious, the guiding principles are intended to inspire and cultivate collaboration among the companies and communities in the region who support each other in conducting work to execute this vision. This vision aligns with the legacy of Cummins Inc., a global power leader headquartered in the region who has had a profound effect on south central Indiana through innovation, education, and quality of place investment for over 100 years.

Regional Assets

The South Central Indiana Talent Region has demonstrated we have the capacity to dream big, leverage capital, implement projects, and work together to better the region. With this proven capacity, we are prepared to partner with the State of Indiana to take on the collective challenges facing the region. Here are key examples of how our collaborative spirit has created key regional assets.

Our Region Rallies Around Education

Since the early 2000's, the AirPark Columbus College Campus, home to Ivy Tech, IU Columbus, and Purdue, has grown from four degree-granting programs to over 70 programmatic options – all of which are designed to align with workforce needs within our regions. The three institutions share the Columbus Learning Center and the Advanced Manufacturing Center of Excellence, where they collaborate on student success and employment strategies.

Our Region Cultivates Talent

In 2019, we were designated as a 21st Century Talent Region. Additionally, the region was named a National Talent Hub by Lumina Foundation in 2018. This designation demonstrates the capacity of cross-sector partnerships to significantly increase the number of residents with highquality, postsecondary credentials.

Our Region Shares Economic Prosperity

For over 20 years, the local economic development organizations of Bartholomew, Jackson, and Jennings County have worked together to promote the region through foreign direct investment trade missions, site selector outreach, and shared business prospecting.

Our Region Is A Powerhouse For Industry

Over 31% of our region's employment is in manufacturing, four times the national average. Cummins has been an integral partner in providing approximately 8,000 jobs to our communities. Foreign direct investment trade missions led by local economic development organizations have introduced 52 foreign owned enterprises to the region, employing more than 14,000 people in South Central Indiana.

Regional Goals

1 Innovation & Entrepreneurship

Position the region's economy for a resilient future by advancing innovation and entrepreneurship around the region's existing powerful technologies and future opportunities.

2 Education & Workforce Development

Build and retain a resilient workforce and enhance regional prosperity by expanding both local and regional access to degree and certificate programs directly linked to well-paying jobs in the region, while providing needed support services such as childcare to ensure an available workforce.

3 Housing

Grow the region's population through investments that stimulate and sustain housing in the region.

4 Quality of Place

Encourage accelerated population growth and retention through intentional investment in high-impact quality of place initiatives.

Benchmark Communities

We chose to compare our region to the other top-ranked small metros for manufacturing identified by Business Facilities Magazine in 2022. Columbus ranked first, followed by Sheboygan (WI), Lima (OH), and Decatur (IL). Of these peers, Sheboygan has the closest parallels to the region in terms of demographics and manufacturing legacy. The peer evaluation we conducted offered key lessons, the

most important of which was that successful manufacturing hubs have diversified economies that include multiple manufacturing sectors – and seek employment opportunities beyond manufacturing.

Regional Collaboration

With the announcement of READI 1.0, our region held meetings with elected officials, major employers, and representatives from economic development organizations, community foundations, and other non-profits. To advance the work of the South Central Indiana Talent Region, a 12-member Steering Committee was formed.

The engagement process for the READI 1.0 regional development plan included broad outreach including planning workshops in each county, a public website, stakeholder meetings and a community survey. Following the outreach phase, a regional workshop brought 70 key leaders together to review key finding and true build consensus on the region's priorities.

Since the READI 1.0 plan was completed, our region has continued planning around our goals. Bartholomew County has worked on housing by adopting the CityView master plan for a mixed use healthcare and residential development of nearly 1,000 new housing units. Jackson County worked with the Brookings Institution to develop a plan for significant housing investment for the Burkhart Opportunity Zone. Jennings County also has advanced planning, including the adoption of a new North Vernon Comprehensive Plan.

With the launch of READI 2.0, we evaluated our goals and concluded they remained valid, but the strategies needed more detail. Our team updated the implementation strategies by incorporating key recommendations from recent plans, and by gathering additional input from key stakeholder groups. Concurrent with updating our strategies, we have built a project pipeline report which identifies key initiatives each community is working on to advance regional goals. In evaluating our project pipeline, we have identified that our region has the capacity to match and execute priority projects to leverage \$56 million in funding. Our pipeline report has also identified a series of aspirational projects that are also high-impact and high-priority, but where more time and money is needed to move them forward. With additional support from IEDC up to \$75 million in READI 2.0 dollars, our region could make a more significant impact and accomplish so much more.

Regional Outcomes

1 Innovation Will Multiply

We would like to see an increase in per capita income, new business startups, and private investment across the region, with an emphasis on elevating rural counties.

2 Education Will Increase And Equalize Across The Region

We would like to see educational attainment and childcare capacity increase across the region, as well as greater attainment of STEM certificates and degrees.

3 Housing Will Become Available

We would like to see an increase in new single-family and rental housing units in the region, with an emphasis on housing growth in rural areas.

4 We Will Use Quality Of Place To Attract Population

Two of our three counties are already growing. To accelerate regional growth, we would like to see Jennings County's population stabilize by 2027 and show growth from 2027 to 2032.

Part II: READI 1.0 Evaluation

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

Our region has a legacy of collaboration that existed long before READI 1.0. For over twenty years, the South Central Indiana Talent Region has worked together to improve educational and employment opportunities in Bartholomew, Jackson, and Jennings Counties. With READI 1.0 funding, the region seized the opportunity to enhance collaboration by developing a regional plan. As planning for READI 2.0 began, we looked back, and were very pleased with the results. Consequently, we remain committed to the same four key priorities identified in READI 1.0 as we advance to READI 2.0. The success of READI 1.0 can be attributed to engagement with community leaders and stakeholders across the region. We held workshops in each county, and then facilitated regional meetings to refine South Central Indiana's needs and priority strategies. Over 450 voices were heard throughout the planning process. Our strategies in READI 1.0 were then vetted by smaller stakeholder groups with specific expertise, including downtown leaders, county commissioners, chambers of commerce, local economic development organizations, tourism bureaus, and school superintendents. Projects were identified through the planning process, with stakeholders proposing improvements to support shared objectives. Once received, each project was carefully vetted to assess regional impact, shovel ready status, and feasibility of utilization for ARPA dollars. The steering committee then convened to prioritize projects with the biggest impact in the three-county region. The South Central Indiana Talent Region was awarded \$30M, and 12 of our 14 projects are under construction (or finished). Progress has also been made on projects outside of READI 1.0, as unfunded projects such as the planned Columbus downtown housing project are already complete. The first iteration of the READI initiative generated \$82M in public investment and \$102M in private investment to date. Projects moved quickly, with funds obligated well ahead of schedule and with \$9M spent to date. Many projects are already done, or are nearing completion, and have demonstrated expected results. Notably, the healthcare facilities within the innovative NexusPark project in Bartholomew County are now open, and the fieldhouse and other elements will open soon. This project featured the redevelopment and adaptive reuse of the mostly vacant 400,000 square foot Fair Oaks Mall into a health, wellness, sports, and fitness facility. In partnership with Vincennes University, the Jackson County Learning Center saw the expansion of technical programming. The first two classes of trainees have graduated, supporting the needs of incumbent workers and local employers. In tandem with investments made at the Propeller Makerspace, over \$5M in private venture capital was deployed, helping fund 15 startups. Finally, as another example, the Town of Edinburgh successfully extended Main Street one-half mile to the town's southern border at County Road 900 North. This infrastructure investment enhances connectivity and supports industrial development in the area.

