

READI 2.0 Policy

Application Guidance & Evaluation Framework

Application Guidance

A region's application to the IEDC requesting READI 2.0 funding will be an updated **Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Strategy**. This strategy should be considered a compelling proposal that focuses on transformative opportunities for growth in alignment with IEDC objectives. This development strategy will serve as the basis for READI 2.0 investment commitment.

The IEDC does not expect regions to develop completely new applications for this phase of the READI program. Rather, the expectation is for regions to use the initial application submitted in 2021 as the baseline for a revised strategy that will focus on the region's vision for population and economic growth with clearly defined strategies that, if implemented, will help the region and state grow.

The development strategy may include specific projects that the region is requesting funding commitment from the IEDC as well as example projects that help the Board understand the types of investments the region may consider making as it implements its multi-year strategy. The application should not include every investment the region may make in the event the IEDC commits funding to its implementation, but projects must be contemplated by, or be aligned with, the strategies included within the application.

Successful applications should demonstrate how they align with the state's economic development priorities, including how the region's application will help the IEDC meet or exceed the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) the Board establishes for the READI 2.0 program.

Application/Plan Content Guidelines

The IEDC will provide an application form titled **Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Strategy** (Application) that must be used by each region submitting a proposal for funding through the READI 2.0 initiative.

Applications may be submitted by an eligible regional economic development and acceleration development organization as defined in the policy overview and comply with the requirements of this policy below.

This policy provides an outline of the expected contents of the region's application for a grant or loan from the READI 2.0 fund established by Indiana Code § 5-28-43-3. The intent is to standardize the "Application" across regions and provide a common baseline for the evaluation of proposals delivered to the IEDC. The IEDC will provide a standardized application form for the regions to utilize; however, the Executive Summary and any appendices may be branded or customized by the regions so long as the content of the submission complies with the requirements outlined below.

Part 1: Executive Summary

- Describe the region's overall vision for the future and intent of the application. This should summarize the plan, the region's vision for its future, and what the region seeks to accomplish if the plan is successfully implemented.
- Describe the region's unique qualities that will be leveraged to retain and grow its population and increase economic opportunity for current and future residents.

Part 1: Executive Summary—cont.

- Identify which regional communities across the country or around the world the region is using to benchmark itself against and which were identified for best practices, defining strategies, and setting measurable goals or metrics for the region's plan.
- Highlight how the region's plan will help the state achieve its goals for the initiative.
- Describe how the region sought broad stakeholder engagement in the development of the Application and how it will maintain regional collaboration for at least the next five years. Regional collaboration should include key stakeholders throughout the region, including but not limited to; local units of government, county representative, higher education institutions, large employers, key economic organizations and other non-profit organizations. The application should identify key stakeholders' role and responsibilities for the development strategies as well as through the implementation.
- Explain the interconnections between the participating communities including employment, traffic flows, historical regional engagement/strategic planning, etc. and how this informed the region in its formation/continuation.

Part 2: READI 1.0 Evaluation

- Provide an honest assessment of the region's participation in the first phase of the initiative, including how the region identified and prioritized projects for investment, engaged stakeholders in the process and the status of the region's investment to date.
- Identify lessons learned and any issues that if addressed would increase opportunities for successful implementation of the region's updated plan/application.
- Describe the capacity of the regional organization, its strengths, weaknesses, and whether changes/support are needed to enhance its long-term viability and sustainability.

Part 3: Review of Regional Data

- Using the analysis conducted for the first phase of the READI program application, provide an update on the datapoints identified and how the region's population, employment, per capita income, number of housing units, educational attainment, childcare availability, and/or other metrics that may have shifted since 2021. Regions may use the same data

set as their READI 1.0 applications if US Census data updates are not available.

- Describe the region's expected demographic and economic projections within the next 5 years and how the region expects them to change if the plan is successfully implemented.
- In alignment with the state's metrics, describe how the region expects to contribute to the overall success of the program.

Part 4: Regional Growth Strategies and Action Plan

- Identify the region's overall planned investment required to successfully implement the plan outlined in the application including how much anticipated private, philanthropic, local, state, and federal funding would be required to execute on the strategies included in the application.
- Outline the goals and strategies focused on improving the quality of life, quality of place and quality of opportunity within the region. These can include investment strategies focused on:
 - Tourism, arts, culture and community projects
 - Family-support initiatives (Childcare and healthcare access)
 - Trails and parks (Public spaces)
 - Housing availability and affordability (New and rehabilitated units)
 - Growth infrastructure (Water, sewer, roads, and utilities)
 - Mixed-used developments (residential and commercial along with other mix of uses)
 - Infrastructure for economic development (leading directly to jobs)
 - Talent supply and education (talent development and attraction)
 - Innovation and entrepreneurship
- For each strategy, include specific opportunities/projects and/or examples of the types of investments the region is considering in achieving its goals. Describe the process the region will utilize for intake, prioritization, and evaluation of projects.
- Identify key partner organizations and anchor institutions and their expected roles in helping implement the plan.
- If applicable, explain how the proposed or potential investments leverage additional investments within the immediate proximity or a plan to make additional investments within the surrounding area to enhance the viability and economic benefit of the project's implementation.

