

Introduction

Following the initial release of *Indiana Vision 2025 (IV 2025)*, the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with other organizations and leaders, conducted five regional forums around the state of Indiana. The purpose of the forums was to:

- introduce *IV 2025* regionally;
- identify regional priorities among the report's stated goals within *IV 2025*; and
- gain perspective on issues and opportunities specific to different geographical areas of the state.

Together, the Indiana Chamber and the regional hosts invited thought leaders in both the for-profit and non-profit arenas to facilitated discussion and planning forums in Merrillville, Fort Wayne, Sellersburg, Evansville and Indianapolis. Prior to the forum, participants were invited to complete an online survey that asked them about regional issues, opportunities and trends, and asked them to prioritize each of the 33 *IV 2025* goals in four key drivers. The responses were then used to shape the specific content of each forum. To help them further prepare, each invited participant was provided with an executive summary overview of *IV 2025* and was asked to become familiar with the full report prior to attending the forum.

Besides the invited regional thought leaders, each half-day forum was also attended by several members of the Indiana Chamber executive leadership and policy teams who served as information resources to the participants. The forum discussion served as an invaluable opportunity for the Chamber regarding the regional priorities reflected in the report.

Forum Structure

After a brief overview on the history and content of *IV 2025* presented by Kevin Brinegar, president and CEO of the Indiana Chamber, participants then reviewed and discussed the regional challenges and opportunities identified through their survey responses. The forums were facilitated by representatives from CHORUS®, Inc., an Indiana-based management consulting firm.

The regional leaders then turned their focus to the core content and focus of the forum – discussion of the drivers and goals within *IV 2025* that they believed were the specific priorities for their region. Working in teams, the participants expanded the content on nine of the goals to include **Objectives, Strategies, Regional Assets, Immediate Next Steps** and **Milestones**. Each team then presented its expanded goal to another team for “spirited critique” and revision, followed by a brief presentation to all forum participants. A summary of all nine of those expanded goals is included in the following report.

Central Region Participants

Thirty-nine regional leaders attended the *Indiana Vision 2025* Central Forum on June 19, 2012, in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Keira Amstutz
President & CEO
Indiana Humanities Council

Jenna Barnett
President
Newmark Knight Frank Halakar

Tanya Bell
President & CEO
Indiana Black Expo

Stephen Borchers
Executive Director
Wayne County Indiana Foundation

Ken Brengle
President & CEO
Terre Haute Chamber

Dan Canan
President
Fishers Chamber of Commerce

Molly Chavers
President
IndyHub

Sara Cobb
Vice President for Education
Lilly Endowment

Jeb Conrad
President & CEO
Kokomo-Howard County EDA

Rich Ellery
Assistant General Counsel
OneAmerica

Jay Geshay
Sr. VP, Strategic Initiatives
United Way of Central Indiana

Christy Gillenwater
President & CEO
Bloomington Chamber of
Commerce

Hon. Greg Goodnight
Mayor
City of Kokomo

Carey Hamilton
Executive Director
Indiana Recycling Coalition

Jay Julian
President & CEO
Muncie-Delaware County
Chamber

Lisa Kobe
Manager of Indiana
Government Affairs
Duke Energy

Bill Malcolm
Principal Analyst Business
Government Affairs, Midwest
MISO

Marissa Manlove
President & CEO
Indiana Grantmakers Alliance

Wil Marquez
Principal
w/Purpose

Jim McClelland
President & CEO
Goodwill Industries of Central
Indiana

Mary McConnell
State Director
The Nature Conservancy

Mo Merhoff
President
Carmel Chamber of
Commerce

Dan Moore
President & CEO
Home Bank

Jean Neel
VP of Corporate Affairs
Haynes International, Inc.

Mike O'Connor
Dir. of State Government
Affairs
Eli Lilly & Company

Sam Odle
Exec. Vice President & COO
IU Health

Paul Okeson
VP of Business Development
Keystone Construction

Terry O'Neil
Partner
Katz Sapper Miller

Brian Payne
President & CEO
Central Indiana Community
Foundation

Dan Peterson
VP Industry & Government
Affairs
Cook Group

Clay Robinson
Owner & Brewer
Sun King Brewing Co.