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

Our region learned three main lessons from the READI 1.0 planning process. First, we are confident that the goals we established for READI 1.0 were on point, and stakeholders confirmed that they are still relevant; however, some strategies lacked depth. For READI 2.0, we have focused on strategy development. By outlining complete strategies, we will be better equipped to establish a regional project pipeline and select quality regional projects that support our desired outcomes. To better detail these strategies, we have conducted

additional community planning and stakeholder outreach related to key topics, gathering regional experts to refine our education, childcare, and innovation strategies. Second, we needed to establish a pipeline of high-impact regional projects. When information about READI 1.0 was released, it was apparent that the City of Columbus already had many key projects planned out but awaiting funds. This positioned the city to capitalize on any number of funding opportunities. When READI 1.0 was announced, the city was able to strategically select projects best suited for the funding. In contrast, Jackson and Jennings County leaders had to first conduct preliminary scoping studies to transform concepts into tangible projects. Acknowledging this disparity, community leaders recognized the importance of building and supporting a pipeline of projects to address regional priorities. Great progress has been made to develop this project pipeline. The City of North Vernon has adopted a new comprehensive plan, trails plan, downtown redevelopment plan, and feasibility study for a new community sports and wellness facility. The City of Seymour worked with the Brookings Institution and LISC to cast a bold vision for equitable community growth. The City of Columbus has continued to plan as well, adopting the City View plan for a new 690-acre mixed-use healthcare, commercial, and residential district to attract the construction of 965 new homes. The region's leaders have communicated with one another, lending support throughout this process. This work has equipped the region with a robust set of priority projects that are fully scoped and ready to move forward when funding is available, whatever the source. Finally, we expected more private investment during READI 1.0. While the region has exceeded the IEDC's goals for public and private investment ratios, the numbers fall short of what we expected to achieve. In part, this was due to ARPA restrictions and a smaller pool of available READI 1.0 funds. That is, fewer grant dollars resulted in fewer projects to attract private match. Even so, we were proud of the achievements realized with READI 1.0, and we are eager to leverage our READI 1.0 experience to deploy bold, innovative READI 2.0 strategies.

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.

Our regional organization is the Southern Indiana Housing Community Development Corporation (SIHCDC). The SIHCDC exists to promote the general and public welfare of the residents of 11 Indiana counties, including Bartholomew, Jackson, and Jennings Counties. The corporation seeks to do this by improving the quantity and quality of housing in the communities it serves, and by assisting in the development of employment opportunities. The SIHCDC contracts with Administrative Resources association (ARa) for staffing. ARa has served communities in South Central Indiana, and beyond, for fifty years. The mission of the ARa is to improve the quality of life of its member communities by its proactive approach to the development and implementation of community and economic development projects. Together, the SIHCDC and ARa have the expertise needed to lead the region through the planning and implementation of READI 2.0. These organizations have a combined staff of six individuals, and both are governed by a board of directors, which provides oversight. Both the SIHCDC and the ARa routinely provide grant administration, planning assistance, loan program management, housing services, labor standards services, and more to communities in the region. They also have extensive experience administering state and federal funds. In the first round of the READI initiative, the SIHCDC performed well, helping drive the success of the region. Both organizations are trusted partners with the credibility to promote success in the South Central region. Our region acknowledges that it is unusual for a community development corporation to provide the organizational capacity for the region. However, we do not foresee any adverse effects, nor did any problems arise in READI 1.0 with this

approach. Consequently, we feel comfortable continuing to use SIHCDC as the lead organization for the region. The biggest challenge facing the SIHCDC is that they do not have a dedicated revenue stream to support ongoing efforts to lead, convene, and plan on behalf of the region. Administrative expenses for regional initiatives were covered through READI 1.0. There is not a separate funding stream for this effort. These expenses are currently handled as overhead for the organization, with no staff members solely dedicated to regional programming. To sustain the regional function of the SIHCDC in South Central Indiana, a dedicated revenue stream is needed. This would allow the organization to place one or more staff members in a role centered on regionalism, and the pursuit of shared priorities. Alternatives to address this are being explored by the ARa, SIHCDC, and their respective board of directors.

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 | 156,193 (2022) |
| Total employment (U.S. Census Bureau) | 3,020,345 | 76,234 (2022) |
| Per capita income (Bureau of Economic Analysis) | \$ 51,645.95 | \$ 56,001.00 |
| Total population with bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau) | 1,253,299 | 28,055 (2022) |
| Total housing units (U.S. Census Bureau) | 2,911,562 | 66,118 (2022) |
| Total rental housing units (U.S. Census Bureau) | 680,964 | 16,498 (2022) |
| Total owner-occupied units (U.S. Census Bureau) | 1,097,622 | 44,310 (2022) |
| Number of new business start-ups (Small Business Development Center) | 150,067 | 1,343 (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.

The primary childcare challenge facing our region is lack of capacity. According to Brighter Futures Indiana, approximately 7,571 children under the age of six may need care. Licensed capacity can only support 4,467 of those children, or 59%. Half of the region's need for childcare is in Bartholomew County, while the other half is split between Jackson and Jennings Counties. Our region also struggles to balance the affordability of childcare with fair wages. Childcare providers tell us that they could add more seats if they could attract more workers. Due to low wages, workers are discouraged from pursuing childcare credentials, or maintaining a career in childcare, since doing so threatens their financial stability. Providers tell us that families can't afford higher rates, which suppresses wages and limits capacity. It's a vicious cycle in which everyone ends up dissatisfied. The region is working with Lilly Endowment, Inc. GIFT VIII Planning Grant to identify shared strategies to offset fixed operating costs so providers can afford to pay childcare workers more. Finally, there is a need for more Spanish-speaking providers in our region. In recent years, there has been an influx of Hispanic/Latino families as workers move here in pursuit of job opportunities. Consequently, there is an increased demand for Spanish-speaking staff and language programming at childcare centers. Today, we

need providers to serve a total of 2,500 Hispanic/Latino students. This number is growing daily.

