

VISION

We are West Central, a destination for individuals seeking a place to visit and, more importantly, a choice place to live.

On the cusp of significant transformation, the West Central Indiana region is blooming with opportunity. Located on the Illinois border, West Central Indiana is positioned to host visitors, benefit from their stay, and re-deploy those dollars to help advance quality of life initiatives in the region.



CLAY • PARKE • SULLIVAN • VERMILLION • VIGO

WEST CENTRAL INDIANA

Through regional planning executed since the Regional Cities initiative in 2016, the communities which make up the Wabash River RDA recognize their role in Indiana's economy as a place of destination. Through the planning process first conducted in 2017, to the newest plan adopted in 2021, the counties are not only taking notice to their unique assets but learning how to utilize them collectively to enhance the quality of life for those choosing the region as their home.

REGIONAL COLLABORATION & AREAS OF FOCUS

As we look to the future, the regional plan defined areas of opportunity through additional planning and studies. These efforts include the Grow Up in West Central Indiana Regional Childcare Strategic Plan, West Central Indiana Housing Study, collaboration and communication with the Presidents of the Higher Education Institutions and local school corporations, and feasibility studies on projects such as the West Central Indiana Recreation and Wellness Complex. The resulting information guided the Wabash River RDA to focus on:

1. Early Childhood Education
2. Educational Attainment & Workforce Training
3. Housing
4. Destination & Recreational Development



REGIONAL ASSETS

The region's strategic planning process showcased two key categorical assets that make West Central Indiana stand above other regions: higher education and destination development.



HIGHER EDUCATION

With **over 15,000 students calling the region home**, the business community through The Intern Experience – a new program adopted within West Central Indiana through partnership with the IDDC and the Indiana Chamber – is finding direct connections between students and employers by offering an engaging community-focused and network-building program to maximize the talent pipeline for employers. A recent study conducted by Zippia research indicated that 70% of interns are hired at the same company they interned with, and former interns are 15% less likely to be unemployed. This statistic, along with others from Work and Learn Indiana, indicate we can do better.

The higher education institutions in the region, like Indiana State University, Ivy Tech Community College, Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, and Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, provide valuable assets for community development and workforce training in various fields such as liberal arts, town-gown relationships, manufacturing and engineering, all contributing to the state's population growth strategy.

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

The second undeniable category, destination development, has a history beyond our regional identity. The natural assets of the region along with the foresight of leadership in this space proves financially fruitful, while offering quality of life assets that are critical to retaining talent.

In 2023, the region was host to nearly two million visitors, from sporting events to parent weekends at the four institutions, and more. Noteworthy national events, such as the Nike Cross Country Meet at the Lavern Gibson Cross Country Course and the Newport Antique Auto Hill Climb, alongside the influx of thousands of summer visitors from Illinois to Lake Sullivan, contribute significantly to the region's vibrancy. These events present valuable opportunities for small businesses to directly engage with visitors while also catering to the needs of the local population. Furthermore, it is important to recognize Vigo County's role as an urban hub within the rural region, facilitating the provision of essential quality-of-life resources.

This is not a new concept. However, the destination development strategy recognized in the regional planning process directly connects the counties best natural assets and upcoming venues as economic resources, offering young college graduates, hungry entrepreneurs, families, and seniors alike a place they want to live. With the upcoming opening of the casino, a wellness and recreation center on the horizon, the redevelopment of Terre Haute's mall, and the start of riverfront development plan, **the visiting population is expected to quadruple in size in the next five years.**



GOALS & STRATEGIES

1 Utilize the insights from the Regional Housing Analysis to advance housing development in West Central Indiana.

Work alongside regional partner, Thrive West Central, in leveraging data-driven initiatives and partnerships to address housing needs by supporting below-market-rate homes, promoting infill housing, easing market-rate construction, and incentivizing senior housing development.

2 Increase childcare accessibility and availability in West Central Indiana by collaborating with our regional childcare task force, as established through the Grow Up in West Central Indiana Initiative.

Support Grow Up in West Central Indiana Child Care task force to expand access to licensed childcare providers, support childcare programs via local employers and organizations, enhance early childhood education and workforce development opportunities, and secure resources for sustainability and program scalability.

3 Create innovative initiatives to enhance educational attainment, workforce training, and entrepreneurial endeavors within the region.

Facilitate advanced education and training for adult learners, enhance educational offerings through regional institutions, promote community-focused intern programs to attract talent, and align community college programs with advanced manufacturing needs to meet workforce demands effectively.

4 Develop the region as a destination where individuals want to live, work, and play.

Create a regional atmosphere attractive to young professionals, families, and seniors, leveraging feasibility studies to develop the region for living, working, and recreation, promoting downtown revitalization, and enhancing destination development and recreation assets to benefit the community, education institutions, and aging population.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

To measure the success of the identified regional goals, the following KPIs will be utilized by the Wabash River RDA and its regional partners:

- Population Growth and Retention
- Per Capita Income
- Educational Attainment Rates

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

In conclusion, the vision for West Central Indiana embodies a commitment to strategic planning and collaboration. By harnessing its unique assets and working together across counties, the region is poised for significant transformation. Through initiatives like the READI program, West Central Indiana is not only becoming a premier destination but also a thriving community for residents and visitors. The Wabash River RDA's READI 2.0 Proposal promises to spur economic growth, community development, and an enhanced quality of life for generations to come.



