DRIVING GLOBAL INNOVATION AT THE INTERSECTION OF LIFE SCIENCES AND AGRIBUSINESS

BIOHEARTLAND | CIRDA
CENTRAL INDIANA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

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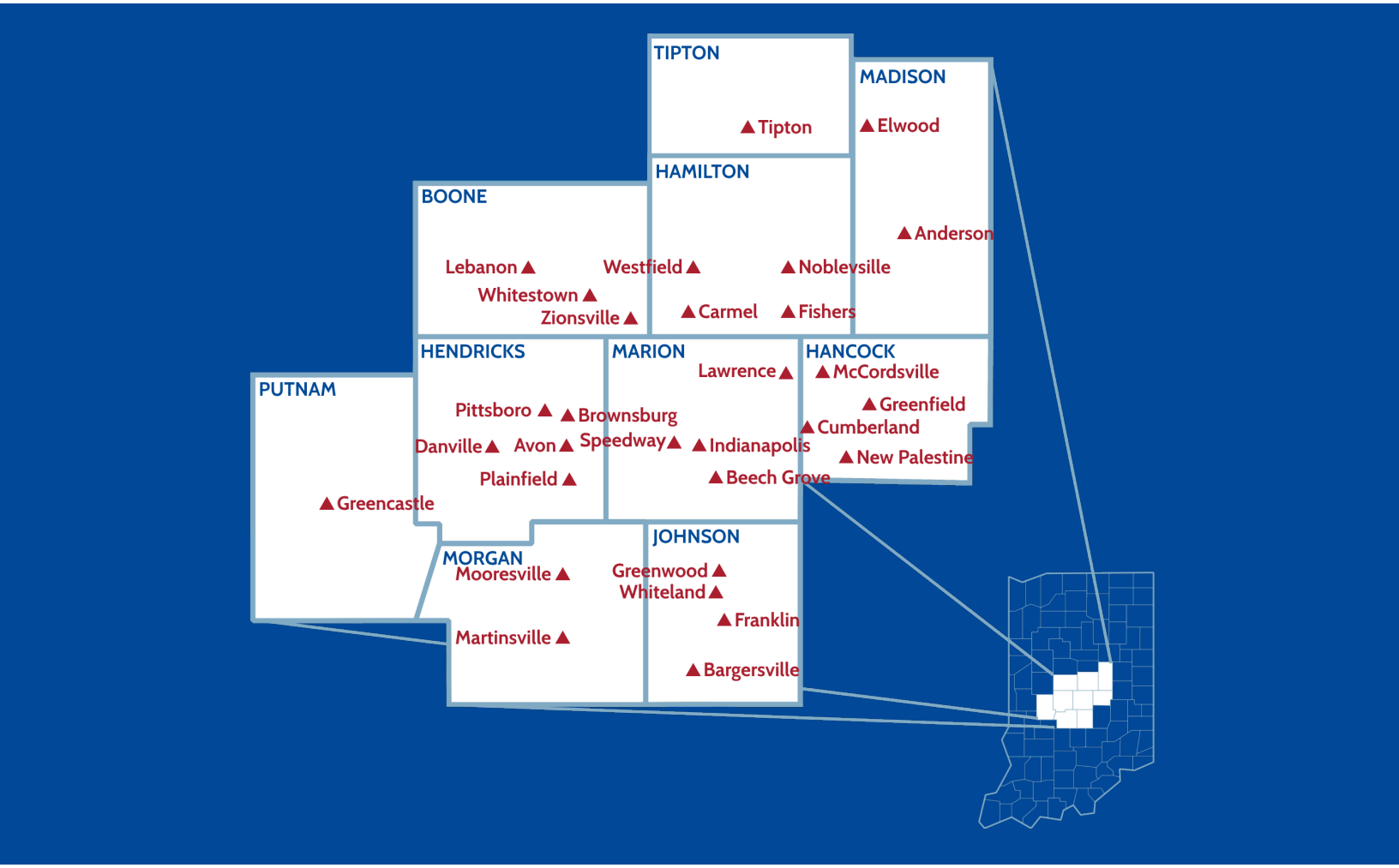
ABOUT CIRDA

Comprised of elected leaders throughout the region, CIRDA is working to deliver on a clear economic strategy that ensures that Central Indiana keeps pace with current and future competitors and adapts to an ever-changing world. CIRDA fosters a thriving future for our communities by strategically investing in projects that enhance infrastructure, promote innovation, and improve the quality of life across the region.



