

Regional Outreach Meetings: Results for Allen County

INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the results of the Allen County regional outreach meeting, which was held on Wednesday, March 10th from 12:00 – 2:00pm. Approximately 35 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 Allen 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. **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.
3. **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.
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"> • A reputation of being one of the best places in the US to do business. Some smaller, surrounding counties are much more welcoming to business (learn from surrounding counties) • Grow business, encourage local entrepreneurship. Make this easier. Need infrastructure in place to make that happen. • Bring together industry clusters - what do we have in common? Regulatory needs? Workforce needs? • Concentrated efforts - legislative actions, etc. • Diversification - not dependent on manufacturing. • Education - Ft. Wayne school system needs to be upgraded. • Create atmosphere where young people with inventive minds can flourish. Innovation centers in every quadrant of the county. Encourage inventions, business plans, eventually manufacture here. Need to be motivated by education system. • Currently have only 1 PhD program - need to expand this, give kids an opportunity to do post-doctoral work and attract research dollars. • PhD programs can also help tech industries facilitate ongoing opportunities and learning for employees. Industry collaborative can help with funding. • Building a defense cluster - helping auto industries retool NEI Defense Industry Cluster Association has now been incorporated as a non-profit. • Software systems engineers to support the cluster. • Retraining for mechanical engineers. • Government procurement expo upcoming. • Hundreds of mechanical engineers could be retrained in a new area to help existing businesses (software, electrical engineering) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 rivers - great resource • Welcoming community, good cost of living - people want to stay. Easy to put roots down. • Great universities - center of higher education, IPFW, Trine • Great work ethic • Entrepreneurship - core culture - history of new companies starting here. Willingness to develop new business. • Logistics - land availability, geographic location - access to large population. Rail access. • Healthcare exploding regionally. • Easy to get around Fort Wayne - park at the door, very accessible. • Big city greatness in a front porch community. • A lot of companies want a big city feel • Extraordinary low cost of living

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
6. Establish a business-friendly tax and regulatory climate. Streamline approvals for economic development projects.	11	Get out of our own way so we can accomplish the rest. Sometime too many steps, hurdles, to bringing business here (local and state). Concentrate more on small companies - don't have funds now. Need friendly environment for existing and new business.
10. Enhance economic development incentives. Encourage existing businesses to upgrade their programs and processes. Create tailored incentive packages for prospective businesses.	8	Celebrating victories here, winning new business. Developing pride, swagger
8. Develop strong leadership in the region – including government officials and the business community.	7	Leadership drives branding, regulatory issues, everything else. Cooperative leadership.
11. Grow existing manufacturing base and attract new manufacturing and distribution companies to the region.	3	We've identified clusters, which we can grow from within.
1. Develop a brand for Northeast Indiana. Market the region nationally and internationally.	3	Need a vision, roadmap - what do we want to be?

Additional “must haves” suggested by participants

- Encourage private sector to take over public sector functions (more public/private partnerships) for more competition. But have a clearly defined end and clearly defined use of the gains that the political entity realizes from this partnership.
- Encourage stronger education system linked to business development - i.e. current business base K-PhD
- Branding to include the marketing points of low cost, etc.
- The state legislators need to change laws that hinder small business. Hold the state administration and IEDC accountable.
- Remove duplication of services between city and county
- Education
- Incentives should include positive and negatives - like the free market (accountability for businesses)
- Create more leadership development programs like leadership Fort Wayne for our public servants.
- Additional doctoral programs and laboratories to be used by creative people.

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"> • Economic development business climate • Lower crime, better the education the lower the crime. • Impact on quality of life. • It will help to be more entrepreneurial • Does traditional K-12 education address issues in our pillar? We have pockets of it but it is not universal. • Compared to Canadians and Japanese, we are lagging. • Giving children more experience can help then and also 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership between education and economic development in Allen County is a real strength. • Internships • Foundations • The Midwest work ethic • Lakes, Parkview Field • Religious community strengths.

alleviate educational costs on parents for children undecided in what to study.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If we are to be globally competitive the students need to see competition (Japan) first-hand. The curriculum has to reflect this - it is a cultural choice if we want. • Raising the expectations of peer group pressure.