Part II: READI 1.0 Evaluation

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

Prior to READI 1.0, West Central Indiana engaged with stakeholder groups as well as leaders within the contiguous communities to develop a plan to move West Central Indiana forward as a region. Through two initiatives, we met with stakeholders and held community forums to learn our region's strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities. The first initiative occurred in 2018 through the formation of the West Central Indiana Partnership (WCIP; formerly West Central 2025). The purpose of WCIP was to create an action-oriented network of individuals and groups that are familiar with each other's regional assets and advance opportunities together. In an effort to share the vision, promote regionalism, and gain the trust of each individual community, 17 meetings were held in the six-county region with local leadership including governments, economic development corporations, chambers, community foundations, businesses, and non-profit organizations. In 2020, Thrive West Central received funding through the Economic Development Administration (EDA) CARES Act Recovery Assistance grant to launch Resilient, a regional recovery and resiliency plan to help our communities thrive. Resilient serves as a guide for communities within our region as they look to emerge from the pandemic and work to rebuild their communities. A comprehensive data collection process was conducted using dynamic surveys and community forums, held in person and virtual, to discover our communities' strengths, challenges they faced due to the results of the COVID-19 pandemic, and determine solutions moving forward. With the completion of the forums and second survey, the Resilient economic recovery plan analyzed the collected data and launched the plan in 2022. Through these intentional conversations with community leaders, shovel-worthy projects were collected for the READI 1.0 proposal. Considering the amount received was considerably less than the amount requested, the RDA's leadership team met with every stakeholder to determine which projects/initiatives needed funding to move forward, and which projects/initiatives could meet success with some funding available. This required an analysis of every opportunity presented. Through that meeting process, the RDA moved forward with 24 projects/initiatives which could be successfully completed with some amount of funding from the READI program. The region received \$20.0 million and as of February 14th obligated \$17.65 million, disbursed \$4.1 million, and leveraged \$99.2 million. The portion not yet obligated is for the Homes for the Future pilot program, which has different requirements and processes as mini-grant program. These funds will be obligated no later than March 31, 2024, and the project will positively impact the total leverage amount of the region.

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

The Wabash River RDA was proud to be an early role model for the disbursement process across the state. The Wabash River region completed its first disbursement in October 2022. Additionally, this region was proud to have the first completed READI 1.0 project in the state. The Sullivan City Pool celebrated its project completion in August 2022 and received its full disbursement in funds in November 2022. At the time of the IEDC-hosted READI forum in March 2023, the Wabash River region was responsible for 1/3 of all funds disbursed across the state at that time. Due to economic circumstances beyond the control of the RDA and the project



stakeholders, its three largest construction projects became the last to obligate funds due to significant increases in interest rates and construction costs between the application process for READI 1.0 and the deadline for obligation of funds in the portal. The RDA successfully navigated these concerns alongside the project stakeholders, and all funds (aside from the Homes for the Future project) were obligated by December 31, 2023. Through this process, the RDA learned that having a protocol for including contingency costs in these large-scale projects is crucial to the accuracy of the budget and overall funding of the project. The RDA learned that to enhance the quality of life and place within our region, local and regional collaboration is imperative. Upon the completion of the READI 1.0 initiative, the RDA made a point to revise our current website to provide updated information on the RDA to provide a platform to showcase accomplishments, updates on meetings and projects, how to contact the RDA, and tell our region's story. Along with our website, the RDA makes regular updates on Facebook as another source of information sharing. These platforms allowed the RDA to prepare for the READI 2.0 initiative. To streamline processes for READI 2.0, the RDA established an application process that allowed stakeholders within their jurisdiction to apply for READI 2.0 funding. The RDA utilized the wabashriverrda.com website, social media, and local news outlets to distribute information announcing the application process, timelines, and where to access additional information. The RDA accepted FAQs from interested parties and released responses on the RDA's website for potential applicants. The full application opened in December 2023 and closed on February 1, 2024. The RDA provided application guidelines, application components, and a scoring rubric for applicants review as they developed their applications on their website. The RDA held an executive session and reviewed and scored all applications that were submitted utilizing the provided scoring rubrics. The RDA left this executive session with a clear understanding of what projects exist in each of the region's priority areas including project costs, matching funds, and KPIs.

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.

At the end of 2023, two new board members were appointed to the RDA from two member counties of Clay and Vermillion County. With these appointments, each county within the RDA now has representation on the board of directors. The RDA works closely with our local stakeholders and our regional groups, such as Thrive West Central and West Central Indiana Partnership, to pursue and support regional initiatives while providing support at the county level. A current weakness within our organization lies the challenges of sustainability and securing funding for administrative work. The ongoing operation of the Wabash River RDA demands a steady influx of resources and a sustainable framework. To address sustainability, we are proposing the implementation of a Membership Matrix program. This initiative aims to engage communities at various population levels. By establishing a structured membership framework, we can foster a sense of ownership and involvement among West Central Indiana Counties. Members will not only contribute financially but also offer expertise, networks, and advocacy efforts, thereby strengthening our sustainability and amplifying our funding avenues. Through this strategic approach, we can ensure the long-term viability of our organization while advancing our mission along the Wabash River corridor. The RDA is anticipating implementation of this strategy beginning Jan. 1, 2025. 150,000 to 100,000 - \$50,000-99,000 to 50,000 - \$35,000-49,000 to 20,000 - \$25,000-< 19,000 - \$15,000The RDA continues to work with RJL Solutions on administration of READI 1.0 funds and communications management such as website updates, social media strategies, and public relations. The RDA will continue to utilize RJL's services throughout the READI 2.0 process due to their familiarity with