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 economy has traditionally been driven by the design and manufacturing of internal combustion engines. and related components. This is both a strength and a weakness as gas engines are in the early stages of being phased out in favor of alternative mobility technologies. To state the challenge succinctly, approximately 19,000 jobs (1 in 5) in the region are directly tied to engine manufacturing, so we must evolve or else face catastrophic disruption. To meet the challenge, our regional strategy includes supporting entrepreneurship, developing shovel-ready sites for business growth, recruiting foreign direct investment, and leveraging existing engineering strengths to promote investments in next generation mobility. Companies like Cummins, Aisin, Toyota Material Handling, Forvia, and LHP Engineering are leading the way in this transition, with the latter two proposing to jointly create a new non-profit Vehicle Innovation Center to serve statewide and national interests. The Indiana Small Business Development Center (SBDC) reports 3,648 new business applications in our region since 2020. To increase the pace of business start-ups and diversify our economy, our region will strengthen the work of Catalyst Columbus, Propeller, SCORE South Central Indiana, Indiana SBDC, and the minority-focused TIME program, all of which support small business development. The region is also attracting investment in diversified sectors, like food manufacturing, pharmaceutical production, and others. To welcome more foreign and domestic investment, the region will build infrastructure for shovel-ready sites, leverage relationships with 52 foreign firms in the region, and enhance collaborations between organizations.

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

TOP EMPLOYERS *Cummins Inc., Bartholomew & Jackson Counties – 8,500+ FTE (2023)*Aisin USA, Jackson County – 2,150+ FTE (2023)*Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporation, Bartholomew County – 2,100+ FTE (2023)*Toyota Material Handling, Inc., Bartholomew County – 1,950+ FTE (2023)*NTN Driveshaft Inc., Bartholomew County – 1,900+ FTE (2023)*Valeo North America, Inc., Jackson County – 1,770+ FTE (2023)*Columbus Regional Health, Bartholomew County – 1,700+ FTE (2023)*Schneck Medical Center, Jackson County – 1,110+ FTE (2023)*Wal-Mart Distribution Center, Jackson County – 1,000+ FTE (2023)*Dorel Juvenile Group, Bartholomew County – 880+ FTE (2023) CIVIC INSTITUTIONS (HIGHER EDUCATION)*AirPark Columbus (Indiana University Columbus, Purdue University Columbus, Ivy Tech) – Columbus*Vincennes University – Seymour*Ivy Tech – Seymour*Community Education Coalition (CEC) – Regional*Jackson County Education Coalition – Seymour OTHER CIVIC INSTITUTIONS*Administrative Resources Association (ARa) – Regional*Southern Indiana Housing and Community Development Corporation (SIHCDC)*Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce*Jackson County Chamber*Greater Columbus Economic Development Corporation*Jackson County Industrial Development Corporation*Jennings County Economic Development Corporation*Heritage Fund – The Community Foundation of Bartholomew County*Community Foundation of Jackson County*Jennings County Community Foundation*The Cummins Foundation*Su Casa*Sans Souci*Boys and Girls Club*Landmark Columbus Foundation*Thrive Alliance

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.

RURAL AND DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES*Rural: Jennings County*Rural Mixed: Jackson County*Disadvantaged: Jackson CountyA key goal for our region is to invest in rural areas to bring income and education levels on par with our urban areas. Half of our region's population is rural or rural mixed. To achieve our goal, we expect 50% of our investment to go to our rural counties.Jackson County has areas of chronic distress, such as the Burkhart Opportunity Zone. This district was the primary focus of the 2023 Brookings-LISC Study for Seymour. It includes a large Hispanic/Latino population and lower than typical income levels. The recommendations of the Brookings-LISC Study have been incorporated into the region's strategies and are a focus of this application. Potential investments to serve this area include an immigrant welcome center and additional housing.The Burkhart Opportunity Zone may be the only area that technically qualifies as an area of chronic distress, but there are multiple other areas in the region that have experienced distress. A key example is the Country Squire Lakes neighborhood in Jennings County. This unincorporated district of approximately 3,021 residents has a median household income of \$50,078, well under the rest of Jennings County (\$66,892) and the state (\$67,173). Our READI 1.0 plan featured a project to address blight and improve infrastructure, resulting in renewed private investment in the district. With READI 2.0, the region hopes to continue investment in this underserved area.

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?

Our region observed trends from 2010 to 2020, and 2020 to 2022. These timeframes capture some changes from READI 1.0; however, several projects are incomplete, and their effects have yet to be felt. Key observations include:OUR REGION IS GROWING. Jackson County, home to Seymour, is the fastest growing rural county in Indiana. Since 2010, the county's population has increased by 9.6%. In the same period, Bartholomew County, home to Columbus, grew by over 7%. As a whole, the South Central Indiana Talent Region has grown by 6.6% since 2010.OUR REGION IS BECOMING MORE DIVERSE. Between 2020 and 2022, the Hispanic population in the region grew by over 11%. Jackson County experienced the largest increase in its Hispanic/Latino population with an increase of 17.1%, or over 500 people. This follows a 10.2% decline between 2010 and 2020. HOUSING DEVELOPMENT HAS STAGNATED. From 2020 to 2022, the total number of units in the region stayed approximately the same, even with a growing population. While READI 1.0 funding has been used to support infrastructure, new housing development fails to keep up with demand.EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IS ON THE RISE. Because of investments such as the EcO Network, our region has seen an increase in educational attainment. From 2010 to 2020, the population over 25 with a bachelor's degree or higher increased by 43.9%. Even so, our region continues to lag behind the state. Only 26.3% of residents hold at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 28.2% for Indiana.

