

Regional Outreach Meetings: Results for Huntington County

INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the results of the Huntington County regional outreach meeting, which was held on Tuesday, March 9th from 12:00 – 2:00 pm . Approximately 33 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 Huntington County expressed the following order of priority for the vision pillars:

1. **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.
2. **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.
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. **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.
5. **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.

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"> • More businesses coming into county - expand jobs. • Replace manufacturing base we lost - need to diversify. • Attract small business and large employers. • Technology-oriented business: software development, research and laboratory; sell our regional assets. • Creative nightlife in downtown Huntington. • Establish a regional organization designed to promote foreign trade...think globally. • Expand the airport - foreign trade zone. • Attract heavier industry. (driven out by environmental regulation, utility rates, but still more favorable than other parts of the country) • Improved regional cooperation, like Indianapolis aerospace consortium. We could look at software development, heavy industry. How can we all benefit, rather than compete? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pro-business, pro-manufacturing • Reservoir • River • Airport • Space - land for industrial parks - shovel-ready. • Well-tied to road/rail/air infrastructure • Educational resources - ITT aerospace, Purdue, TAP program: grad students available to work for your business, consulting • HCUED - leveraging existing and prospective businesses. • Partnerships • Financial resources - CEDIT money, tax abatement funds.

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
11. Grow existing manufacturing base and attract new manufacturing and distribution companies to the region.	8	Most taxes com from manufacturing, also jobs.
8. Develop strong leadership in the region – including government officials and the business community.	5	Need to maintain unity between city government and manufacturing. Need to put a face on our community; need leadership to sell it.
12. Develop a diversified economy that expands beyond the traditional manufacturing base.	5	We've lost automotive. Need to diversify better, handle different industry cycles.
2. Invest additional financial resources into economic development activities.	4	n/a
10. Enhance economic development incentives. Encourage existing businesses to upgrade their programs and processes. Create tailored incentive packages for prospective businesses.	3	n/a

Additional “must haves” suggested by participants

- Develop specific strategies with education, entrepreneurship, and economic development to launch and/or attract technology-based business with high-growth potential (software, research, testing, etc.)
- Improve technical based curriculum in K-16 education system in area (Example: Research Triangle in North Carolina)

- City government must work well with businesses and industries.
- Look at international companies.
- Leverage Huntington Airport to secure businesses that would locate by the airport. Foreign trade zone possibility similar model to what Indianapolis has done.
- Expand on business plan competition to focus on economic development in the county.

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"> • Workforce development - that can adapt. • Strong leadership to prosper. • Workforce matches business opportunities for county. • Collaboration on shared resources. • Retaining talent from college - i.e. internship programs etc. • Develop businesses • Increase population • Gain per capita income - increase quality of life. • Broader industry focus (i.e. autos) • Cyclical benefit of education as is linked to workforce. • Using certain factors as a magnet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building on current internships and initiatives. • NE Indiana has broad diversity in educational institutions; currently under-sold/utilized education corridor. • Lots of opportunities to collaborate and form a cooperative effort. • Three 4-star schools. • Regionally and nationally ranked institutions - great opportunity to market more strategically/effectively. • Strong community partnerships to build on: Decko, etc.; NE Indiana group already networked. • Must sell it as best education opportunities "in world".

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
1. Invest in Pre-K through 16 education and benchmark progress using internationally recognized standards.	13	NE Indiana has been linked to low-skill jobs, investment in education. Currently low expectations/aspirations in county education and help community set higher goals and investment. Long-term strategy.
10. Build community-wide appreciation for education, and a commitment of lifelong education and training.	10	Manufacturing base here and could train K-12 in Chinese, Spanish, etc. to educate a globally-focused workforce.
7. Ensure a strong employment base and attractive jobs for future workers.	7	Shuttleworth example - expanding this helps to increase passion for. Key to retaining and recruiting. Hard to motivate scholars, students, without incentive to stay - avoiding the "brain drain."
2. Invigorate students to excel in STEM – science, technology, engineering, math. Support engineering and technical talent to encourage growth in high tech businesses.	7	Everything going high-tech and must invest in the people.