working with the IEDC in administrating READI 1.0. Additionally, the RDA will continue to work with Thrive West Central as the organization's fiscal sponsor. As we look to the future, the RDA is partnering with the Wabash Valley Community Foundation through the Lilly Endowment, Inc.'s GIFT VIII initiative to develop a regional plan that will begin preparing the organization on "what's next" after implementing the vision and strategies identified within this application. This plan will be developed at the end of 2024 and is anticipated to launch at the end of 2025.



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	185,527
Total employment (U.S. Census Bureau)	3,020,345	66,775
Per capita income (Bureau of Economic Analysis)	\$ 51,645.95	\$ 45,495.00
Total population with bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau)	1,253,299	25,421
Total housing units (U.S. Census Bureau)	2,911,562	82,300
Total rental housing units (U.S. Census Bureau)	680,964	22,615
Total owner-occupied units (U.S. Census Bureau)	1,097,622	49,999
Number of new business start-ups (Small Business Development Center)	150,067	30

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.

West Central Indiana is no different in the challenges we face with childcare. In READI 1.0, the region included a Childcare project with Indiana Statue University (ISU) to increase capacity for early childhood education through the renovation of one of the buildings on their campus. In September 2023, ISU and Ivy Tech Community College announced “Grow Up In West Central Indiana – a Regional Childcare Strategic Plan.” The effort, generously supported in part by the Lilly Endowment’s College and Community Collaboration Initiative, seeks to identify strategic ways to support employers, families and childcare providers in our community and advance initiatives. The full plan is set to be completed in the Spring 2024. Data collected during this project’s planning phase shows there is no universal solution for the challenges and barriers within early learning. From wages to workforce pipeline to available seats to quality care, the impact is felt across the region. There are 8,729 children who may need care between infants and 5-year-olds in the region that has a 4,417 licensed capacity with 189 programs (2023). Through Grow Up In West Central Indiana, the region will identify strategies and action items that will better early childhood education within the region by addressing all aspects it impacts from providers, employers, and families. In addition, the Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce



Foundation was a recipient of the FSSA's Employer Sponsored Childcare grant that took a regional approach to assisting employers and employees through tuition benefits for high-quality care.

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 innovation ecosystem within West Central Indiana is preparing to accelerate in the coming years due to local and regional planning initiatives. The Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with the Indiana Destination Development Corporation, officially launched The Intern Experience that partners with our local businesses in the region to provide a community-focused and network-building programming for their interns with the ultimate goal to maximize the talent pipeline by improving hiring efficiencies and support community population growth. This will connect and support the pipeline for innovative and entrepreneurial initiatives within the region like: ·ION Program – West Central ISBDC and Terre Haute Chamber to support intentional outreach to strengthen outreach services to underserved businesses·Thrive's Spark Revolving Loan Fund Created through a 2022 grant from the EDA·West Central Business Hub bringing the Terre Haute Chamber, Station Coworking, Terre Haute MPO, Terre Haute EDC, and WorkOne under one roof·ENTEK Lithium Battery Separator Plant broke ground on its brand new \$1.5 billion Vigo County production facility and will create up to 642 new, high-wage careers by the end of 2027 and play a significant role in population growth·Black Business Alliance to empower, guide, promote, enhance, connect and grow Black business leaders and entrepreneurs throughout the West Central region·Rose-Hulman looks to build upon READI 1.0, ARPA, and EDA investment by developing an integrated complex called Innovation Grove, which will expand the entrepreneurial ecosystem for external clients, Rose-Hulman community, and beyond.

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

TOP 10 Employers: ·Vigo County School Corp·Union Health·Indiana State University·Great Dane·Elanco·GE Aviation·Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology·Amcore·Federal Bureau of Prisons·First Financial Bank
Coming Soon: Entek and Terre Haute Casino
Civic Institutions:·Indiana State University·Ivy Tech Community College – Terre Haute·Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology·Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College·Wabash Valley Community Foundation·Western Indiana Community Foundation ·Parke County Community Foundation·Duke Energy Foundation·Center Point Foundation·Oakley Foundation·Clara Fairbanks Foundation·Union Hospital Foundation·Local Development Agreement with Churchill Down·West Central Indiana Partnership·Thrive Foundation·United Way of the Wabash Valley·Goodwill·Vigo and Clay County YMCA·CenterPoint Energy Foundation·CANDLES Holocaust Museum and Education Center·Catholic Charities·Vigo County Education Foundation

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.