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: Sheboygan, WI

| Key performance indicators | Region | Peer Community |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| Total population | 156,193 (2022) | 117,741 (2022) |
| Total employment | 76,234 (2022) | 61,062 (2022) |
| Per capita income | \$ 56,001.00 | \$ 60,359.00 |
| Total population with bachelor's degree or higher | 28,055 (2022) | 21,885 (2022) |
| Total housing units | 66,118 (2022) | 52,375 (2022) |
| Total rental housing units | 16,498 (2022) | 13,883 (2022) |
| Total owner-occupied housing units | 44,310 (2022) | 35,152 (2022) |

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 compare our region to the top-ranked small metros for manufacturing identified by Business Facilities Magazine in 2022. Our region is currently ranked first, followed by greater Sheboygan (WI), Lima (OH), and Decatur (IL). This list reflects mostly Midwestern economies centered around manufacturing and offered key lessons for South Central Indiana. Of these peers, Sheboygan has the closest parallels to the region. While our region's population is 33% larger, the population of the City of Columbus (50,896) and the City of Sheboygan (49,805) are similar. Both are also within a 70-minute drive of a larger metro – Milwaukee for Sheboygan, and Indianapolis or Louisville for our region. Both areas also record 31%+ manufacturing employment. Of the leading small metros identified by Business Facilities Magazine, the South Central Talent Region has the second largest median household income at \$67,614, behind only Napa, California. Per capita income for our region at \$56,001 is among the highest compared to other identified metros, although Sheboygan and Decatur lead on this metric. The economies of both top ranked manufacturing hubs have evolved over time. Historically known for furniture manufacturing, Sheboygan's top employer is now Kohler, best known for its plumbing products. In addition to Kohler, Sheboygan is home to other manufacturers that make a range of products, from cheese to plastics, each of which employs over 1,000 people. Sheboygan has also diversified their top employers beyond manufacturing, with over 1,000 employed at ACUITY, an insurance provider. The key lesson learned from this evaluation is that successful manufacturing hubs have diversified economies that include multiple manufacturing sectors – and seek employment opportunities beyond manufacturing. What is not evident from our peer evaluation is strong leadership from other regions in transitioning to new economic realities, nor an aligned strategy to support the changes needed to advance innovation and develop the workforce. The South Central Indiana Talent Region is ahead of its peers in this

area, although much work remains. Finally, this data evaluation would be incomplete if the differences in metrics within the region were not acknowledged. Addressing these disparities is one of the region's key challenges and is a key factor limiting overall regional success. Consider the differences in per capita income between our three counties. Bartholomew County leads with \$61,920, while Jackson and Jennings County come in at \$49,379 and \$49,178, respectively. Median household income shows the same trend, with Jackson and Jennings County lagging. Educational attainment is a key factor in this disparity. Over 70% of the region's college graduates are in Bartholomew County, even though the county is home to less than half of the region's population. Closing these gaps will be necessary for the region to advance.

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 faces the following barriers to growth: a transitioning economy, talent development, housing, infrastructure, childcare, and quality of place.

A TRANSITIONING ECONOMY: As the nation transitions to alternative energy vehicles, our region is in danger of being left behind. With one in five of our region's jobs tied to internal combustion engines and related components, our current automotive manufacturing base must undergo radical change at the threat of disinvestment and distress. Our vision is to support innovation around the total transformation of our economy toward next generation mobility.

TALENT AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: Talent attraction, retention, and development are barriers to regional growth. To support the transition to new mobility technologies, we not only need the mechanical engineers we've been attracting for generations, but we need a broader range of STEM careers. Our region must attract and develop a workforce of electrical engineers, robotics engineers, precision manufacturing specialists, and many more jobs like these. To support this transition to high-tech jobs, we must increase educational attainment across the region. We must also develop viable pathways to these careers for individuals already in the workforce.

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT: New home construction is needed to support growth. While our region's population has grown since the first round of the READI initiative, new housing development has failed to keep pace with demand. Rural areas, including Jennings and Jackson Counties, have seen very little housing investment. Without a full range of housing products to choose from, our region will struggle to attract new talent. Our region needs bold investments in housing to sustain our current success.

INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT: Our region needs infrastructure investment to support job growth and housing expansion. There are few developable sites in the region with adequate infrastructure. As we invest in infrastructure and housing, it's important to focus on redevelopment and blight elimination whenever possible. By focusing on underinvested neighborhoods and communities, we can revitalize these areas and ensure widespread prosperity in South Central Indiana.

CHILDCARE CHALLENGES: More seats are needed in regional childcare centers to support growth. Working families may choose to live elsewhere if the childcare services they need are unavailable or unaffordable. As discussed previously, there is also a need to increase wages for childcare workers, to attract qualified employees and expand capacity. Additionally, with the growing Hispanic/Latino population in the region, there is demand for Spanish-speaking staff and language programming in regional childcare facilities.

QUALITY OF PLACE: To support growth, we must work to enhance character, expand cultural and recreational amenities, and provide other unique offerings in our communities. Cities and towns in our region should be beautiful, inviting places to live in and visit, with ample places to explore, gather, and relax. Our parks, trails, downtowns, and streetscapes should reflect a commitment to thriving communities

and vibrancy.

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

For the second round of the READI initiative, our region is focusing on four priorities related to the economy, talent, housing, and quality of place.

TRANSITION OUR ECONOMY: While our region has long been a powerhouse in manufacturing internal combustion engines, that economy is declining. On August 5, 2021, President Biden signed an executive order setting a national goal that half of all cars and trucks sold in the U.S. should be zero-emission vehicles by 2030. These vehicles will include pure electric vehicles, hybrids, and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles. All major automakers have announced plans to shift from internal combustion engines to electric or other power solutions. This shift will not only impact engine manufacturing, but all the associated exhaust and mechanical parts manufactured in our region. With one in five of the region's jobs related to mobility, we need to support innovation and entrepreneurship around next generation mobility. We can lead the transition to more sustainable transportation in Indiana, while promoting economic growth and development.

BUILD A HIGH-TECH TALENT PIPELINE: The shift to electric as well as autonomous vehicles means the region needs more electrical and software engineers on top of the talented mechanical and industrial engineers who already call the region home. Talent in advanced manufacturing needs cultivating, specifically the skills to adapt to changing production environments. As such, our region must ensure the education system is recalibrated to rapidly support modern automotive engineering, electrical engineering, control systems, and cybersecurity. We must also ensure that graduates are connected to jobs in the region, so that we can retain the workers we educate here.

ADD HOUSING TO SUPPORT GROWTH: Across the region, new homes are not being built at the rate they were prior to 2000. Existing single-family homes and multi-family units are of mixed quality, and only 17 percent of the existing housing stock has been constructed in the past twenty years – approximately 10 percent lower than decades prior. The lack of supply will have a negative impact on population growth and talent attraction within the region if not addressed. In addition to developing new housing, our region must ensure that existing neighborhoods are attractive and desirable. We can accomplish this by tackling blight and abandonment.

