



**NORTH CENTRAL INDIANA REGIONAL
PLANNING COUNCIL
CASS, CLINTON, FULTON, HOWARD, MIAMI & TIPTON**



**REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
PLAN
SEPTEMBER 2017**



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Introduction

The North Central Indiana Regional Planning Council (NCIRPC) is comprised of Cass, Clinton, Fulton, Howard, Miami and Tipton counties. The region has a population of approximately 225,000 and 34 separate units of local government. Officially organized in late 2014, the region completed a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) in 2012. The year-long CEDS effort brought together a new and diverse group of participants that included elected officials, economic development professionals, education and business leaders, along with civic organizations and the general public to develop a regional strategy. The 2012 CEDS plan identified two strategic focus areas: Workforce & Education and Quality of Life, along with four goals:

1. Prepare a workforce for jobs of today and tomorrow,
2. Leverage its transportation assets,
3. Develop/enhance its downtowns, and
4. Provide quality infrastructure to its communities.

In 2014, the six counties created the North Central Indiana Regional Planning Council (NCIRPC) to serve as the region's community development organization, working on a multi-county level to build stronger local and regional economies. Since its inception, NCIRPC has successfully secured over a million dollars in grant funding for workforce development initiatives, regional planning, transportation, community development activities and health and safety projects. NCIRPC has also worked closely with the region's economic development professionals to host forums on career pathways for employers and educators from across the region.

Knowing that an update to the CEDS would be due in 2017, NCIRPC reached out to the Purdue Center for Regional Development (PCRD) for consideration as part of the Stronger Economies Together (SET) program, in its 6th phase nationally and third in the state of Indiana. The main deliverable of the program, the SET high-quality plan, uses similar criteria as CEDS plan, and the Chicago office of the Economic Development Administration (EDA) has determined that the SET high-quality plan meets the requirements associated with a five-year CEDS plan. The primary reason NCIRPC opted to pursue the SET approach was due to the attention it gives to the step-by-step, asset-based, capacity-building process:

1. Building collaboration between communities in a region,
2. Providing economic data analyses that are tailored to help inform the region of its current or emerging clusters and comparative economic advantages, and
3. Accessing technical assistance made available by the state's land-grant university system.

With these attributes in mind, NCIRPC applied for SET in early 2016 and was accepted in mid-2016. The 2016 SET announcement allowed the North Central region to update its regional strategy and prepare the organization to move on from its start-up phase.

NCIRPC Executive Summary

The North Central Indiana Stronger Economies Together initiative is the result of a collaborative effort of elected officials, community and economic development organizations, and business leaders from Cass, Clinton, Fulton, Howard, Miami and Tipton counties in Indiana. Throughout this strategic plan, the member counties have demonstrated their dedication and commitment to the region and to building stronger regional economies.

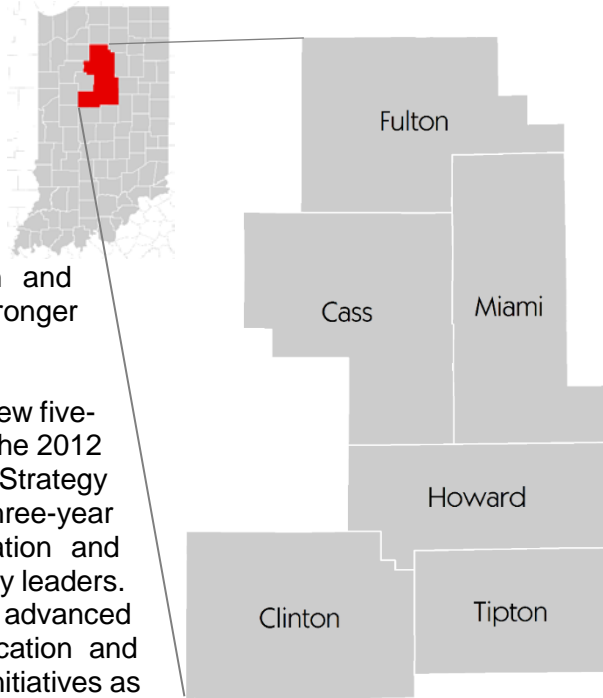
The 2017 SET plan is intended to serve as the new five-year plan for the region, and thus, an update of the 2012 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). This new plan is the culmination of a three-year effort to establish a viable regional organization and encourage stronger engagement from community leaders. The SET plan identified agriculture, advanced manufacturing, leadership development, education and training, infrastructure assets and quality of life initiatives as key focus areas to grow, diversify and strengthen the region.

The Goals and Objectives outlined in this plan are supported by research-based data analysis and designed to build on regional strengths, as well as identify and address weaknesses.

1. Create a more focused and collaborative agricultural strategy;
2. Support key manufacturers while bolstering and diversifying suppliers;
3. Create a culture of excellence for advanced manufacturing;
4. Establish a cultural foundation and network of regionalism;
5. Leverage existing assets by developing infrastructure/broadband connectivity; and
6. Enhance quality of place to promote talent attraction and retention.

NCIRPC and its partners will use this road map to further support the competitiveness of the region and guide its economic future.

Elected officials and community leaders have embraced the spirit of regionalism of this initiative (Appendix A). The key partners listed below (in Figure 1.1) have explicitly expressed commitment to support the plan's implementation in these specific ways:



NORTH CENTRAL INDIANA PARTNERS (Figure 1.1)

Organization	Commitment to SET Implementation
Cass County	Financial and technical resources committed to the NCIRPC & NCIEDP
Clinton County	Financial and technical resources committed to the NCIRPC & NCIEDP
Fulton County	Financial and technical resources committed to the NCIRPC & NCIEDP
Howard County	Financial and technical resources committed to the NCIRPC & NCIEDP
Miami County	Financial and technical resources committed to the NCIRPC & NCIEDP
Tipton County	Financial and technical resources committed to the NCIRPC & NCIEDP
Indiana University Kokomo	Continued organizational support of the NCIRPC and engaged partner in the Regional Leadership Development initiative
Ivy Tech Community College, Kokomo Campus	Continued organizational support of the NCIRPC and engaged partner in the Agricultural and Advanced Manufacturing initiatives
Indiana Manufacturers Association	Collaborative support of the Advanced Manufacturing initiatives
Indiana Farm Bureau	Collaborative support of the Agricultural initiatives
Indiana Small Business Development Corporation	Collaborative support of the business growth initiatives
Fiat Chrysler Automotive Group	Continued support relating to workforce training and skills development
North Central Indiana Economic Development Partnership	Through its partner commit financial and technical support of projects of local and regional impact:
	Cass County Economic Development
	Clinton County Chamber of Commerce
	Fulton County Economic Development Corporation
	Miami County Economic Development Authority
	Tipton County Economic Development Corporation
Tecumseh Area Partnership - Region 4 Workforce Board	Continued financial and technical assistance relating to workforce training and skills development
Realtors Association of Central Indiana	Collaborative support of the quality of life initiatives
Howard County Community Foundation	Serve as a convener and supporter of local and regional quality of initiatives
Logansport Memorial Hospital	Serve as a convener and supporter of local and regional quality of initiatives relating to health and wellness
Grissom Regional Defense Alliance	Serves as a convener and supporter of economic growth of the defense sector and Grissom Aeroplex
Indiana Association of Regional Councils	Collaborative support of the Regional Leadership Development initiative



Regional Collaboration

NCIRPC MISSION: To provide impactful services and programs that support sustainable and competitive communities throughout North Central Indiana

Traditionally, the North Central region has interacted with businesses and industries through the local economic development organizations (LEDOs). At its inception, NCIRPC intentionally created two industry-led committees—an Employer/Educator Council and an Agribusiness Council—in order to develop a foundational network for engaging a broader audience in regional discussions. The Employer/Educator Council is comprised of regional business leaders from large and small companies, secondary and post-secondary educators, and workforce and economic development professionals. The Agribusiness Council has brought together farmers, financial institutions, ag-industry leaders, educators and other key community leaders, to engage in the region’s first meaningful discussion on the state of agriculture within North Central Indiana. Both councils have met to discuss the goals and objectives outlined in the SET plan and have approved the overall strategy. The councils are actively involved in developing stronger and more collaborative relationships to address common needs such as supply chain, and workforce and transportation infrastructure. They will continue to guide the direction of NCIRPC’s regional strategy. NCIRPC will serve as the convener and facilitator for both councils’ ongoing quarterly meetings. (The SET Committee roster can be found in Appendix A.)

In addition to the participants in SET, public input and support was garnered through two civic forums. The Civic Forums brought together a diverse group of elected officials, educators, workforce and economic development professionals, as well as non-profit organizations. Businesses, downtown development, real estate development, veterans and agriculture were also represented. The first was held on November 14, 2016 in Miami County and the second on November 21 in Howard County. In total, 74 residents of the six counties (Cass, Clinton, Fulton, Howard, Miami and Tipton) participated in the forums, providing their feedback on the region’s assets, challenges and opportunities. During the course of the forums, participants offered input on ways to build upon the region’s strengths, as well as address the region’s obstacles in order to build a strong regional economic development plan. Forum participants (see Figure 2.1) included engaged citizens, representatives from business and industry, units of government, economic development organizations, non-profits, community foundations, agribusiness, healthcare, retired military and workforce development officials. Educational institutions represented included: Indiana University Kokomo, Ivy Tech Community College, and Purdue University. The 2017 SET plan has the participation of and buy-in from more than 50 key decision-makers in the region. NCIRPC announced the SET plan, when it was finalized, on its Web site and social media pages. NCIRPC will formally present the final plan for a public comment period prior to seeking the approval of each of the partner counties.

