



Executive Summary

In the heart of the Midwest, Southeast Indiana unfolds as a land of opportunity and growth, where the picturesque Ohio River, rolling hills, and tranquil lakes set the stage for a thriving and successful future.

The natural beauty of our region is one of our vital assets, but we are more than just a scenic stop between Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky. Together we are crafting a regional vision where natural beauty meets economic vitality, where educational opportunities pave the way for generational prosperity, and where the dream of affordable living becomes a reality.

You're invited to be our partner in creating a competitive region where every investment, every initiative, and every step forward is a stride towards a bolder Southeast Indiana, and a more prosperous Indiana.

With the right strategic investments in our communities just across the state line from Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky, **the collaborators at SEI READI, Inc. firmly believe that Southeast Indiana can become the fastest growing region in Indiana over the next 10 years.** This is a bold statement and position to take. Luckily, we are in a state which is unabashed about setting higher expectations, competing nationally and internationally for business and talent, and transforming our economy to meet the needs of future generations of Hoosiers.

With READI 2.0 now before us, we invite the IEDC to continue as an important partner in aggressively, intentionally, and boldly growing our region.

Regional collaboration:

Beginning with the work orchestrated by the Southeast Indiana Growth Alliance in 2009, and transitioning to the SEI READI Inc. organization in 2021, our six-county area has officially, and unofficially been working to ensure the shared success outlined in our long-term vision.

Throughout the READI processes the public and all regional stakeholders have been encouraged to participate in the planning process at every opportunity. Key elected leaders and CEOs of our region's employers and industries, including our area's largest employers Rising Star Casino and Resort, Perfect North Slopes and St. Elizabeth Dearborn Hospital, were active participants.

Our recent engagement efforts have yielded:

- A more complete stakeholder contact list;
- Eight stakeholder discussions with attendance totaling over 100 individuals; and
- Three separate surveys that resulted in 576 individuals participating with representation coming from all six counties and surrounding areas of influence.



Our engagement and strategic planning initiatives executed during this READI 2.0 process have been directed at refining and improving upon previous regional efforts. Based on feedback from our regional leaders, our project supporters, the IEDC, and by examining the work of other regions from across the state, we identified weaknesses, assessed challenges, and made thoughtful decisions about how to move forward.

Our revised development strategy offers:

New leverage: In READI 1.0 we under-emphasized our region's greatest assets and opportunities. To accelerate the 2,100 Ohio and Kentucky residents who migrated into our region between 2016-2020, Southeast Indiana must collectively and aggressively compete for population and economic growth occurring within the Cincinnati tri-state region.

A sharp focus: We know that having a clear and compelling set of goals that are tied to quantifiable metrics helps mobilize our leaders to advance ideas and actions. With READI 2 we are prepared to refine our target goals with measurable indicators around population, investment, employment, and earnings.

Attainable strategies: Our strategy includes a dynamic set of recommendations that will include policy and programmatic recommendations in addition to capital improvement projects.

Regional assets and unique qualities

There is no stronger way for us to grow our region, than to leverage the set of regional assets and unique qualities that we have. We have seen how other regions across our state have done the same- Northwest Indiana has used their proximity to compete with Chicago, Illinois for both residential and economic growth and Our Southern Indiana has leveraged its proximity to Louisville, Kentucky and its rich natural amenities including the Ohio River to draw residents across the river.

These examples show us that it is clear that Southeast Indiana provides boundless opportunities and an environment to begin recreating those regional success stories in our corner of the state. We feel that the following are our region's best opportunities to aid in our success as we move forward:

- **Metro Proximity:** Five of our six counties rest on the border of Ohio and Kentucky in the growing Cincinnati region. Between 2016-2020, we have seen 2,100 Ohio and Kentucky residents migrate into our region. Our region is bisected by Interstate 74 – a key growth corridor for our region – and connected by the Cincinnati Interstate 275 beltway.

- **The great outdoors:** State parks and recreation areas, unique water resources and land-based destinations such as Whitewater Memorial State Park, Brookville Lake, and Perfect North Slopes are magnets for resident nature lovers and those looking for a weekend of entertainment. In total our destinations bring over 2 million visitors and outdoor enthusiasts to the region per year.

- **Unique industries and business sectors:** Agriculture, is a leading Indiana economic sector. The I-74 Corridor, which bisects our region, has a unique set of industry clusters that are competitive including Agribusiness, Food Processing and Technology clusters which provide opportunities for our region to grow in a unique way.



In addition to our physical attributes, it's hard to overlook the hardworking people that represent the SEI region. Our unique organizational model was chosen based on the strengths it allows us to leverage including:

- **Support of LEDOs as conduits from each county.** LEDO's from each of the six counties serve as a technical advisory committee and conduit to the SEI READI Board. Their involvement allows us to work collaboratively to solve complicated efforts at multiple scales.
- **Ability to fundraise for regional planning.** Contributed funds, provided by governments and employers, totaling \$170,000 to date, have provided professional regional planning and strategy development services.
- **Support of SIRPC for financial, admin, and some regional initiatives.** The SEI READI Board is supported by SIRPC staff, who oversee the administration and disbursement of READI funds as the region's grant administrator. Their support provides consistency amongst our counties and communities.

Through that hard work, and wide-reaching collaboration, SEI READI Inc. was able to facilitate a total investment of nearly \$400 million through our READI 1.0 allocation of \$15 million, good for a 26:1 match ratio to support investment in needed infrastructure, housing developments, early education initiatives, and recreation projects across our six-county area. To date 7 projects are substantially complete, 7 are under construction, and 5 are well into planning.

Alignment with state's economic development goals

Our hard work and timeless investment serve our communities, but our strategy also aligns with the State of Indiana's broader goals to grow the population -- through both talent retention and attraction -- by prioritizing investment the health and well-being of our residents, the infrastructure systems that serve our communities and the businesses and industries that keep us competitive.

Our region's investment of nearly \$400 million in READI 1.0, coupled with our ongoing efforts, are expected to provide the following regional returns by the end of 2026:

- 3,000 new residents (2.3% growth);
- 405 new housing units;
- 285 new direct jobs;
- 175 new indirect jobs;
- An increase in wages and overall earnings; and
- A total economic output of over \$115 million.

With a documented ability to attract Ohio and Kentucky residents to Southeast Indiana we feel strongly that our investments and ongoing efforts outlined within this strategy will allow us to exponentially increase our ability to not only attract, but retain high quality talent within the region.

Our five pillars of investment create broad opportunities for the SEI region to grow, improve and innovate. Our metric-based goals will drive transformative change so that Southeast Indiana can serve as an active contributor towards the State's Key Performance Indicator Targets.



GOAL 1- HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Provide 1,800 new housing units by 2030 and ensure that those new assets are available at attainable price points based on annual per capita income earnings.

GOAL 2- CULTURE, TOURISM, RECREATION AND LIFESTYLE

Preserve, enhance and activate our communities, destinations and recreational activities as a front-line resource to grow our regional population by 5,000 residents by 2030.

GOAL 3- INFRASTRUCTURE

Increase regional infrastructure capacity and reach by 10% to ensure that our regional transportation and utility infrastructure systems are safe, efficient and meet the needs of our current and future residents and businesses.