West Central Indiana disadvantaged communities by census tracts:·Parke County - 18121030300 (City of Rockville)·Vermillion County - 18165020500 (City of Clinton)·Vigo County - 18167000300 (City of Terre Haute) -



18167000400 (City of Terre Haute) - 18167000500 (City of Terre Haute) - 18167000600 (City of Terre Haute) - 18167000700 (City of Terre Haute) - 18167000900 (City of Terre Haute) - 18167001100 (City of Terre Haute) - 18167001200 (City of Terre Haute) - 18167001300 (City of Terre Haute) - 18167001500 (City of Terre Haute) - 18167001700 (City of Terre Haute) - 18167001800 (City of Terre Haute) - 18167001900 (City of Terre Haute) - 18167010202 (Northern Vigo County) - 18167010500 (West Terre Haute) - 18167011100 (City of Terre Haute) Rural and Rural-Mix Areas (Purdue University – Center for Regional Development)·Clay (rural)·Parke (rural)·Sullivan (rural)·Vermillion (rural)

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?

We utilized all \$20 million of the READI round one funding to complete as many projects and initiatives as possible toward our goals. Considering we were not fully funded, the RDA determined ways to build additional data on game-changing projects like the feasibility study of the regional Wellness and Recreation Center and the Homes for the Future Pilot program. The RDA and the regional stakeholder group (government, non-profit, K-12, higher education, business) worked together to fund new planning documents which allowed the RDA to deliver better processes in considerations for READI round two, and any other funding opportunities available to the region to meet the KPIs. With that, although the RDA and regional stakeholders are more informed on the implementation strategy, utilizing additional data and shared understanding, many of the projects not funded in READI round one are still vital to the region's overall success. Strategic regional planning around destination development, childcare, workforce, and housing helped the RDA make more informed decisions, not just about READI, but about all sources of revenue and incentives for private investment. Therefore, the biggest change from READI round one is the power of additional planning and data, which shows in the region's overall financial match. West Central Indiana is more attractive to the private sector, making any dollars invested in the region go much farther.

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: Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Key performance indicators	Region	Peer Community
Total population	185,527	110,602
Total employment	66,775	55,652
Per capita income	\$ 45,495.00	\$ 32,141.00
Total population with bachelor's degree or higher	25,421	25,619
Total housing units	82,300	53,652



Total rental housing units	22,615	22,970
Total owner-occupied housing units	49,999	18,632

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 RDA identified Tuscaloosa, Alabama as our benchmark community due to there “Elevate Tuscaloosa” initiative. This is the city’s initiative to invest \$500 million dollars over 30 years into bold projects that create a brighter future for our community. Launched in 2019, the vision of this initiative is to provide the resources the community needs to move towards an experience-based economy and remain an exceptional place to live, work, and play. The RDA specifically identified practices and strategies the city is utilizing that are similar to what the RDA is implementing in the West Central Indiana region. Through community engagement processes, the RDA identified our regional priorities through regional planning projects that were developed through community feedback and stakeholder conversations. The RDA works in conjunction with our partner regional groups, Thrive and WCIP, that are both comprised of local and regional stakeholders representing a variety of industries to provide well-rounded community perspective. The Elevate Tuscaloosa initiative identified strategic areas to invest in including education, cultural arts and tourism, parks and recreation, and connectivity. These four specific areas guide the advisory board in project decision making, similar to the processes established by our regional groups. In addition, the chosen benchmark community utilizes the “Elevate Tuscaloosa” brand to tell the story of the city and bolster support from community members and stakeholders. West Central Indiana has also moved forward with the development of the “We Are West Central” to unite our communities under one brand and one story to promote to visitors, tourists, businesses, organizations and more.

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.

The RDA is engaged in conversation on numerous studies that have identify barriers to regional growth. These plans assisted the RDA in developing our regional vision for the IEDC’s READI 2.0 initiative. Through Thrive’s Housing Study, key findings were: 1. There is a mismatch in the housing market. Not only is there not enough housing to meet a conservative estimate of future demand, but the region is also currently significantly oversupplied in the lower half of the market.2. A significant portion of existing housing in that lower end of the market is in poor condition and in need of repair or replacement.3. The market is not supporting sufficient new construction of the right variety, largely because the high cost of new homes is hard to support in a region with median incomes that lag behind much of the state.4. Demographic changes will drive the future market for housing as the baby boomer generation fully reaches retirement age in the next decade. Childcare continues to be a barrier of growth within the region. The Grow Up in West Central Childcare Strategic Plan strategically identifies ways to support employers, families, and childcare providers in our community and advance childcare initiatives. The plan, expected to be released in Spring 2024, included a dynamic survey, community forums, and one-on-one interviews with regional stakeholders to gather data to understand how the region can address the challenges and barriers. Key findings included:1. There is a lack of available spots



and other accommodation like flexible hours and age-appropriate programming.² There is an overall scarcity of available high-quality options that create barriers for families seeking access. ³ Costs of childcare and financial pressures on families that impact professional responsibilities and managing childcare expenses. ⁴ There is a struggle to attract and retain high-quality childcare workforce. The Resilient Study focused on the major regional challenges caused and exacerbated by the pandemic, with a specific focus on issues pertaining to population decline and lagging economic growth. The study identified four main themes of resiliency related challenges in the region that included: Workforce and business development, healthcare, quality of life and community needs, and education. The Excel Center provided data that over 10,000 adult individuals in Vigo without a high school diploma and over 26,000 in the region. Those who have a high school diploma can increase their earnings by 39% compared to their peers after 5 years. Graduates can earn up to \$10,000 more per year with a high school diploma. Graduates are 72% more likely to be employed than those without a high school diploma. Working with our community stakeholders, the region continues to align our comprehensive destination strategy with the IDDC to promote and tell Indiana's authentic story to attract and retain talent, students, businesses, and visitors. Identified in the Resilient Study and the Cultivating a young and dynamic workforce in Terre Haute Report, enhancing amenities in the region that are relevant to young, working professionals is imperative to attracting and retaining talent.