Part 4: Regional Growth Strategies and Action Plan—cont.

- If applicable, describe the plan to maintain, or activate the asset the IEDC is investing in (e.g., if the state is being asked to invest in a public art initiative).
- Each strategy should contemplate a multi-year time horizon and include expected milestones to measure successful implementation.

Part 5: Goals and Metrics

- Define the region's expected outcomes if the plan is successfully implemented.
- Using the IEDC's KPIs as a baseline, include targets within each category that the region expects to achieve during and after implementation (one-, five-, and ten-year time-horizons). Explain how the region formulated these benchmarks.
- Include additional metrics that are specific to the region if applicable.

Part 6: Economic Impact Analysis

- Once the plan is submitted, the IEDC will conduct an economic impact analysis of the application utilizing the proposed investment and the region's goals and metrics included in the plan.

Evaluation Framework

The IEDC Board may establish a strategic review committee to assist in the evaluation of applications for an award commitment from the fund.

A region's **Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Strategy** (Application) will be evaluated based on the overall strength of the vision in their proposal as well as the plan's economic impact, alignment to the state's economic development priorities, and collaboration among state, regional, and community stakeholders.

Specifically, the criteria to be used by the strategic review committee to analyze and evaluate applications will consider the following:

- Which applications have the greatest economic development potential.
- Which applications focus on Indiana's rural communities.

- Degree of regional collaboration in the development of the application and the region's commitment to long-term regional engagement.
- Degree in which the region prioritized or focused on blight reduction/remediation
- The application's alignment with the state's economic development priorities (KPIs).
- Any other criteria as determined by the Board.

Included below is additional detail on the specific criteria the Board will consider when recommending funding commitments. This should not be considered an exclusive set of metrics and evaluation criteria, but it does contain the baseline measures to be considered during the Board's evaluation process. In addition to these criteria, an evaluation matrix will be developed and distributed to regions prior to the submission deadline.

Successful applications for a grant or loan from the fund must comply with the Application/Plan Content Guidelines of this policy and demonstrate to the Board, that if successfully implemented, will accelerate population growth within the region covered by the application.

The IEDC's financial commitment to a region will be scaled based on the region's alignment with the IEDC's economic development priorities, the potential impact of the region's application and the region's capacity to leverage public and private resources.

To determine whether the application will achieve these goals, the Board will consider:

1. Recommendations from the Board's strategic review committee

The Board will establish a strategic review committee comprised of experts in the fields of regionalism, economic development, rural development, and community engagement. This committee is tasked with evaluating each regional application submitted for funding through the READI 2.0 program and providing feedback to the IEDC and the Board on the application's adherence to the Application/Plan Content Guidelines and their analysis of the factors that should be considered by the Board outlined below.

2. The extent to which the plan includes a focus on Indiana's rural communities

The Board will evaluate the plan's potential impact on rural areas of the region. While approximately 20% of the state's population resides in a rural community, the IEDC recognizes that the state's continued economic growth will require these rural areas to remain healthy and vibrant places for those who live there today and in the future. When analyzing a regional development strategy, the Board will determine:

- The extent to which the needs and opportunities of rural Indiana are considered in the plan.
- How the region will evaluate investment opportunities in rural areas and ensure these opportunities will be considered on equal footing with other investments in communities with larger populations/more capacity.
- Whether or not the region has a plan to identify ways to promote rural communities and raise awareness of the activities and opportunities available to residents and visitors.
- To what extent the rural and urban stakeholders have developed a plan that accounts for the growth of urban areas and its impact on the surrounding rural communities, including whether the plan focuses on in-fill or redevelopment opportunities within urban communities.
- Whether the region identified funding opportunities for projects in rural areas that align with other state initiatives (e.g., Indiana State Department of Agriculture or the Office of Rural and Community Affairs).

3. The degree of regional collaboration

Broad stakeholder input in the planning and execution processes is critical for a successful regional development strategy. Through extensive research of the most successful regions in the country for economic and population growth, the IEDC identified broad, regional collaboration as a critical factor in the overall success in the development and implementation of a region's strategic plan.