After much table-level discussion in each forum, the top four regional strengths were identified based on an aggregation of the forum’s results:

- **Transportation**

The region houses the main corridors of US-31, US-24, and I-65 which provide excellent connectivity throughout the region. Continued improvements to these corridors will increase efficiency for the movement of goods and services, extend commuting patterns for job opportunities, and allow residents to have easy access to a variety of amenities, thereby increasing regional quality of life.

- **Agriculture/agribusiness**

Individually each county within the region relies heavily upon agriculture and agribusiness as a part of its overall economy. Throughout the region, there are numerous examples where agribusinesses support one another in the movement of products, creating a value-added supply chain.

- **Aviation/Grissom Runway**

The Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) actions of the Department of Defense provided the region with assets available for development within the aviation industry. These assets include the longest runway within the state of Indiana at 12,500 feet and other opportunities for aircraft manufacturing, aircraft repair and rehabilitation, and general civil aviation use. These opportunities allow for industrial diversification across the region.

- **Education/universities**

Collaboration amongst the region's educational institutions provides many career path opportunities for high school and/or adult learners. These collaborations and partnerships include numerous community school districts, at least 3 vocational education centers, and several colleges/universities.

The top four challenges were also identified and discussed at these two civic forums. Of the top four, three of them were inter-related, all revolving around concerns with the quality of the workforce. From lack of work ethic to drug abuse, the NCIRPC region suffers from the challenge and inability to find and/or replace skilled labor. In spite of all the NCIRPC counties clearly identifying workforce as an issue, there is still an overall lack of regional cooperation. In fact, there is a fundamental lack of understanding of regionalism, exacerbated by the fact that there is no one uniform regional structure that all state agencies embrace.

The NCIRPC region has sufficient educational infrastructure, but is having difficulty connecting graduating high school students with a career pathway that leads to local employment in one of the regional industries. The region also faces challenges connecting people to the resources they need for lifelong learning. Some rural counties are experiencing “brain drain,” as defined by their best and brightest youth leaving to further their education and moving away from the community permanently. This is resulting in a slow out-migration of youth leaving an under-skilled, underemployed, aging population unable to sustain an adequate tax base in the six counties (Cass, Clinton, Fulton, Howard, Miami and Tipton) making up the region. The net effect is a lower assessed value, inadequate housing stock, rising poverty, and decreasing wealth within the region's population.

Another challenge is public policy, and the issues that revolve around them, such as tax abatement and land use, including planning/zoning. Current public policy only serves to further divide local economic development, making it more difficult to attract new businesses or expand existing ones. Inter-competition—county vs. county and city vs. county—complicate the situation. The region is somewhat unique in that it boasts an industry cluster, transportation equipment manufacturing, with a location quotient of 12.3 and a county-based Herfindahl-

Hirschman Index of 0.77. This creates a situation where the cluster is much more concentrated in the region relative to the United States, but the jobs in the cluster are essentially found in one county (Howard). While this creates job opportunities for the region, as seen in commuting patterns, the flip side is a lack of business diversity that makes the region vulnerable to boom/bust cycles that adversely affect the workforce and the local/regional economy.

See both the listing of positive features and the listing of challenges (Figure 2.2).

SET PARTICIPANTS (Figure 2.1)

	First	Last	Affiliations	County
1	Cathy	Valcke	Indiana University Kokomo	Regional
2	Charlie	Sparks	Economic Development	Howard
3	Christy	Householder	Economic Development	Cass
4	Dick	Wiles	Resident	Miami
5	Don	Havens	Local Government	Tipton
6	Ethan	Manning	Local Government	Miami
7	Jim	Sailors	Local Government	Cass
8	Jim	Tidd	Economic Development	Miami
9	Josh	Francis	Local Government	Miami
10	Kathy	Burns	Tecumseh Area Partnership	Regional
11	Michelle	Simmons	Ivy Tech	Regional
12	Randy	Sutton	Local Government	Fulton
13	Scott	Deyoe	Business	Howard
14	Shan	Sheridan	Chamber of Commerce	Clinton
15	Stan	Ortman	Business	Howard
16	Steve	Reiff	Resident	Miami
17	Susan	Davis	IN Small Business Development	Regional
18	Susan	Sciame-Giesescke	Indiana University Kokomo	Regional
19	Terry	Lee	Economic Development	Fulton
20	Tyler	Moore	Business	Howard
21	Vicki	Warner	Chamber of Commerce	Tipton
22	Arin	Shaver	City/County Planning	Cass
23	Becki	Harris	Logan's Landing Main St	Cass
24	Dean	Despinoy	GRDA	Howard
25	Elaine	Zeider	Area Five	Cass
26	Jolene	Rule	Greentown Main St	Howard
27	Marilyn	Jackson	Local Government	Miami
28	Mike	McCool	Economic Development	Howard
29	Sarah	Reese	Rochester Main St	Fulton
30	Steve	Dobbs	Business	Miami
31	Tom	McKaig	Education	Miami

32	Rodni	Lytle	Ivy Tech	Regional
33	Mike	Karickhoff	State Representative	Regional
34	Mark	Lantz	Local Government	Howard
35	Bob	Dunderman	Municipal Utility	Cass
36	Nathan	Kring	Economic Development	Tipton
37	Dave	Arnold	Education	Cass
38	Amy	Roe	Chamber of Commerce	Fulton
39	Douglas	Schwartz	GRDA	Regional
40	Tim	Calhoon	GRDA	Regional
41	Ide	Vaneen	Local Government	Cass
42	Jim	Yates	Economic Development	Miami
43	Bishop	Grover	Local Government	Cass
44	Brooke	Robertson	Economic Development	Miami
45	Don	Stock	Resident	Clinton
46	Amy	Pate	Real Estate Association	Regional
47	Tami	Brown	Agriculture	Tipton
48	Sandy	Chittum	Chamber of Commerce	Miami
49	Misty	Knisely	Economic Development	Howard
50	Larry	Lowry	Veterans Services	Cass
51	Fred	Seehase	Agriculture	Cass
52	Richard	Hostetler	Regional Sewer District	Miami
53	Jeff	LeDonne	Local Government	Cass
54	John	Jackson	Local Government	Cass
55	Amy	Beechy	Economic Development	Fulton
56	Gerry	White	OCRA	Regional
57	Lori	Hurst	Local Government	Fulton
58	Jennifer	Vandeburg	OCRA	Regional
59	Rose	Jackson	Local Government	Cass

NORTH CENTRAL INDIANA STRENGTHS & CHALLENGES (Figure 2.2)

POSITIVE FEATURES

Transportation/Logistics	43
Agriculture/Agribusiness	31
Aviation/Grissom Runway	29
Education/Universities	15
Central Location in IN	9
Cost of Living	7

Manufacturing	6
Tourism/Recreation	3
Natural Resources/Land Use	2
Strong Economic Development	2

CHALLENGES

Workforce (lack of ethic)	45
Regional Cooperation	36
Drug abuse	31
Declining/aging population	22
Ability to attract industry	12
Educational attainment	7
Low income residents	3
Access to technology	0

Evidence Basis for Plan

North Central Indiana analyzed data provided by the Purdue University Center for Regional Development to guide the direction of this regional plan (Appendix B). The regional demographic data indicates North Central Indiana's population is in decline and aging faster than the rest of the State. Population attraction and retention are essential for regional growth. Educational attainment within the region is both an asset and a challenge. North Central Indiana has a high percentage of high school to Associate degrees but lags behind in four-year and graduate degrees. The commuting patterns illustrate the regional connectivity of our workforce. This data provides clear insight to the strengths and weaknesses confronting the region and serves as a common focus for the regional partners.

Regional Demographic Data

Population Change

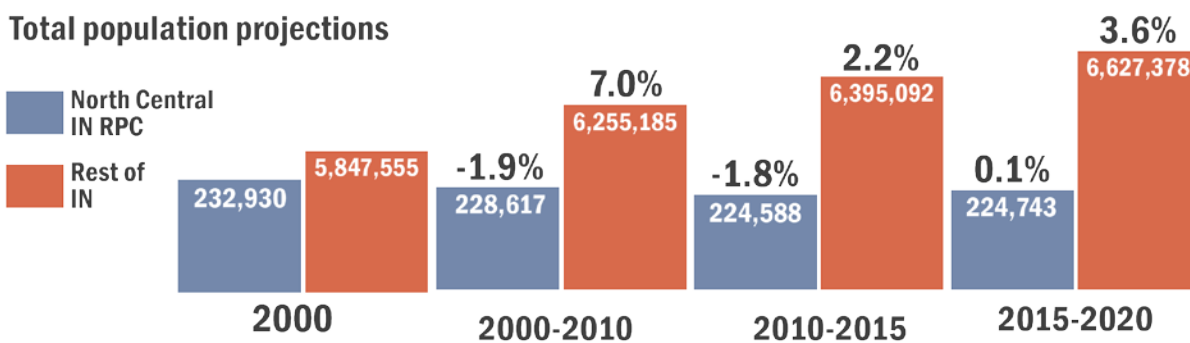


Figure 3.1

The region has witnessed a 3.6% decrease in population from 2000 to 2015 and the projected growth reveals that the region will experience little growth over the 2015-2020 time period. With an aging population and the current level of outmigration, the region is committed to addressing these issues through targeted attraction and retention—and quality of life initiatives—to ensure an available labor force for the jobs of today and the future.