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

Through regional collaborative planning initiatives, the RDA highlighted the following four priority needs within our region upon reviewal of regional data and assessment of needs for our regional strategy:¹.Housing².Childcare³.Education and Workforce Development⁴.Destination and Recreational Development



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>Utilize the insights from the Regional Housing Analysis to advance housing development in West Central Indiana.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Utilize Thrive West Central's Housing Resource Hub as the data-driven initiative aimed at creating high-impact housing solutions through robust public-private partnership. 2. Support the development of new below-market-rate homes with assistance in land assembly and acquisition infrastructure, or financing. 3. Promote and facilitate infill housing development as a source of affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization. 4. Ease the construction of market-rate housing to fill a critical gap in the upper half of the region's market and facilitate movement in the housing market. 5. Incentivize and facilitate the development of senior housing to meet the needs of this growing population segment.
<p>Increase childcare accessibility and availability in West Central Indiana by collaborating with our regional childcare task force, as established through the Grow Up in West Central Indiana initiative.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase overall access to licensed childcare providers throughout the region 2. Promote, enhance, and support childcare programs throughout the region through local employers and organizations 3. Expand and promote early childhood education and workforce development opportunities: 4. Leverage available resources and funding and generate resources for sustainability and scale of programming.



<p>Create innovative initiatives to enhance educational attainment, workforce training, and entrepreneurial endeavors within the region.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Connect adult learners and employers with resources to encourage advanced education and training (CEDS, 2023-2027).2. Advance educational offerings through our regional higher education institutions and school corporations to promote future workforce development opportunities and provide increased programs through innovative technology and state-of-the-art facilities (Resilient, 2022).3. Promote “The Intern Experience” within West Central Indiana as an engaging community-focused and network-building programing to celebrate our interns and to showcase why West Central Indiana is a great place to live and introduce them to what life is like in West Central Indiana (CEDS, 2023-2027).4. Connect community college training and certification programs with advance manufacturing that allows for a higher yield of next generation manufacturing employees for this growing sector.
<p>Develop the region as a destination where individuals want to live, work, and play</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Develop a regional atmosphere that reflects the lifestyle conducive to the lifestyle of young, working professionals and families while advancing projects that provide a quality of life to the aging senior community.2. Build off results of feasibility studies awarded in READI 1.0 that determined feasible projects to develop West Central Indiana as a region to live, work and play.3. Encourage downtown revitalization and beautification projects (CEDS, 2023-2027).4. Enhance and promote destination development and recreation assets to support regional school corporations, higher education institution, aging population, and future generations.



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	\$ 60,045,535,538.80
Requested READI 2.0 funds	\$ 86,474,516.00
Anticipated matching funding sources	\$ 559,061,022.80
Private funding	\$ 368,042,654.00
Philanthropic	\$ 73,075,368.80
Local Funding	\$ 117,943,000.00
Other State funding	\$ 0.00
Federal funding	\$ 0.00
Percentage of anticipated READI funding towards rural and rural-mix communities	50.9
Percentage of anticipated READI funding towards disadvantaged communities	62.5



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

Housing

Strategy 1

1a. Work with nonprofit developers that are eligible for a variety of funding sources, some of which are limited to nonprofits like charitable donations and could implement a range of housing programs in conjunction with community partners. Certified Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs) are eligible for set-aside funds from HUD and IHEDA to use for acquisition, new construction, and or rehabilitation of rental housing or homebuyer property (Regional Housing Study, 2022).

Strategy 2

2a. Develop demonstration projects to provide opportunity to test and/or showcase new or improved housing development models, whether through innovative financing, construction methods, or piloting a new housing product (Regional Housing Study, 2022).

2b. Develop a land bank to improve the marketability of distressed properties. The role of the land bank can include land assembly, site preparation, holding strategic properties for later development, housing rehabilitation, or even property redevelopment (Regional Housing Study, 2022).

Strategy 3

3a. Encourage communities to promote strategic land acquisition and land assembly in older but attractive neighborhoods to share risks and provide appealing infill sites for new housing (Regional Housing Study, 2022).

Strategy 4

4a. Bring local zoning ordinances up-to-date to provide developers and investors the predictability they need to minimize risk and make a project attract (Regional Housing Study, 2022).

4b. Streamline the application and review process for local building and planning permits, including shortening timeline, and/or reducing fees for prioritized types of housing construction (Regional Housing Study, 2022).

4c. Utilize Residential Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and Tax abatements as tools to stimulate new housing construction and reduce costs of development to make projects feasible (Regional Housing Study, 2022).

Strategy 5

5a. Target home rehabilitation and improvement programs specifically to seniors by allowing them to make critical repairs or accessibility upgrades (Regional Housing Study, 2022).



Childcare/Early Learning

Strategy 1

- 1a. Decrease barriers to accessing childcare programs for all families (Childcare study, 2024).
- 1b. Increasing the number of high-quality providers by assisting existing providers with PTQ Levels 1 and 2 to achieve high-quality rankings (Childcare study, 2024).
- 1c. Provide support to families of children with special needs (Childcare study, 2024).