Additional “must haves”

- Develop cooperative higher education center similar to (?) that would bring together all higher education institutions in the region.
- The business community and industry needs to market the variety of higher education institutions in the region. A dozen different institutions within 1-2 hours of each other, all different kinds and strengths - some nationally recognized. This should be a regional marketing strategy for attracting industry - not just individual institutions trying to attract students.
- Market/advertise programs that already exist to build familiarity and produce confidence in "local" life-preparation institutions (education and otherwise)
- Higher education collaboration that goes beyond "normal" collaboration - i.e. reduction of redundancy in programs (some institutions, sacrificing programs/short-term enrollment to a stronger neighbor and vice-versa, in order to build strong niche programs)
- India/China produce more individuals with the English language than we do. Begin a K-16 approach to foreign language such as Spanish/Chinese to provide opportunities to ALL graduates regardless of whether they continue their education or go directly to the workforce.
- Regionalized, collaborative marketing approach to promote educational opportunity held by the region.
- Invest education into the international education (worldwide)
- Train companies on how to recruit "top performers and draw them in, even when a position is currently not available.
- Need opportunities to promote/develop a culture of education appreciation and value.
- Develop a collaborative research center to support private business emphasis in NE Indiana.
- Creation of a virtual school in a K-16 approach to capture students from across the country - create specialty education pods.
- Stimulate global workforce and creative thinking in order to generate "seed" ideas for new business development.
- Invest in the talents of students in high-tech, math and science.
- Change the story about what we offer in Huntington County.
- Need to market as a region the post-secondary institutions that exist - their achievements and contribution to the region.
- Develop collaborative health services initiative - combine medical schools, pharmacy, nursing programs, etc.
- Creating a way to measure student accountability and create an environment to get kids engaged with the education.
- Promote "adaptability" in training for workforce skills.
- Tie education into training and education based on local business industry.

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 and visibility • Strength in numbers. Quality in the region, creates quality if this places. • Regional tourism. • Marketing exposure/media exposure. • Partner with sister cities. • Publicize our assets, highlight them. • Public transportation • Improved technology. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courthouse • Dinner theatre • Reservoirs • Athletic facilities • Affordable housing • Parkview Huntington Hospital • Huntington University • Huntington County Chamber of Commerce • Huntington County Visitors Bureau • Huntington County Community School Corporation

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. Develop a regional identity that highlights quality of life assets – including favorable tax rates, affordable housing, and strong education system.	10	Brand us as a destination. Strong education system - H.U.
8. Celebrate the unique assets and characteristics of various communities throughout the region.	8	Identify the unique characteristics.
10. Enhance social connectivity among all races, classes, and ages.	3	Reason for people to stay.
11. Provide amenities that attract young professionals – including housing, entertainment, recreation, and transportation.	3	n/a

Additional “must haves”

- Quality, safe affordable transportation links.
- Be the first region to unite colleges/universities. Provide multiple university participation a B.S. in 2.5-3 years and at a cost advantage to the student.
- Need a main attraction here that will draw people to our county and make it a destination community.
- Promote attributes - most desirable in years to come.
- Service opportunities- ways to enhance community life other than schooling, working, entertaining, etc. focus on volunteering.
- Spread funding around to all areas, not just in one concentrated community.
- Develop a leadership model for each separate community that encourages broadly developing their own community to be a destination site for use of the local assets.
- Better transportation system so people can easily travel from place to place.

- Make much more of our natural resources - lakes, rivers, streams in particular.
- Capitalizing on higher education institutes - "popping the bubble" to include the higher education institute in ALL community events, initiatives, and engage students.
- Increase market awareness of our assets, money spent here, improves here.
- Need media in the community: TV radio, etc. to promote Huntington County.
- Turn Huntington into an "artists Mecca" that does not now exist in NE Indiana.