Source: 2000 & 2010 Decennial Census, 2015 Population Estimates, and 2020 Population from STATS Indiana, using data from the Indiana Business Research Center, IU Kelley School of Business, http://www.stats.indiana.edu/pop_proj/

Age Distribution

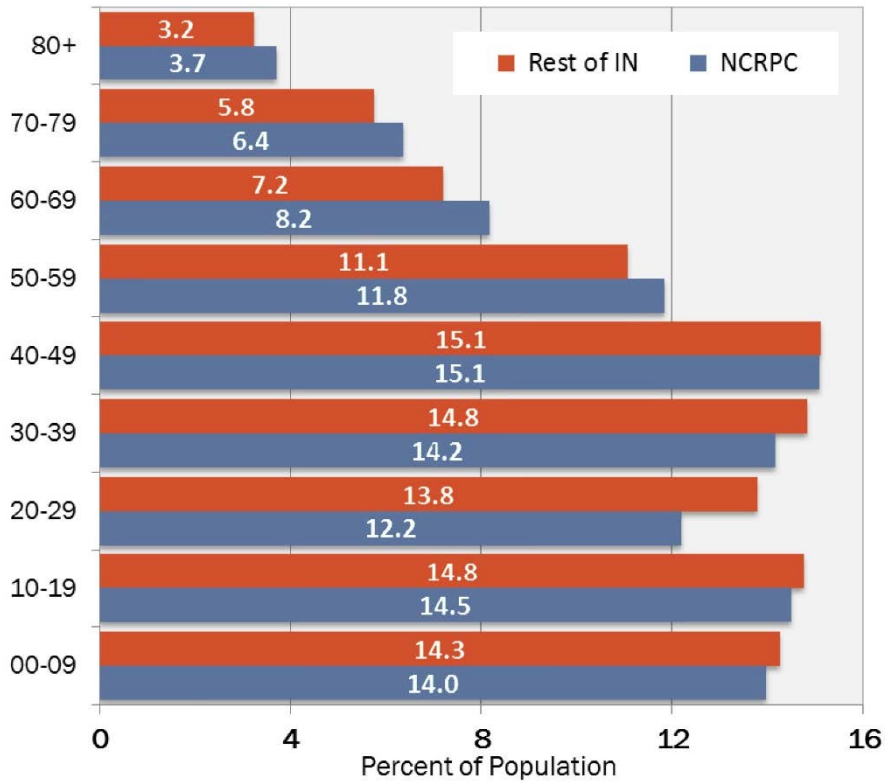


Figure 3.2

The 2015 Age Distribution graphic highlights the challenges the region faces relative to an aging population. The regional population from 0-19 is consistent with the State's average; however, North Central sees a significant decline in the 20-29 age group. These age groups are the workforce of tomorrow and retention is critical to the growth and sustainability of the region.

Source: 2015 Population Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau

Educational Attainment

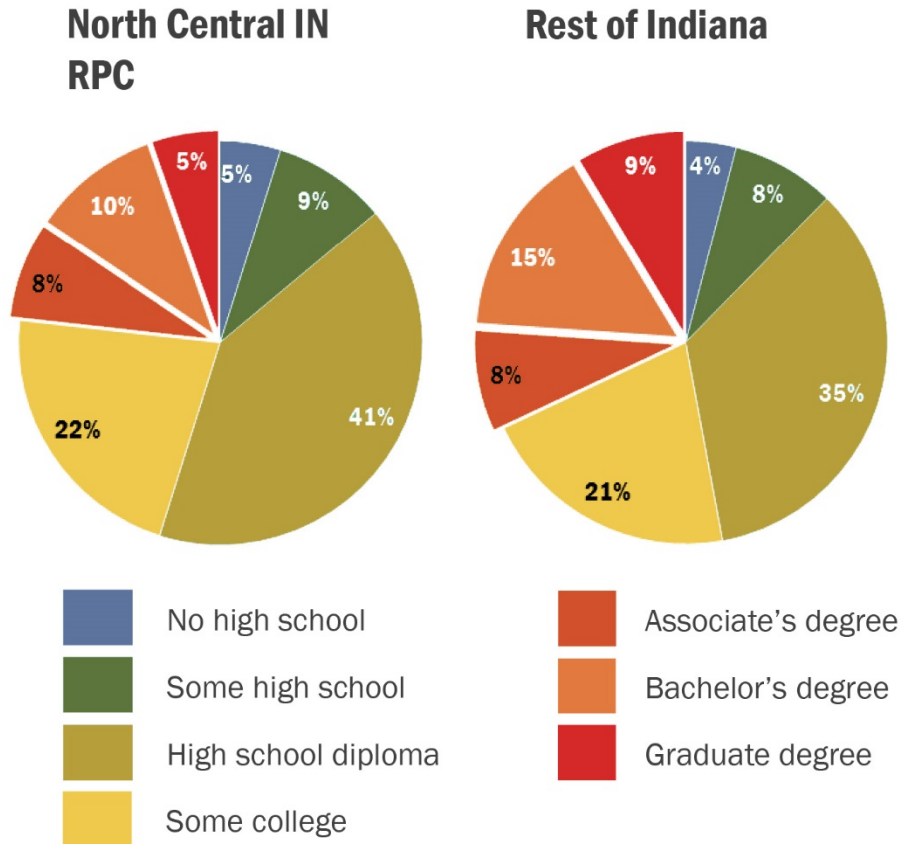
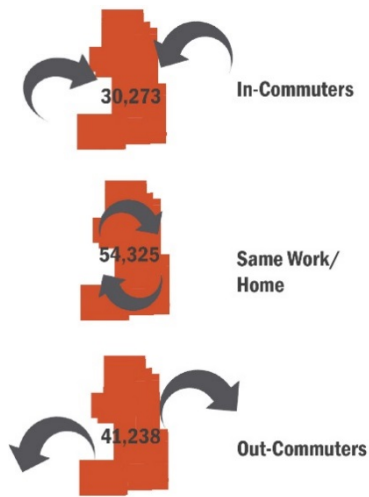


Figure 3.3

North Central Indiana has a higher percentage of population with a high school and some college education than the State; however, the region falls behind in Bachelor's and Graduate degrees. This is likely linked to the region's history of manufacturing. The goals and objectives outlined in this plan will serve to meet the workforce demands of current and future employers.

Source: 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Journey to Work & Commute Shed



	2014 Count	Proportion
Employed in North Central IN RPC	84,598	100.0%
Both employed and living in the region	54,325	64.2%
Employed in the region but living outside	30,273	35.8%
Living in North Central IN RPC	95,563	100.0%
Both living and employed in the region	54,325	56.8%
Living in the region but employed outside	41,238	43.2%

Figure 3.4

The North Central region has a workforce of approximately 95,000, 56% of which resides and works within the region. Slightly more than 1/3 of the North Central Laborforce commutes from outside the region, while 43% of the region's workforce travels outside for employment. 41,238 workers choose to live in North Central communities but work elsewhere. This data demonstrates the value and importance of building a regional plan given the flow of labor needed to support the region's economic development activities.

The Stronger Economies Together (SET) plan outlines initiatives to easily develop and implement training programs to serve the rapidly changing needs of industries and to promote economic diversification.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OTM, LEHD, Purdue Center for Regional Development (PCRD)

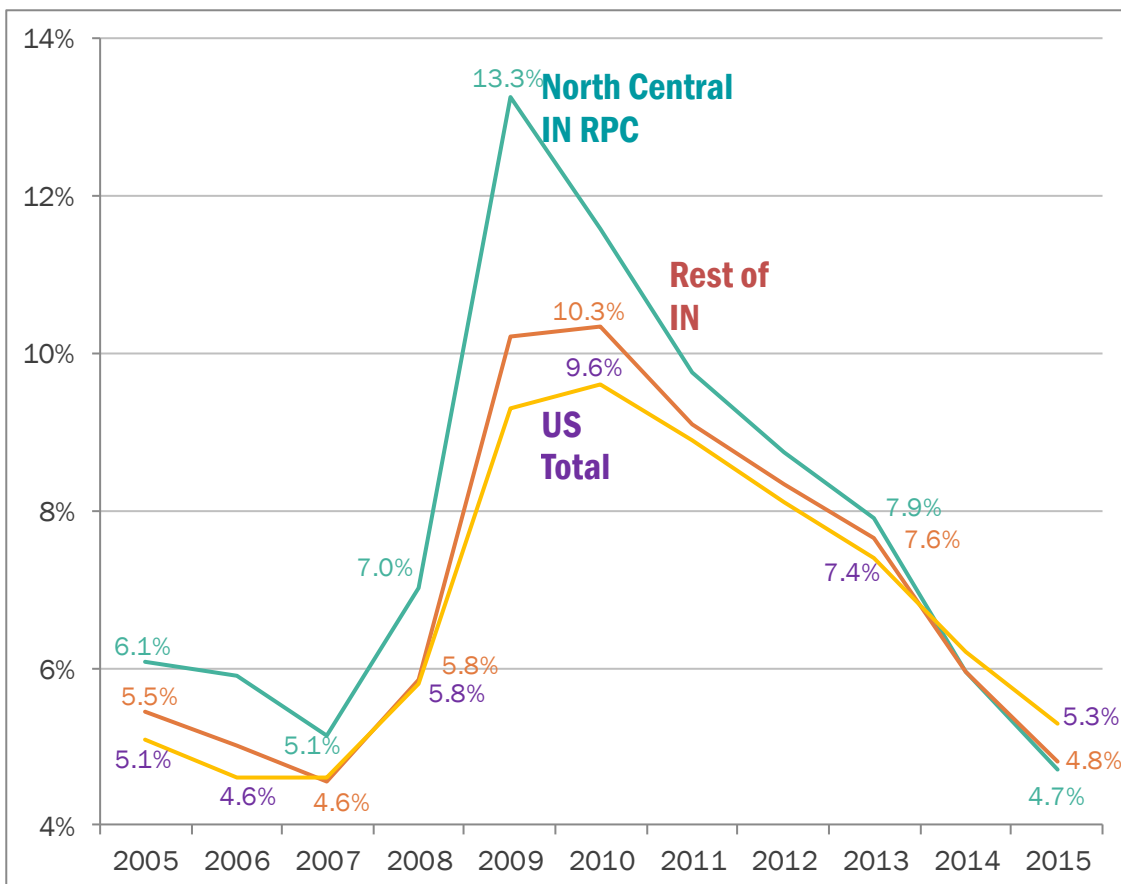
Regional Economic Data

The regional economic data continues to highlight regional strengths and weaknesses. The 2015 regional unemployment rate is nearing full-employment levels, leaving employers to struggle to find qualified workers. Economic diversification and focused educational attainment strategies are key drivers to reduce the impact of economic downturns, promote higher wages and reduce the poverty rate across the region.

