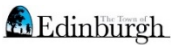




SOUTH CENTRAL INDIANA TALENT REGION

Powerful technologies. Prosperous communities. Resilient futures.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT BY:



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MEDIA CONTACT: Eric Frey, SIH CDC, 812-378-9949

REGION PARTNERS ON \$378 MILLION IN PROJECTS SEEKS \$49.5 MILLION FROM INDIANA READI FUND

A region with deep roots in collaboration today submitted a \$49.5 million grant proposal to the State of Indiana to support \$378 million in projects to stimulate housing, regional amenities, workforce training, and innovation.

The ambitious plan was developed through a collaboration of communities, non-profit organizations, and employers who are located largely in Bartholomew, Jackson, and Jennings counties. The region includes (but is not limited to) the communities of Columbus, Seymour, North Vernon, and Edinburgh, which brings portions of Johnson and Shelby counties into the plan as well.

Plan organizers expect the targeted investments to lead to a growing population, enhanced educational attainment, and increased job opportunities for the region's 156,000 residents.

"We have the pleasure of working with many communities in southern Indiana, and the level of collaboration and strategic planning exhibited by the members of the South Central Indiana Talent Region has created a proposal that will be a game-changer in southern Indiana," said Eric Frey, Executive Director of Southern Indiana Housing Community Development Corporation, a non-profit based in Columbus that will serve as the lead applicant for the grant proposal.

The vision of the South Central Indiana Talent Region stands on three principles: **powerful technologies, prosperous communities, and a resilient future.** Inspired by the vision and guided by public input, the region's proposal calls on four strategies:

- 1) Innovation & Entrepreneurship
- 2) Education & Workforce Development
- 3) Housing & Talent Attraction
- 4) Quality of Place

In developing projects to implement the strategies, a Steering Committee comprised of representatives from each of the three primary counties selected HWC Engineering to facilitate workshops, surveys, and other meetings to gather public input from residents, local governments, and employers in the region. The region's largest employer and one of just seven Fortune 500 companies to be headquartered in Indiana is Columbus-based Cummins Inc., which employs approximately 8,000 persons in southern Indiana.

"The South Central Indiana Talent Region's vision and each of the categories outlined in the proposal are foundational for the future health of the communities of which Cummins is a part," said James Schacht, Executive Director, Community Relations in an

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c/o Southern Indiana Housing & Community Development Corporation
748 Franklin Street | Columbus, Indiana 47201 | www.sihcdc.org | Tel: 812-376-9949

official statement. “While Cummins’ future investment plans in the region have not yet been determined and many factors can affect investment decisions, Cummins may invest up to \$50 Million in Southern Indiana over the next five years, with a material amount potentially invested in the categories listed in the READI application.”

The 187-page proposal offers details on 25 agreed upon projects and initiatives to be implemented in the region:

STRATEGY 1: INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Key projects to support Innovation & Entrepreneurship in the region include investments in a new Mobility Test Park and Proving Ground at the site of the former Walesboro Airport in Columbus, a project that has been envisioned for several years, plus funding for the new Propellor Innovation Center on the AirPark Columbus campus, and expansion of the Seymour High School Owl Manufacturing program.

One of the regional employers offering support to the strategy is LHP Engineering Solutions, who has conditionally pledged more than \$15 million of its own funds to two of the projects.

“With more than 250 engineers at home in Columbus and 300 more around the world, we have options about where to make investments and employ high-wage engineers and other professionals. As such, the direction and strength of south central Indiana is very important to our ongoing success, and our LHP team is committed to being a part of that success,” said David Glass, CEO, in a public letter of support.

Industry engagement is playing a key role in the Owl Manufacturing project as well.

“Since its inception in 2017, Owl Manufacturing at Seymour High School has shown steady growth in the number of students enrolled,” said Jackie Hill, director of the Jackson County Industrial Development Corp.’s Workforce Partnership. “That growth is due, in part, to the tremendous support our local industries have provided through mentoring and the way the program adapts to the needs of employers. READI grant support will enhance Owl Manufacturing and take the program to the next level.”

STRATEGY 2: EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

With “Talent” being in the region’s name, the proposal certainly seeks to build on the area’s national recognition as being named by Lumina Foundation as one of just 26 “Talent Hubs” in the U.S. The region is also a key part of the broader area’s State designation as a “21st Century Talent Region”. As such, the South Central Indiana Talent Region’s READI proposal places significant emphasis on investments to increase access to high quality training that is close to where residents live.