Ellen Rosenthal
President
Conner Prairie

John Ryan
Attorney at Law
Hall, Render, Killian, Heath &
Lyman

Jefferson Shreve
President
Storage Express

Barbara Simpson
President
Indiana Wildlife Federation

Tom Utley
Councilman
Montgomery County Council

Tyler Vanderpool
Director of Benefits
RMD/Patti Insurance

Mike Wells*
President
REI Real Estate Services

Steve Witt
President
Terre Haute EDC

* Denotes Regional Partner

Central Region Challenges & Opportunities

Through survey results, personal interviews with regional leaders and forum discussions, the challenges and opportunities/assets characterizing the economic environment in Central Indiana were identified.

PRIMARY CHALLENGES

- 1. Educational Excellence:** Central Indiana Forum participants were in strong agreement that an underperforming educational system calls for dramatic reform. Its effects alter everything from business to healthy lifestyles. Broken family structures, unemployment, lack of funding, weak emphasis on STEM-related education and lowered academic expectations are among the most debilitating factors for education.
- 2. Workforce Development:** In lockstep with educational excellence, Central Indiana must develop a talented, technically competent and innovative workforce necessary for economic development. Forum participants expressed the need for a sense of urgency regarding the lack of workers prepared to take on high-tech jobs. Beyond simply an issue of education and training, they noted that the absence of aspiration and a desire to improve one's situation is also a cultural issue.
- 3. Mass Transit:** Central Indiana's mass transit is widely regarded as one of the most underfunded systems in the nation. In the future, mass transit is expected to play an ever-increasing role in advancing a region's workforce. Beyond the need for an effective bus service that would serve both urban and rural areas, participants also noted that light rail must be a future consideration.
- 4. Quality of Life:** Central Indiana has successfully transformed from a tired rustbelt urban area to the Midwest's gold standard for revitalization. But participants said the region's leaders must continue to build a world-class cultural and recreational environment that attracts and retains the best and brightest talent. While Central Indiana may have set the bar for other areas in the Midwest, competition for jobs and the talented people needed to fill them is now a global contest.
- 5. Diversity & Inclusion:** Closely tied to the issue of quality of life is the need to construct a culture that creates opportunity and understanding. Participants believe the Central region has reached a "comfort level" with the issue of diversity and inclusion that threatens to stall the spread of understanding and civility. Also, the current political environment threatens to create polarization among various groups.
- 6. Transportation Infrastructure:** Building, maintaining and funding superior roads, air service, utilities and technology pathways will continue to present Central Indiana with significant challenges to growth. Though the existing infrastructure places the region in a position of strength and influence, maintaining and growing those systems will require significant, ongoing investment critical to economic vitality.
- 7. Healthy Communities:** Economic recovery and growth in Central Indiana is threatened, in part, by a population whose collective health continues to decline. Obesity, poor nutrition, lack of exercise, and poor lifestyle choices will dramatically affect the health of our future. Participants noted that the health of Central Indiana's population is not equal to the quality of life the region can offer.



OVERARCHING OPPORTUNITIES TO LEVERAGE

1. **Quality of Life:** From its cost of living to outstanding health care, affordable housing, culture, philanthropy, arts and entertainment, Central Indiana is a great place to live and grow. The region was in the national spotlight in early 2012 when it hosted the Super Bowl to rave reviews, immeasurable goodwill and incredible exposure.
2. **Business Climate & Regional Economy:** Central Indiana’s diversified business base, low operating costs, favorable tax structure and entrepreneurial opportunities are clearly among this region’s greatest strengths. Indiana’s business-friendly climate has helped move the Central region and other areas of the state near the top of the list for any enterprise looking to expand and grow.
3. **Location & Infrastructure:** Central Indiana is, literally, the Crossroads of America with prime geographic location, a close proximity to major population and manufacturing areas, and an exceptional transportation infrastructure. While growing and maintaining that infrastructure was also considered a challenge by forum participants, there are advantages to the region’s location and infrastructure that its competitors will be hard pressed to ever match.
4. **Higher Education Resources:** There are a number of prestigious and affordable colleges, universities, vocational schools and centers for research excellence at Central Indiana’s doorstep. These resources strengthen the region’s quality of life, increase our opportunities for technology transfer, provide recreational opportunities and help prepare our region’s workforce for a new economy.