Unemployment Rates

Figure 3.5

Source: LAUS, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)



North Central Indiana's unemployment rate is directly connected to the "boom-bust" cycle of the automobile industry. As the state and nation faced the "Great Recession," the region saw significantly higher than average unemployment rates. Since the start of the recovery, North Central's unemployment rate has declined greater than both the state and nation. In an effort to lessen the impact of the "boom-bust" cycles, the region has identified opportunities to diversify its regional economy and further develop workforce skills.

Earnings per Worker



Figure 3.6

North Central Indiana's recovery from the Great Recession has outpaced the State and the Nation; however, wages continue to lag \$2,993 behind (Fig. 3.6). This fact is further supported by the Income and Poverty trends from 2000 to 2014. The regional strategy is focused on talent attraction and retention through career pathway education, leadership development, and enhancement of quality of place amenities.

Source: EMSI, *Class of Worker 2015.4* (QCEW, non-QCEW, self-employed and extended proprietors)

Income & Poverty Table

	2004	2009	2014
Total Population in Poverty	10.9%	14.1%	14.8%
Minors (Age 0-17) in Poverty	16.0%	20.9%	21.8%
Real Median Household Income* (\$ 2014)	\$54,535	\$49,492	\$46,617

Figure 3.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau – Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE)

*Note: Regional Median Household income is the population-weighted average of median household income values across North Central IN RPC counties.

Regional Assets

One of the most informative work sessions in the development of this plan was the identification of regional assets that are available to achieve overall success of each of the plan's goals and objectives. These assets transcend those found in typical development strategies, usually identified through the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats) analysis. Discovered through the Community Capitals framework, these assets within the region include not only physical and natural, such as highway, airports, water supply, climate, etc., but also human, social, cultural, and financial assets that incorporate, relationships, partnerships, and professional experience.

Below is a summary of the assets identified during the development of the plan by category. A complete list of the assets is located in the appendix to the plan. Assets should be reviewed and utilized to the extent practical to overcome potential barriers (also identified in the plan, below) to achieve success.

Built:

US 31, US 24
I65
Airports
Rail

Natural

Good soils
Abundant Water
Climate
State/local parks

Human

Indiana University Kokomo,
IvyTech Community College,
Purdue University
Entrepreneurs/Inventrek
Workforce Training

Social

Community service clubs
Employer/educator forums
FFA/4-H Clubs
Chambers of Commerce

Cultural

Festivals
Theatres/Museums
Farmer's Markets
Tourist attractions

Financial

Access to incentives
Local lending institutions
Experienced Grant writers
Small Business Loans

Political

Ag-friendly zoning
Connection with state/federal officials
Strong state/local support, and emerging regional organizations (NCIRPC and NCEDP)
Pro-business officials and departments

Built:

North Central Indiana has well-developed transportation infrastructure system which includes: highways – I65, US31 and US24; railroads – Class I Norfolk Southern & CSX Transportation and several short-line railroads; airports – seven airports including a 12,500ft runway at Grissom Aeroplex. These transportation assets are key components to the economic vitality and quality of life within the region.

Natural:

Each of the six counties possess unique natural resources. The region has an abundant access to water through several surface sources, Tippecanoe, Wabash, Eel, Sugar Creek and Mississinewa rivers, Lake Manitou, Wildcat Creek and Mississinewa Reservoirs, along with the Teays Aquifer. The surface water resources also provide recreational value. The region is also home to the Mississinewa and France Park recreational sites.

Human:

North Central Indiana is home to higher education institutions such as Indiana University Kokomo, Purdue Poly Tech, Ivy Tech Community College with campuses and educational sites in each county, Trine University, Indiana Wesleyan University and Western Governors University. Career and vocational courses are available to high school students and adult learners through the Century Career Center in Logansport, Heartland Career Center in Wabash, Kokomo Career Center in Kokomo and at industry training centers across the region. Southeastern School Corporation in Cass County is opening a career and technical training center in 2017 focusing on entry level skills and career pathways in the Agriculture and Advanced Manufacturing sectors.

Social:

The region is home to communities with strong social and civic networks keeping residents connected internally and externally. With 8 Main Street organizations and 6 Chambers of Commerce, local businesses and industries have access to resources to develop and grow. The local economic development organizations created an Employer/Educator Council in 2017 to advance workforce initiatives and improve the connectivity between the businesses and local school corporations.

Cultural:

North Central Indiana plays host to a variety of local festivals and cultural events throughout the year attracting visitors from across the United States. Local attractions include: sporting events, wineries, theater and historical re-enactments, music and art festivals. North Central Indiana provides a "small town" environment with access to quality of life amenities of much larger communities.

Financial:

Each county provides a variety of financial and technical assistance tools available to businesses and entrepreneurs. From revolving loan funds to tax incremental financing to local financial institutions to state and federal resources, the region has the resources to attract, expand and retain businesses and to strengthen the local and regional economies.

Political:

While the region does enjoy ag-friendly zoning and pro-business support from state and local politicians, there is still a lack of intentional regional collaboration. One of the more prominent goals in this plan is for NCIRPC to become an impetus for greater collaboration, with specific objectives embedded to make this goal a reality. These objectives, like fostering a more robust regional council that includes representatives from both major industry clusters (manufacturing and agriculture), will be benchmarked and measured as the plan is implemented.

Potential Barriers and Related Strategies

Over the course of identifying the main goals and strategic objectives outlined in the plan, there were several potential barriers that could have an impact on timely and effective implementation. Therefore, during implementation of goals and objectives, potential barriers should be taken into account to ensure they do not serve as barriers to the achievement of key regional initiatives.

Some barriers can be overcome or addressed during the actual implementation of the goals or strategies outlined in this plan, while other barriers may require a separate sub-goal or objective to address potential impacts on the region. Potential barriers identified include:

- Lack of understanding on benefits of regionalism
- National Trade Policy on imports and exports
- Ability of the region to attract medium- to highly skilled workers
- Culture change to focus on importance of continuing education
- Infrastructure concerns (such as access to/availability of broadband and transportation)
- Lack of a good mix of housing stock
- Environmental concerns (including non-agricultural use of ag land, road management, CAFO (confined animal feeding operations) waste, and climate limitations)

Regional Cluster Analysis

As NCIRPC is a new and still developing organization, the key regional partners seek to leverage the existing strengths of transportation infrastructure, agri-business and advanced manufacturing to address concerns in workforce, economic growth and population decline. The strategic planning committee and writing team analyzed the industry cluster data provided by PCRCD, realizing that the Manufacturing Super Cluster Location Quotient has grown nearly five times the national average and the agri-business cluster has grown more than three times the average between 2010-2015. (Appendices C & D)

Why Advanced Manufacturing and Agribusiness

Manufacturing

- Given the region's strength in manufacturing, North Central identified advanced manufacturing as a key strategic focus area. The region possesses a strong economic advantage in manufacturing; has seen significant growth within the cluster; and has exports of over \$8 billion.
- Data from PCRCD indicates the following manufacturing sectors have outperformed others from 2009-2015. All of these sectors are within the region's "wheel house" with both experience, capacity to expand, and regional competitiveness:

- Motor Vehicle Transmission and Power Train Parts Manufacturing
- General Purpose Machinery Manufacturing
- Machine Shops
- Other Motor Vehicle Parts Manufacturing
- Farm Machine and Equipment Manufacturing
- A substantial amount (approximately \$600M) of supply chain leakage occurs outside the region from input sectors such as:
 - Custom Roll Forming, machine shops and precision-tuned product manufacturing
 - The NCIRPC believes the region has the assets, strategic location, and other competitive advantages to return a portion of this leakage back to the region, while strengthening existing manufacturing businesses.
- All but two of the 15 top occupations associated with manufacturing showed a position percent change or increase in jobs from 2009-2015. The range of increase varied from 14% to 97%. In comparison to the two occupations that showed a negative percent change over the same period, the decrease was -8% and -4%.

Agri-business

- Agriculture/Agribusiness is the No. 1 industry in the region by way of land use
- Agribusiness industries that outperformed others include: Animal (except Poultry) Slaughtering, Frozen Speciality Food Manufacturing, Confectionery Manufacturing from Purchased Chocolate, and Dog and Cat Food Manufacturing. A significant amount of the raw material used within these outperforming industries are manufactured within the region.
- Opportunities exist to capture some portion of the out-of-region supply chain leakage that exists with the Agribusiness Sector to include:
 - Animal Production and Aquaculture
 - Animal (except poultry) Slaughtering
 - Soybean and other oil processing
 - Plastic Bottle Manufacturing

Outside the Data

Two other regional challenges were identified during the review of the data provided by PCRCD and are somewhat embedded or addressed in the goals agreed upon by NCIRPC. Those include:

- A significant amount of major manufacturing employers in the region are facing employment shortages with the anticipated retirement of the baby-boom generation in the next 5-10 years. How do we provide the skilled to semi-skilled workers to backfill retirements?
- As shown In Fig 3.5, the region suffers with high unemployment numbers during recessions caused primary by a downturn in the automotive industry. Figure 3.5 also indicates there is high unemployment during economic downturns and low unemployment during economic booms. The challenge for the region is to further deversity the regional economy, making it less dependent on automotive transportation which levels the peaks in unemployment and creates a more stable regional economy.