ENHANCE LOCAL QUALITY OF PLACE: To attract talent, our region must have prosperous communities that are defined by lively, activated, and inclusive public spaces. Our region should be inviting, with defined character, and enhanced connectivity. Place-based investment was a priority of the READI 1.0 initiative and continues to be a priority for READI 2.0. In READI 1.0, our region was very intentional about selecting projects that would build off one another and catalyze change. Projects included riverfront redevelopment in Columbus, the NexusPark health, wellness, sports, and fitness facility, also in Columbus, and the Quarry Adventure Park in North Vernon. As we continue to grow, our region must expand existing quality of place amenities and develop new amenities with broad appeal and regional impact.

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>INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP Position the region's economy for a resilient future by advancing innovation and entrepreneurship around the region's existing powerful technologies and future opportunities.</p> | <p>INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP STRATEGIES To ensure a resilient future, we must transform our regional economy. By leveraging the ongoing transition away from internal combustion engines, our region can embrace innovation in manufacturing and become a leader in next generation mobility. At the same time, we can diversify our economy, and develop a healthy employment ecosystem with opportunities in different industries, sectors, and firms. Supporting strategies include:</p> <p>PROMOTE INVESTMENTS IN NEXT GENERATION MOBILITY. We will support research, development, testing, and certification of new mobility technologies to transition away from an economy focused on internal combustion engines. A key component of this strategy is creating a non-profit Vehicle Innovation Center to promote the development of next generation mobility technologies and encourage collaboration among local businesses and entrepreneurs.</p> <p>ATTRACT FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT. We will continue to promote investment in existing foreign-owned companies in the region and promote new foreign direct investment.</p> <p>SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESSES. We will diversify the region's economy by supporting small business growth with entrepreneurial support programming. Initiatives will include promoting innovation and entrepreneurship through the Catalyst program offered through the Columbus Chamber of Commerce. We will also continue to provide small business coaching through the SCORE South Central Indiana program.</p> <p>DEVELOP SHOVEL-READY SITES. We will develop infrastructure and buildings to provide expedited and shovel-ready employer sites. These sites are essential to be able to accommodate growth associated with strategies outlined in this plan.</p> <p>IMPROVE COLLABORATION. We will improve access to and collaboration among organizations</p> |



| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>promoting innovation and entrepreneurship.</p> |
| <p>EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT Build and retain a resilient workforce and enhance regional prosperity by expanding both local and regional access to degree and certificate programs directly linked to well-paying jobs in the region, while providing needed support services such as childcare to ensure an available workforce.</p> | <p>EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES To successfully transform the regional economy, we must build and retain a resilient workforce. From advanced manufacturing to healthcare, education is key. We will expand access to degree and certificate programs, connect graduates to well-paying regional jobs, and increase access to childcare for students and workers. Supporting strategies include:</p> <p>EXPAND STEM POST-SECONDARY CREDENTIALS AND DEGREES. We will support the AirPark Columbus College Campus and the Jackson County Learning Center as regional education hubs. Through communication and collaboration, we will ensure these institutions provide STEM education pathways that meet the workforce needs of the Advanced Manufacturing, Technology, and Healthcare industry sectors. Priorities include expanding engineering and technology degree programs, health sciences lab facilities, and student housing.</p> <p>EXPAND K-12 STEM AND CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION PATHWAYS. We will support K-12 STEM and Career and Technical Education Pathways, providing seamless transitions from high school to programs at the AirPark Columbus College Campus and Jackson County Learning Center. These programs will connect students to high demand, well-paying jobs with local employers.</p> <p>TRAIN EXISTING WORKERS FOR ADVANCEMENT. We will train existing workers for advancement, with a focus on marginalized populations in diversifying rural communities. This will involve expanding access to degree and certificate programs, and strengthening partnerships with local community colleges, universities, and employers to ensure that programs are directly related to local career opportunities.</p> <p>EXPAND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION. We will support childcare expansion strategies to create a more equitable and sustainable early learning ecosystem centered on families, caregivers, professionals, and children. Access to quality early childhood education is a vital supporting mechanism for economically successful communities. This system-wide approach will serve as a model for other regions. A key component of this strategy will be to implement recommendations from the recently commissioned, regional childcare study funded by Lilly Endowment.</p> |

HOUSING
Grow the region’s population through investments that stimulate and sustain housing in the region.

HOUSING STRATEGIES

New housing development fails to keep up with demand from current and future residents. To support population growth in the region, we must stimulate and sustain housing development at a range of types and prices. Supporting strategies include:

EXPAND HOUSING AVAILABILITY AND CHOICE.

We will support the development of a full range of housing products to address the severe lack of housing in the region. This includes the development of single-family (detached) housing, but also townhomes, duplexes, triplexes, small multi-family units and apartments. A mix of both rental and owner-occupied units are needed. In downtown districts, mixed-use, infill development will be encouraged to grow the supply of housing without extending infrastructure.

CREATE NEW HOUSING NEIGHBORHOODS.

Each county in the region has proposed bold housing investments. In North Vernon, a 60-unit mixed-use development is planned at the site of a devastating downtown fire. Both Columbus and Seymour have proposed large-scale housing investments, including City View and the Freeman Village housing projects. These investments will ultimately lead to over 2,000 new housing units in the region and will be critical to attracting and retaining residents. New neighborhoods will emphasize walkability and connectivity to jobs and services.

EXTEND INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT HOUSING.

The region lacks developable sites that are already served by adequate infrastructure. Water, sewer, storm, electric, street, and broadband investments are all needed to serve priority development sites in the region.

SUPPORT HOUSING AFFORDABILITY.

There is a need for housing designed for first-time homebuyers, and middle-income, essential workers in the region. To meet this need, we will support a mix of housing products at varying densities within our region.

COMPLETE NEIGHBORHOOD BLIGHT ABATEMENT.

We will pursue blight abatement to support reinvestment in neighborhoods, rural areas, and mixed-use districts.



QUALITY OF PLACE
Encourage accelerated population growth and retention through intentional investment in high-impact quality of place initiatives.

QUALITY OF PLACE STRATEGIES

Our region is committed to strategic investments in quality of place. By revitalizing our downtowns, eliminating blight, and expanding access to enriching amenities, we can create welcoming, vibrant communities that attract and retain residents. Supporting strategies include:

PROMOTE DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION.

We will encourage downtown revitalization through blight elimination, redevelopment, mixed-use development, and placemaking programs. In our historic downtowns, this means continuing façade and structural improvements, activating parks and public spaces, investing in arts and cultural amenities, and re-using or removing blighted structures.