GOAL 4- BUSINESS RETENTION, GROWTH, AND ATTRACTION

Grow our regional target industries by adding 2,500 jobs by 2030 through business recruitment, expansion, and attraction efforts in an effort to increase the per capita income by 2.50% per year.

GOAL 5- CHILD CARE

Expand access to quality and affordable child care and early education programs by 10% percent each year.

Benchmark Communities

Our plan leans on the knowledge and expertise of those leaders within our region, however we recognize that we can also learn from other regions, entities and organizations who have faced similar challenges and set their sites on the same aspirational goals.

The Southwest Regional Development Commission (SRDC) region of Minnesota was chosen as a Peer Community because of its rural community character, proximity to metropolitan Sioux Falls, SD and overall alignment with our regional goals and action items such as:

- **Implementation of a Traditional Revolving Loan Fund:** SRDC can serve as an informed resource as SEI works to build a revolving loan fund to support businesses and communities for the foreseeable future.
- **Regional Housing and Gap Identification:** SRDC could prove to be a useful resource while SEI conducts a regional housing and market demand study and provide support while we create the foundation for a successful, cooperative land banking program.
- **Regional Trail Planning:** The organization can serve as a guide during SEI's effort to complete a region wide trail study that ties together greenways and blueways.
- **Regional marketing:** Their previous efforts can be used as inspiration to our county-wide tourism entities as they work to create collaborative platforms that serve multiple needs.
- **Intentional Regional and State-wide Collaboration:** Since the organization is well staff, and serves in multiple capacities, SEI can work to better understand SRDC's structure, history and evolution to develop an appropriate staffing model.

The SRDC region provides best practices in economic development, broadband deployment and digital literacy, active community development, infrastructure planning and overall government communication/ coordination. **All of which SEI READI intends to learn from to ensure that the best strategies are created and applied to our region moving forward.**

Executing our Bold Vision

Following a READI award, the region is committed to facilitating a phased, multi-year project intake process that identifies short- and long-term initiatives that benefit the region as a whole over a sustained time period. The phased approach is intended to immediately invest in shovel ready initiatives, while allowing ample time to develop other significant efforts as a larger, regional team.

As a component of the phased approach, SEI READI is committed to establishing a revolving loan program to ensure overall regional resilience and sustainability. **Our goal is to utilize the loan program as a way to maximize our implementation capacity even though we recognize that this will result in a more long-range timeline for project development and construction.**

Southeast Indiana demonstrated well its ability to make meaningful impacts with the IEDC's READI 1.0 investment. READI 2.0 continues to not only encourages us to think boldly about what our region can be, but this program allows us a real opportunity to make it happen. At SEI READI, we are excited about the prospect of becoming Indiana's fastest growing region. We ask that you join us.

Thank you, Governor Holcomb and the Indiana Economic Development Corporation, for your consideration.





Part II: READI 1.0 Evaluation

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

Throughout the READI 1.0 process the public and all regional stakeholders were encouraged to participate in the planning process at every opportunity. Key tools utilized included the following:

1. Online engagement: The Southeast Indiana Growth Alliance regional LEDO group redesigned its website, www.southeastindiana.org, in 2021 for the purposes of READI. Today it serves as a best practice example for project information and promotion.
2. LEDO connections: Through their strategic outreach and conversations, the LEDOs funneled direct, local input from employers, institutions and elected leaders into the early stages of the SEI READI initiative. This is continuing through the ongoing implementation and development of READI efforts.
3. Regional Identification: Signed letters of support for the SEI regional identification were obtained from several key stakeholders including government officials; anchor institutions; major employers and small businesses; Chambers of Commerce, Main Street Programs, and downtown associations; and foundations and other nonprofits. The full list of signatories can be found at <https://southeastindiana.org/signatories/>.
4. Workshops: Engagement primarily consisted of topical community workshops to provide a better understanding of community goals. In total, 66 individuals attended the workshops, with several of the participants ultimately becoming members of the SEI READI Board of Directors.
5. Call for Projects: An open call for projects was facilitated to provide the steering committee with an in-depth knowledge of all aspects of proposed projects in August 2021. Additionally, the SEI READI Board of Directors and LEDO representatives had many in-depth conversations and evaluations with project stakeholders, IEDC, and EY to determine project readiness prior to project reviews. To further prioritize the proposed projects, the SEI READI Board of Directors utilized a strategic review to identify projects for READI 1.0. Following the open call for projects in which more than 120 projects and ideas were received, the steering committee created an evaluation matrix to evaluate submissions. The committee, which consisted of consultant TPMA, Southeastern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (SIRPC), and a LEDO representative from each county, evaluated projects to ensure that they were in alignment with the Indiana READI guidelines, as well as regional strategies identified in the SEI READI Regional Development Plan. Evaluation categories included economic development potential, quality of life, place and opportunity, talent attraction and development, available matching funds, regional impact and project readiness. The LEDO representatives provided recommendations of highly prioritized projects to the SEI READI Board of Directors who provided final approval for investments. In total, \$14.1 million in READI funds were allocated across 19 projects within Southeast Indiana by June 2022. Along with the public and private match dollars, which totaled \$398,330,334, SEI READI Inc. was able to support investment in needed infrastructure, housing developments, early education initiatives, and recreation projects across our six-county area. The region's project portfolio represents a 26:1 match ratio. To date 7 projects are substantially complete, 7 are under construction, and 5 are well into planning. By the end of 2023, we disbursed 40% of our READI 1 allocation to agencies and organizations within our region.



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

Based on feedback from our regional leaders, our project supporters, the IEDC, and by examining the work of other regions from across the state, we see the following as opportunities to improve moving forward.

Leverage: In READI 1, we under-emphasized our region's greatest assets and opportunities. These include our proximity to the growing areas of Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky, our rich natural features, lower cost of living, and existing quality-of-life amenities. To accelerate the 2,100 Ohio/Kentucky residents who migrated into our region between 2016-2020, Southeast Indiana must collectively and aggressively compete for population and economic growth occurring within the Cincinnati tri-state region.

Focused: Our strategic planning work lacked a focused vision, an actionable set of goals and a measurable set of performance indicators. We now know that having a clear and compelling set of goals that are tied to quantifiable metrics helps mobilize our leaders to advance ideas and actions. With READI 2 we are prepared to refine our target goals with measurable indicators around population, investment, employment, and earnings.

Strategy-based: While we have been successful in moving critical projects forward, there are more actions that need to be completed to ensure that our region thrives. In addition to sharpening our goals for the future, our strategy needs to include a dynamic set of recommendations that will include policy and programmatic recommendations in addition to capital improvement projects. Our region must continue to build capacity for SEI READI and SIRPC to monitor and work day-to-day on implementation of these growth strategies.

Communication: We believe that our communication platforms are sound and provide an excellent opportunity to share information on the process and project implementation. Acknowledging there is always room to improve, moving forward we will work to provide better meeting opportunities on all projects to address known challenges before implementation advances. Additionally, we will work to provide supporting material to better showcase the benefits the project will realize to overcome the fears and concerns of those locally impacted.

Resident Outreach: We've strived to make our website Indiana's best practice example of READI region-level transparency. While many of our residents welcome the positive impacts that projects will bring, we are no different than many other regions everywhere in that large initiatives often bring citizen concern. In READI 1, SEI READI was intentional about asking communities from all corners of the region to participate in our regional planning and educate citizens about the exciting opportunities READI would make possible. Additionally, we will work to provide supporting material to better showcase the benefits the project will realize to overcome the fears and concerns of those locally impacted.