Regional Economic Development Plan

GOAL 1:

CREATE A MORE FOCUSED AND COLLABORATIVE AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY FOR THE NCIRPC REGION

Goal Rationale

This goal seeks to address the over \$1 billion of leakage in animal and crop production, as well as aquaculture that is leaving the region annually. Although agriculture is a major employer in the region, wages and required education levels for employees remain low. With this goal, the hope is to improve this situation by bringing innovation, technology, and in turn, higher wage/education jobs to the region's agribusiness sector.

Key Partners

The key partners identified are a diverse mix of local, state and federal associations, businesses, economic development and education organizations. Each partner will provide its unique expertise and resources to compliment and support the specific initiatives.

Target Outcomes

Short-Term (1-2 years):

Establish a regional Ag Council comprised of industry professionals, economic development organizations, educational institutions and other key community leaders to develop stronger working relationships, study current industry conditions, and advance the region's agribusinesses.

Intermediate (2-3 years):

Complete supply chain study to provide the data necessary to guide the development of appropriate future actions, including strengthening the connectivity between agricultural-related businesses, suppliers and educational institutions. (2-3 years)

Long-Term (5+ years):

Strengthen and diversify its economy through targeted agriculture education initiatives and

retention and attraction activities to reduce annual leakage by \$10 million. (5+ years)

Objective A:

Create a regional agriculture council with up to 13 members that proportionally represents the region by the 4TH quarter of 2017

Strategies	Responsible Party	Key Partners	Available Assets	Timeline Start/End	Outcomes
Identify regional stakeholders and make proportional appointments	North Central Indiana Economic Development Partnership (NCIEDP) Chair	Farm Bureau, Area Ag and Food Manufacturers, ISDA, USDA, Large Farmers, FFA Leaders, etc.	Existing Ag Councils, Farm Bureau	Start: 4th Qtr 2017 /End: Ongoing	Board membership comprised of 2 representatives per County and 1 at-large
Create organizational direction by devising strategies, plans, mission statements, etc.	NC Ag Council Project Manager	Farm Bureau, Ivy Tech, Purdue	Existing Ag Councils, Industry Partners	Start: 2nd Qtr 2018/End: 4th Qtr 2018	Establish work plan with 3 Goals & present to NCIRPC Board
Hold First Annual Ag Roundtable	NC Ag Council Project Manager	Outside organizations and people	LEDOs, Industry Partners	Start: 4th Qtr 2018 /End: Ongoing	Track attendance to develop a baseline. Conduct survey to measure impact.

Objective B:

Commission a regional agriculture study that specifically addresses supply chain issues by the 1ST quarter of 2019

Strategies	Responsible Party	Key Partners	Available Assets	Timeline Start/End	Outcomes
Determine ag company data for NC Study	NC Ag Council, NCIEDP Chair, Project Manager	IN Dept of Ag, PCRD, Farm Bureau, Local Producers & Ag Manufacturers	IN Dept of Ag, PCRD, Farm Bureau	Start: 2 nd Qtr 2019 /End: 3rd Qtr 2019	Gather, compile and present data to Ag Council
Analyze data to identify local/regional supply chain issues	NC Ag Council, NCIEDP Chair, Project Manager	USDA, IN Dept of Ag, PCRD, Farm Bureau, Local Producers & Ag Manufacturers	USDA, Online databases and in-person surveys	Start: 3 rd Qtr 2019 /End: 1st Qtr 2020	Generate regional agribusiness profile & complete study
Present findings to stakeholders (including board, commissioners, industry partners)	NC Ag Council, NCIEDP Chair, Project Manager	USDA, IN Dept of Ag, Farm Bureau, Purdue Extension, Ag Council	New ag council	Start: 1 st quarter of 2020	Release study through press releases, available on NCIRPC website

Objective C:

Expand regional opportunities for Indiana grown products to reduce regional leakage by 1% (\$10,000,000) by 2023

Strategies	Responsible Party	Key Partners	Available Assets	Timeline Start/End	Outcomes
Identify opportunities to mitigate regional leakage using existing data and the newly completed agriculture study	NC Ag Council, NCIEDP Chair, Project Manager	USDA, IN Dept of Ag, PCR, Farm Bureau, Local Producers & Ag Manufacturers	Existing ag data	Start: 4th Qtr 2019 End: ongoing	Establish consensus and implement 2 strategies
Create an awareness campaign that proposes solutions to regional leakage	NC Ag Council, NCIEDP Chair, Project Manager	USDA, IN Dept of Ag, PCR, Farm Bureau, Local Producers & Ag Manufacturers	USDA, IN Dept of Ag, PCR, IU Kokomo, Farm Bureau, Local Producers & Ag Manufacturers	Start: 4th Qtr of 2019	Campaign formed
Present findings to stakeholders	NC Ag Council, NCIEDP Chair, Project Manager	Farm Bureau	Networking groups	Start: 1st Qtr of 2020	Launch campaign

Objective D:

Increase opportunities for agricultural education by connecting industry demands and needs with local educational institutions by 3rd quarter by 2019

Strategies	Responsible Party	Key Partners	Available Assets	Timeline Start/End	Outcomes
Work with Ag partners to develop programs and services to increase educational opportunities	NC Ag Council, NCIEDP Chair, Project Manager	Ivy Tech, Purdue, IU Kokomo	Educational institutions, FFA programs, Farmer's Markets	Start: 3 rd Qtr 2018 End: 3 rd Qtr 2020	Develop baseline using existing databases and increase student and adult enrollment by 10%
Organize a regional Ag Day	NC Ag Council, NCIEDP Chair, Project Manager	Ivy Tech, schools, agribusiness, Farm Bureau	Existing structure of National Manufacturing Day & Farm Bureau	Start: 2 nd Qtr 2019/Annual Event	Host Regional Event annually; utilize Ag Council survey as baseline
Publicize Farmer's Markets on RPC Web site	NC Ag Council, NCIEDP Chair, Project Manager	Chambers, Main Streets, Farmer's Markets	Existing infrastructure	Start: 3 rd Qtr 2018/Ongoing	Survey Market attendance and impact
Add ag education to urban schools	NC Ag Council, NCIEDP Chair, Project Manager	K-12 schools	Existing ag classes at area high schools	Start: 3 rd Qtr 2020/Ongoing	Host Farm/Ag Day field trip in each county

Goal 2:

SUPPORT KEY MANUFACTURERS WHILE BOLSTERING AND DIVERSIFYING SUPPLIERS

Goal Rationale

This goal acknowledges that in order to succeed in continued economic growth, the region needs to grow and retain jobs within the NCIRPC region through promoting awareness of regional resources and untapped capacity, Tier 2 support of original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) supply chain analysis to close leakage (imports and exports), and equal distribution throughout the counties.

Key Partners

The key partners include: key decision-makers from local industries; local elected officials and economic development professionals; workforce development; primary school systems and higher education insitutions; and statewide resources.

Target Outcomes

Short-Term (1-2 years):

The North Central region seeks to establish a regional Employer Council comprised of industry professionals, economic development organizations, workforce development organizations, Purdue Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP), educational institutions and other key community leaders. The Employer Council will serve as the working committee to monitor and address current industry conditions and to grow the region's advanced manufacturing sector.

Intermediate (2-3 years):

The region strives to create a comprehensive economic development toolbox to improve new business survival rates and support retention and expansion efforts.

Long-Term (5+ years):

North Central Indiana expects to see an increase of investment, productivity and jobs in the advanced manufacturing sector.

Objective A:

Convene a regional employer council on an ongoing quarterly basis, beginning in the 4TH quarter of 2017

Strategies	Responsible Party	Key Partners	Available Assets	Timeline Start/End	Outcomes
Contact regional employers to invite to council	NCIEDP Chair, North Central Indiana Regional Partnership Council (NCIRPC) Executive Director	Manufacturing facilities in each of the six counties	Employers	Start 4th Qtr 2017/Ongoing	Invitations sent out by LEDO's, representation of 3 per county (small, medium & large)
Contact workforce officials to invite to council	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Region 4 Workforce Board, WorkOne	Region 4 Workforce Board	Start: 4th Qtr 2017/Ongoing	Invitations sent out by LEDO's to each Workforce Region; each region represented
Contact regional elected officials to invite to council	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Mayors, City Council, County Commissioners, County Council, State Representatives	Elected officials	Start: 4th Qtr 2017/Ongoing	Invitations sent out by LEDO's; 60% participation rate
Contact education partners to invite to council	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Superintendents, Higher Education Administrators	Education partners	Start: 4th Qtr 2017/Ongoing	Invitations sent out by LEDO's; 60% participation rate
Host the regional council meeting (revolving venue)	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Manufacturing, Education, Workforce & Elected Officials	IU Kokomo, Ivy Tech, Kokomo Country Club, Industry	Start: 1st Qtr 2018 End: 2nd Qtr 2018	Organize the Council structure and establish meeting schedule
Meet on an ongoing quarterly basis	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Manufacturing, Education, Workforce & Elected Officials	IU Kokomo, Ivy Tech, Kokomo Country Club, Industry	Ongoing quarterly	Create an annual workplan with achievable action steps

Objective B:

Accelerate the growth, placement, connectivity, and innovation of potential businesses new to the region by increasing business survival rates to 50% by 2023