CONNECT PEOPLE TO WORK AND PLAY.

A key recommendation of the Brookings-LISC Study for Seymour is to connect people to work and play, supporting communities with satisfying job opportunities and abundant recreation amenities. These connections include investments in parks, trails, and sidewalks in communities across the region.

BUILD VIBRANT ATTRACTIONS.

We will encourage the development of attractions that promote tourism and excite residents. Tourism in the region will be further supported through efforts to increase the supply of hotel rooms in the region and establish a regional conference/event center.

DEVELOP INDOOR RECREATION AMENITIES.

Too many of the region’s indoor recreation amenities have closed, leaving residents with few recreation options in inclement weather. To address this, we will prioritize the creation of new places for recreation and socializing, including the creation of new indoor recreation facilities.

WELCOME NEW IMMIGRANTS.

With so many new immigrants coming to the region for employment opportunities, more needs to be done to welcome immigrant families and incorporate them into the social and support structures of the community. A key component of this strategy is developing an immigrant welcome center in Seymour per the recommendations of the Brookings-LISC Study.

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 | \$ 586,000,000.00 |
| Requested READI 2.0 funds | \$ 75,000,000.00 |
| Anticipated matching funding sources | \$ 511,000,000.00 |
| Private funding | \$ 400,000,000.00 |
| Philanthropic | \$ 2,000,000.00 |
| Local Funding | \$ 105,000,000.00 |
| Other State funding | \$ 2,000,000.00 |
| Federal funding | \$ 2,000,000.00 |
| Percentage of anticipated READI funding towards rural and rural-mix communities | 50 |
| Percentage of anticipated READI funding towards disadvantaged communities | 25 |

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

INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACTION PLAN:

Our region's biggest need is advancing innovation in next generation mobility. To support this need, our region proposes to create the non-profit Vehicle Innovation Center. Led by Forvia and LHP Engineering, the center is intended to promote the development of next generation mobility technologies through collaboration between local businesses and entrepreneurs. The project would be located adjacent to Forvia's existing test track, allowing concept development and testing to all occur on-site. The Vehicle Innovation Center is made possible through a combination of public and private funds and is expected to launch in the last quarter of 2024.

Other proposed investments include infrastructure upgrades/expansion, shell buildings, and small business and entrepreneurship support. These investments will promote industrial development, while also meeting the needs of small businesses, allowing them to scale-up their operations over time.

Additionally, a joint innovation and entrepreneurship center to house local and regional programs is proposed in Bartholomew County. This would include SCORE South Central Indiana, Indiana Small Business Development Center, Catalyst (regional entrepreneurship coaching), TIME (minority small business development), Columbus Chamber, and the Greater Columbus Economic Development Corporation.

MILESTONES

Property needed for the Vehicle Innovation Center has been secured and matching funds are in place, allowing this project to move quickly to construction. Our goal is for the facility to open within two years of funding availability.

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN:

To address the need for workers with certificates and degrees in STEM fields, we intend to support initiatives at the AirPark Columbus College Campus. Central to this investment will be expanding engineering, technology, and health sciences lab facilities. We will also support efforts to expand housing options for students.

To prepare students for college or the workforce, we will support K-12 STEM and CTE pathways. A key initiative will be expanding career and technical education programs at local high schools. In Jennings County, the school corporation expanded on-campus CTE programs in READI 1.0. These programs have already proven to be successful. Naturally, we are excited to move forward on our vision to create a new Panther Tech facility to accommodate a full range of programs for students. In Bartholomew County, our goal is to expand biology and health sciences pathway facilities to equip students for strong local health care careers.

Additionally, we will support training for incumbent workers to prepare them for careers in next generation mobility. In READI 1.0, Jackson County partnered with Vincennes University and local employers to provide equipment and programming for worker training. With READI 2.0, our vision is to expand the Jackson County Learning Center and add additional equipment to allow for advanced training programs.

Finally, we recognize the need to support early childhood education in the region. Our vision is to expand facilities related to early childhood and Pre-K education, especially within our local schools, to increase childcare capacity.

MILESTONES

Property for the projects has been secured and funding is available. Our goal is to open these facilities within 3 years of funding availability.

RURAL/DISADVANTAGED IMPACT

Approximately half of this investment will occur in rural/disadvantaged communities.

HOUSING ACTION PLAN:

Each county has proposed significant housing investments. In North Vernon, there are plans to construct a new 60-unit mixed use housing complex in the downtown. The development will be built on the site of a major 2014 downtown fire, helping revitalize an area struck by tragedy.

In Seymour, as recommended by the Brookings-LISC Study, there are plans for a new mixed-use and mixed-density housing project to be known as Freeman Village. This could ultimately include over 1,000 housing units.

Finally, in Columbus, City View is a new, 690-acre mixed-use healthcare, commercial, and residential district to be developed in a partnership between Columbus Regional Health and the City of Columbus. The master plan is complete and has been formally adopted by the City. It includes 965 new homes.

MILESTONES

Within 4 years, our goal is to see the first phase of housing complete for the Freeman Village and City View projects with 100 units complete in each. Within 6 years, our goal is for 500 units to be completed at each site. For the North Vernon apartments, our goal is to complete this within 3 years of funding availability.

RURAL/DISADVANTAGED IMPACT

Our goal is to see at least 40% of the housing investment in rural and disadvantaged communities.

QUALITY OF PLACE ACTION PLAN:

In Columbus, there are plans to renovate the Main Library and North Christian Church, as outlined in the Bartholomew County Public Library (BCPL) County-Wide Facilities Strategy. Renovations would improve facilities, promote engagement, and expand offerings at these locations.

Across the region, there are also plans for three new entertainment venues, including the construction of a Performing Arts Hall in Columbus. In North Vernon, a new outdoor pavilion is planned for the area adjacent to the Park Theatre.

The City of Seymour is also planning to renovate an existing downtown building to accommodate a new downtown theater. This building has specifically been chosen as the upper level can house a new immigrant welcome center, serving as a cultural bridge in the community.

MILESTONES

Within 4 years of funding award, our goal is to see each of these projects complete and in operation.

RURAL/DISADVANTAGED IMPACT

Our goal is to see 50% of the quality of place investment occur in rural and disadvantaged communities.