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.

Following the award of READI funds, our region successfully established SEI READI, Inc., a 501(c)3 organization. The SEI READI Board of Directors, which meets monthly, is made up of six members with one resident representative from each county. SEI READI Inc. has consistently communicated and cooperated throughout the READI effort to steer investments to the most impactful projects and ensure the success of the broader region. Currently they oversee all READI 1 projects, and collaborate on other regional initiatives with county LEDO's and local governments. Our organization is unique and was chosen based on the strengths it allows us to leverage including:

- *Support of LEDOs as conduits from each county. LEDO's from each of the six counties serve as a technical advisory committee and conduit to the SEI READI Board. The LEDO's have been meeting on a weekly basis since the onset of the READI program and interact with the Board and all local stakeholders



as a part of their full-time county positions. Their involvement allows us to work collaboratively to solve complicated efforts at multiple scales.*Ability to fundraise for regional planning. With LEDO's serving as a primary conduit, fundraising to support regional planning has been provided by governments and employers in their respective counties. Contributed funds, totaling \$170,000 to date, have provided professional regional planning and strategy development services, including TPMA for READI 1.0 and Taylor Siefker Williams Design Group for READI 2.0.*Support of SIRPC for financial, admin, and some regional initiatives. SEI READI Board is supported by SIRPC staff, who oversee the administration and disbursement of READI funds as the region's grant administrator. Their support provides consistency amongst our counties and communities.While strong, we recognize that for our continued success we will need to address and advance the following objectives to ensure we have the capacity to implement our shared ideas.*Develop a Structured Staffing Approach: With no dedicated full-time staff, the SEI READI Board functions in part because of the support provided by county LEDO's, SIRPC staff, and its volunteer members. Moving forward we plan to develop a comprehensive approach to staffing, aiming to establish dedicated full-time position(s) focused on managing regional initiatives. *Self-Sustaining Financial Model: We have had the ability to scale our activities according to our ability to raise funds, but moving forward our continued actions will require a more self-sustaining financial model. Moving forward we plan to establish a sustainable, self-sustaining financial model by diversifying our funding sources and developing long-term financial strategies to support our ongoing initiatives.*Comprehensive Branding and Marketing Plan: At a regional level we lack a common platform and brand. Moving forward we intend to create a comprehensive branding and marketing strategy that unifies our regional efforts. This will involve collaborating across counties to develop a cohesive brand identity and marketing plan, maximizing the appeal of our region.In recognizing these weaknesses, we are committed to transforming them into strengths through deliberate planning and execution over our long-range plan.



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	125,115
Total employment (U.S. Census Bureau)	3,020,345	64,356
Per capita income (Bureau of Economic Analysis)	\$ 51,645.95	\$ 50,092.00
Total population with bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau)	1,253,299	18,233
Total housing units (U.S. Census Bureau)	2,911,562	52,995
Total rental housing units (U.S. Census Bureau)	680,964	9,533
Total owner-occupied units (U.S. Census Bureau)	1,097,622	39,061
Number of new business start-ups (Small Business Development Center)	150,067	42

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.

Childcare is one of our region's weakest infrastructure systems which has resulted in higher costs, fewer high-quality programs and limited capacity. The following describes the current landscape of childcare within our region: Caregivers that are able to access care pay on average \$7,000 per year. With annual average wages hovering nearly \$42,000 per year, individuals and families are paying nearly 16% of their income for childcare. These statistics likely do not account for the large portion of caregivers who utilize family members, or non-working spouses/ partners to care for children. Based on our SEI READI 2.0 survey, 57% of respondents utilize alternative care since traditional facilities and programs are limited. Within the region there are approximately 5,634 children who may need care, but the 109 available programs only offer 1,870 seats, leaving nearly 67% of the region's children without adequate care. Switzerland County is at a greater disadvantage because there are no available childcare programs. Switzerland County is the only county in the state where there are no programs available. Based on our SEI READI 2.0 childcare survey, 42.86% of participants said that they would consider leaving the region if another employer offered them a comparable salary with childcare benefits. Our region is actively working to improve our childcare systems by supporting the Building Blocks



Creative Curriculum program in five of our six counties. Additionally, our region has recently been awarded \$800,000 in FSSA and Early Learning Indiana funds to support the development of childcare and early childhood centers.

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).

The region's innovation index, as described within the SIRPC CEDS document, measures innovation in terms of human capital, economic dynamics, productivity and employment, economic well-being and state context. While the region is underperforming by index metrics, the data identified constraints that include population growth and lack of high-tech employment opportunities that can lead to lower-than-average growth in patented technologies. That said, the region boasts near US averages in GDP per worker, productivity and employment and technology-based knowledge occupations per share of total employment. The region acknowledges its weaknesses in innovation and is taking steps to reverse the trends. In the last two recordable years of ISBDC data (2021 and 2022), the Southeast region boasts over 50 new startups, ranking third amongst ISBDC regions. The region is currently capacity building with entrepreneurship support programs. This includes an active ISBDC office supported regionally by redevelopment commissions and the development of innovative support infrastructure starting at the "Main Street" level. Additionally, Ivy Tech has a strong presence with the growth of its Advanced Manufacturing Lab in Lawrenceburg. At the high school level, regional pitch competitions have been established since 2013 and seeded by the IEDC. Manufacturing technology reigns supreme regionally. The region counts among its primary employers six manufacturers that have received Conexus Manufacturing Readiness Grants. And with existing medical technology sectors, thriving family agribusiness throughout the region, and a growing food and beverage market, the region is primed for patent growth, technology transfer, and new product generation for the State of Indiana.

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

The following businesses, organizations and institutions are included within our anchor institution network: SEI Region Employers: Rising Star Casino Resort, Belterra Casino Resort, Matthews Aurora Funeral Solutions, Perfect North Slopes, St Elizabeth Healthcare, Ohio Rod Products, Hollywood Casino-Hotel, Anchor Glass Container, Baxter (formerly Hill-Rom), Batesville Casket, MGP Ingredients Ross & Squibb Distillery, OMNI Technologies, Catalent, Proximo Distillers, and Precision Concepts. Southeast Ohio and Northern Kentucky Employers: Kroger, Cincinnati Childrens, CVG, University of Cincinnati, UC Health, TriHealth, GE Aviation, Fifth Third Bank, the Christ Hospital Health Network, Bon Secours Mercy Health, P&G, Fidelity Investments. High Education Institutions: Ivy Tech Community College; Southeastern Career Center. Philanthropic Organizations: Dearborn County Community Foundation, Franklin County Community Foundation, Ohio County Community Foundation, Ripley County Community Foundation, Switzerland County Community Foundation, Union County Community Foundation, Rising Sun Regional Foundation, United Way of Greater Cincinnati - Southeast Indiana, United Way of Whitewater Valley, Southeast Indiana Chamber Foundation, and Versailles Tyson Fund. Regional Organizations: Southeastern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, Southeastern Indiana Growth Alliance, Indiana I-74 Business Corridor, Southeastern Indiana Regional Port Authority, The Ohio River Way, REDI Cincinnati, Purdue Center for Regional Development, Region 9 Workforce Investment Board, and County



Tourism Bureaus.

