

Regional Outreach Meetings: Results for Adams County

INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the results of the Adams County regional outreach meeting, which was held on Monday, March 8th from 8:00 – 10:00am. Approximately 31 people attended the meeting. The complete data set that contributed to this report has been saved in an Excel spreadsheet, which will be submitted electronically to the Northeast Indiana Fund. This report is divided into 7 parts:

1. Pillar Ranking Results
2. Results: Competitive Business Climate
3. Results: 21st Century Talent
4. Results: Quality of Life
5. Results: Infrastructure
6. Results: Entrepreneurship
7. Exit Questionnaire Results

1. PILLAR RANKING RESULTS

Participants in Adams County expressed the following order of priority for the vision pillars:

1. **21st Century Talent** – Among other issues, this pillar focuses on: workforce skills for a knowledge-based economy; an excellent education system (pre-K through higher ed); workforce retraining opportunities; a strong regional work ethic; and collaboration among businesses, schools, and higher education institutions.
2. **Infrastructure** – Among other issues, this pillar focuses on: regional planning that connects land use, transportation and infrastructure investments; affordable energy; enhanced freight; effective public transit; increased “shovel-ready” development sites; and expanded broadband service.
3. **Competitive Business Climate** – Among other issues, this pillar focuses on: globally competitive industry clusters; a diversified economy with a strong manufacturing base; a business-friendly tax and regulatory climate; and a strong regional brand that can be marketed globally.
4. **Quality of Life** – Among other issues, this pillar focuses on: vibrant downtowns; strengthening the unique character of communities in the region; stewardship of natural resources; enhanced arts and cultural resources; higher development standards; and amenities that attract young professionals.
5. **Entrepreneurship** – Among other issues, this pillar focuses on: access to venture capital; a strong regional innovation center; formalized entrepreneurial training opportunities; and support services such as research, invention evaluation, product development, and marketing.

2. RESULTS: COMPETITIVE BUSINESS CLIMATE

Activity 2: Small Group Discussion

Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?	Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IPFW has a 4-year medical schools, has a lot to do with Fort Wayne hospitals, bio-tech companies in Warsaw. • Can Decatur benefit from Fort Wayne's medical gain? • Are there downsides to clusters? Like the RV industry - when it went south, everything did. • When one part falls down, another steps up. • There can be a downfall for a small area with an industry cluster. • You can specialize. I don't think cluster is the answer, you need to diversify. • Balance income with cost of life. What is the value? What does that buy you? • Business-friendly tax, marketing the brand will help. • Location-wise, tax breaks will pull business in, it helps to have low cost of living. It's tax-friendly and we will get more jobs, manufacturing. • We don't want it just in Fort Wayne, we want it to spill-over. • Regional - anything that helps the region, will benefit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong work ethic. • Industrial parts places to grow. • Fort Wayne airport, I-75, I-69, Toll Road. You are an hour from major transportation. • We have created a low tax base. Businesses will rise and fall by tax rates. • Businesses too some hit as property. • Great location. For products going out as well as raw materials going in. There are great reasons to stay. • Competitive employment base. • Logistically it is a great place. Proximity to Fort Wayne and Indianapolis, Dayton • Banks - financial institutions. It is traditional banking. We have not seen the defaults and foreclosures. A lot of the banks did not make the bad loans as in other places. • Plenty of employees available for work. • Infrastructure in place can help. • Good governmental structure - mayors, county councils.

Activity 3: Strategizing the Vision

This section lists the top 3-5 initiatives for this pillar, and provides a combined weighted score for each initiative based on the participants' voting sheets (3 points for being ranked first, 2 points for being ranked second, 1 point for being ranked third). It also lists any additional "must haves" that were identified by the participants.

Top Initiatives

Initiative	Weighted Score	Reason(s) Selected
10. Enhance economic development incentives. Encourage existing businesses to upgrade their programs and processes. Create tailored incentive packages for prospective businesses.	9	Other things can fall into place with this coming first.
6. Establish a business-friendly tax and regulatory climate. Streamline approvals for economic development projects.	8	Adams vs. someplace else, Adams needs to have the incentives. We have to have a business-friendly county to attract business.
1. Develop a brand for Northeast Indiana. Market the region nationally and internationally.	4	If Northeast Indiana has a brand - like Indianapolis.
11. Grow existing manufacturing base and attract new manufacturing and distribution companies to the region.	3	We need additional manufacturing.
8. Develop strong leadership in the region – including government officials and the business community.	3	n/a

Additional "must haves" suggested by participants

- Infrastructure development.
- Teach more economics in high schools and middle schools. Start in elementary school.