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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.	10	Collaboration is key to region. Enhancing collaboration is important because it means it will save resources.
1. Invest in Pre-K through 16 education and benchmark progress using internationally recognized standards.	9	If youth not trained, lost purpose of skills - - Research and Development and higher education. If you don't provide K-12 funding, higher education misses out on funding too.
10. Build community-wide appreciation for education, and a commitment of lifelong education and training.	6	Interpreted to attitude; drives everything.
9. Focus on higher education (e.g. Purdue University and extension offices.) Establish a research university in the region.	4	Without R&D we will not have the jobs of the future. Without this the community falls apart.
2. Invigorate students to excel in STEM – science, technology, engineering, math. Support engineering and technical talent to encourage growth in high tech businesses.	3	Areas are what we could excel in and fit history and region.

Additional “must haves”

- Venture capital fund - develop start-ups from educational institutions based in Allen County (like ND and others have done)
- Align local government entities with defined pillars (without taking over)
- Provide opportunities for collaboration between K-12 and higher education - both formal and informal hosted by businesses
- We should go to longer class days, longer school years, more adult re-training and education.
- Sister-city relationships in key internationally competitive parts of the world.
- Need to put the "Fort" back into Fort Wayne. Need federally/nationally recognized programs in defense research, education, and product development.
- Business/foundation/public - collaboration and investment in doctoral programs or other demand/opportunity programs.
- Demonstrate ROI to business leaders when investments are made to workforce development.
- Formalize linkages between the classroom and the needs of businesses and industries.

- Become math, science, technology, education, training, and development center of the world based upon pre-K through Ph.D. training and education. We have a wonderful history of innovation and product development. Create and implement a regional pride program through education and PR that we build the world (or something). Every student and parent and citizen learns we invented the TV, calculator, fax machine, washing machine, gas pump, etc. and we are the breeding ground for 21st advanced manufacturing technology, and production.
- Link Allen County students to their counterparts internationally to bridge gap in cultural/economic understanding.
- Must promote the "arts and entertainment" aspects of the region to maintain competitive and culturally complete experience/quality of life.
- Change perceptions about jobs that are hard to fill.
- Significantly increase funding support for non-credit training especially as provided by colleges and universities.
- Implementation of proven "non-traditional" educational environments for grade 9-16 students.
- Need to engage youth into computer sciences.

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"> • Attract people to the region. • Critical mass of talented people - recognized by local companies. • Must market Fort Wayne • Assets already bring in people to Allen County - must increase those assets and get the word out in order to bring companies and talent to Fort Wayne • People want to live and visit "cool places." • Positive attitude - "I'm proud to be here." • We've lost our swagger, must work to get that back. • Time to be more open-minded in regards to attracting business. • Young people want urban lifestyle • Bring us back to our "former glory" - entertainment downtown. • NO identity - "upstate area" - call us something. Entertainment is at the heart of all that. • DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION • Complacency - no one wants to bring anything new. • Should be a great place to DO things, not just live. • Motivation to grow and build. Create a vision to market our community. • "Good enough" mentality - need to adjust attitude and progress forward. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban environment. More people are back downtown. Harrison Square, Embassy, etc. • Our community is not very diverse - arts, food, etc. must elevate our diversity. • More innovation from diverse groups. • Riverfront development - great asset that needs to be developed. • Time for redefinition - we have a blank slate - turn that into an asset. i.e. Indianapolis' downtown redevelopment. • Must take a chance - opening new restaurant downtown, developing rivers, etc. • Very easy community for risk-takers. • We have foundations willing to engage and help risk takers. • Greater starting point for revitalization. • Not ashamed to be identified with Fort Wayne • Re-engage families. • Fundraiser in Florida raising money for Fort Wayne • Diversity, educational institutions, FW Zoo, Medical care. • Keep Warsaw in our orbit, get their business community to acknowledge Ft. Wayne

Activity 3: Strategizing the Vision

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Top Initiatives

Initiative	Weighted Score	Reason(s) Selected
1. Invest in downtown Fort Wayne as the vibrant urban core of the region.	16	It's where it all starts. #5 follows. Downtown must be vibrant. Asset to the entire region.
11. Provide amenities that attract young professionals – including housing, entertainment, recreation, and transportation.	9	People are the key to the success of our community.
9. Encourage redevelopment and infill instead of sprawling development patterns.	5	There has been decentralization. Visited Europe- the have infill and intelligently used space. Have done a lot with little space.
4. Develop a regional identity that highlights quality of life assets – including favorable tax rates, affordable housing, and strong education system.	4	n/a