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 Counties: Franklin, Ripley, Ohio, Switzerland and Union; 59.64% of the region's population Disadvantaged Communities, specifically those that experience chronic economic distress: Dearborn, Franklin, Ohio; 63.30% of the population Low to Moderate Income Communities: To further classify our region's economic constraints, currently twelve of our region's communities qualify as low to moderate income communities making them eligible for additional state and federal grants. Statistics such as the poverty rate do not reflect the true magnitude of financial instability in the region. The official U.S. Poverty rate, which was developed in 1965, has not been updated since 1974 and is not adjusted to reflect cost of living differences. A lack of accurate measurements and language to frame a discussion has made it difficult to identify the full extent of the economic challenges that so many residents face. Southeastern Indiana income levels have consistently lagged behind those of most of the State of Indiana and nation even when unemployment rates are not significantly different. Not only are a large number of families not able to purchase products and stimulate the economy, a shocking number of families are barely sustaining, and are one event away from economic disaster. These ALICE households earn above the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) but cannot afford the basic cost of living in their county. The following percentages are estimates of the percentage of families in each county that are poverty level and ALICE households: Dearborn (32%), Franklin (34%), Ohio (34%), Ripley (37%), Switzerland (48%) and Union (30%).

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

Since 2021 our region has continued to see positive growth in all data points. Additionally, we are projecting growth in all categories following the completion of our 19 READI 1.0 efforts. Based on an IMPLAN assessment of our READI 1 projects (included in an attached Appendix), our region's investment of nearly \$400 million in READI 1.0, coupled with our ongoing talent retention and attraction efforts are expected to provide the following regional returns by the end of 2026: *3,000 new residents (2.3% growth); *405 new housing units; *285 new direct jobs; *175 new indirect jobs; *An increase in wages and overall earnings; and *A total economic output of over \$115 million. With a documented ability to attract Ohio and Kentucky residents to Southeast Indiana (2,100 residents between 2016-2020), we feel strongly that our investments and ongoing efforts outlined within this strategy will allow us to exponentially increase our ability to not only attract, but retain high quality talent within the region.

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: Explore Southwest Minnesota



Key performance indicators	Region	Peer Community
Total population	125,115	117,062
Total employment	64,356	59,604
Per capita income	\$ 50,092.00	\$ 60,430.00
Total population with bachelor's degree or higher	18,233	16,994
Total housing units	52,995	52,822
Total rental housing units	9,533	11,189
Total owner-occupied housing units	39,061	35,202

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.

The Southwest Regional Development Commission (SRDC) region was chosen as a Peer Community because of its rural community character and overall alignment with our regional goals including:1.We believe that developing, retaining and attracting talent are critical for us to sustain and grow our rural businesses and communities;2.We believe that our competitiveness requires our communities to develop and link all available assets to encourage business investment;3.We want our communities to maintain their rural values and heritage as well as the assets that support them; 4.We are striving for collaborative approaches to address infrastructure needs in a cost-effective manner.We believe that the following goals and strategies are best practices that should be applied to the SEI region:Regional marketing: Explore Southwest Minnesota is a regional tourism marketing effort promoting the nine counties of Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Rock and their communities as a tourism destination. The organization is funded by the nine counties. SRDC staff has been contracted to develop, coordinate, and administer a refreshed marketing plan as well as provide organizational guidance to the organization.Implementation of a Traditional Revolving Loan Fund: SRDC administers several funding opportunities for businesses and entrepreneurs in Southwest Minnesota. The RLF originated as a Disaster RLF of \$1,226,000 to assist businesses whose operations were adversely affected by extreme flooding in 1993. Since its inception, SRDC has assisted 186 businesses in the region and leveraged over \$66.7 million. Intentional Regional and State-wide Collaboration: While SRDC serves as the primary arm for regional collaboration and implementation, they also serve as a collaborator for larger initiatives that impact the entirety, or large portions of the state of Minnesota. Regional Trail Planning: in 2023 SRDC was awarded federal funding through the Economic Development Administration to execute a regional trails plan. Regional Housing and Gap Identification: Since 2019, SRDC staff has been an integral participant in regional activities around visioning and strategic planning specifically related to housing. The SRDC has conducted meetings, community outreach and developed an overall set of visioning statements. To further support the effort, funds were used to support the creation of model neighborhood development plans (generated by local architectural students) to use in marketing and overall implementation work.In addition to the specific action items outlined above, the SRDC region provides best practices in economic development, broadband deployment and digital literacy, active community development, infrastructure planning and overall government communication/ coordination. All of which SEI



READI intends to learn from to ensure that the best strategies are created and applied to our region moving forward.

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.

Through our regional READI strategic planning process, and stakeholder and residential outreach, we have confirmed that the following are our primary barriers to growth: Limited infrastructure capacity and reach. Our developable land is limited due to floodways, floodplains and natural topography and to create new developable land- away from the river corridor- we have to extend all of our infrastructure systems. Our utility capacity has been a constant restraint on growth in Southeast Indiana for decades. While initial growth occurred within incorporated cities and towns, our more recent growth has been in non-incorporated areas, requiring regional utility districts to plan for, implement and manage systems which in many cases run across district boundaries. The growth outside of our municipal areas has created fiscal and administrative challenges for utility providers, meaning proactive expansion/upgrade projects are limited and costly. Diverse and attainable housing. Eighty-one percent of our existing housing stock was built prior to 1990, with 30% of our stock being constructed before 1950. The current housing stock is aging faster than we can build new housing options and it is resulting in our overall loss of housing units (down 44 since 2016). Today 10% of our housing units are classified as multi-family options, leaving baby-boomers, young professionals, and remote workers specifically without options that cater to their needs. This deficit is magnified because only 15.5% of the rental units and 45.4% of our owner-occupied units are deemed affordable. Because resident workers in the region can easily commute across state lines, the region loses high-wage and educated residents to neighboring areas, likely in part due to better housing options and amenities. Childcare and early education facilities and resources. Within the SEI region there are approximately 5,634 children who may need care, but the 109 available programs only offer 1,870 seats, leaving nearly 67% of the region's children without adequate care. If we don't improve this infrastructure in the short term, we risk losing population- especially young professionals and families. Based on our SEI READI 2 childcare survey, 42.86% of participants said that they would consider leaving the region if another employer offered them a comparable salary with childcare benefits. Rural Constraints. Using the census definition, the SEI region has no 'Urbanized Areas'. Beyond the governmental and financial impact of rural designation, the rurality of a place is an important factor in economic development. Services that provide healthcare, education and mental health services, broadband, cell service, etc. may not be financially feasible in areas with low density populations. Thus, rural residents may not have adequate locally available healthcare, broadband and cell phone access, educational opportunities, and other services that are ubiquitous for urban residents. Additionally, if these services are available rurally, they are often much more costly than in competitive urban environments. These gaps in services can create a pinched environment for business development, job creation and training, entrepreneurship, and innovation leaving rural areas with low paying jobs and transportation issues and a lower tax base supporting fewer employees to provide services.