Investments under this strategy will be made for the expansion of programming at Jackson County Learning Center and construction of a new Panther Technology

Education Center by the Jennings County School Corporation. Another significant project will support a Campus Access and Student Success project at the AirPark Columbus campus which is the shared home of the Columbus Learning Center, Advanced Manufacturing Center of Excellence, and regional sites of Indiana University Purdue University Columbus (IUPUC), Ivy Tech Community College, and Purdue Polytechnic Institute with a combined student population of about 5,000 individuals.

“With the majority of our positions filled from within the region, having a ready and available workforce is critically important to us,” said Tony Miller, Senior Vice President at Toyota Material Handling, with employment of 1,450 persons in the region. “We’re very pleased to support the South Central Indiana Talent Region’s plans for leveraging READI funds to enhance access at the Columbus AirPark Higher Ed Campus, along with additional investments in career and technical programming in both Jackson and Jennings Counties. Our support of these types of investments have been demonstrated previously, with one key example being our corporate sponsorship of the Toyota Material Handling Welding Lab at Ivy Tech’s Columbus campus.”

STRATEGY 3: HOUSING & TALENT ATTRACTION

Population growth is a key aim of the State’s READI program, and the South Central Indiana Talent Region is making plans to welcome up to 13,000 new residents to the region over the next 9 years. To support this growth, the Housing and Talent Attraction strategy calls on multiple housing projects and initiatives to foster future housing developments and population growth throughout the region.

Projects include a 200-unit market rate apartment complex in downtown Columbus, 123 new homes in the North Vernon Knobstone subdivision, 64 units of workforce & multi-generational housing in Jackson County, and a new 35-home development in Edinburgh. The plan also calls for other regional initiatives and housing incentive programs, including the innovative “Welcome Home Talent Attraction Program,” which plans to offer a “reverse scholarship” to returning college graduates who move back to the region within five years of graduation, along with down payment and rent assistance to those relocating to the region for new career opportunities.

“Recent graduates of college and trade schools have a lot of options about where to live and work, and we appreciate that student debt can be a significant burden as well,” said Kathy Ertel, Executive Director of the Jennings County Economic Development Commission. “With our regional ‘Welcome Home’ Talent Attraction program, we’re excited to match new housing and quality of place initiatives with innovative efforts to attract young people and recent graduates to our region.”

STRATEGY 4: QUALITY OF PLACE

As regions and employers around the nation compete for workers, the plan recognizes that investments in community amenities, often referred to as “Quality of Place” initiatives, become increasingly important. One of the largest projects to support this strategy will be the redevelopment and adaptive reuse of the mostly vacant 400,000

square foot Fair Oaks Mall into the new NexusPark - a regional health, wellness, sports and fitness facility to offer healthcare services to the region's residents while also attracting sports tourism from around the Midwest. In Jennings County, the Quarry Adventure Park will see a former stone quarry become a new public park and recreation center, and in Jackson County, an expansion of Chateau de Pique will enhance tourism at the destination winery, brewery and event center. Downtowns throughout the region will also benefit from a new Downtown Revitalization Fund, enabling projects in any of the region's communities. Additional investments will be made in the proposed Columbus Riverfront Project, a new downtown hotel & conference center, and other projects.

"Approximately 80% of our workforce comes from the primary three counties of the South Central Indiana Talent Region, so the presence of availability and affordable housing is important to meet the needs of our existing workforce," said Michael DeWitt, Vice President of Faurecia Clean Mobility, an employer of more than 1,400 persons at the company's local Research & Development and production operations. "Moreover, as we recruit globally for the best and brightest talent, it is important to us that this region have the types of amenities that a global workforce expects."

Several companies throughout the region voiced similar support for the region's plan, including one of Jennings County's largest employers, North Vernon Industry Corporation.

"In order for our company to address the future of manufacturing, we will depend on Jennings County and the tri-county region to dynamically create talent attraction initiatives and workforce-ready programs for both youth and adults," said Steve Pride, Executive Director with North Vernon Industry Corp. "Our business success also depends on housing availability in the county and region, as well as strong quality of life initiatives."

Among the rules of the READI grant program is a requirement that all READI funds be matched on a dollar for dollar basis by local governments or other public sources. As such, several elected officials from the region were actively engaged in the plan's development.

"The READI grant is an opportunity to create partnerships that will lead to true transformation in both our individual communities and our region as a whole," said Seymour Mayor Matt Nicholson. "This program has allowed and encouraged us to work together in a way that truly serves a larger purpose -- a purpose of what is good for one of us is good for all of us. This will bring great attention to our communities and help us prosper for many, many years to come."

Also active on the Steering Committee was Columbus Mayor Jim Lienhoop.

“When prospective businesses and new residents consider where to plant roots, my sense is that they probably don’t care as much about where the county line is as they do what type of schools, amenities, and career opportunities await them in this region,” Lienhoop said. “As such, I have been very pleased to work together with neighboring municipal officials on this highly important and impactful effort.”