Strategy 2

- 2a. Increasing awareness of the impact of childcare to our local employers on community development and the local economy (Childcare study, 2024).
- 2b. Work with local Chambers to engage current and future employers in the conversation and promote the region's \$600,000 FSSA Employer Sponsor Child Care grant award to provide tuition benefits (Childcare study, 2024).

Strategy 3

- 3a. Recruit, retain, and promote a high-quality childcare and education workforce in partnership with our regional taskforce, local higher education institutions, and community organizations (Childcare study, 2024).
- 3b. Promote importance of early childhood education and childcare professionals (Childcare study, 2024).
- 3c. Research and analyze opportunities and constraints for early childhood staff (Childcare study, 2024).

Strategy 4

- 4a. Work with local community foundations to develop a community fund to create provider/programming grants for childcare (Childcare study, 2024).

Education and Workforce Development

Strategy 1

- 1a. Develop Goodwill Excel Center in the region and assess its effectiveness as a model for educational attainment (CEDS, 2023-2027).

Strategy 2

- 2a. Enhance mentorship program between retirees and entrepreneurs or business leaders within the community (CEDS, 2023-2027).
- 2b. Engage the private and public sector in the development early learning programs, project-based learning, experiential learning, internship, externships, leadership, mentoring, and other evidence-based educational programming to better prepare students for the workforce (CEDS, 2023-2027).
- 2c. Create new or expanded networking opportunities for entrepreneurs and improve outreach to entrepreneurs from underserved populations (CEDS, 2023-2027).
- 2d. Expand regional revolving loan fund (RLF) to cover the region (CEDS, 2023-2027).

Strategy 3

- 3a. Work with the Terre Haute Chamber to encourage businesses and organizations in the region to participate in The Intern Experience to market local employers to students.



Strategy 4

- 4a. Increase exposure to career pathways to students beginning in grade school (CEDs, 2023-2027).
- 4b. Convene 5 regional employer meetings to understand current and anticipated workforce needs (CEDs, 2023-2027).

Destination Development

Strategy 1

- 1a. Promote projects that encourage health and wellness opportunities including physical and mental wellbeing.

Strategy 2

- 2a. Promote the development of 5 new destination development facilities and attractions (CEDs, 2023-2027)

Strategy 3

- 3a. Continue partnerships with local government, Main Street organizations, neighborhood associations, local businesses, and chambers of commerce to promote vibrant downtown spaces where visitors and residents want to spend time.

Strategy 4

- 4a. Provide regional assets for community organizations (i.e. school corporations) that provide modern and equipped facilities to address regional infrastructure needs.
- 4b. Generation assets that positively impact regional health and wellness to improve overall quality of life and place.

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

The Wabash River RDA conducted a comprehensive process to collect projects within the identified focus areas from stakeholders across the region. Any individual, organization, business, or entity could submit a project; the project stakeholders that submitted applications included private businesses, non-profit organizations, municipalities and government agencies. These included city/county projects from all five counties, projects from institutions of higher learning, and projects that focused on childcare, housing, destination development, talent attraction and retention, workforce, etc. Based on current projections, the RDA anticipates meeting a nearly 8:1 match, above the 4:1 requirement; it is anticipated that 68% of the projects will be funded by private/philanthropic sources and 18% of the projects will be funded by local public entities. These public and private partners would serve as project stakeholders and be responsible for the implementation of various projects throughout the region. These private and public partners would not only provide a commitment of matching funds, but they would also provide a commitment to complete their respective projects within an identified timeframe, as well as track the KPIs of their projects. There are two projects on the horizon that give a great snapshot of the way the region is leveraging its private/public dollars for a larger



impact: (1) the West Central Indiana Recreation & Wellness Complex and (2) the Homes for the Future housing initiative: West Central Indiana Recreation & Wellness Complex This \$157m project will be a game changer for West Central Indiana. By developing the region as a destination, this project will bring new dollars into the region, allowing the region to grow in quality of life/place/opportunity initiatives that will positively impact the region's KPIs – growing the population and increasing the per capita income. K-12 schools are losing population to more urban areas who have better sports facilities. With \$45m in READI 2.0 funding dedicated to this project, the region will be able to leverage: potential \$15m in Lilly Endowment College and Community Collaboration (CCC) grant funding through Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College; \$20m in corporate funding and sponsorships; \$20m through strategic partnerships with the healthcare industry along with high-level corporate naming rights; and \$57.7m in public funding through Terre Haute, Vigo County, Capital Improvement Board, and Convention & Visitors Bureau, using funding mechanisms such as Food and Beverage Tax Revenue, Inn Keeper's Tax Revenue, Gaming Tax Revenue, and Redevelopment Funds. Homes for the Future This project incentivizes private development by providing home builders with up to 10% of housing projects to cover early infrastructure costs. The goal of this project is to produce 1190 units of new and rehabilitated housing units throughout our five-county RDA region by the end of 2026. It is anticipated that this project would have a 21:1 private versus public sector matching rate. In real dollars, that equates to \$254m in private sector investment to \$12m of public sector investment. By leveraging private investment dollars across multiple entities, the public dollars are stretched much farther than the average infrastructure project resulting in a stronger impact on the