3. RESULTS: 21ST CENTURY TALENT

Activity 2: Small Group Discussion

Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?	Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buying into more technology. Regional development of technology. Accelerating opportunities to higher education/higher technology education, dual credit/new tech program. Addressing "Brain Drain." Strong schools/continued improvement of the educational system. Quality educational system = quality of life. Complementing outdoor amphitheater, community center, libraries, parks. Building a solid base of talent for businesses - new and existing. Make it appealing and possible for emerging students to live here. Recognize the talent of our young leaders and give them opportunities - leadership training, young leaders of northeast Indiana "YLNI". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School systems are into reform - lead the way. Carry through with 4 community recommendations. 4 Community recommendations could be the generation. We have identified needs - "foundation is there" = "4 community strategic planning" Visionaries/forward thinking.

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Top Initiatives

Initiative	Weighted Score	Reason(s) Selected
4. Enhance collaboration among schools, higher education institutions, and businesses. Develop more internship and on the job training opportunities.	9	n/a
2. Invigorate students to excel in STEM – science, technology, engineering, math. Support engineering and technical talent to encourage growth in high tech businesses.	9	Invigorating students to 21st Century skills - in all skill areas (i.e. auto mechanics to emerging sciences).
10. Build community-wide appreciation for education, and a commitment of lifelong education and training.	8	Many families do not have education as a priority.
1. Invest in Pre-K through 16 education and benchmark progress using internationally recognized standards.	5	n/a
7. Ensure a strong employment base and attractive jobs for future workers.	3	n/a

Additional “must haves”

- Bring the educational opportunities into the site. Make it more accessible.
- Strong, new-tech schools lead to strong employees.
- Develop strategic ways to promote and explain the positive talents and assets of our county.

- County Library System - a tool to digital access. Building appreciation for education and life-long learning. Libraries are becoming less about books, more about information.
- County-wide library service: for life-long educational opportunities; a tie between schools, universities, business, individual enhancement needs.
- Recognize the talents and leadership abilities of millennial folks and put them to use.
- Need to change how to evaluate instructors.
- Develop young people in our community to take on leadership roles and placed in decision-making roles.
- Adult Learning - Building a "John Jay" to be the broker for learning. Coordinating the need to continue to learn.
- Adult learning center - comprehensive life-long learning opportunities from GED, job skills training, leisurely enhancement classes (woodworking, dance, photography...)

4. RESULTS: QUALITY OF LIFE

Activity 2: Small Group Discussion

Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?	Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposure to Adams County assets. • Increases "foot traffic" which increases economic benefits to the county. • Cooperation among individual communities for the betterment of the county. • Cohesiveness for the county. • Breaks down the barriers between the different communities. • Increases travel outside of the county by county residents. • Possibly draw young professionals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good parks and recreation system. • Growth of trail system, outdoor activities. • Health centers, youth facilities in Berne - also attracts outside visitors. • Safe community. • Local healthcare. • Good work ethic of residents - German/Swiss heritage. (not everyone has a great work ethic and it has decreased dramatically, possibly due to low-income housing)

Activity 3: Strategizing the Vision

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Top Initiatives

Initiative	Weighted Score	Reason(s) Selected
11. Provide amenities that attract young professionals – including housing, entertainment, recreation, and transportation.	9	Attract the young professionals to lead to growth and leadership.
4. Develop a regional identity that highlights quality of life assets – including favorable tax rates, affordable housing, and strong education system.	9	Economic development is urgent right now.
2. Support active lifestyles in the region – increase walkability and bikability; enhance access to healthy foods; improve access to outdoor spaces and recreational activities.	6	Important to our world and that's important to everyone. Want to promote Adams County as a healthy place.
8. Celebrate the unique assets and characteristics of various communities throughout the region.	6	Unique assets in Adams County.

9. Encourage redevelopment and infill instead of sprawling development patterns.	3	n/a
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Additional “must haves”

- Gain an understanding of what people need to feel satisfied and happy.
- Online education opportunities! Local adult education opportunities!
- Promote work ethics.
- Learning center to support education beyond high school for those who cannot attend college.
- Adams County DOES offer many quality of life opportunities. However, many local people overlook these opportunities. Produce a marketing piece that shows activities and events in Adams County, in a 30-mile radius, a 3-hour driving radius, and 6-hour driving radius.
- Educational systems.