Strategies	Responsible Party	Key Partners	Available Assets	Timeline Start/End	Outcomes
Support start-up incubators by promoting awareness of their services	NCIEDP Chair	LEDOs, Local co-working spaces, local incubators, NCIRPC	PCRD Asset map	Ongoing	"Reason for contact" cited on incubator intake form; develop baseline survey

Create co-op to connect businesses to share ideas, resources, and increased buying power	NCIEDP Chair	Manufacturing Extension Partnership	PCRD Asset map	Start: 3rd Qtr 2017/Ongoing	# of attendees at meetings
Connect interested businesses and potential start-ups with ISBDC	NCIEDP Chair	ISBDC, local incubators	PCRD Asset map	Ongoing	# of referrals; # of counseling sessions with businesses
Offer regionwide education opportunities to business planning and other business related topics	NCIEDP Chair, Business Advisor	ISBDC, State and Local Chambers of Commerce	USDA	Start: 1st Qtr 2018/Semi-annual	# offered; # of attended
Ensure that all counties have an active revolving loan fund	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	LEDOs, USDA, Local financial institutions	See asset map	Ongoing	Evidence of revolving loan fund/documentation
Increase start-ups' or small business access to capital	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	LEDOs, ISBDC	Revolving loan funds, angel investments, venture capital fund	Ongoing	Number of loans issued by county revolving loan funds

Objective C:

Support the local economic development officials' business retention & expansion efforts by coordinating and initiatives to be completed by 2023

Strategies	Responsible Party	Key Partners	Available Assets	Timeline Start/End	Outcomes
Survey LEDOs re: their BR&E needs	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	LEDOs	Region 4 Workforce Board	Start: 1st Qtr 2018 End: 3rd Qtr 2018	Survey results will inform decision-making
Ensure that businesses have access to revolving loans and capital	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	LEDOs, Financial Institutions, USDA	USDA, Financial Institutions	Ongoing	# of loans issued
Offer regionwide educational opportunities to businesses including business planning and other business topics	NCIEDP Chair, Business Advisor	ISBDC, State and Local Chambers of Commerce	USDA, SBDC, PCRD Economic Gardening Program, IU Kokomo Collegiate Management Program & Enactus Club	Start: 1st Qtr 2018/Semi-annual	# offered; # of attended
Find a regional BR&E solution (possibly hire a shared regional coordinator or grad student)	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	NCIPRC (to secure funding), IU Kokomo (to find personnel)	RPC, IU Kokomo, Ivy Tech, Purdue, LEDOs, Region 4 Workforce Board	Start: 2nd Qtr 2018 End: 1st Qtr 2019	LEDOs convene to discuss options and present recommendations to NCIRPC Board and County Elected Officials

Survey LEDOs re: their supply chain needs	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	LEDOs	Industry	Start: 1st Qtr 2018 End: 3rd Qtr 2018	Survey results will inform decision-making
Analyze the existing import/export data for regional firms	Made available by the Region 4 Workforce Board & PCRD	LEDOs	Industry, Region 4 Workforce Board, PCRD, IEDC	Start: 2nd Qtr 2018 End: 1st Qtr 2019	Chart developed for each county showing supply chain analysis
Find a regional supply chain solution (possibly hire a shared regional coordinator/grad students)	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	NCIPRC (to secure funding), IU Kokomo (to find personnel), Regional Employer Council, PCRD	IU Kokomo, Ball State University, Ivy Tech, PCRD	Start: 2nd Qtr 2018 End: 1st Qtr 2019	LEDOs convene to discuss options, follow-up with one-on-one discussions, and present recommendations to NCIRPC Board and County Elected Officials

Goal 3:

CREATE A CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE FOR ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

Goal Rationale

This goal recognizes the history and future importance of advanced manufacturing in the region. The goal identifies objectives and subsequent strategies to inform graduating high school students as well as the general population in the region of the high-paying, high-skill job opportunities in career pathways available in advanced manufacturing in the North Central Indiana region. By establishing a culture of excellence in advanced manufacturing, the region will continue to grow through a variety of manufacturing industries.

Key Partners

The key partners include: key leaders of local industries; local elected officials and economic development professionals; workforce development; primary/secondary school systems and higher education institutions; and statewide resources.

Target Outcomes

Short-Term (1-2 years):

The North Central region seeks to develop and promote the available resources and regional capacity in advanced manufacturing to attract and retain a qualified skilled workforce needed to grow and sustain the industry sector and strengthen the vitality of communities in the North Central Indiana region.

Intermediate (2-3 years):

The region expects to create a regional network to produce and attract the labor force necessary to compete in the global economy.

Long-Term (5+ years):

North Central Indiana plans to be Indiana’s leader in advanced manufacturing through increased career pathways resulting in a greater number of high-paying, middle- and high-skilled job opportunities.

Objective A:

Develop a regional promotional campaign to showcase advanced manufacturing by 2018

Strategies	Responsible Party	Key Partners	Available Assets	Timeline Start/End	Outcomes
Identify key participants	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	IU Kokomo, Ivy Tech, Purdue, Indiana Manufacturer’s Association (IMA), local marketing/design companies, Regional Employer Council	Regional sponsors, marketing expertise from within team, help with distribution (schools, politicians, chambers, etc.)	Start: 3rd Qtr 2017/End: 1st Qtr 2018	# of participants
Attain buy-in from manufacturers and school districts	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Regional higher education, workforce development, manufacturers, school districts, Regional Employer Council	NCIEDP, NCIRPC, Regional Employer Council, universities, etc.	Start: 3rd Qtr 2017/End: 1st Qtr 2018	# of participants expressing interest and buy-in
Develop materials to support programming, videos, commercials, and brochures, etc.	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Manufacturers, IU Kokomo, Ivy Tech, vocational schools, IMA, Regional Employer Council	Employer Council, social networks, local marketing professionals	Start: 1st Qtr 2018/End: 3rd Qtr 2018 2018/End: 3rd Qtr 2018	# of participants expressing interest and buy in
Explore or seek funding to develop and implement a regional campaign	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Manufacturers, IU Kokomo, Ivy Tech, vocational schools, IMA, Regional Employer Council	State and local governments, Community Foundations	Start: 2nd Qtr 2018/End: 4th Qtr 2018	# of presentations or campaign material distributed, increase in enrollment in manufacturing certifications

Objective B:

Implement a regionally recognized work ethic certification (Work Ethic Certificate program) involving 75% of regional high schools and 50% of regional manufacturing by fall 2023

Strategies	Responsible Party	Key Partners	Available Assets	Timeline Start/End	Outcomes
Introduce program to all regional high schools	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Superintendents, high school principals	Students	Start: 2nd Qtr 2017/End: 4th Qtr 2017	# of schools participating
Seek funding for implementation of the PRIDE Program	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Dept of Workforce Development, private granting sources, county elected officials; NCIRPC	Dept of Workforce Development, private granting sources, county elected officials; NCIRPC, community foundation	Start: 2nd Qtr 2017 End: 4th Qtr 2018	Amount of funding, number of schools participating
Engage employers on the benefits of the program and establish a standard criteria for the program	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Regional employers	Regional Employer Council	Start: 2nd Qtr 2017/Ongoing	# of employers participating
Identify employer recognition/advantage for those who complete the program	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Industry Partners	Regional Employer Council	Start: 2nd Qtr 2017/End: 4th Qtr 2018	Advantages identified by employers

Objective C:

Collaborate with regional partners to create a center of excellence for advanced manufacturing by 2020 to showcase manufacturing as a viable career path

Strategies	Responsible Party	Key Partners	Available Assets	Timeline Start/End	Outcomes
Identify potential partners in Center Development	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Ivy Tech, IU Kokomo, Industry representatives, school districts, vocational schools	Regional Employer Council, other State connections	Start: 3rd Qtr 2017 End: 2nd Qtr 2018	# of participants attending
Identify possible roles to be filled by a Center	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Regional industry reps, school districts, vocational schools	Regional Employer Council, Workforce Development	Start: 1st Qtr 2018/End: 3rd Qtr 2018	Input from participants and number of potential roles identified

Determine if "Center" can be achieved by existing facilities or separate stand alone facility	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director, Ivy Tech Program Manager, IU Kokomo External Relations	Regional industry reps, school districts, vocational schools	Regional Employer Council, Workforce Development, transportation network	Start: 1st Qtr 2018/End: 3rd Qtr 2018	Conveying of key stakeholders
Develop budget for Center's development and annual operation and seek funding	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director, Ivy Tech Program Manager, IU Kokomo External Relations	Regional industry reps, school districts, vocational schools, state and local government, USDA, EDA, OCRA	Regional Employer Council, local CPA firms	Start: 3rd Qtr 2018/End: 3rd Qtr 2019	Amount of financial support received versus budget
Begin Center's operation	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director, Ivy Tech Program Manager, IU Kokomo External Relations	Regional industry reps, school districts, vocational schools	Regional Employer Council, social networks	Start: 3rd Qtr 2019/Ongoing	# of attendees using the center, increase in educational attainment statistics, feedback from employers employers

Goal 4:

ESTABLISH A CULTURAL FOUNDATION AND NETWORK OF REGIONALISM

Goal Rationale

This goal addresses a weakness identified in the Civic Forums by creating a forum for elected officials and community leaders to engage in impactful regional discussions to inform and educate participants of the value of building local assets by advancing regional collaborations wherever feasible.

Key Partners

The key partners include: colleges and universities; state and regional associations; workforce development; and community foundations. These key partners operate beyond jurisdictional boundaries and offer resources and perspective to the regional efforts.

Target Outcomes

Short-Term (1-2 years):

The North Central region seeks to develop a common vision of the value and importance of multi-jurisdictional collaboration.

