MISSION:

Accelerate digital transformation in Indiana through the creation and implementation of digital inclusion plans.

Through this grant from the Duke Energy Foundation, the Purdue Center for Regional Development (PCRD) launched the Accelerating Community Digital Transformation (ACT) program. ACT builds on PCRD’s experience assisting many counties and regions in Indiana and beyond in developing digital inclusion plans. PCRD views writing a digital inclusion plan as one of the first steps in moving the needle on digital inclusion. For that reason, this program centered around digital inclusion plans by helping counties not just write a plan, but beginning to implement the plan as well.

Since different counties in Indiana are at different places in terms of addressing digital inclusion, this program offered flexibility to meet counties where they are. This flexibility became an asset as participant applications came in. Five counties were accepted into the program, two of which already had a county-level digital inclusion plan, one county had a regional digital inclusion plan, and two counties had no existing digital inclusion plan. The program adapted to the needs of each of these counties allowing the funds to go as far as possible in further digital inclusion for each county. The flowchart to the right shows the fluidity of the program.

PCRD provided technical support to the counties on writing plans, implementing funds, and developing evaluation strategies. PCRD brought not only our experience with developing digital inclusion plans, but with evaluation and storytelling. Evaluation was a part of the program from the start as all counties worked with PCRD to integrate evaluation into their implementation projects. While evaluation took different forms for each county, the ultimate goal was to tell the story of digital inclusion work through the ACT funds accomplished in each county. While some counties are still collecting long-term metrics, the following pages are their stories so far.

**Participating Counties:**

- **Boone County** pg 2
- **Carroll County** pg 3
- **Dearborn County** pg 4
- **Greene County** pg 4
- **Rush County** pg 4
Boone County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) led the creation of a digital inclusion plan for Boone county. Through reviewing data and consulting stakeholders, the team created a plant that lays the foundation to foster a digitally inclusive environment. Specifically, one that enhances the county’s economic and community vitality.

The process of creating the plan brought to light the gaps in digital inclusion currently existing in the county. Boone County EDC sought to address these gaps with the implementation funds provided through ACT to enhance the capacity of the county to address digital inclusion. The funds were focused on two major areas: Data collection and strategic marketing.

Data collection funded through ACT sought to provide a better understanding of the current digital climate in Boone county and guide future digital inclusion initiatives. Data was collected through 4 channels: Indiana Farm Bureau speed tests; a survey of major employers; a survey of small businesses; and a survey of residents. The results of the speed tests will allow for better identification of infrastructure needs and gaps. The survey results will help direct the types of programming needed by Boone county workforce, small businesses, and residents. Ultimately, all of the data collected will build Boone county capacity to pursue future grant opportunities and implement digital inclusion initiatives.

The strategic marketing done as part of the digital inclusion plan implementation assisted in the outreach during data collection and communicated resources related to digital inclusion. A digital inclusion webpage was developed to host information on all digital inclusion efforts, projects and resources in Boone county. One resource promoted through this initiative was the Indiana Connectivity Program. The landing page can be viewed at www.betterinboone.org/digital-inclusion.
CARROLL COUNTY

Carroll County approached their digital inclusion plan a little differently from most. They developed their plan to align with their current Economic Development Strategy. After reviewing the data and compiling a list of the needs in the county, the team began to draft goals for the digital inclusion plan and recognized a lot of repetition with the goals in the economic development strategy. Therefore, the team decided to write the plan as an expansion of their economic development strategy and align their digital inclusion strategies with the economic development goals.

During the creation of the digital inclusion plan, the team took into consideration data and explored current digital inclusion in the county. This exploration helped form the partnerships needed to begin implementing the digital inclusion plan through the ACT funds. Ultimately, the funds were used to purchase and install internet access in three key locations. Through this investment, Carroll county seeks to fulfill not only their goal of broadband expansion, but also impact Workforce Attraction, Quality of Place, Business attraction and development, education and workforce development.

**CREATE A DIGITAL INCLUSION PLAN**

**IMPLEMENT PLAN**
- Broadband Expansion
- Workforce Attraction
- Quality of Place
- Business Attraction & Development
- Education
- Workforce Development

**RURALURBAN TECH HUB**
Once an Opera house, the Camden building is being converted into a tech hub that will host a coworking space, a telehealth room with secure access, classroom and meeting spaces available 24/7, and more.

**UPPER ROOM YOUTH CENTER**
An after school program currently serving 75 junior and senior high school students by providing tutoring, mentoring and after school care.

**RILEY PARK & RILEY PARK ANNEX**
Delphi’s largest park serves as a center part of the community life through providing recreational space for sporting events, a playground, gathering space and more.
DEARBORN COUNTY

Implement Plan
Create a Sustainable digital equity ecosystem
Integrate digital inclusion into economic development strategies for business retention and expansion

Dearborn county played a vital role in the development of the Southeastern Indiana Regional Planning Commission's regional digital inclusion plan. The first of its kind, the regional digital inclusion plan addresses digital inclusion across the nine-county region. Involvement in the plan creation has made Dearborn county aware of digital inclusion issues at the local level, allowing them to put these programs' funds towards addressing these issues and furthering their digital inclusion plan.

Dearborn's task force discussed several options for furthering digital inclusion in the county and ultimately decided on a project that contributes to the creation of a sustainable digital equity ecosystem by helping small businesses. The task force put together a program that resulted in funding new websites for seven businesses. In addition, each business was trained on how to perform website updates and marketing. In this way, the task force not only integrated digital inclusion and economic development strategies but expanded the county's digital footprint and built capacity so the changes can be sustained for years to come.

7 SMALL BUSINESSES
7 NEW WEBSITES

7 SMALL BUSINESSES
7 NEW WEBSITES

Greene County is part of the Indiana Uplands region and actively participated in the creation of its regional digital inclusion plan through Regional Opportunity Initiatives (ROI). ROI supported each county in the region in creating a county-level digital inclusion plan that they aggregated to create the regional digital inclusion plan.

Greene County will focus its efforts on the ACT funding to gather information and build the capacity to implement more complex parts of its plan. Three key projects have been identified. The first is the collection of digital assets in Greene county. The results of this inventory will be published online for all to use and could help inform initiatives around device lending and ownership, digital literacy workshops, and more. The second project will focus on identifying current workforce needs related to digital technology through a survey of major employers in the county. The third and final project will be a survey to identify the digital skill needs of small businesses in the county and build a contact list. The results from both surveys can be used to inform future programming and workshops in the county.
RUSH COUNTY

**IMPLEMENT PLAN**
Improve digital skills and literacy among multiple groups in the community
Integrate digital inclusion strategies into community and economic development efforts

Rush County is already two years into implementing its digital inclusion plan. As their team reflected on the work they have already done and what components of their plan still needed implementation, the group took the idea of a “hackathon” from the digital inclusion plan and expanded it into a one-day event: Rush TechFest. Rush TechFest was held Saturday, April 30th as a showcase of fun and engaging activities, contests, demonstrations, and workshops focused on making participants of all ages more aware of technology and its uses plus the skills and tools required to use that technology.

The resulting event brought over 136 people together and represented more than 20 organizations. 77 exit surveys were collected that day, demonstrating the event’s success through the responses. In addition, the exit surveys gave the team insight into additional digital inclusion issues and acceptance in the county. From support for another event to volunteers to teach digital skills workshops, Rush TechFest will impact the county for years to come.

136+ PARTICIPANTS
20+ ORGANIZATIONS