Additional “must haves”

- Large monument in center of courthouse lawn similar to Indianapolis or even Angola. Public Art
- Develop a music and art community downtown - housing, studios, retail - to include music venues - old buildings renovated to house etc.
- Create a high quality arts festival to attract visitors from 150-200 miles.
- Let's become the "intern capital of the great lakes region"
- Expand the "most wired city" to the "most wired region" in the country!
- The vision should implement a bug and spoke model for development of the region. An economic assault on the development of the downtown Fort Wayne District! The critical mass that does or can exist in downtown does so in a 5-block radius. Such a concentration allows for efficient use of resources. Something like Louisville's 4th Street live can combine work and play into one district. Housing should be included as well as other amenities required for downtown/walkable living.
- We must change our attitude about ourselves and toward projects that can help move us forward. If we aren't trying to move ourselves forward no one is going to come in and push us forward. Time for an "attitude adjustment".
- Student exchange programs need development. We are land-locked and have no clue the rest of the world exists.
- Major investment such as an aquarium or riverfront.
- In order to support this corps of young people let's build a living and lifestyle center for them in our downtown
- Enabling/attracting a national research university or private/national research development center to attract doctorate level research - increase entrepreneurship.
- River bank business development

- A major event or venue, like a NASCAR track at I-69 and 469.
- Regional identity - "A great place to grow a business" target national level goal to be a center for entrepreneurship and innovation!
- Research university downtown. Start with educational grant for rivers from US Government in collaboration with university (engineering department) from Purdue, IN, Notre Dame etc.
- From that core, the plan should target development of border counties as neighborhoods that compliment the core.

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"> • Access to other communities close by - close to Chicago, the rest of the world through airport. • Fort to Port - we're a stopping point on that corridor, shipping access to ports • Warehouses locating here • Support region, while region will be able to support Allen • Better interaction between regional communities. • Improved use of infrastructure we already use: are the weight limits on highways impeding trucks from using Indian highways/routes; why is there a stop for the track in Waterloo, but not Fort Wayne? • Improved ease of travel (stoplights after interchange exits) • Rethink zoning • Improved air quality • An airport at the next level: fun, easy to use. Utilize air service - it is currently underserved, but it needs to be used in order to get access to some of those services. It is a catch-22. • Globally connected airport with "butts in the seats" • A community that stands up and asks for air service • Marketing of a diverse transportation center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadband connectivity - Comcast updated bandwidth in Ft. Wayne • Technology that is not available anywhere else - we are the most wired city in the US • The people • Healthcare - Parkview and Lutheran. Health sciences, 2 hospital systems; access/service here is unbelievable. • Affordable housing. • Proximity to Warsaw and their industry • Infrastructure: I-69, Norfolk-Southern rail, airport, 24 • Access to water resources: underground aquifer - not constrained to water use like many. • Lots of land - though they need to be "shovel-ready" sites. • Electrical grid - capable and reasonably cheap.

Activity 3: Strategizing the Vision

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Top Initiatives

Initiative	Weighted Score	Reason(s) Selected
8. Increase the number of “shovel-ready” development sites.	14	Sites need to be ready on many levels, not just shovel-ready. We've lost projects because of not being shovel-ready.
2. Enhance regional planning efforts to ensure connections between land use, transportation, and infrastructure investments.	11	Have to plan regionally. It's not us vs. them. It has to be a regional mentality. Other counties can share the cost. Have shovel-ready sites from planning.
5. Focus on developing an integrated, multi-modal transportation network that effectively links the region’s population centers.	7	Don't spend money on something inconsistent with regional plan.
3. Provide for a new east-west highway artery.	7	We need good east-west traffic flow to connect to Chicago-Toledo.
10. Work regionally to identify and finance regional infrastructure priorities.	6	If entire region works together we can all benefit.