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"> • Broader industry focus (i.e. autos) • Infrastructure/energy is the ticket price into the game. But even though you enter the game, you don't necessarily win the game. Everyone has to do things well to be looked at. • 21st Century Talent/Quality of Life will follow when you have infrastructure in place. • Protect/improve our assets. • Improve on weaknesses: sewer (combined sewer overflow), inability to radically improve. • How do we take an existing strength and make it viable for the next 30-40 years? • We're disadvantaged in money/funding because of merger with Region II/A / NIIC • What is regional coalition of legislatures/coordinating strategy? • 9 could be another north/south road, other than I-69 (Marion to Toll Road) and we could then get to 30-W • Cooperation of regional legislators to lobby for regional transportation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad band in the works • 1 shovel-ready site. • I-69 and 3 exits. • 24 • State Roads 9, 5. • Lafayette Center Rd, Allen to FWA International Airport • Norfolk Southern Rail • KHHG, our own airport • University has fiber • I-light regional system for broadband • Electric energy suppliers

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. Work regionally to identify and finance regional infrastructure priorities.	10	A north-south connector is critical and the only way we can get it done is to act regionally if it is too big for just the county. When we get a north-south corridor, we can do more. We have to set a priority regionally. Making a look through the region - needs regional planning/packing.

2. Enhance regional planning efforts to ensure connections between land use, transportation, and infrastructure investments.	6	Regional planning authorities, political groups/representatives, INDOT, IEDC to start process of creating new corridors.
4. Enhance freight opportunities through improvements to air and rail facilities.	5	n/a

Additional “must haves”

- Funds are short on availability, must help each other.
- Road northwest to Warsaw and US-30 West.
- Provide north/south highway artery to provide improved connectivity to US-30 West (northwest).
- North-south connector to 30-West via parallel to 15 or expand 9 or 5.
- Aggressive support from federal elected officials.

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"> • Resources (funding, encouragement) access to personnel and information that help entrepreneurs begin their business. • Entrepreneurs need a trustworthy source to "counsel" or mentor them...they need a facilitator. • New businesses bring other new businesses. • Huntington University and community leaders are viewed as major assets. • The downtown area is a vital part of Huntington. • Communities are beginning to work better together. • Reasonable labor costs. • Business-friendly environment? • Networking would help ensure business stability • Chamber of Commerce and HCUED • Huntington County Expo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did not fill out sheet

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
1. Enhance access to venture capital – both debt and equity. Better connect entrepreneurs to potential investors.	10	Small businesses fail because of lack of capital. Entrepreneurs have the drive and ideas, they need the money.

3. Create an innovation center that can and will provide entrepreneurial assistance to all counties in Northeast Indiana.	8	Entrepreneurial assistance is expensive, so an innovation center would help. Help from a regional director would allow business expansion and growth.
6. Develop a variety of support services to assist entrepreneurs, including business-related research, invention and innovation evaluation, product and service development, and marketing.	5	n/a
2. Encourage existing businesses to take entrepreneurial risks by growing their firms, or investing in new business areas.	4	Entrepreneurial expansion...encourage them and they will continue expanding.

Additional “must haves”

- Foster the entrepreneurship talents in our young people.
- Could the NIIC be more regional? Open to all counties in the area? Those are extremely expensive to run and being a part of that would be a huge benefit.
- We need a "package" or coordinated approach to assist entrepreneurs from the idea stage to the implementation stage. (Example, a checklist of everything they should consider and who can help them)
- Committee that could educate potential entrepreneurs on support businesses in the region they could partner with to enhance their business model.
- Since the #1 reason new business ventures fail is a lack of capital, it is critical that we generate availability to capital for subordinated debt.

7. EXIT QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

At the Huntington County regional outreach meeting, 26 participants submitted exit questionnaires. All of the respondents were white, and 73 percent were male. Seventy-seven percent of respondents were over 45 years of age, and 85 percent had a college degree or higher. Most participants indicated that they live and work in Huntington County.

Participants were highly satisfied with the meeting format. Every respondent indicated that they were comfortable working in their small group, and that their ideas were recorded appropriately. Eighty-four percent noted 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 Huntington County Excel file.