Intermediate (2-3 years):

The region is striving to create and sustain a regional leadership model to enhance the capacity within the local communities and the region.

Long-Term (5+ years): North Central Indiana expects to see an increased number of collaborative projects and programs.

Objective A:

To create an awareness campaign of the benefits of regionalism by 2020

Strategies	Responsible Party	Key Partners	Available Assets	Timeline Start/End	Outcomes
Identify target audiences such as elected officials, general public, high school economic/gov't courses, etc.	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	NCIRPC Board, IU Kokomo, Ivy Tech, Regional 4 Workforce Board, PCRD, High Schools	Local marketing experienced persons, IARC	Start: 3 rd Qtr 2018/End: 1st Qtr 2019	Number of audiences identified
Gather data (commuting patterns, community assets, other demographic data, etc.)	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	IU Kokomo, PCRD, Ivy Tech, Workforce Board	Chambers of Commerce, PCRD, Tourism	Start: 3 rd Qtr 2018/End: 1st Qtr 2019	Useable Data collected from a variety of sources
Design a targeted message(s) for each identified audience, using examples of regional success stories (local/state/national)	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	IU Kokomo, PCRD, Ivy Tech, Experienced writers in the region, media reporters	Local/regional news media, regional web sites	Start: 2nd Qtr 2018/End: 4th Qtr 2019	Matching a targeted message to specific audiences
Disseminate & implement the campaign	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director, High School Superintendents	High Schools, local/regional media sources, Chambers	Local regional media outlets, web sites, social media, civic organizations	Start: 1 st Qtr 2020/Ongoing	Survey responses towards regionalization after implementation

Objective B:

Establish a regional leadership institute at Indiana University Kokomo to create a foundation of regionalism and a forum for regional leaders by 2020

Strategies	Responsible Party	Key Partners	Available Assets	Timeline Start/End	Outcomes
Identify the participating institution	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Ivy Tech, IU Kokomo, Trine University	Ivy Tech, IU Kokomo, Trine University, Purdue, IARC	Start: 1st Qtr 2018/End: 1st Qtr 2018	Selection of appropriate or willing institution
Determine number of targeted attendees from each county per course and from community sector, (elected officials, professionals, etc.)	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Ivy Tech, IU Kokomo, Chambers, Professional/Community service organizations, IARC	Ivy Tech, IU Kokomo, Chambers, Professional/Community service organizations, IARC	Start: 1st Qtr 2018/End: 3rd Qtr 2018	Number of targeted attendees identified to attend per year
Develop Program curriculum	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Ivy Tech, IU Kokomo, PCRDC, Chambers, IARC	Ivy Tech, IU Kokomo, PCRDC, Chambers, IARC	Start: 2nd Qtr 2018/End: 4th Qtr 2018	Consensus on developed curriculum
Determine program specifics to include timeframe, operational costs, number of presenters/facilitators required	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Ivy Tech, IU Kokomo, PCRDC, Chambers, IARC	Ivy Tech, IU Kokomo, PCRDC, Chambers, IARC	Start: 4th Qtr 2018/End: 2nd Qtr 2019	Identification of course specifics and requirements
Identify Sources of Funding	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Ivy Tech, IU Kokomo, PCRDC, Chambers, Community Foundations, local governments	Regional Employer Council, Regional Ag Council, Sponsorships, local governments, USDA	Start: 2nd Qtr 2019/End: 4th Qtr 2019	Pursue and secure funding to meet budget
Implement the program	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Chamber, Community Foundations, local governments, professional/community service organizations, local media	Chamber, Community Foundations, local governments, professional/community service organizations, local media	Start: 2nd Qtr 2019/Ongoing	Number of attendees completing the program
Identify champions to perpetuate regionalism and influence decision makers	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	LEDOs, Chamber, Community Foundations	Prior course attendees	Ongoing	Increased understanding and regional cooperation, increased number of regional initiatives through pre & post surveys

Goal 5:

LEVERAGE EXISTING ASSETS BY DEVELOPING INFRASTRUCTURE/BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY

Goal Rationale

The purpose of this connectivity goal is to recognize current and future needs of the region, including roads, bridges, sewer, water, drainage systems, housing, broadband, fiber, and public transportation. As a region, the average gross assessed value increased by 12% from 2011 to 2015. The region intends to replicate that increase between 2016 and 2020.

Key Partners

The key partners include: elected officials; economic development professionals; Purdue Center for Regional Development; Purdue Extension; workforce development; local transportation authorities; and local service providers.

Target Outcomes

Short-Term (1-2 years):

The North Central region seeks to engage key community leaders to serve as the infrastructure working group within each county.

Intermediate (2-3 years):

The region is striving to develop an infrastructure inventory for each of the six member counties.

Long-Term (5+ years):

North Central Indiana plans to identify and prioritize infrastructure projects and develop a long-term plan to address those areas of need to assist the local units of government and the state with financial decisions.

Objective A:

Ensure our infrastructure assets (state highways, roads and bridges) are upgraded, maintained, and available to provide the highest level of service to our communities in the region by 2022

Strategies	Responsible Party	Key Partners	Available Assets	Timeline Start/End	Outcomes
Identify infrastructure inventory in each county	NCIRPC Staff	Local units of government, PCR, Region 4 Workforce Board	PCR, INDOT, Region 4 Workforce Board, Existing Asset maps	Start: 1st Qtr 2019/End: 4th Qtr 2019	Completion of an inventory by 3rd Qtr 2019
Assess the gaps in inventory and service	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director, Local units of government	Local units of government, PCR, Region 4 Workforce Board	PCR, INDOT, Region 4 Workforce Board, Existing Asset maps	Start: 3rd Qtr 2019/End: 1st Qtr 2020	Completion of gap analysis
Prioritize greatest needs as identified in the gap analysis	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Local units of government, PCR, Region 4 Workforce Board	PCR, INDOT, Region 4 Workforce Board, Existing Asset maps	Start: 4th Qtr 2019/End: 2nd Qtr 2020	Consensus of group for identified priorities
Coordinate corrective efforts with local authorities in each county	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Local units of government, PCR, Region 4 Workforce Board	Elected Officials, PCR, INDOT, Region 4 Workforce Board	Start: 3rd Qtr 2020/Ongoing	# of corrective efforts underway
Report back to the local authorities in each county what corrective efforts were identified and what resources are available	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Local units of government, PCR, Region 4 Workforce Board	Elected Officials, PCR, INDOT, Region 4 Workforce Board	Start: 1st Qtr 2021/Ongoing	# of people attending/# of sessions held, increased awareness of available resources, increased level of engagement

Objective B:

Ensure that an increased number of residents and businesses within the region have access to broadband and fiber services by 2022

Strategies	Responsible Party	Key Partners	Available Assets	Timeline Start/End	Outcomes
Identify broadband inventory in each county	NCIRPC Staff	Elected Officials, PCR, Region 4 Workforce Board	PCR, Region 4 Workforce Board, FCC, Existing Asset maps	Start: 1st Qtr 2019	Completion of an inventory by 2 nd Qtr of 2019

Assess the gaps in inventory and service	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Elected Officials, PCR, Region 4 Workforce Board	PCR, Region 4 Workforce Board	Start: 2nd Qtr 2019/End: 4th Qtr 2019	Completion of gap analysis
Prioritize greatest needs as identified in the gap analysis	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Elected Officials, PCR, Region 4 Workforce Board	PCR, Region 4 Workforce Board	Start: 2nd Qtr 2019/End: 4th Qtr 2019	Consensus of group for identified priorities
Coordinate corrective efforts with local authorities in each county	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Elected Officials, PCR, Region 4 Workforce Board,	Elected Officials, PCR, Region 4 Workforce Board	Start: 1st Qtr 2020/Ongoing	# of corrective efforts underway
Report back to the local authorities in each county what corrective efforts were identified and what resources are available	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Elected Officials, PCR, Region 4 Workforce Board,	Elected Officials, PCR, Region 4 Workforce Board	Start: 1st Qtr 2021/Ongoing	# of people attending/# of sessions held, increased awareness of available resources, increased level of engagement

Objective C:

Ensure our public transportation assets (buses, trains, trolleys) are upgraded, maintained, and available to provide the highest level of service to our communities in the region by 2022

Strategies	Responsible Party	Key Partners	Available Assets	Timeline Start/End	Outcomes
Identify public transportation inventory in each county	NCIRPC Staff	Elected Officials, PCR, Region 4 Workforce Board, Local Transportation Authorities	Local Transportation Authorities, PCR, Region 4 Workforce Board, Existing Asset maps, INDOT	Start: 2nd Qtr 2020/End: 4th Qtr 2020	Completion of an inventory by fourth quarter of 2020
Assess the gaps in inventory and service	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Elected Officials, PCR, Region 4 Workforce Board, Local Transportation Authorities	Local Transportation Authorities, PCR, Region 4 Workforce Board, Existing Asset maps, INDOT	Start: 4th Qtr 2020/End: 2nd Qtr 2021	Completion of gap analysis
Prioritize greatest needs as identified in the gap analysis	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Elected Officials, PCR, Region 4 Workforce Board, Local Transportation Authorities	Local Transportation Authorities, PCR, Region 4 Workforce Board, Existing Asset maps, INDOT	Start: 3rd Qtr 2021/End: 4th Qtr 2021	Consensus of group for identified priorities
Coordinate corrective efforts with local authorities in each county	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Elected Officials, PCR, Region 4 Workforce Board, Local Transportation Authorities	Local Transportation Authorities, PCR, Region 4 Workforce Board, Existing Asset maps, INDOT	Start: 4th Qtr 2021/Ongoing	# of corrective efforts underway
Report back to the county authorities corrective efforts	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC	Elected Officials, PCR, Region 4 Workforce Board,	Local Transportation Authorities,	Start: 4th Qtr 2021/Ongoing	# of people attending/# of sessions held,

identified and the resources available	Executive Director	Local Transportation Authorities	Region 4 Workforce Board	increased awareness
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Goal 6:

ENHANCE QUALITY OF PLACE TO PROMOTE TALENT ATTRACTION & RETENTION

Goal Rationale

This goal identifies the need to provide and promote quality of place amenities and housing options to reverse the region's population decline and further attract a talented workforce.