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

When READI 2.0 was announced by the state, the Wabash River RDA immediately stepped into action to develop a proactive approach for identifying potential projects throughout the region. In November 2023, the RDA launched a portion of their website dedicated to READI 2.0 and the region's own application process. This included posting the application guidelines and the region's priorities, obtaining feedback via a question form, posting FAQs, posting the scoring rubric, and launching the full application, which was open from December 1, 2023 through February 1, 2024 (see attachment for all RDA READI 2.0 application materials). Throughout the application period, the RDA and its consultants met with any potential project stakeholder that requested time, whether it was through email, phone call, virtual or in-person meetings. The RDA intentionally made themselves available to field any questions and give every project stakeholder the best chance for success. No one was turned away. The Wabash River RDA received a total of 37 READI 2.0 applications, amounting to \$718,350,466.80 in total projects and \$119,792,158 in READI asks. Applications were scored by each RDA member based on the scoring rubric. Every project received was discussed in an Executive Session of the RDA on February 8, 2024. The day was divided into two parts – quantitative discussions (scores were tallied and averaged) and qualitative discussions (factors to consider outside of scoring). The day concluded with a prioritized list of projects, and the top projects within the region were identified and agreed upon as a group. It was important to the RDA that they had a strong understanding of the projects within the region and how those projects support the regional strategy and priorities of the region prior to meeting with the IEDC later this spring. The priority projects are impactful, quality initiatives that will change West Central Indiana for the better. The RDA is excited to review the projects with the IEDC to determine the best plan of action for funding. Other than to obtain additional information, project stakeholders will not receive any communication from the RDA on their projects; the RDA will not give project stakeholders any indication of their project scoring until final projects are chosen in collaboration with the IEDC. Understanding that the goal of the RDA



is to support impactful projects that will advance the region, applications that are not funded through READI 2.0 will be further reviewed to evaluate alternative funding mechanisms for the projects. The projects received were all deserving of funding, and the RDA hopes to help each one finds an alternate source of funding.

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.

Investments being leveraged within our regional projects include ARPA funding, the Lilly Endowment's College and Community Collaboration Grant and Gift VIII programs, the FSSA Employee Sponsored Childcare program, along with other sources including TIFF Revenue, Gaming Tax Revenue, Innkeeper's Tax, Food and Beverage Tax, and Redevelopment Funds. Projects like RHIT's Innovation Grove is set to foster additional trails, housing, and new business development with a high-tech focus, while the West Central Indiana Recreational and Wellness Facility is expected to spur additional neighborhoods with retail investment. These projects are located on the eastside of Terre Haute with proximity to both Brazil and Terre Haute I70 exits. Much of property is infrastructure ready, while some is located within both airport and city TIFF districts, connected to the Terre Haute Airport and nearby the new Terre Haute Casino. With the new 641 bypass, the Ivy Tech campus is located just ten minutes from the development. Additionally, the Wabash River Corridor is a key area of opportunity resulting in another regional draw. The City of Terre Haute and Vigo County are collaborating on a long-term riverfront plan which addresses blighted industrial properties, housing, and recreation. The Mill entertainment center sits directly on the riverfront, bringing in thousands of visitors each concert season, and is located within one mile of the Terre Haute Mall. The Mall is undergoing renovations with a motivated private stakeholder with its Sandbox Social business strategy, along with road improvements to better transportation and access off the HWY 41, I70 exit.

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.

Collaboration is at the heart of the West Central Indiana region. Through partnership with our regional groups, Thrive West Central and West Central Indiana Partnership, and our local stakeholders, the RDA communicates with our stakeholders throughout the implementation of our regional strategy. The RDA presented to the following groups and continues communications with stakeholders within the region: -West Central Indiana Partnership advisory board representatives include the Mayor of Terre Haute, Terre Haute Chamber, Mayor of Clinton, Vermillion County EDC, Thrive, Mayor of Sullivan, Parke County Commissioners, Clay County Chamber, business leaders, Partnership Parke County, Sullivan Chamber, and City of Brazil. -Community leaders and rotaries-Local elected officials (mayors, county commissioners, etc.)-Thrive West Central Board The RDA continues to communicate with Mayors and County Commissioners to remain current on local initiatives to understand how their priorities play into the regional vision. When requesting applications, the RDA opened the applications to all organizations and provided support to interested applicants by answering questions on the applications process through meeting with RDA members or their consultants. One of the challenges encountered in the West Central Indiana region is the disparity in planning efforts between rural and urban



communities. While our urbanized areas had made significant progress in their planning endeavors, our rural communities lagged behind. Recognizing the challenge, our local community foundations have played an imperative role in planning efforts throughout the region through the GIFT VIII initiative that plays an important role in growing financial resources to promote long-term viability and sustainability, further strengthen leadership capabilities, and develop and implement strategic programs, projects, and initiatives that enhance their communities' quality of life. Currently, all counties within the RDA region are partnering with their local community foundations to further planning efforts through the GIFT VIII initiative.

How do you plan to maintain stakeholder engagement?

As the region capitalizes on the regional "We Are West Central," we will continue to maintain stakeholder engagement through our website and social media by providing regular updates on the RDA, projects and initiatives. Our board meetings will continue to be open to the public to allow the public to hear directly from the board. Our RDA board members will remain active within the region by meeting with local elected officials and attending local and regional events on behalf of the RDA. Additionally, we will continue to the process we established in READI 1.0 on hosting virtual workshops for stakeholders as a part of our READI 2.0 initiative to ensure stakeholders are up to speed on timelines and important information.

