

#015 The BIG Goal

September 2011

Opportunity: Adopt the BIG Goal: Increase the proportion of Northeast Indiana residents with high-quality degrees and credentials to 60% by the year 2025.

Background: One of the single most important factors that will impact the future of Northeast Indiana's economy and the prosperity of its residents is the skill level and educational attainment of its workforce. Unfortunately, trends in educational attainment compared to skills needed by 21st century employers are not matching up and unless leaders from all sectors are willing to take on this challenge, Northeast Indiana will continue to be left behind in the national economic recovery.

According to an analysis conducted by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, a much larger proportion of jobs in the U.S. will require higher education — even in the near term. This analysis, titled *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018*, shows that fully 60 percent of jobs in the U.S will require postsecondary education by 2018.¹ As of 2009, the percentage of the Northeast Indiana workforce (adults between the ages of 25 – 64) with a 2 or 4 year degree or higher was just 31.5%. The region is not ready to meet these near term demands, which means potential jobs requiring post secondary training may go elsewhere.

In 2009, the Lumina Foundation for Education, based in Indianapolis, developed the BIG Goal - focusing all of their efforts towards increasing the proportion of Americans with high-quality degrees and credentials to 60% by 2025. They have aligned all of their programs and grant making with effective strategies towards achieving this goal and have reached out to communities across the country to do the same. The adoption of the BIG Goal in Northeast Indiana gives the region the ability to align its efforts toward a single long-term objective that has the potential to transform the region. A Northeast Indiana with 60% of its workforce holding a high-quality degree or credential will be a dynamic environment with an increase in per capita personal income, higher paying jobs overall, strong collaborative relationships between business and education, and a regional culture that embraces lifelong learning.

The first step toward turning the goal into action is to gain broad regional support for its adoption, followed quickly by convening community, education, and industry leaders to identify key strategies to achieve this goal.

Additionally, the Vision 2020 staff would like to propose a critical opportunity be undertaken by Vision 2020 and the Regional Opportunity Council in the near term to collaborate with the Talent Initiative in launching a comprehensive communications campaign in 2012. This communications campaign will be targeted at capitalizing on the initial success of the "Talent Made Here" campaign to increase messaging and media exposure about the importance of life-long learning and target regional stakeholders to educate them on the BIG Goal and its potential impact on the region. In order to take the communications campaign to the next level, the Vision 2020 and Talent Initiative staff propose to reach out to best practice

¹ Lumina Foundation for Education, "A stronger nation through higher education," September 2010.

organizations and firms with a proven track record for influencing community cultural change and seek initial seed funding from the ROC for this initiative in the amounts of \$50,000 to \$75,000.

The landscape of talent development in Northeast Indiana is vast and complex; alignment and collaboration around achieving the BIG Goal will be extremely challenging. However, it is time to leverage the rich talent pool that exists within the region's leadership to tackle one of the region's greatest challenges to its long-term growth and prosperity.

Citizens Advisory Panel Feedback – September 28, 2011

Impact (#1 Opportunity according to Citizens Advisory Panel members)

- Could increase wages - raise overall economic wealth – per capita income
- Will meet the needs of existing businesses, enable them to grow and create more jobs
- Provide future industrial growth – business attraction

Difficulty

- Need to focus on funding - financial resources both for initiatives and for students themselves
- Overcome community issue – culture of dignity and quality of education and the worth of education

Steps to success:

1. Agree to the most compelling option for success and adopt the BIG goal as a region.
2. Come to consensus on the meaningful definition of high-quality degrees and credentials for Northeast Indiana and develop appropriate mechanisms for tracking the number of credentials gained.
3. Develop an educational system asset map.
4. Develop collaboratives within the different spectrums of the learning continuum (early childhood, K-12, higher education, and adult worker training) to identify near-term and long-term strategies to help achieve the BIG goal.
5. Develop a marketing and communications campaign that will foster a culture of passion for life-long learning in Northeast Indiana.

Options

- a. Pursue opportunity
- b. Obtain further information
- c. Realign/Refocus the opportunity
- d. Put aside for future consideration