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Northwest Indiana Forum Foundation and IEDC Approve Nine Additional READI Grant Projects for Funding

January 25, 2023 - Portage – Thirty-four (34) projects were selected by a team representing talent, business development and marketing, infrastructure, quality of place and entrepreneurship and innovation. The Northwest Indiana Forum spearheaded the efforts to secure \$50 million in READI grant funding. These selected projects have an additional \$550 million of matched spending that will spur development and growth in Northwest Indiana. The Northwest Indiana Forum represents Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Newton, Jasper, Starke and Pulaski counties.

Nine additional projects have been recently approved for READI grant dollars by the Northwest Indiana Forum Foundation and the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC). These projects have met all the necessary requirements to receive READI grant funding.

These projects include:

- **Valparaiso Community Sports & Recreation Complex-City of Valparaiso – \$4,700,000 READI /\$42,232,279 Total Investment** – The City of Valparaiso along with its Redevelopment Commission and Park Department are planning a new community recreation and sports complex. This project implements a master plan for the transformative 248-acre park, plus an adjacent 180 acres prime for private investment and job creation around the existing St. Mary's Medical Center as the anchor. Phase I design of the park includes outdoor fields/courts, an activities hub, accessible playgrounds, and a trail system accentuating the natural characteristics of the property. A combination of diamond and rectangular multi-purpose turf fields will offer area youths an opportunity to compete, at home, with best-in-class facilities to attract traveling sports leagues and tournaments while showcasing Valparaiso to visitors from around the Midwest.
- **Northwest Indiana Housing Study-Indiana University Northwest – \$94,000 READI/\$126,080 Total Investment** - An extensive analysis of the current housing market and inventory and construction mix as well as the changing dynamics of local markets. This housing study will identify strengths and weaknesses in the housing market of Northwest Indiana to support regional development organizations as well as the Greater Northwest Indiana Association of REALTORS in advocating for and developing specific housing strategies across the seven-county region to better meet future economic growth.

“Sustained economic growth requires an expanding educated and skilled workforce. The Housing Study will investigate how the quantity, quality, and variety of available housing in Northwest Indiana will meet the needs of a growing workforce and identify areas in which further residential construction is needed.” Micah Pollak, PhD, Director, Center for Economic Education & Research

- **Quantum Corridor–Digital Crossroads - \$3,995,000 READI/\$25,981,220.00 Total Investment** - The Quantum Corridor will create the first Coherent communication network in the State of Indiana. The network is designed to be quantum ready. Once completed, the network will be among the fastest and most secure networks in the world.

“Northwest Indiana has a much better chance to attract the largest and best technology companies in the world because of the READI grant program. Gov. Holcomb, Secretary Chambers, LG Suzanne Crouch and Heather Ennis all understood this possibility and we thank them for their support.” Thomas P. Dakich, Managing Member, The Quantum Corridor, LLC

- **Downtown Hammond Train Station & Station Square -City of Hammond - \$2,820,000 READI/\$9,720,000 Total Investment** - The Downtown Hammond Train Station & Station Square will be a dynamic, elevated train station creating a stunning new landscape in a currently underutilized area. Station Square will be a bustling, park-like interface between downtown Hammond and the station. The square will have a green space to the south and an urban plaza, anchored by retail and commerce, to the north. A new street will be created to connect Russell St. and Fayette St., creating better connectivity.
- **Ivy Tech Energy Technology Mobile Unit - \$705,000 READI/\$955,000 Total Investment** - Ivy Tech has initiated partnerships with developing companies and plans to develop a mobile training unit designed to deliver remote instruction for students to meet workforce needs in renewable energy. This mobile unit would be built to simulate an on-campus lab space, supporting the technical and hands-on applications of a student’s educational experience. The space would be equipped with technical classroom equipment and also electrical and renewable energy trainers.

“We are incredibly grateful for the financial support from the READI grant and the partnership with the Center for Workforce Innovation. These funds are essential to supply equipment that will be used to offer educational and training programs aligned with our local workforce needs in the multi-county service area. Supplying this much-needed equipment will complement our extraordinary faculty and staff’s dedication to helping our students. It will provide state-of-the-art resources supporting our students with their educational goals, ultimately enhancing the quality of life in our thriving communities.” Aco Sikoski, Valparaiso Campus Chancellor, Ivy Tech Community College

- **Region Roots Local Farm & Food Hub-NWI Food Council - \$1,598,000 READI/\$2,855,686 Total Investment** - The Region Roots Local Farm and Food Hub serves the needs of small-mid scale farmers trying to access wholesale markets. The hub provides an online platform where farmers list their products/inventory and local bulk buyers are able to

purchase from multiple farms, with streamlined invoicing and delivery. Region Roots will develop a small but high-impact infrastructure with cold chain storage for local food distribution, which will offset distribution costs for farmers. Through targeted recruitment and networking, Region Roots seeks to create entrepreneurship opportunities for socially disadvantaged, as well as beginning, limited resource, and veteran farmers. Finally, the NWI Food Council will have significantly more capacity to serve high needs communities, most notably school children, with farm-to-school services and support.