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

Through our ongoing planning efforts and our READI regional stakeholder and residential outreach, we have confirmed that the following are our top priorities for the future: Infrastructure expansions, upgrades and modernizations. Regional investments to drinking water, sanitary sewer, stormwater, broadband and telecommunications infrastructure systems is the only way we can open up new land for housing, commercial and industrial development. Through READI 1 efforts, we have seen that infrastructure improvements will lead to housing (estimated +405 units) and overall population growth. Housing and neighborhood development. Across our region we have seen minimal growth in our total number of housing units in the last ten years; and, many SEI communities have not had a new single-family home built in over several years. Affordability is declining with the shrinking inventory of available, quality homes for purchase, which puts our region at risk for stalled growth in the near term. While we feel our existing programs will drive housing growth, we recognize the opportunities to accelerate our efforts by leveraging available infrastructure and creating new capacity to support new development. Recreation, natural features and cultural investments. State parks and recreation areas such as Whitewater Memorial State Park, Mounds State Recreation Area, and the Versailles State Park are magnets for resident nature lovers and visitors. Our unique water resources including the Ohio River, provides recreation opportunities for boaters and kayakers, as well as mobility for barge and river commerce. Smaller bodies like the Whitewater River, Brookville Lake, and Laughery Creek offer recreational destinations for pleasure boats, paddlers, and fishermen. Those looking for land-based opportunities find enjoyment in Perfect North Slopes, Lawrenceburg Speedway, Haspin Acres, and three riverboat casinos. In total these unique assets bring over 1.5 million visitors and outdoor enthusiasts to the region per year. To elevate our community's quality of life, we must safeguard and enhance our unique assets while creating new connections between them and neighboring areas. This strategy enriches current residents' daily experiences, ensuring our region remains a prime destination, not just for visitors but current and future residents as well. Economic Opportunity Enhancement. While our region is rich with natural features, recreational assets and strong community facilities, our average private sector hourly wage rate is low in many of our counties. If our residents can't earn a living wage, it will continue to be hard for us to attract new, high-quality talent to the region. Compared to the Indiana state average wage of \$26.25/hr per the IEDC's 2023 county wage table, four of our counties rank within the lowest ten counties- Union County \$16.49/hr, Ohio County \$17.21/hr, Switzerland County \$17.66/hr and Franklin County \$17.90/hr. As we work to improve and leverage the assets we have, we also need to work to build new business and workforce assets and programs, and find ways to support individual training and upskilling so that we can continue to raise and diversify income levels for households and communities. Through these efforts we can not only improve our available workforce, but build personal financial resilience.



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>GOAL 1- HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS Provide 1,800 new housing units by 2030 and ensure that those new assets are available at attainable price points based on annual per capita income earnings.</p>	<p>GOAL 1 STRATEGIES- HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify existing housing gaps, market demand and targeted, priority development areas throughout the region. 2. Increase the availability of shovel-ready residential development sites throughout the regional market by proactively planning for infrastructure investment in priority areas. 3. Preserve and revitalize the existing housing stock in disinvested and blighted areas of the region through local or regional blight mitigation programs and/or land banking activity. 4. Promote and increase broadband access in urban, suburban and rural residential areas by utilizing the SEI Broadband Clearinghouse. 5. Establish appropriate homebuyer and home improvement programs and incentives, in partnership with regional financial institutions, to support young and emerging professionals across the region.
<p>GOAL 2- CULTURE, TOURISM, RECREATION AND LIFESTYLE Preserve, enhance and activate our communities, destinations and recreational activities as a front-line resource to grow our regional population by 5,000 residents by 2030.</p>	<p>GOAL 2 STRATEGIES- CULTURE, TOURISM, RECREATION AND LIFESTYLE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Utilize the Ohio River Way as a resource to connect, regionally market, fund (through state and federal grants) and redevelop our region's river towns. 2. Enhance the public's access to and enjoyment of public waterways, parks, open spaces, nature preserves, cultural facilities and interpretive programming through the development of trails, pathways and enhanced amenities. 3. Increase the share of new visitors to the region and the amount of money they spend per visit by growing and diversifying local restaurant, convenience, and personal service businesses along primary travel routes, and adjacent to regional destinations. 4. Promote the redevelopment of declining, blighted and abandoned areas with local communities. 5. Encourage collaboration toward a cohesive and shared Southeast Indiana regional brand among tourism bureaus and EDOs in our region for talent attraction.



<p>GOAL 3- INFRASTRUCTURE Increase regional infrastructure capacity and reach by 10% to ensure that our regional transportation and utility infrastructure systems are safe, efficient and meet the needs of our current and future residents and businesses.</p>	<p>GOAL 3 STRATEGIES- INFRASTRUCTURE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain and modernize existing transportation and utility infrastructure systems that serve currently developed areas of the region. 2. Expand and improve vehicular and waterborne transportation routes and utility infrastructure systems to support and facilitate development in appropriate and prioritized suburban and rural areas. 3. Support and facilitate infrastructure system improvements that will connect existing regional activity centers to one another and to our existing communities. 4. Improve, expand and promote broadband access to increase digital use and literacy across the region. 5. Leverage railroad assets in consideration of areas for new industrial parks and infrastructure development.
<p>GOAL 4- BUSINESS RETENTION, GROWTH, AND ATTRACTION Grow our regional target industries by adding 2,500 jobs by 2030 through business recruitment, expansion, and attraction efforts in an effort to increase the per capita income by 2.50% per year.</p>	<p>GOAL 4 STRATEGIES- BUSINESS RETENTION, GROWTH, AND ATTRACTION</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote the State Road 1 Corridor as an ideal location for agribusiness and value-added agriculture operations that protect rural character while creating new jobs. 2. Increase the availability of shovel-ready commercial and industrial development sites throughout the regional market. Utilize existing high-capacity infrastructure at key industrial development sites, including the former coal fired power plant site at Tanners Creek in Lawrenceburg. 3. Support rural small business development efforts at a local level to foster quality of place and community livability. 4. Support the development of robust business accelerator and incubator resources, such as scaling up the City of Lawrenceburg/Main Street/ISBDC Small Business Sherpa Program to work county-wide or regionally. 5. Partner with local employers, K-12 educators, secondary and skill training programs and local governments to build out available career pathway systems to support employee retention and growth.
<p>GOAL 5- CHILD CARE Expand access to quality and affordable child care and early education programs by 10% percent each year.</p>	<p>GOAL 5 STRATEGIES- CHILD CARE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support the review of local regulatory policies to identify opportunities for, and obstacles to, child care programs. 2. Utilize partnerships and economic development tools to help overcome the financing challenges of improving local child care infrastructure. 3. Partner with local employers, community organizations and philanthropic foundations to support the maintenance and development of child care facilities, and the child care workforce.



	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Leverage local, state and federal funding opportunities to support the development, construction, renovation and maintenance of child care staff and facilities. 5. Allow more families to afford a stay-at-home parent by raising wages and increasing economic opportunity within the region.
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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	\$ 490,500,000.00
Requested READI 2.0 funds	\$ 78,000,000.00
Anticipated matching funding sources	\$ 412,500,000.00
Private funding	\$ 325,000,000.00
Philanthropic	\$ 8,500,000.00
Local Funding	\$ 78,500,000.00
Other State funding	\$ 500,000.00
Federal funding	\$ 0.00
Percentage of anticipated READI funding towards rural and rural-mix communities	45%
Percentage of anticipated READI funding towards disadvantaged communities	55%



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

Action plans

GOAL 1 ACTION PLAN- HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Cornerstone Project-

Spires Senior Village, Oldenburg, IN: This \$15.2 million investment is a planned 62-unit senior living community in Oldenburg, Indiana. The project envisions an adaptive reuse of historic buildings, with considerable common space and on-site amenities to create one of the most unique living environments within the region.