Additional “must haves”

- "Certified" shovel-ready sites.
- River development - recreation, cleaning, living space, business, walking access.
- US Customs/Federal Inspection and Immigration Services Facility at airport to process international passengers/cargo.
- Speed up permits
- Enhance north/south and east/west corridor from I-69 to I-469 to downtown Ft. Wayne. Not to interstate standards but visually improved, better signage - make them true gateways.
- Build and cluster some "ready sites" for various business segments that we want to have and focus on bringing these sectors to our community.
- Single government structure - city/county make it easier to do business here.
- Right to work. This is the single biggest obstacle to attracting new industry.
- Regional financing is necessary. Cannot be supported by Allen County only.
- Planning needs to start thinking regional: smoother faster traffic flow; congestion; spot-zoning (redefine).
- Subsidy for flights - locally-funded.
- Inter/multi-modal and cross-dock facility at or near airport.
- Love one another, work together
- Light rail between downtown Ft. Wayne and the IPFW/Ivy Tech/Coliseum node and between Jefferson Pointe and downtown.
- Integrate the 3 rivers in economic and social enhancements to our communities where appropriate.
- Competitive business practices. Do not favor one company over another or harm part of an industry while promoting other parts.
- Develop local nuclear power.

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"> • Everything - critical first step as businesses already here to support and grow what we have. • Grows jobs committed to community. • New business • Stronger on supporting current businesses. • Shore up weakness of venture capital - build on lending practices. • Long-run gain of more venture capital and local reinvestment • A more fertile entrepreneurial environment (i.e. plant the seed) - supportive community with a shared commitment. • Higher ambitions are welcomed and supported (i.e. astronaut vs. engineer) • Community of independent thinkers - create new industry beyond manufacturing • Foster appreciation of individuality and fearlessness to fail in order to succeed. • More "team-oriented" approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing entrepreneurs in the county • Innovation Center - ahead of the game • SBDC • Many assets to help both new and existing entrepreneurs - building on institutions that exist. • Admiration by some for entrepreneurs, but need to widen throughout community. • Higher education system and building on connections with entrepreneurial efforts.

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Top Initiatives

Initiative	Weighted Score	Reason(s) Selected
1. Enhance access to venture capital – both debt and equity. Better connect entrepreneurs to potential investors.	14	All about capital - a lot of great ideas but need capital
4. Establish a leadership network to foster entrepreneurial coaching and collaboration.	6	n/a
6. Develop a variety of support services to assist entrepreneurs, including business-related research, invention and innovation evaluation, product and service development, and marketing.	4	Most small businesses need this support and may need additional information.
10. Promote the value of entrepreneurial activity throughout the region, highlighting past and present entrepreneurial efforts, and celebrating the future potential of this region.	4	Culture of entrepreneurial spirit comes first.

Additional "must haves"

- Venture capital
- Access to world markets for money. Third world/developing nations implementation
- I think #7 is actually a poor idea - we shouldn't limit entrepreneurs, and clusters tend to evolve naturally although unpredictably.

- Share financial successes throughout NE Indiana (by counties) that were a result of regional endeavors
- Mentoring programs
- Policy: Failure is OK. "The only person not making a mistake is the person who is not doing very much."
- Allen County must create a culture of acceptance or risk-taking, "hair-brained" ideas, and disorganization (anti-establishment) in order to attract a population very different than what we have.
- Community business plan competition to highlight/inspire innovation?
- We have 3 innovation/incubators in NE Indiana with another 3 being considered. Strategy #3 presents many problems.
- Allow and promote more businesses within the education system - let school groups/clubs actually make money and promote business growth.
- Policy: It is OK to put out big ideas, even if you don't have them all figured out.
- We need a formal approach to securing endowments, not for the creation of foundations or buildings, but for venture capital. It is OK for the money to go toward a losing business.
- Work with large companies and universities to help them identify unneeded intellectual property and find small businesses who would use it.
- Initiative: A competition for ideas.

7. EXIT QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

At the Allen County regional outreach meeting, 30 participants submitted exit questionnaires. Ninety-seven percent of the respondents were white, and 80 percent were male. Seventy-three percent of respondents were over 45 years of age, and 80 percent had a college degree or higher. Nearly all participants indicated that they live and work in Allen County.

Participants were highly satisfied with the meeting format. Ninety-three percent of respondents indicated that they were comfortable working in their small group, 97 percent noted that their ideas were recorded appropriately, and 93 percent said 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 Allen County Excel file.