

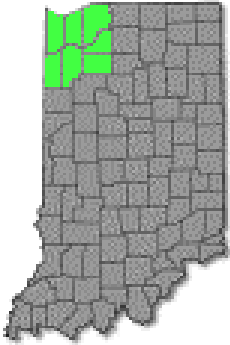
# The Economic Enhancement of Northwest Indiana

## The Community Workforce Compact

### Winter 2002/2003

## Background

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*Northwest Indiana* is a seven-county area encompassing agricultural land, lakeshores, sand dunes, wetlands, and rural communities. It also encompasses a major metropolitan area and a corridor of heavy industry – steel, automotive, and transportation. The region owes its good quality of life to this mixture of environmental wonders, productive farmland, and high paying manufacturing jobs. However, manufacturing and agriculture in this area has been and will continue to be vulnerable to global economic competition. The communities in Jasper, Newton, Starke, Pulaski, LaPorte, Porter, and Lake Counties must look to the knowledge and skills of their workforce, the potential of their youth, and diversification of their economic base to maintain and improve this quality of living.

This requires both analysis of what is, planning for what can be, and acting to make it happen.

- Since the summer of 2001, the community has been engaged in analysis and planning. Studies have been analyzed, new data has been mined, a community audit has occurred, and reports such as the “Northwest Indiana Workforce Profile” and the “Report on Learners” have been commissioned.
- Community stakeholder groups have met and the leadership has come together to agree on four major goals addressing the workforce challenges of Northwest Indiana.
- Beyond this identification, over 100 members have rallied to develop action plans to support achieving our vision of a skilled, adaptable, motivated, and diverse workforce for Northwest Indiana. This document represents the first phase of the community plan for 2003 and 2004.

### **CURRENT CHALLENGE**

**Our current workforce is below the state and national averages in education and credential attainment. There is insufficient information available to help them make career decisions. There is no uniform means of assessing their current education and skills against the education and skills needed now and in the future. There is insufficient information for employers to analyze what kind of training they need to invest in to help their workers become more productive.**

### **FUTURE VISION**

#### **Goal-One: Increase the Skills of the Current Workforce**

##### **Objective 1 - Increase skill levels of existing workers.**

**Action:** A targeted group of the existing workforce will be assessed using tools such as the Manufacturing Skill Standard Council (MSSC) Assessment. Skill gap training will be administered where needed.

**Leadership:** Employers, qualified assessors, training providers, and the two Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) in the region will implement the action.

**Target Date:** In 2003 we will have identified skills needed by workers at (3) select manufacturers in the (7) counties and will disseminate the needed skill-set information to the community. Assessment will begin in July and the skills gap analysis will commence in September 2003. (Ending 2003)

**Objective 2 - Increase skill level of the entry-level worker.**

*Action:* New and entry level workers will be assessed, utilizing tools such as Work Keys and Key Train.

*Leadership:* Employers, qualified assessors, training providers, the two WIBs, and WorkOne will implement the action.

*Target Date:* In 2003, begin assessment of entry-level applicants for the skills needed by key manufacturers in the region with skills gap training beginning in September. (Ending 2003)

**CURRENT CHALLENGE**

**There is not enough emphasis placed on credentials, there are too few quality work-based learning opportunities, and there is not enough information provided to help youth prepare for high skilled, high pay work within this labor market.**

**FUTURE VISION**

**Goal-Two: Prepare Youth for Success**

**Objective 1 - Increase the percentage of high school students in each county who participate in work-based learning experiences.**

*Action:* Assess the current opportunities that are available to students, develop marketing materials directed to business and industry in order to increase company awareness of work-based learning, develop information for schools about companies interested in providing work-based learning opportunities, make connections between the business community and educators, and increase parent/student awareness of the importance of work-based learning.

*Leadership:* WIBs, professional coordinators, educational institutions, and business.

*Target Date:* Assessment of employers and development of marketing material in 2003. (Ending 2003)

**Objective 2 - Ensure that students entering high school have a career education plan/objective, which includes an assessment of their strengths and their need for growth areas.**

*Action:* Ensure each 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade student completes a written Career Plan/Objective, utilize a workforce readiness assessment such as Work Keys and incorporate the Work Ethics component into the report card grading system, establish an adult model for work ethics, establish the Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) charge of providing schools accurate information about the skills necessary to be successful, and increase the opportunities for students to come into contact with the "World of Work".

*Leadership:* Involve stakeholders such as superintendents, school administrators, teachers, counselors, PTAs, parents, WIBs, and the communities.

*Target Date:* Ending 2004.

**Objective 3 - Expand opportunities for students to become involved in career and technical educational coursework.**

*Action:* Increase parental and community knowledge about career preparation programs and labor market issues, expand business, labor and educational partnerships, expand internship and scholarship programs.

*Leadership:* Involve career, technical, and educational administrators, faculty, chambers of commerce, service clubs, and professional groups.

*Target Date:* Expand business, labor, and educational partnerships to improve career and technical education by late 2003.

**Objective 4 - Infuse Career Education into K-8 curriculum.**

*Action:* Distribute Department of Education K-12 career curriculum to all elementary schools. Provide professional development and career day opportunities to elementary teachers and have teachers provide reality type exercises for all students.

*Leadership:* Involve career, technical, and education administrators, faculty, chambers of commerce, service clubs, and professional groups.