Central Forum participants selected nine goals from *IV 2025* and addressed how these goals could be specifically leveraged in their region. Objectives, Strategies, Immediate Next Steps and Milestones were all considered and applied to the goals. Below is a synopsis of those prioritized goals by the driver under which they appear in *IV 2025*. An expanded explanation of the work done by participants on each goal begins on the next page.

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| <p>DRIVER 1: Outstanding Talent</p> <p>Significant increases to educational performance will require the collective efforts of all parties charged with improving our schools and, ultimately, our workforce. Central Indiana Forum participants emphasized the need to guarantee that a high school degree ensures a student is career or college ready. Identifying tools that accurately measure that readiness is a priority. Additionally, improving the process for students by which they select and are placed in appropriate programs and majors must improve.</p> | <p>DRIVER 2: Attractive Business Climate</p> <p>Forum participants regarded comprehensive government reform at the state and local levels as a priority for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services. They recommended a redefinition of essential functions that must be delivered by government agencies. Identifying the best available models for local government is a first step. Participants also tackled the goal of reducing the obesity levels in the region, encouraging healthy lifestyle education, infrastructure investments, and the availability and affordability of healthy foods.</p> |
| <p>DRIVER 3: Superior Infrastructure</p> <p>Forum participants expanded two of the <i>IV 2025</i> goals tied to superior infrastructure: diversifying Indiana’s energy mix and developing new fiscal systems to support infrastructure projects. They recommended that Indiana establish itself as an energy technology capital. Modernizing and upgrading the state’s electric power production infrastructure is essential, and identifying alternative energy sources is critical to our economic future. Regarding infrastructure, participants encouraged the state to identify and prioritize the projects that enable this region to leverage existing key assets.</p> | <p>DRIVER 4: Dynamic and Creative Culture</p> <p>Developing entrepreneurship, enabling technology transfer, and promoting diversity and civility were the focus of the forum participants related to this driver. Systems, support, encouragement and incentives are all key elements for building a culture of entrepreneurship in the region. Both public and private institutions should be encouraged and incentivized to participate in technology transfer. Promoting educational achievement; encouraging a “triple bottom line” business model of economic, social and environmental emphasis; and investment in public art, cultural events and architecture were among the objectives recommended for furthering the region’s commitment to diversity and civility.</p> |

Key Driver #1: Outstanding Talent

Goal Statement: Increase to 90% the proportion of Indiana students who graduate from high school ready for college and/or career training.

Central Indiana Forum participants recommended that educational partners in the state work closely together to guarantee that a high school degree ensures a student is career or college ready. With that as the objective, they presented several strategies aimed at accurately measuring “readiness” through meaningful assessment tools, involving businesses through industry-sponsored schools and further educating school professionals on work skills. They were in accord with leaders in other regions that the responsibility and remedy for our current educational crisis lies with all of us. School leaders, teachers and their professional associations, colleges and universities, and business partners must ban together to tackle this systemic problem.

Goal Statement: Increase to 60% the proportion of Indiana residents with high quality postsecondary credentials.

At each regional forum, participants collectively addressed the goal regarding increasing the proportion of Indiana residents with high quality postsecondary credentials. Its importance and priority was reflected throughout survey responses in all regions. Tackling this goal together also served as an exercise that educated participants about the process they would use when expanding the remaining prioritized goals. Central Indiana Forum participants emphasized the need for clear and applicable achievement metrics. They also questioned whether there is a clear point person accountable to lead any strategies developed toward improving this proportion of Indiana residents. They also encouraged interim goals that can be used to measure progress and provide course correction for any initiatives. Participants stated that increasing the achievement rate to 60% will require significant additional funding for scholarships. They believed state government is well positioned to allocate sufficient funds in order to make this target percentage attainable and should make this investment a priority.



Key Driver #2: Attractive Business Climate

Goal Statement: Enact comprehensive government reform at the state and local levels to increase efficiency and effectiveness in delivery of services.