Short to midterm

Supplement previously collected data at local and county levels by conducting a regional housing and market demand study that identifies the following:

- Existing housing inventory including type, age, tenure and value;
- Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky market share opportunities;
- Strategic and prioritized locations for new residential growth;
- Assessment and feasibility of infrastructure needs to spur housing and neighborhood development in priority areas;
- Inventory of existing regional residential home-buying and rehabilitation programs;
- Identify all underutilized programs and resources available to our region including Redevelopment Tax Credits, IHEDA, and the Residential Infrastructure Fund;
- Prioritized listing of key regionally significant housing priorities and direct implementation plans including all regional partners; and
- Involve local communities, real estate experts, and government officials to gain insights and support throughout the process.

Establish a financial program for first-time homebuyers by the end of 2026 using both local private/public resources and possibly other program monies available through grants from ICHDA and USDA Rural Development Services.

Work with local elected officials, redevelopment commissions, and housing developers to build awareness and support of housing incentive programs including TIF, IEDC Redevelopment Tax Credits program, IHEDA, and IFA Residential Infrastructure Fund.

Long term

Establish a cooperative regional land banking program to identify, acquire, hold, manage and redevelop tax-delinquent or abandoned properties, municipal government transfers, donations, or open-market purchases.

Establish a regional incentive and/or resource program to redevelop land banked properties into attainable, single-family housing units.



GOAL 2 ACTION PLAN- CULTURE, TOURISM, RECREATION & LIFESTYLE

Cornerstone Project-

Lawrenceburg Riverwalk, Lawrenceburg, IN: This \$26.5 million investment includes a public space along the Dearborn Trail and the Ohio River, offering opportunities for walking, biking, dining, and enjoying the outdoors.

Short to midterm

Complete all planned and in-progress trail projects according to adopted timelines and prioritize projects that connect municipalities to one another.

Supplement previously collected data at local and county levels by conducting a regional trail, pathways and blueways master plan that identifies the following:

- Identification of existing trail/pathways that connect the region to SE Ohio and Northern Kentucky;
- Proposed routing and connectivity recommendations including design standards;
- Needed right-of-way or land acquisition to complete gaps; and
- Update estimated design and construction costs per priority phase.

Pursue state and local resource and grant opportunities such as the IDNR Next Level Trails program for priority segments.

Continue to attend regional trail/pathway/waterway meetings such as the West Region Blueway & Trail System to uncover opportunities, grant funding, and best practices.

Establish a priority listing of regionally significant parks, and recreational amenity needs through the development of municipal and county 5 Year Park Master Plans.

Execute the recommendations of the Ohio River Way's 2021 River Town Review reports to support activation of Ohio River shoreline and accelerate the rejuvenation of regional River Towns.

Execute the recommendations of the Aurora and Versailles Hotel Feasibility Studies by marketing priority sites to hospitality development teams.

Long term

Establish a regional park and/or trail district that can focus on key portions of regional trail systems including connections between municipalities, across county boundaries and across state lines.

Establish a regional land trust to own, hold and manage areas of land for the development of recreational amenities, and the preservation of unique geological features.



GOAL 3 ACTION PLAN- INFRASTRUCTURE

Cornerstone Project-

Rising Sun Electrical Improvements, Rising Sun, IN: This \$6 million investment includes the upgrade, modernization, and expansion of the Rising Sun Electric Utility System. The upgraded infrastructure will allow for future development, in the realm of housing, commercial, and industrial opportunities.

Short to Mid Term

Establish a SEI Infrastructure Loan Fund to make capital improvements and infrastructure projects more attainable to local. Utilize this fund as a way to educate regional stakeholders on proactive infrastructure planning and investment.

Implement the recommendations of the SR 1 Corridor Plan by constructing enhancements to the Town of St. Leon wastewater system, the North Dearborn Water Corporation, and by completing the proposed road extension within the Dearborn County Redevelopment Commission St. Leon-Kelso Township TIF District.

Leverage READI 1.0 and SIRPC regional investment by registering providers, businesses and residents with the Affordable Connectivity Program and the Indiana Connectivity Program, to ensure SEI residents and employers have reasonable access to quality, affordable and reliable broadband services.

Serve as an advocate and liaison to local and regional gas, electric, and telecommunications providers regarding planned and potential development projects so they may expand their networks accordingly.

Partner with INDOT to promote local interests and advocate for desired improvements to State Road 1, State Road 46, and the Interstate 74 interchange.

Assist local communities with OCRA Stellar Pathway applications starting in 2024 by providing technical assistance and financial planning support.

Long Term

Leverage the \$100 million state investment in Link 101 by providing a regionally coordinated vision for growth and development along the SR 101 corridor following the conclusion of the NEPA process in 2026.

Support the redevelopment of the 725-acre former Tanners Creek Power Plant by identifying an ideal end-use and accordingly providing capital resources, incentives, and marketing support.



GOAL 4- ACTION PLAN BUSINESS RETENTION, GROWTH, AND ATTRACTION

Cornerstone Project-

Southeastern Career Center, Versailles, IN: The Southeastern Career Center has operated since 1966 as a critical workforce development asset for Southeast Indiana. The proposed \$11 million investment to the facility will allow for modernizations to many 1960s era electrical and mechanical components which will enable the building and programs to grow and serve the region in an enhanced capacity.

Short to Mid Term

Establish a SEI READI Regional Growth Revolving Loan Fund or utilize an existing revolving loan fund framework within the region to make economic development projects more attainable and assist LEDO's, ISBDC, Main Street organizations, chambers of commerce, and others in their mission of adding jobs, attracting talent and growing the Southeast Indiana economy. Utilize this fund as a way to educate regional stakeholders on proactive infrastructure planning and investment. The fund may also generate income to wholly or partially support an SEI regional growth strategies director or SEI READI staff.

Work with the Southeastern Career Center to upgrade and modernize their facility and equipment to support continued program growth and overall student capacity.

Develop a pipeline of next generation agriculture workers by strengthening partnerships and co-facilitating events and programs with local FFA Chapter staff and members.

Work with Indiana Small Business Development Center – Agriculture Initiative (ISBDC-AG) and Purdue Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) to identify and map companies and suppliers operating in the region so that we can expand, diversify and grow our region's niche industries.

Work with the Indiana State Department of Agriculture and new Indiana Economic Development Ag Council to advance recommendations of the I-74 Business Corridor 2023 I-74 Region Ag Strategy.

Long Term

Establish, fund and staff a regional economic development organization to advance regional business attraction and retention initiatives.

GOAL 5- ACTION PLAN CHILD CARE

Cornerstone Project-

Switzerland County Childcare, Vevay, IN: The \$2.6 million investment would be used to modify available space in the community center to accommodate daycare services. With the completion of this project, it will become Switzerland County's first childcare center.

Short to Mid Term

Support SIRPC as they collect, and share pertinent data and metrics on childcare capacity, quality, staff wages and overall challenges to state and federal agencies.

Continue marketing appropriate development sites within or adjacent to employment hubs for the creation of



new childcare facilities.

Share data, implementation strategies and lessons learned from the recently introduced Indiana FSSA Office of Early Childhood and Out of School Learning grant program with regional employers-especially those with skilled trades such as hospitals and schools- in anticipation of future programs and resource opportunities.