When reviewing applications, the Board will expect to see a clear demonstration by the region that it proactively engaged a diverse group of individuals, organizations, and interest groups during the planning process by considering:

- What criteria was used to define the region, who was involved in that process, and why the region came together as it did.
- How the region solicited input when developing the plan.
- Whether or not the region has an action plan to maintain regional stakeholder engagement and input as the plan is implemented.
- How has the region demonstrated commitments to the plan's implementation from key public and private stakeholders.
- Whether the region has articulated how the regional organization is equipped to sustain itself during and after the implementation of the plan.

4. Alignment with the state's economic development priorities

There is an opportunity to leverage the READI 2.0 planning process to align state and regional economic development priorities to increase the impact and return on investment for communities across Indiana. Coordinating investments and extending the reach of successful economic development efforts already underway will help to achieve the state's economic development objectives.

In its review, the Board will assess the region's alignment with the following:

- The plan's alignment with IEDC's KPIs (see table below) for READI 2.0 program.
- The plan's focus on Quality of Place and Quality of Life strategies in an effort to drive population retention and growth:
 - The extent to which the plan and the proposed investments it contains focuses on creating high quality, vibrant places with an eye toward attracting and retaining people.
 - The extent to which the plan prioritizes the revitalization or redevelopment of existing vacant, blighted or underutilized assets within the region.
 - Whether or not the plan considers investments in arts and cultural amenities.
 - Whether or not the plan highlights the natural resources within the region as a part of creating high quality communities.

4. Alignment with the state's economic development priorities—cont.

- The plan's focus on Innovation and Entrepreneurship:
 - Whether or not the plan complements the state's investments in supporting advanced industries including training programs, innovation centers, and co-working spaces.
 - Whether the plan includes strategies that leverage regional assets (e.g., colleges, universities, and existing innovation/entrepreneurial organizations) to increase entrepreneurial activity and/or access to support networks and capital.
- The plan's focus on Talent Development and Attraction:
 - Whether or not the region engaged its major employers to understand their workforce needs.
 - The extent to which the region developed strategies that capitalize on opportunities to retain graduates from its colleges and universities.
 - Whether or not the region utilizes existing tools, programs, or organizations to identify individuals who may have a likelihood to move to the state.
 - Whether or not the plan contemplates leveraging the quality of life/quality of place investments the region is making through the initiative in its talent development and attraction efforts.
 - The extent to which the strategies and potential projects in the plan support increased wages throughout the region.

5. Other criteria determined by the Board

In addition to the evaluation categories outlined above, the Board will also consider other factors in its analysis.

- Can the region sustain the effort after the state's initial investment has been made?
 - Has the region demonstrated a commitment to regional collaboration in the absence of state funding?
 - Does the plan consider creative ways to invest the state's READI funds to generate returns to reinvest in the region?
 - Has the region identified barriers to continued investment and considered opportunities to remove them?

- How has the region engaged its anchor institutions?
 - Did the region use its major employers and other legacy anchors to coordinate the regional planning effort or otherwise actively solicit their input and engagement in the planning process?
 - Have the region's anchor institutions committed to the plan's implementation, including providing funding where appropriate?
 - Have the anchor institutions demonstrated they are committed to focusing on interests outside of their own?
- Are there clearly identified metrics, goals or outcomes expected to be achieved if the plan is successfully implemented?
 - Has the region articulated how the projects are intended to achieve these outcomes?
- Will the investments in the plan be promoted in alignment with the region's vision?
 - Has the region described its visionary identity? Is this identity being used to help attract and retain people in the region?
 - Does the regional plan include a marketing strategy or a plan to ensure the region is being actively promoted?
 - How does the region plan to ensure any planned programmatic investments are still visible to the public within the region, across the state and around the world?
- How likely will the plan be successfully implemented?
 - How clearly has the region articulated its action plan and implementation strategy to make significant progress within the next 3-5 years?
 - Has the region demonstrated the capacity to coordinate with public and private entities to move projects to completion?
 - How does the plan align with or capitalize on the existing assets in the region?
 - Does the region have strong leadership that is trusted and relied upon by a broad group of stakeholders?

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Targets
Population growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the rate of the state’s population growth from historical average of 20,000 people per year to 24,000 people per year
Per capita income growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase per capita income (wage growth) by \$2,750 per year
Growth in employment opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce skills gap by 20% • Projected growth in target industries of 10,769 new jobs by 2032
Educational attainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase of 3.5% in share of population 18 and over with bachelor’s degree or higher
Housing units developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and rehabilitate a total of 6,000 units • Increase number of new rental units by 4,200 • Increase number of units for sale by 2,800
Childcare capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower the percentage of childcare deserts by 10% • Increase the level of quality at existing centers
Innovation activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number of patent filings • Increase research and development spending • Increase number of new business start-ups
Private investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 to 1 leverage ratio • 25% of total investment is in rural and rural-mix communities • 25% of total investment is in disadvantaged communities