Reflecting the findings of the Kernan Shepard report, forum participants believed a major overhaul of state and local government is needed. They suggested redefinition of the “essential functions” as presently delivered by counties and municipalities. Three strategies were developed under this objective: 1) identify the best available options (models) for local government structure; 2) identify services that should be delivered and manage the expectations surrounding those services; and 3) gain understanding about the role of federal funding (i.e., matching grants, directives) in state and local government. They recommend the Indiana General Assembly consider passage of reform legislation in 2013.

Goal Statement: Return obesity levels to less than 20% of the population.

Because of its overwhelming negative effects on health care costs, lost work and productivity, and the collective health of our citizens, forum participants chose to address the goal of reducing obesity rates in the state and region to less than 20% of the population. Any solution will involve multiple assets and any number of strategies. Central Indiana leaders encouraged significant increases in a number of areas, including healthy lifestyle education, infrastructure investment (such as walking and biking paths), increased availability of affordable and healthy foods, and increased availability to exercise and recreational opportunities. Thorough communication, exceptional collaboration and targeted investment will all be important components in addressing this daunting problem.

Key Driver #3: Superior Infrastructure

Goal Statement: Diversify Indiana’s energy mix with an emphasis on clean coal, nuclear power and renewables.

The energy industry is a significant economic force in Indiana and Central Indiana is a large recipient of the state’s energy generation. Forum participants urged modernization and upgrades to the state’s electric power production. They also encouraged research into alternative energy sources for future needs. To drive production as well as innovation, they encouraged the state government and investors to make Indiana an energy technology capital.

Goal Statement: Develop and implement new fiscal systems to support the array of infrastructure projects critical to economic growth.

Much of Central Indiana’s economy has been built on the foundation of its extensive transportation infrastructure. The geographic location of the region has teamed with a confluence of highways and interstates to create decades of opportunity. Changes in tax structures necessitate that the state and region look at alternative ways to fund and support future infrastructure projects. Forum participants recommended the region identify and prioritize the most desirable infrastructure projects that will enable regions of the state to leverage existing key assets.

Collaboration between regions of the state will result in new infrastructure that increases economic momentum in multiple areas. Those regions must be willing to share in the investment in order to share in the reward.



Key Driver #4: Dynamic & Creative Culture

Goal Statement: Develop entrepreneurship and aggressively promote business start-ups through education, networking, investment and financial support.

For many years, Central Indiana has benefited from a diversity of industry and services. Overall, our economy finds itself in better shape than many of the regions surrounding us (particularly those in neighboring states). Therefore, the area is uniquely positioned to benefit from entrepreneurial enterprises that can draw on the expertise, resources, and favorable business climate of Central Indiana. Forum participants encouraged creating an entrepreneurial culture that supports risk-taking, encourages innovation and supports systems thinking. They recommend that the region incentivize technology transfer and intellectual property through close association with higher education, philanthropic organizations, angel investors, venture capital investors and state legislators. They also urged legislators to ease any regulatory obstacles that would deter entrepreneurial efforts.

Goal Statement: Increase the amount of technology transfer from higher education institutions and attain “Top 5” ranking per capita among all states.

Closely related to the above goal regarding entrepreneurship, participants also encouraged facilitating more technology transfer activity from the state’s publicly-funded universities as well as private universities and colleges. Financially rewarding universities for their technology transfer success will continue to seed ongoing efforts and provide ample incentive for continuing research. Forum participants also support increased government involvement in technology transfer, specifically in areas that are already showing promise or results. Funding for incubators could draw on public and private assets such as philanthropists, endowments, chambers and private business.

Goal Statement: Promote a culture that further values diversity and civility, attracting and retaining talented individuals.

Forum participants developed a number of objectives around this goal, focusing their attention on creating business, educational and cultural opportunities that raise awareness of diversity and civility in the region. Among the objectives proposed by participants were increasing green space and recreational opportunities to reach the minimum standards identified by the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan; significant investment in public art, cultural events and architecture; and adoption by companies of a “triple bottom line” business model that measures economic, social and environmental impact.