5. RESULTS: INFRASTRUCTURE

Activity 2: Small Group Discussion

Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?	Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better broadband: to attract and maintain business. • Transportation: better highways and rail (regional not a problem), airport is good. • Gain jobs and population with better infrastructure. • Higher wages, improving quality of life. • Even if jobs go to another county, we will get a spill-over effect. • Work ethic and labor availability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work ethic, good labor pool. • Infrastructure-friendly government. • Make incentives to business already here, not just "new" business. • Shovel-ready sites - availability of land. • Agricultural products: even with bad economy, people have to eat. • Research in agricultural products (Bunge, Red Gold).

Activity 3: Strategizing the Vision

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Top Initiatives

Initiative	Weighted Score	Reason(s) Selected
2. Enhance regional planning efforts to ensure connections between land use, transportation, and infrastructure investments.	15	Each county is different. Adams County is more business-friendly than Allen County. Adams doesn't have population issues, Allen does and will get more money that Adams can tap into.
8. Increase the number of “shovel-ready” development sites.	5	n/a
10. Work regionally to identify and finance regional infrastructure priorities.	5	Regional infrastructure is helpful to enhance land use and attract business.
5. Focus on developing an integrated, multi-modal transportation network that effectively links the region’s population centers.	3	Transportation between counties will help connect them.

Additional “must haves”

- Increase knowledge and the expansion of agriculture processing facilities in Adams County.
- Allen County must revise the building code or encourage development NOT discourage it.

6. RESULTS: ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Activity 2: Small Group Discussion

Q1. What will your county gain through the regional implementation of this pillar?	Q2. What are the assets in your county that can help ensure the success of this pillar?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to entrepreneur training opportunities and facilities. • Stronger outreach for adult continuing education. • All entrepreneurs should take classes - business planning, how to run a business. • Support for businesses - "business partners" resources to strengthen/support weaknesses of individual entrepreneurs. • Strengthened business planning resources. • Improved local access to support services: local score chapter, local mentors, share Adams County score participants. • Peer-to-peer relationships/support, understanding business fundamentals. • Leverage regional assets/resources, don't reinvent the wheel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 community banks and banking community general. • John Jay Center in Portland (Ball State/Ivy Tech) 15 minutes from southern part of county - more convenient to some than Fort Wayne and IPFW. • Make increased use of distance learning - Hospital, Bunge - serve as convening opportunity. • Strong local retired leadership - make use of them and engage.

Activity 3: Strategizing the Vision

This section lists the top 3-5 initiatives for this pillar, and provides a combined weighted score for each initiative based on the participants’ voting sheets (3 points for being ranked first, 2 points for being ranked second, 1 point for being ranked third). It also lists any additional “must haves” that were identified by the participants.

Top Initiatives

Initiative	Weighted Score	Reason(s) Selected
4. Establish a leadership network to foster entrepreneurial coaching and collaboration.	9	Identify and foster entrepreneurial coaching.
6. Develop a variety of support services to assist entrepreneurs, including business-related research, invention and innovation evaluation, product and service development, and marketing.	8	Entrepreneurs need a range and variety of support.
2. Encourage existing businesses to take entrepreneurial risks by growing their firms, or investing in new business areas.	6	Strengthen existing business for job growth. Opportunity to grow what we have.
5. Formalize entrepreneurial education and provide instruction through seminars and workshops.	4	Improve education on business planning.
3. Create an innovation center that can and will provide entrepreneurial assistance to all counties in Northeast Indiana.	3	n/a

Additional “must haves”

- Identify and support entrepreneurial ideas.
- The use of retired leaders to help new and existing businesses.

7. EXIT QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

At the Adams County regional outreach meeting, 27 participants submitted exit questionnaires. All of the respondents were white, and 81 percent were male. Ninety-three percent of respondents were over 45 years of age, and 81 percent had a college degree or higher. Nearly all participants indicated that they live and work in Adams County.

Participants were highly satisfied with the meeting format. Every respondent indicated that they were comfortable working in their small group, that their ideas were recorded appropriately, and that the length of the meeting was “about right.”

The complete exit questionnaire data, including all write-in responses, will be submitted electronically with the Adams County Excel file.