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

STEP 1: COLLECT PROJECT IDEAS TO BUILD A PROJECT PIPELINE (COMPLETE)A lesson learned from READI 1.0 is that the region needs to continually scope out projects to address the region's biggest priorities. For READI 2.0, we have performed much better. Updated community plans that identified priority projects have been completed in each county including the City View Master Plan in Bartholomew County, the Brookings-LISC Study in Seymour, and a new comprehensive plan in North Vernon. Scoping plans were also completed for the leading projects in each county. In May 2023, our region held its formal kickoff for READI 2.0. As we gathered in the board room of the Community Foundation of Jackson County, our region shared progress on the key initiatives each county had been working on to address regional priorities. This conversation formed the basis of our regional project pipeline. This meeting also marked the beginning of the process of reaching out to stakeholders, community leaders, and anchor institutions to identify additional projects from across the region. The results of this process were used to create the Regional Project Pipeline Report that is included as an appendix to this application. Working together, the READI Steering Committee prioritized the projects in the Regional Project Pipeline Report and concluded that they could move forward immediately with projects leveraging \$56M in READI 2.0 funding. If additional funding were available, the region could move forward with additional projects. These additional projects are also regional priorities but are more aspirational in nature as not all matching funds are in place.

STEP 2: UPON AWARD, ISSUE A CALL FOR PROJECTSDuring READI 1.0, our region did the work to narrow our list of projects down to a \$50M request for the application and repeated the exercise to reduce the list to \$30M in awards. This was an incredibly challenging process, and our lesson learned was that we only want to do that exercise once for READI 2.0. We also recognized that the status of some projects changed considerably after the original application, but before funds were obligated. Based on these lessons learned, our intent is to issue a formal Call for Projects in the spring/summer of 2024 after the region's award is determined. The process will be open to any project, including those collected during the Project Survey, those on the Regional Project Pipeline Report, and new project ideas. This Call for Projects will allow us to collect current and accurate project details, match commitments, and related documentation so that regional leaders can make an informed decision on which projects to prioritize.

STEP 3: EVALUATE AND SCORE SUBMISSIONSUpon receipt of project submissions through our call for projects, each project will be evaluated and scored. The first evaluation will include threshold evaluation to determine if the project meets eligibility and if the project can follow procurement requirements. Next, the project will be rated according to a scoring matrix. This matrix will be published as part of the Call for Projects but is expected to include the following general criteria: Evaluation Criteria*Alignment with Region's Goals and Strategies (25%)*Impact on State KPIs (25%)*Shovel Ready Status (15%)*Highest Regional Priority Project (Shovel Worthy Status) (15%)*Public/Private Match Ratios (15%)*Impact on Rural/Disadvantaged Communities (5%)*Economic Impact (TBD pending IEDC Policies)

STEP 4: PRIORITIZE PROJECTSProject scoring will be reviewed by the READI Steering Committee. This committee consists of an equal number of representatives from each of the three counties. The Steering Committee will make final recommendations related to project selection. These decisions will be reviewed with IEDC, and then a formal decision will be made by the SIHCDC Board of Directors.

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.

Many of our investments are part of ongoing district investments. Consider the following examples:
BURKHART OPPORTUNITY ZONE: The Brookings-LISC Study for the City of Seymour focused on an east side district known as the Burkhart Opportunity Zone. In the coming years, the city expects to complete multiple investments in this district to address the needs identified in this plan. This includes the recommended immigrant welcome center (to be located downtown) and the first phase of the Freeman Village housing project.
CITY VIEW: The City of Columbus, in partnership with Columbus Regional Health, created the City View Master Plan to inform the development of a 690-acre neighborhood southwest of downtown Columbus. The plan features the creation of a new hospital campus, nature-based public spaces, and 965 new homes. The city hopes to begin investment in this district with READI 2.0 support and expects to see significant ongoing public and private investment over the next several years.
DOWNTOWN NORTH VERNON: A priority investment for READI 2.0 is the construction of new downtown apartments at the site of a devastating fire that wrought havoc in 2012. This investment in North Vernon isn't isolated, but rather part of broader downtown revitalization efforts dating back to the restoration of the Park Theatre 20 years ago. North Vernon Main Street recently completed an updated downtown master plan, a new trails plan calls for a downtown trail, and the city is actively working to address blighted properties that are preventing North Vernon from reaching its true potential.

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.

OUR LEADERS CAME TOGETHER QUICKLY FOR READI 1.0. With the announcement of READI 1.0, our region held a series of meetings with potential partners from throughout South Central Indiana. Discussions included more than 20 elected officials at the city and county level, executives from economic development organizations, major employers, education providers, and leaders from community foundations and other non-profits. Conversations collectively focused on the economic prosperity of the region through business support, educational attainment, workforce development, tourism, talent attraction, and more. To advance the work of the South Central Indiana Talent Region, a Steering Committee of twelve representatives from among the three participating counties was formed.
WE PROACTIVELY ENGAGED THE PUBLIC. The engagement process for the regional development plan during READI 1.0 took place over a two-month period and engaged over 450 participants from across the region. A custom website, www.SouthCentralREADI.com, was used to distribute project information and to collect public feedback. Informational videos were developed and posted on the website that provided an overview of the program, as well as findings from local and regional workshops. A public input survey was crafted to identify key issues and opportunities in the region. Stakeholders used social media to share and advertise the website, videos, and survey.
COUNTY STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS. A series of county workshops were held that involved city, town, and county elected officials, key businesses, and other community leaders. The purpose was to identify priorities for each entity, gauge interest in participation, and identify areas of overlap between local, county, and regional priorities. A total of four county workshops were held in Jennings, Jackson, and Bartholomew Counties. These workshops gathered input from over 120 participants. During these workshops, a series of exercises helped

meeting participants identify values and priorities on the local level, as well as the county level. REGIONAL STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP. After the county workshops, a regional workshop brought together leaders and members of the public from all three counties to compare notes on what was learned. Participants were able to see how local values and priorities aligned, and how these common values and priorities could be used to develop regional goals. Over 70 representatives participated in this regional workshop, which resulted in consensus on the four regional goals included in the READI 1.0 plan. GOALS AND STRATEGIES STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS. For READI 2.0, our Steering Committee reviewed the goals and strategies formed in READI 1.0 and sought input from regional leaders and key stakeholders. It quickly became apparent that the goals from READI 1.0 remained priorities for the region. Based on this initial feedback, we launched stakeholder work sessions around education, childcare, innovation and entrepreneurship, and related topics to dig deeper into the goals and build out complete strategies around each.

How do you plan to maintain stakeholder engagement?