*Target Date:* Distribute Department of Education career curriculum to K-8. Educate elementary teachers about careers. (Late 2003)

**Objective 5 - Increase the percentage of students in service learning activities.**

*Action:* Build upon and expand e-club and entrepreneur programs in schools to promote civic learning through community service projects, increase participation in professional student organizations, develop Youth Councils in each community and a Leadership Camp for the region.

*Leadership:* Stakeholders needed are school counselors, students, and school boards.

*Target Date:* A Youth Council is envisioned for each town in 2003 for youth ages 13-18 and a Leadership Camp is planned for youth ages 14-18 in the summers by/or beginning in 2004.

**Objective 6 - Initiate the formation of a "Community in Schools" (CIS) process in all 7 counties.**

*Action:* Establish a joint committee of community stakeholders (business, labor, parents) to identify and assess the workplace, schools, and life. CIS focuses on (5) basics in order to succeed in school and to prepare for life: mentoring, a safe and nurturing environment, physical/mental/emotional family health care, marketable skills, and a chance to give back to the community.

*Leadership:* Stakeholders will include superintendents, school administrators, WIBs, community-based organizations, students, parents, and the community in general.

*Target Date:* Begin Community in Schools expansion by mid 2003.

**Objective 7 - Increase mentoring of students by members and community with the focus on the development of successful workplace and life skills.**

*Action:* Identify successful models already in place, review and implement into the Region.

*Leadership:* Stakeholders needed are principals, mentor coordinators, Tech-Prep leaders in the 7-county region, School-to-Work leaders, and the WIBs.

*Target Date:* Begin review and implement by mid 2003.

## CURRENT CHALLENGE

The highest average annual wages are found in the steel industry, which employs a significant percentage of the population. Downturns in the primary industry have repercussions for the overall economic health of the region. Other high demand jobs tend to be much lower paying. The economic base must include more high skill, high pay job opportunities.

## FUTURE VISION

### Goal-Three: Diversify the Economy

#### Objective 1 - Increase cooperative relationships among employers.

*Action:* The team plans to discover common skill needs among manufacturing companies through the Industry Cluster Survey and will develop regional skill alliances based on results of the survey. Common training programs, providers, and facilities will be identified and training programs developed by the end of the year.

*Leadership:* Employers, training providers, Department of Workforce Development, and the WIBs will work on this objective.

*Target Date:* Identify Regional Skills Alliances by mid 2003, identify training programs and providers by fall of 2003, and commence training in early 2004.

#### Objective 2- Increase the number of jobs in target industries.

*Action:* An index will be developed to measure changes in employment within the top five industry clusters, then 2,000 new jobs will be created within 12 months in industry sectors that meet criteria for growth and wage levels, and a business plan will be developed for attracting targeted companies within industry clusters as well as a retention/expansion plan for existing companies that contribute to diversification.

*Leadership:* Economic development professionals, educators, the Industry Cluster Group, WIBs, local elected officials, and stakeholder groups such as NIRPC, NIPSCO, KIRPC, and the Northwest Indiana Forum will all participate.

*Target Date:* The process has begun and continues throughout 2003.

#### Objective 3A- Maximize the immediate availability of potential sites. Update and use database of potential sites.

*Action:* Review and modify existing database, market the database electronically and through presentations, and create reciprocal relationships between communities and regional partners when marketing sites to prospects. Create, fund, and fill a position to manage this task regionally.

*Leadership:* Economic Development professionals, elected officials, specific individuals with NIPSCO and WorkOne are required to implement this strategy.

*Target Date:* Information is being reviewed for accuracy and new information is being added throughout 2003. Quarterly reviews of progress will be made.

#### Objective 3B - Maximize the immediate availability of potential sites - Assist in the reduction of time it takes to have a site ready.

*Action:* Develop an online, local resource guide template to simplify the expansion/relocation site process.

*Leadership:* Team members supported by stakeholder groups such as NIPSCO and the Northwest Indiana Forum will work on this objective.

*Target Date:* The process will begin February of 2003 and will be reviewed quarterly to determine utility and effectiveness.

### **CURRENT CHALLENGE**

**Workforce intermediaries such as the WorkOne Centers are not viewed as a primary resource for current and future workers. Employers may not see themselves and their commitment to training as part of the workforce development system for the region.**

### **FUTURE VISION**

#### **Goal-Four: Improve Systems Between Workers and Employers**

##### **Objective 1 - Increase career ladders.**

*Action:* Secure and utilize existing career ladder templates or construct own templates, develop a career ladder page to link to existing WorkOne websites, and provide educational information related to the career ladders to individuals. First industries targeted are health care, (entry-level through RN), hospitality/recreation (food preparation –Manager/Chef), transportation (light truck driver through Terminal Manager). Utilize WorkOne sites as the first stakeholder for dissemination.

*Leadership:* Partner stakeholders will include WorkOne operators, schools, employers, and staff of the WIBs.

*Target Date:* This objective begins in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2002 and will be completed by mid 2003.

##### **Objective 2 - Increase employment of underutilized population.**

*Action:* Disseminate career ladder information to youth, non-employed and low wage workforce. Utilize WorkOne sites as the first vehicle of dissemination.

*Leadership:* Assistance of WorkOne, schools, employers, libraries, universities, tech centers, and community-based and faith-based organizations is needed.

*Target Date:* This process will begin in mid 2003 and will be on-going.