Key Partners

The key partners include: real estate professionals, elected officials, economic development, civic organizations, tourism boards. These partners will aid in the identification, prioritization, and implementation of projects and programs.

Target Outcomes

Short-Term (1-2 years):

The North Central region seeks to engage community leaders to serve as a regional housing committee to analyze the housing market and pursue strategies to address the priority areas, and to serve as a quality of place working group to further North Central Indiana as the place to live, work, learn and play.

Intermediate (2-3 years):

The region is striving to create a more connected sense of place across its member counties by building stronger relationships among the housing and destination attractions.

Long-Term (5+ years):

North Central Indiana plans to reverse the population decline and grow its downtown and tourism economies.

Objective A:

Conduct a housing study to measure baseline information, gaps, and needs by the first quarter of 2018

Strategies	Responsible Party	Key Partners	Available Assets	Timeline Start/End	Outcomes
Research housing data per county	NCIRPC Staff	Elected Officials, LEDO's, PCRD, local realtors, & assessor's office	OCRA Housing Assessment, PCRD, RACI, IHEDA	Start: 1st Qtr 2018/End: 1st Qtr 2019	Gather comprehensive data for each county on the following measures: current inventory, occupancy, upcoming developments, blighted homes, current & projected housing demand (based on education, population, and income levels). Specifically answering the question does current housing stock serve housing demand?
Establish a regional housing committee	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	Local elected officials, LEDOs, realtors, & planning/zoning	Local planning staff, LEDOs, NCIRPC, IHEDA	Start: 4th Qtr 2018/Ongoing	Committee will be formed with two members from each county in the position of local elected officials, LEDOs, realtors, or planning/zoning staff, for a total of 12 members
Compile housing data into a report & presentation	Regional Housing Committee, Project Manager	Local elected officials, LEDOs, realtors, & planning & zoning	Local planning staff, LEDOs, NCIRPC, IHEDA	Start: 4th Qtr 2018/Ongoing	The creation of statistics that support the need for regional development. Present to elected officials in each county. Each county adopts resolution in support of process.

Determine & implement new policy strategies / currently available tools to attract developers and residents, as well as to get local planning/zoning on board	Regional Housing Committee, Project Manager	Local elected officials, LEDOs, realtors, & planning/zoning, assessors, auditors, attorneys, state legislators, Indiana Housing Authorities	Local planning staff, LEDOs, NCIRPC, IHCD, PCRD	Determine & implement new policy strategies / currently available tools to attract developers and residents, as well as to get local planning/zoning on board	Create a list of at least 5 recommended regional incentives, strategies, and/or policies in the form of model ordinances for counties to choose from that has been approved by a majority of the housing committee
Identify, contact & attract regional housing developers	Regional Housing Committee, Project Manager	Regional developers, NCIRPC, LEDOs, local elected officials	Local planning staff, LEDOs, NCIRPC, IHCD, PCRD	Start: 4th Qtr 2019/Ongoing	Regional developers and builders begin projects that will close the gap between current housing stock and housing demand by 10%

Objective B:

Promote a well-balanced utilization of the region's natural, historic, physical resources & community attractions by 2022

Strategies	Responsible Party	Key Partners	Available Assets	Timeline Start/End	Outcomes
Convene CVB discussion groups	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	CVBs, Elected Officials	CVBs, Indiana Office of Tourism Development, LEDOs, Chambers of Commerce	Start: 4th Qtr 2018/Ongoing	# of participants
Research existing regional tourism marketing efforts	NCIEDP Chair, NCIRPC Executive Director	CVBs, local tourism boards, Indiana Office of Tourism Development	CVBs, local tourism boards, Indiana Office of Tourism Development, Chambers of Commerce, Arts Associations, Existing Asset maps, Main Streets, PCRD	Start: 1st Qtr 2019/End: 3rd Qtr 2019	Compiled local tourism marketing report
Identify regional tourist attractions	NCIRPC Executive Director, CVBs and local tourism boards' executive directors	CVBs, local tourism boards, Indiana Office of Tourism Development	CVBs, local tourism boards, Indiana Office of Tourism Development, Chambers of Commerce, Arts Associations, Existing Asset maps, Main Streets, PCRD	Start: 3rd Qtr 2019/End: 4th Qtr 2019	Regional tourism map
Develop a regional tourism guide	NCIRPC Executive Director, CVBs and local tourism boards'	NCIRPC, CVB's and local tourism boards	CVBs, local tourism boards, Indiana Office of Tourism Development, Chambers of	Start: 1st Qtr 2019/End: First quarter 2020	Regional Tourism Guide

	executive directors		Commerce, Arts Associations, Existing Asset maps, Main Streets, PCRD		
Market regional tourism guide	NCIRPC Executive Director, CVBs and local tourism boards' executive directors	CVBs, local tourism boards, Indiana Office of Tourism Development	CVBs, local tourism boards, Indiana Office of Tourism Development, Chambers of Commerce, Arts Associations, Existing Asset maps, Main Streets, PCRD	Start: 2nd Qtr 2020/Ongoing	All CVBs and the Indiana Office of Tourism Development have guide in-hand
Add regional tourism guide to RPC Web site	NCIRPC Executive Director	NCIRPC		End: First quarter 2020	Guide added to website



Evaluation Plan

Key Measures and Strategies to Track Progress

North Central Indiana will monitor the progress of the Stronger Economies Together High-Quality Plan by tracking the trends of the following indicators (as detailed in Figure 6.1):

- **Gross Assessed Valuation (GVA):** the total dollar value of all real property and improvements and personal property. GVA serves to comprehensively measure the effectiveness of the SET plan and Goal 5. The target is a 12% increase from 2015 in the region's GVA.
- **Average Wage Per Worker:** total annual income divided by total population of workforce. Goals 1, 2 & 3 establish strategies to increase the region's average wage per worker by 3%.
- **Total Number of Establishments:** total number of businesses within the region. The region seeks through Goals 1 & 2 to increase the total number of establishments by 1.5%
- **Population Growth:** the change in population. Population growth serves to comprehensively measure the overall effectiveness of Goals 1-6. The region will reverse the population decline and grow by 1%.
- **Educational Attainment:** the measurement of post-secondary attainment by age and level of completion. Goals 1, 2, 3, 5 & 6 will increase the region's educational attainment level by 2.5%.

The following chart establishes the baseline of the five data metrics. The metrics selected will measure the effectiveness of the strategies and action steps outlined in this plan. This data will be tracked annually and presented to the NCIRPC Board of Directors at its quarterly meetings.

Performance Indicators – 2015 Baseline
Figure 6.1

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS						
	2015	2015	2015	2016	2015	2015
County	Gross Assessed Value (Millions)	Avg. Earnings per Worker	# of Establishments	Population	Ed. Attainment Assoc. Degree	Ed. Attainment Bachelor
Cass	\$ 2,027	\$ 35,916	714	37,979	7.9%	9.2%
Clinton	\$ 2,369	\$ 41,940	596	32,609	7.1%	10.4%
Fulton	\$ 1,501	\$ 39,576	458	20,315	7.6%	9.1%
Howard	\$ 5,654	\$ 52,548	1,751	82,556	8.7%	12.1%
Miami	\$ 1,720	\$ 36,060	581	35,862	7.7%	7.7%
Tipton	\$ 1,548	\$ 41,760	306	15,267	8.9%	13.3%
TOTAL	\$ 14,819	\$ 41,300	4,406	224,588	8.0%	10.3%
	http://www.indiana.gov/economic/community-vitality-anastats/socio-indicators.php?county=Cass&year	https://pcrd.purdue.edu/ruralindi	https://qwiexplorer.ces.census.gov/static/explore.html#x=0&g=0	http://statsamerica.org/innovation	www.stats.indiana.edu	www.stats.indiana.edu



Glossary of Terms

NCIRPC	North Central Indiana Regional Planning Council
LEDO	Local Economic Development Organization
PCRD	Purdue Center for Regional Development
OCRA	Office of Community and Rural Affairs
RACI	Realtors Association of Central Indiana
IHCDA	Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority
NCIEDP	North Central Indiana Economic Development Partnership
CVB	Community Visitors Bureau
RPC	Regional Planning Council
INDOT	Indiana Department of Transportation
FCC	Federal Communications Commission
IMA	Indiana Manufacturer's Association
IU Kokomo	Indiana University Kokomo
PRIDE Program	Work Ready Certification: Persistence, Respectfulness, Initiative, Dependability, Efficiency
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
EDA	U.S. Economic Development Administration
CPA	Certified Public Accountant
IARC	Indiana Association of Regional Councils
ISBDC	Indiana Small Business Development Center
BR&E	Business Retention and Expansion
IEDC	Indiana Economic Development Corporation
ISDA	Indiana State Department of Agriculture
FFA	Future Farmers of America
NC	North Central Indiana

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Launched in 2009 by USDA Rural Development in collaboration with the nation's Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDC) and their land-grant university partners. The purpose of Stronger Economies Together (SET) is to strengthen the capacity of communities in rural America to work together in developing and implementing an economic development blueprint that strategically builds on the current and emerging economic strengths of their region.

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National Partnership for Stronger Economies Together