Stakeholders in the South Central Indiana Talent Region have regularly engaged for over 20 years, with notable pre-READI examples being regional collaborations conducted via the South Central Indiana Economic Development (SCIED) group, multi-county Foreign Trade Missions, and efforts of the Community Education Coalition, to name just a few examples. Collaborations like these required regular public/private stakeholder engagement and have brought millions of dollars of public and private investments to our region. The results have been nationally recognized, including winning the Lumina Foundation's "Talent Hub" designation. With READI 1.0, our communities came together in a focused way as described in the previous question. Whereas previous cross-border collaborations had often focused on singular areas of importance (e.g., economic development marketing, or educational attainment systems), READI 1.0 created an opportunity for us to take a comprehensive approach to our regional collaborations. The results were impactful. Our READI Steering Committee has continued to meet regularly throughout the implementation phase of READI 1.0. With the announcement of READI 2.0, our core stakeholder group has typically met bi-weekly during the planning phase. With a successful READI 2.0 award, we will make an official call for projects that will bring together additional stakeholders. Worthy projects will involve a mix of public and private stakeholders, and stakeholder engagement comes second nature to us. As we've done for over 20 years through a variety of efforts, stakeholder engagement will be a hallmark of our ongoing work.

How will the organization sustain itself?

The Southern Indiana Housing and Community Development Corporation (SIHCDC) will serve as the regional organization for the South Central Indiana Talent Region. The SIHCDC contracts with the Administrative Resources association (ARa) to provide staffing for the Community Development Corporation. The ARa has served the South Central region for over 50 years, providing planning and administrative services to member communities. It is a not-for-profit governmental association owned by cities and towns in the South Central region, including Columbus, North Vernon, and Seymour. The organization has developed, acquired funding for, and administered more federal, state, and private community development projects than any other organization in Indiana. With a staff of six community development professionals, they have been and will continue to be a trusted partner to the region. Notably, SIHCDC and ARa have just named a new Executive Director, who will start March 1, only the third Executive Director in its 50-year history. Operations for the organizations are currently supported by project administrative fees, as well as membership fees. To date,

administrative fees through READI 1.0 have supported ongoing regional activities. The SIHCDC has been able to utilize existing staff to cover its regional role and other pre-existing responsibilities. However, the region recognizes that there is an increasing need for one or more staff members dedicated to regional responsibilities. The region also recognizes that a dedicated funding stream may be needed to fund regional activities and is evaluating alternatives to address this need.

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.

Not Applicable

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.

INNOVATION WILL MULTIPLY*Our goal is to see per capita income grow across the region. We expect to see per capita income grow in rural counties (Jackson and Jennings) by 3.4% per year, resulting in regional per capita income of \$82,631 by 2032.*Our goal is to see an increase in new business startups with growth of 0.5% per year.**EDUCATION WILL INCREASE AND EQUALIZE***Our goal is for educational attainment to increase across the region. We expect to see educational attainment in rural counties grow from 16.9% to 25.2% of adults 25+ with a bachelor’s degree by 2032. This would allow the region’s educational attainment to increase to 29.4% by 2032.*Our goal is to increase childcare capacity across the region. We expect to add 70 additional seats per year.**HOUSING WILL BECOME AVAILABLE***Our goal is to see an increase in single-family and rental housing units in the region, with an emphasis on housing growth in rural areas. We expect to see 200 single family units and 200 rental units added per year over the next 10 years, with at least 40% of units in rural counties.**WE WILL USE QUALITY OF PLACE TO ATTRACT POPULATION***Two of our three counties are already growing. To accelerate regional growth, our goal is to see Jennings County’s population stabilize by 2027 and show growth from 2027 to 2032. Our ultimate goal is to increase our annual growth rate for the region to 0.45% by 2027 and 0.51% by 2032.

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 | 156,193 (2022) | 159,774 (2027) | 163,916 (2032) |
| Total Employment | 76,234 (2022) | 79,608 (2027) | 83,132 (2032) |
| Per capita income | \$ 56,001.00 | \$ 68,025.00 | \$ 82,631.00 |
| Educational attainment | 28,055 (2022) | 30,779 (2027) | 33,768 (2032) |
| Total new housing units | 66,118 (2022) | 67,710 (2027) | 69,510 (2032) |
| New rental housing units | 16,498 (2022) | 17,369 (2027) | 18,349 (2032) |
| New owner-occupied housing units | 44,310 (2022) | 45,287 (2027) | 46,286 (2032) |
| Percentage of affordable housing units | 60 | 60 | 60 |

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.

In order for licensed childcare capacity to keep pace with population growth, the region will need to add approximately 112 new seats from 2022 to 2027, and 121 new seats from 2027 to 2032, or approximately 24 seats per year. These projections align with the status quo in which licensed capacity insufficiently covers children under the age of six who may need care. As of 2024, only 59% of children in the region can be served by licensed and documented home facilities. To bridge the childcare gap, our goal is to serve at least 65% of children in need of care, which corresponds to an increase of 686 seats by 2032, or approximately 70 additional seats each year.

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

Since 2016, our region has seen an annual increase in the number of new business applications filed. In 2022, there were 1,343 new business applications across the three-county region, with approximately half of those applications coming from Bartholomew County. Our goal is to sustain this growth in new business applications at a rate of 0.5% annually in alignment with projected regional population growth. This would manifest in 1,375 new business start-ups in 2027, and 1,412 start-ups in 2032. Proposed READI 2.0 projects, including an Incubator Program in Jackson County, can support entrepreneurs and promote innovation in the region, potentially elevating these numbers. New business start-ups should be encouraged throughout the region, but especially in Jackson and Jennings County to promote economic growth in rural communities.

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

One of our key goals is to help rural areas (Jackson and Jennings Counties) increase per capita income, educational attainment, and the number of new housing units. Our intentional focus on rural areas is intended to help raise their performance to be closer to numbers in urban areas. Key metrics include: *We would like to see per capita income grow by 3.4% per year, resulting in a per capita income of \$72,000 in each rural county by 2032. *We would like to see educational attainment in rural counties grow from 16.9% to 25.2% of adults 25+ with a bachelor's degree by 2032. *We would like to see housing growth in rural areas. In Jackson and Jennings Counties, we want to see a total of 80 single family units and 80 rental units added per year over the next 10 years.

General Information

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|---|--|
| Legal Name as registered with Indiana Secretary of State (Region Name) | Southern Indiana Housing and Community Development Corporation dba South Central Indiana Talent Region |
| Business Structure | Community Development Corp./Corporate Entity, Tax Exempt, Nonprofit Organization |
| List counties within your region | Bartholomew, Jackson, and Jennings |
| Website | https://www.southcentralreadi.com/ |

Primary Contact Information

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
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