Strengthen the existing partnerships with the United Way of Greater Cincinnati - Southeast Indiana and Indiana United Ways and support their efforts to advance SEI childcare centers as they progress along the Indiana Paths to Quality rating system.

Long Term

Partner with IVY Tech and the Southeastern Career Center to develop and implement curriculum and employee skill/ upskilling programs to support childcare and early learning programming and facility opportunities.

Encourage redevelopment commissions and other entities in economic development site and business park preparation to consider reserving acreage for child care center construction.

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

Based on our initial Request for Project Information, which polled project sponsors on their intended regional projects and initiatives, SEI READI plans to match our requested \$78 million READI award at a ratio of nearly 6:1. Our anticipated financial portfolio includes the following preliminary commitments: 1:1 Local/ Public Match- Our region will provide a 1:1 match at a minimum using local funds. We are fortunate to have several communities supplemented by riverboat revenues, tourism bureaus and TIF funds which provides flexibility and diversity in our revenue streams. Additionally, Dearborn County has received \$20 million in funds from St. Elizabeth Healthcare, for the purchase of the former Dearborn County Hospital. These funds currently have no long-term commitments. We have the ability to commit funds in both the short and long term and we see no major challenges reaching the required public match threshold. While in READI 1.0 our communities heavily relied on ARPA funding, we acknowledge that those funds are now unavailable. Our communities are fiscally responsible, and are committed to investing in our local infrastructure and development systems. Our region anticipates seeing over \$320 million in private investment based on our initial project discovery process- exceeding the 4:1 required match. With an emphasis on housing developments, we see the ability to partner with single-family and multi-family developers to increase our overall housing availability. With our region's continued efforts towards providing ample infrastructure capacity, we see READI investment dollars funding site development costs, which can then be leveraged against private development investment in the long run. We expect to see participation from our civic institutions, key employers, and higher education institutions including Ivy Tech Community College and the Southeastern Career Center. Philanthropic Contributions- Our region is rich with community partners including Dearborn County Community Foundation, Franklin County Community Foundation, Ohio County Community Foundation, Ripley County Community Foundation, Switzerland County Community Foundation, Union County Community Foundation, Rising Sun Regional Foundation, United Way of Greater Cincinnati - Southeast Indiana, United Way of Whitewater Valley, Indiana United Ways Lilly Endowment Capital Construction Grant, and the Versailles Tyson Fund. Our partners are



committed to supporting our regional initiatives in whatever way possible, whether that be through financial contributions, technical assistance, or grant development services. Our initial project discovery process estimated that \$8.4 million would be invested through our philanthropic partners. While not available for READI funding considerations, our philanthropic partners are continuing to support our efforts through technical assistance and outreach including recent opportunities like the Indiana FSSA Employer-Sponsored Child Care Fund. Recently our region's strategic work was celebrated with a total of \$550,000 in grant awards through the FSSA program.

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

Following a READI award, the region is committed to facilitating a phased, multi-year project intake process that identifies short- and long-term initiatives that benefit the region as a whole over a sustained time period. The phased approach is intended to immediately invest in shovel ready initiatives, while allowing ample time to develop other significant efforts as a larger, regional team. Funding provided to short term efforts will provide much needed gap funding to those projects that are shovel ready but lack their complete capital stack. We envision that these projects will provide local and regional significance by creating new opportunities for housing and job creating businesses. Through these short-term efforts, our region will see an initial increase in population and employment and higher hourly wages. This effort will also create additional tax revenue for our local communities and counties which will fund local improvements moving forward. As a component of the phased approach, the SEI region is also prioritizing long-term efforts that may need additional time to be deemed shovel ready. To support these projects and initiatives, SEI READI is committed to establishing a revolving loan program to ensure overall regional resilience and sustainability. At a minimum, a total of 20% of our READI 2 award will be set aside to fund a long-term revolving loan program. Based on regional project interest, and overall projected revenue returns for the SEI region, we are open to increasing the seed funding for the program if warranted. Our goal is to utilize the loan program as a way to maximize our implementation capacity even though we recognize that this will result in a more long-range timeline for project development and construction. While we expect to build upon the framework of existing loan programs used within the region today, we also want to ensure that our financing program is structured in a way that benefits not only our communities but SEI READI Inc. The phased funding approach will allow our regional leaders and experts to formulate a program that is fiscally sound and mutually beneficial. New project intakes (for both short and long-term efforts) will build upon the SEI READI Request for Project Information conducted in November/ December 2023. The second, more in-depth process will require project sponsors to supply more detailed information on their project including proof of financing, letters of support and preliminary engineering/ design documents. We foresee that this process will be modeled off a traditional development RFP solicitation. This intake process will be facilitated through a direct invitation and will require municipal coordination and support. A project committee will be formed to review and score all submitted projects. The committee will include stakeholders from the region which may include municipal leaders, major employers, the SEI READI board and LEDO representatives. Additionally, representatives from the IEDC and other applicable state agencies, will be asked to participate in the scoring and review of submittals. This partnership approach provides greater intentionality for meeting state goals, leveraging available local, regional and statewide resources and will ensure that other activities occurring or planned to occur within individual communities and surrounding regions remain in alignment with the actions of the SEI READI Board of Directors. Submitted projects will be evaluated against state and regional goals, regional significance, funding leveraging and overall economic impact. To ensure that the region maximizes their available funds,



projects and initiatives that utilize our proposed revolving loan program will be given a higher priority.

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 proposed regional goals, strategies and action items are poised to leverage additional local, state and federal investments in the following ways: By supporting and advancing state-wide initiatives and investments: *I-74 Business Corridor Regional Agriculture Strategy *Link 101 Corridor Through the execution and completion of in-progress regional efforts: *SIRPC 2022 SEI Regional Digital Inclusion Plan *SIRPC 2019 SEI State of Broadband Report*OCRA's Hoosier Enduring Legacy Program- Brookville and Franklin County designated*Brookville Main Street success with OCRA PreservINg Main Street funding award*SR 1 Corridor Plan*Dearborn County exploration of a county-wide pursuit of OCRA Stellar Pathways in 2024 or beyond*Completion of Lawrenceburg Liberty Theater renovations*Indiana FSSA Employer-Sponsored Child Care Fund program selections Through the utilization of improved community facilities and educational programs:*Lil' Patriots Preschool Program*United Way of Southeast Indiana Early Education Access Project*Liberty Theater Redevelopment*Versailles Pocket Park By realizing and leveraging the increased capacity from completed infrastructure efforts:*Golden Road Infrastructure Expansions*Dearborn Regional Sewer District Plan Modernizations and Improvements*South Dearborn Regional Sewer District *SR 148 Kopp Farm Sewer Infrastructure*Brookville Sewer Extension*Union County Water and Sewer Extension*North Dearborn Water Authority Expansion*Sunman Sanitary Sewer Extension