- **Work-Based Learning Expansion (Internships)-Center of Workforce Innovations - \$940,000 READI/\$1,511,250 Total Investment** - The expansion of work-based learning (WBL) opportunities across the region through increased internship and apprenticeship programs has been identified as a priority in the Ignite the Region economic development plan as well as the 21st Century Talent Region initiative. These types of programs benefit employers, students, and job seekers. This project seeks to expand current internship, apprenticeship, and other work-based learning opportunities in the region by fostering closer relationships between employers and the education system, adapting successful models to additional industries, and providing backend support for program development and maintenance.
- **Youth Entrepreneurship Ecosystem-Society of Innovators at Purdue University Northwest - \$470,000 READI/\$1,604,790 Total Investment** - The Society of Innovators at Purdue Northwest is leading the development of a Youth Entrepreneurship Ecosystem to break down barriers to innovation and entrepreneurship. Over the next three years, the Society of Innovators expects to hire a youth program director, expand summer programming, establish afterschool programs, train educators on leadership, innovation and entrepreneurship, and launch a new regional competition.

“The Society of Innovators at Purdue Northwest aims to make a regional impact so that our youth across every community in Northwest Indiana learn skills that will create opportunities for them. This funding allows us to be laser-focused on building and deploying youth programming with the goal of building true 21st century skills around innovation, entrepreneurship and leadership.” Sheila Matias, executive director of the Society of Innovators at Purdue Northwest

- **Tolleston Opportunity Hub - \$9,400,000 READI/\$29,400,000 Total Investment** - The Tolleston Opportunity Hub brings together 5 partners: Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Northwest Indiana, Crossroads YMCA, Methodist Hospitals, City of Gary, and the Dean & Barbara White Foundation. Our collective goal is to deliver exceptional spaces and programs that focus on education, social services, childcare, health/wellness, physical activity, talent development, entrepreneurship and economic advancement. Together we can empower families to obtain the means necessary to break the cycle of poverty and actively contribute to a thriving economy.

“Crossroads YMCA is very excited to be involved in the development of the Tolleston Opportunity Hub. We greatly appreciate the commitment from the City of Gary, State of Indiana and Dean & Barbara White Family Foundation to provide more opportunities through the Tolleston Opportunity Hub. We are thankful to partner with the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Northwest Indiana and Methodist Hospitals to create a safe place for all to learn, grow, and thrive. We look forward to serving more kids and families in Lake County, IN through programs. YMCA at the Tolleston Opportunity Hub will be a place for all ages to enjoy wellness, activity, movement, and family time.” Said Jay Buckmaster, CEO Crossroads YMCA.

“The Tolleston Opportunity Hub will be a collaboration and partnership that will transform the Tolleston community for generations to come. We couldn’t be more excited and appreciative of the three lead funders and program partners who support this vision and are committed to seeing it come to fruition. The Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Northwest Indiana has been serving the Gary community for 69 years and this project will ensure our legacy continues for decades to come. Kids and families in Gary deserve the best we have to offer and the Tolleston Opportunity Hub will be that place where we provide hope and opportunity for youth and teens to reach their full potential.” Larry Moore, Interim President & CEO Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Northwest Indiana.

Launched by Gov. Holcomb and led by the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC), READI encourages regional collaboration and data-driven, long-term planning that will attract and retain talent in Indiana. The \$500 million READI fund was passed by legislation during the 2021 session and was divided among 17 regions. Through READI, 17 regions across the state that represent all 92 counties are moving forward with projects and programs designed to enhance Indiana’s regions for current and future generations of Hoosiers. Collectively, the state’s \$500 million investment is expected to yield an additional \$9.86 billion public, private and nonprofit dollars invested (19.72:1 investment leverage ratio) in enhancing Indiana’s quality of life, quality of place and quality of opportunity.

About IEDC

The Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) is charged with growing the State economy, driving economic development, helping businesses launch, grow and locate in the state. Led by Secretary of Commerce Brad Chambers, [@SecChambersIN](https://twitter.com/SecChambersIN), and governed by a 15-member board chaired by Governor Eric J. Holcomb, [@GovHolcomb](https://twitter.com/GovHolcomb), the IEDC manages many initiatives, including performance-based tax credits, workforce training grants, innovation and entrepreneurship resources, public infrastructure assistance, and talent attraction and retention efforts. For more information about the IEDC, visit iedc.in.gov.