One of North Vernon and Jennings County’s elected representatives on the Steering Committee was Clerk-Treasurer Shawn Gerkin.

“Regional collaboration is alive and well,” said Gerkin. “It’s been an absolute pleasure to work with so many people from around the region who care about our region’s success. The plan looks incredible, and I’m proud to have been a part of the collaborative effort.”

The State program also has a goal of attracting up to a 3:1 match of private funds. The South Central Indiana Talent Region has surpassed the State’s goals, by proposing projects that will garner more than a 2:1 match of local dollars and a 4:1 match of private funds, for a total match that equals \$6.65 to every \$1.00 of requested READI funds.

“We have honored the guidelines and are proposing bold, transformational projects and programs that will help our region stand head and shoulders above the competition,” Frey said.

About the READI Program

In May of this year, the State of Indiana announced the formation of the new \$500 million Regional Economic Acceleration Development Initiative, or “READI” program. Some 18 regions representing 91 of Indiana’s 92 counties notified the State of their intent to participate by the first round deadline of July 1. Ten of the 18 regions are expected to receive up to \$50 million each, with the goal of attracting \$2 billion of local public, private and philanthropic match funding. In a July 12, 2021, statement, Governor Eric J. Holcomb said, “We encourage stakeholders to collaborate and think big. Focus not only on shovel-ready, but on multi-year programs to develop talent, drive innovation and improve the quality of life which will transform our great Hoosier state for future generations to come.” More info at: www.iedc.in.gov/program/indiana-readi.

About South Central Indiana Talent Region

The communities within Bartholomew, Jackson and Jennings counties have worked together across political boundaries for more than 20 years to improve educational and employment opportunities for the region’s residents. The Economic Opportunities Network, or the “EcO Network,” has aligned educational offerings with the needs of employers. Shared business recruitment activities have helped attract more than 50 international companies to the region. Collaborative healthcare efforts have lowered costs. Recent collaborations have enhanced defense industry opportunities and

supported business retention and expansion. By working collaboratively, partners of the South Central Indiana Talent Region recognize that opening doors for one another provides a host of mutual benefits: national recognition, major employer retention, and increased community success.

To oversee the development of the region's READI proposal, a 12-member Steering Committee comprised of economic development, civic, education, and public sector officials came together in weekly meetings to work through multiple iterations of the plan and project details. Representation was equal with four representatives from each of the three primary counties:

- Dr. Teresa Brown, Superintendent, Jennings County School Corporation
- John Burnett, CEO, Community Education Coalition (Bartholomew County and the entire EcO 21st Century Talent Region & EGR9 Communities)
- Dan Davis, President, Community Foundation of Jackson County
- Kathy Ertel, Executive Director, Jennings County Economic Development Commission
- Cindy Frey, President, Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce (Bartholomew County)
- Hon. Shawn Gerkin, Clerk-Treasurer, City of North Vernon (Jennings County)
- Jason Hester, President, Greater Columbus Economic Development Corporation (Bartholomew County)
- Hon. James Lienhoop, Mayor, City of Columbus (Bartholomew County)
- Hon. Matthew Nicholson, Mayor, City of Seymour (Jackson County)
- Jim Plump, Executive Director, Jackson County Industrial Development Corporation
- Hon. Matt Reedy, Commissioner, Jackson County Government
- Hon. Matt Sporleder, Commissioner, Jennings County Government

For more information on the region, and to download a full copy of the READI plan, visit: www.southcentralreadi.com.

About Southern Indiana Housing & Community Development Corporation

The Southern Indiana Housing and Community Development Corporation (SIHCDC) is a non-profit, 501(c)3 organization that functions as a regional Community Development Corporation for rural communities, with a mission to assist communities in housing, economic and redevelopment efforts in the Indiana Counties of Bartholomew, Decatur, Dearborn, Henry, Jackson, Jennings, Lawrence, Morgan, Ripley, Rush, and Scott. To assist with that mission, the agency has agreed to serve as the lead applicant for the South Central Indiana Talent Region READI proposal.

The agency has developed and managed a variety of past and ongoing projects including the revitalization of historic properties, downtown revitalization, development and

rehab of multi-unit apartments, and development and implementation of a program for the construction of homes for homeownership. The entity is well versed in managing State, Federal and private sector funds, having been a past recipient of funding from the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority HOME Program, Federal Home Loan Bank Affordable Housing Program, USDA-504 Repair Program, community foundations, Community Development Block Grant Program, and Low-Income Housing Tax Credit projects. Current assets total over \$9.6 million. More info at: www.sihcdc.org.