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

In our READI 1.0 effort we did not have ample time to engage with our stakeholders in a detailed and meaningful way. Specifically missing from our previous engagement efforts were key elected leaders, and CEOs of our region's employers and industries, including our area's largest employers Rising Star Casino and Resort, Perfect North Slopes and St. Elizabeth Dearborn Hospital. To correct this, at the onset of the READI 2.0 process, the SEI READI region engaged in a stakeholder mapping exercise to identify all pertinent organizations, departments and agencies that support talent development, attraction and retention efforts throughout the southeast Indiana region. This list of nearly 200 entities included the following entities: Talent Development: PreK to 12 school corporations, non-school based facilities and programs including local YMCA's and libraries, adult development centers and programs, and other professional development organizations. Talent Attraction: Region-wide employers of varying sizes and scales, business support organizations including local chamber of commerce, arts and entertainment agencies, Main Street and Tourism Bureaus and recreation-based organizations and destinations. Systems Building: Philanthropic organizations and foundations, economic development agencies and commissions, municipal offices and redevelopment commissions and both public and private utility departments/ districts. The comprehensive stakeholder network was invited to participate in one of eight stakeholder discussions. The discussions were organized by topic, allowing stakeholders to provide more detailed information on housing, development,



infrastructure, recreation/ culture, workforce needs and childcare. In total over 100 individuals participated in the discussions. Three separate surveys were also utilized to gain information on overall regional conditions and priorities, the needs of emerging professionals and area youth and regional child care capacity and quality. In total, 576 individuals participated with representation coming from all six counties and surrounding areas of influence. Stakeholders remained involved in the plan development by submitting information on potential regional initiatives through a Request for Project Information. The exercise allowed regional stakeholders to review and discuss initiatives with county LEDO's and SEI READI team members. Following a collaborative discussion, stakeholders were then invited to share information on their project for consideration in developing the region's funding recommendation outlined within this READI 2.0 application. To continue to bolster stakeholder engagement while fostering energy and excitement about this work, two additional sessions were provided to summarize the engagement and input efforts to date, outline the Region's READI 2.0 priorities and goals, and collect input on specific ways in which the region can continue to move forward in the future.

How do you plan to maintain stakeholder engagement?

SEI READI is committed to maintaining and advancing our stakeholder engagement in the following ways: Through their traditional roles, county LEDO's and SIRPC staff will provide ongoing coordination and outreach to regional and local stakeholders, acting as a funnel of information up to the SEI READI Board as necessary. The existing www.SoutheastIndiana.org website will continue to be used as a primary platform for information sharing. All SEI READI Board meeting agenda and minutes will be shared, with specific project information being provided and regularly updated. Press releases, social media, and targeted communication efforts will continue to ensure that the region is made aware of project information, key decisions and overall program updates. The SEI READI Board of Directors will continue to meet monthly to report on regional activities, opportunities and the advancement of specific initiatives. Regional stakeholders may request to attend and address the SEI READI Board during their monthly meetings. Upon request, meeting agendas and summaries can also be provided.

How will the organization sustain itself?

SEI READI Inc. will continue to oversee all READI 1.0 and READI 2.0 projects moving forward, with board members volunteering their time and talents. Additionally, through their traditional roles, county LEDO's and SIRPC staff will provide ongoing coordination and outreach as necessary. To fund operational expenses for the organization, which are limited, SEI READI will continue to rely on county financial contributions that are based on a per capita rate assigned to each county. As new regional initiatives are identified and prioritized, fundraising expectations and processes will be adjusted and implemented as needed. Outside of operational expenses, SEI READI is committed to creating a program to ensure long-term support for regionally significant projects. We are committed to establishing a regional revolving loan program with a portion of our READI 2 award. Through this fund, we will be able to leverage and maximize our one-time award. As proceeds from loan repayments flow back into the fund, they will become available to lend again which will create a sustainable funding source for our region's long-term needs. Additionally, we are committed to exploring ways to utilize additional programs, and resources to fund staffing and fund oversight. These opportunities may include loan origination fees, closing costs, or financing fees. While we do not anticipate that these funds would create a large surplus to fund new initiatives, we do hope that these fees could cover staffing and legal expenses



associated with the implementation of the loan fund itself.

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

N/A



Part V: Outcomes, KPIs and Metrics

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

With an anticipated total investment of over \$450 million with a second round of READI funds, our region stands to improve and accelerate our projected growth patterns. Based on a high-level economic input analysis generated utilizing IMPLAN economic impact modeling software, our initial READI 2 project considerations, the region and our local communities could expect to see the following changes over the next five years.*10% growth in overall population; *12% growth in total housing units;*22.5% increase in the number of rental housing options*Increase in percentage of available affordable rental and for-purchase homes;*Increase in per capita income; *Increase in amount of developed and redevelopment land;*Increase in local tax revenue at the city, Town and County level; and*Over 12 million visitors (2.5 million per year) to our destinations and attractions; *Increased mileage of trails and pathways along the Ohio River basin;*Preserved state cultural facilities including local downtowns;*Greater economic opportunity for the region.By supporting and implementing additional regional and state-wide efforts including the I-74 Business Corridor Regional Agriculture Strategy our region stands to become a leader in the Agricultural industry by further developing a strong agricultural workforce, an expanded food supply chain and a more adaptable regulatory environment for agribusiness and industries.The projects have the potential to generate tangible impacts for the Southeast Indiana Region as a result of the direct employment generated, and the capital investment in the projects.

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	125,115	137,627	151,389
Total Employment	64,356	70,792	77,871
Per capita income	\$ 50,092.00	\$ 55,101.00	\$ 60,611.00
Educational attainment	18,233	20,056	22,062
Total new housing units	-44	6,534	6,003
New rental housing units	9,533	11,655	12,820
New owner-occupied housing units	453	3,961	4,352
Percentage of affordable housing units	61.96%	62.07%	66.08%



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.

The SEI Region intends to leverage the previous investment in the United Way of Southeast Indiana Early Education Access Project to further extend the United Way of Greater Cincinnati-Southeast Indiana's working Building Blocks Creative Curriculum program. program is currently increasing accessibility and affordability of pre-K and childcare centers by increasing the number of slots available, moving centers higher on the Indiana Paths to Quality scale, and allowing for more opportunities to use On My Way Pre-K vouchers. The vouchers and new opportunities for private pay will make the new childcare slots sustainable. Our region has recently been awarded \$800,000 in FSSA and Early Learning Indiana funds to support the development of childcare and early childhood centers. Through this work we will actively increase the overall capacity of childcare in partnership with our regional employers including the Sunman-Dearborn Community School Corporation.

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

The region has several projects that will assist in development of new technologies that boost the region's competitiveness related to innovation and business start-ups including: *The Lawrenceburg Business Sherpa Program which is spearheaded by the City of Lawrenceburg, ISBDC Southeast, and Lawrenceburg Main Street. The program provides a guiding hand to entrepreneurs and helps them succeed with locations in downtown Lawrenceburg. *Main Street Revitalization projects in Lawrenceburg and Brookville have helped to foster an environment for entrepreneurs over the last several years. *A strong relationship with Ivy Tech with an advanced manufacturing lab located at the Lawrenceburg Lakefront Campus. *The West Harrison Business Park Site Readiness Acceleration expects to continue to grow at a rate of at least three new large employer business attraction projects over the next ten years.*Anticipating growth within the medical profession space, including construction and equipment within Switzerland County.

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

N/A



General Information

Legal Name as registered with Indiana Secretary of State (Region Name)	SEI READI, Inc.
Business Structure	NFP
List counties within your region	Dearborn, Franklin, Ohio, Ripley, Switzerland, and Union
Website	southeastindiana.org

Primary Contact Information

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