How will the organization sustain itself?

As mentioned previously, the RDA will be proposing the implementation of a Membership Matrix program. This initiative aims to engage communities at various population levels. By establishing this structured membership framework, the RDA can foster a sense of ownership and involvement among West Central Indiana Counties. Through this strategic approach, the RDA will ensure the long-term viability of our organization while advancing our mission along the Wabash River corridor. This proposed strategy is anticipated to be implemented in January 2025.

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.

As shown in the membership matrix, the Wabash River RDA plans to implement a membership structure starting January 2025, promoting additional buy-in beyond READI dollars. These dollars will allow the RDA to hire a full-time regional director that will help advance the stakeholder group beyond just planning and fundraising. Through a regional planning process funded by Lilly Endowment Gift VIII, the RDA will have a new plan, which will highlight a five-to-ten-year implementation strategy and require additional accountability to meet the region's KPIs. The accountability will allow the plans to develop in a more collaborative manner, including all sectors of the community. In addition, it will allow the RDA to work at a timelier rate, including businesses and their funding interest. Understanding businesses want to invest in communities who are striving to increase population, and therefore workforce, the RDA sees value in incorporating them in not just the planning, but also the implementation phases.



Part V: Outcomes, KPIs and Metrics

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

The region has experienced minimal population retention over the past five years. Additionally, the average per capita income across the region is lower than the state average. While the region will track and review other KPIs, such as those surrounding housing and workforce, these two metrics will be key in measuring the success of the region’s initiatives. The region’s identified priorities of recreational tourism, housing, early childhood education, and educational attainment and workforce training give the RDA key areas of focus to improve these two metrics: total population and per capita income. Investing in recreational tourism attracts visitors, boosting local economies and creating job opportunities, indirectly supporting population growth. It also generates revenue, stimulating local businesses and increasing income opportunities for residents, while also improving property values and promoting homeownership, contributing to wealth accumulation. Housing investments provide affordable and accessible living options, attracting new residents and retaining existing ones. Childcare investments enable parents to work, increasing household income, fostering economic stability and encouraging families to settle. Educational attainment investments enhance workforce skills, attracting businesses and professionals, ultimately driving population growth by creating a thriving community with better job prospects and quality of life. This also leads to higher-paying jobs and career advancement, elevating individual earning potentials. Overall, by investing in these areas, regions not only foster population growth but also improve the economic prosperity of their residents, leading to higher per capita income levels, creating an attractive environment through improved living conditions and a vibrant community ecosystem.

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	185,527	187,382	193,004
Total Employment	66,775	67,443	69,466
Per capita income	\$ 45,495.00	\$ 45,950.00	\$ 47,328.00
Educational attainment	46,030	46,490	47,885
Total new housing units	82,300	83,123	85,617
New rental housing units	22,615	22,841	23,526
New owner-occupied housing units	49,999	50,499	52,014



Percentage of affordable housing units	29	29.71	32.69
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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.

As the region's population increases, it is expected that the number of children who need care will increase. It is important that the region not only addresses the children who currently need care but also considers the new residents who will need care in the future. The region would like to emphasize the importance of Paths to Quality (PTQ) Rating and Improvement System by supporting providers who will offer level three or four care, while also understanding that workforce training contributes to moving from a level two to a level three. The following represents the goals and KPIs of the region as it relates to childcare:-The number of licensed capacity (4,381) within the region will increase by 10% over the next 5 years, and an additional 10% from 5 to 10 years.-Of the additional licensed capacity, 100% of those would be PTQ level two or above.

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 will utilize the following KPIs to quantitatively assess the success and impact of innovation activities, including a general KPI for the establishment and growth of new businesses within the region and a more project specific KPI regarding Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology's Innovation Grove project:-The number of business establishments (3,691) within the region will increase by 10% over the next 5 years, and an additional 10% from 5 to 10 years.-Rose Ventures, operating within Innovation Grove, a high-tech research and prototyping facility that entices entrepreneurial growth, worked with 37 companies in 2023. The number of partner companies will increase by 25% over 5 years and by 50% over 10 years.

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

A destination for surrounding areas and regional metropolitan hub, Vigo County has three funding mechanisms that provide unique KPIs:-Food & Beverage Tax (1%)-Innkeeper's Tax (8%)-Gaming Tax RevenueThe amount of revenue generated through each funding mechanism directly correlates to people eating/drinking/staying/playing in the region. These funds support quality of life/place/opportunity initiatives through boosting the local economy as the region's destination assets grow. While Gaming Tax does not currently have a baseline (casino opening April 2024), the RDA will track these metrics with a goal of 50% increase over the next 5 years and a 100% increase over the next 10 years.Additionally, K-12 schools in the region have been losing student population to urban areas with better sports facilities, academic programming, and metrics. It is the goal of the region to increase the K-12 population by 1% in 5 and 3% in 10 years.



General Information

Legal Name as registered with Indiana Secretary of State (Region Name)	Wabash River Regional Development Authority (RDA)
Business Structure	Regional Development Authority (Thrive West Central = Fiscal Agent)
List counties within your region	Clay, Parke, Sullivan, Vermillion, and Vigo County, Indiana
Website	https://www.wabashriverrda.com/

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