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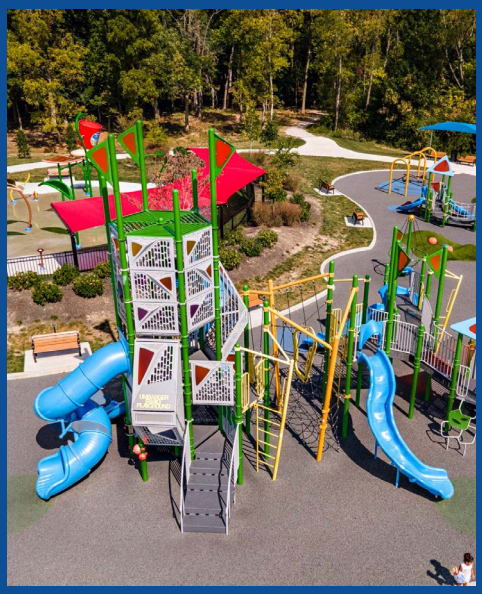

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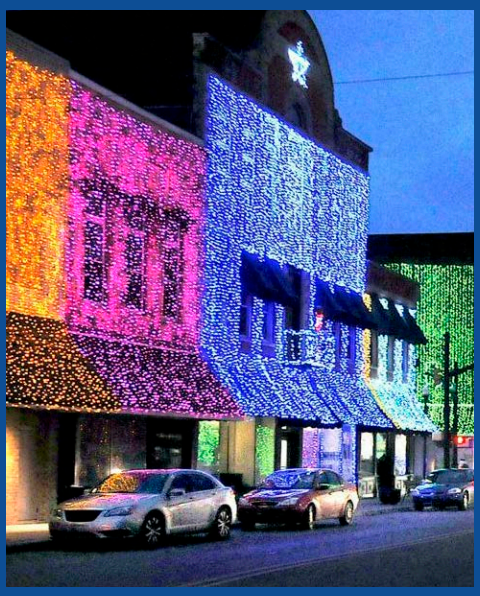

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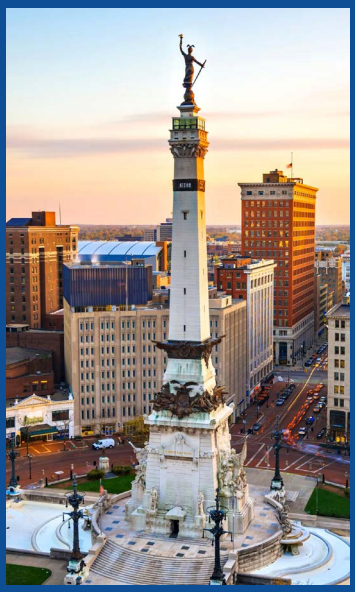

MARION COUNTY

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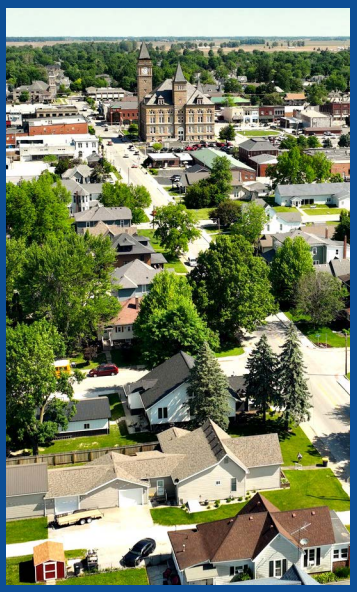

TIPTON COUNTY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WHY THIS MATTERS

Central Indiana plays a pivotal role in driving Indiana's economic future, and the decisions made now will shape the region's trajectory for generations. Approximately 30% of the state's population resides within the CIRDA region and nearly 40% of Indiana's GDP is generated within it. The region has depth in academia and healthcare, a strong and evolving workforce, established industry leadership, available real estate, and infrastructure that supports research, production and distribution.

Central Indiana stands at the intersection of life sciences and agribusiness, two industries reshaping global health, food production, and supply chain resilience. As innovation continues to blur the lines between human, animal, and plant health, regions with strength across these sectors will be increasingly well-positioned to attract investment and drive economic growth.

REGIONAL POTENTIAL

Central Indiana's opportunity extends beyond attracting any single company or project. The region's competitive position is built on its ability to invent, make, and move.

The region's research institutions, healthcare systems, and corporate innovators invent new technologies and solutions. Its manufacturers and producers make products. Its transportation and logistics assets move those products to national and global markets. Few regions possess strengths across all three functions.

Life sciences and agribusiness are experiencing a period of unprecedented growth, driven by increasing global demand and the growing convergence of human, animal, and plant health. Over the past 18 months, many of the world's largest life sciences companies have announced multi-billion-dollar commitments to build new facilities, expand manufacturing capacity, and accelerate research activities in the United States. Johnson & Johnson has pledged more than $55 billion in domestic investment over the next four years, while Roche and AstraZeneca have each announced plans to invest $50 billion. Bristol Myers Squibb has committed $40 billion over the next five years to expand its research, development, and manufacturing footprint. These announcements are not isolated events, but rather indicators of a broader transformation occurring across life sciences and agribusiness sectors.

Corporate development projects take one to three years to evaluate potential locations and make final investment decisions, followed by another one to two years for permitting, construction, and operational ramp-up. In other words, the projects that will shape the region's economic future over the next decade are being evaluated and negotiated today. States across the country are aggressively competing for these opportunities through coordinated economic development strategies, talent initiatives, infrastructure investments, and targeted incentive programs. To successfully capture its share of future growth, CIRDA and its regional partners must be positioned to compete for sustained industry investment.

The Central Indiana region's economic outlook extends far beyond any single company or industry sector. Leadership in life sciences and other advanced industries will increasingly depend on how effectively regions align innovation, commercialization, production capacity, infrastructure, talent development, and capital investment into coordinated systems that accelerate industry expansion. Regions that can successfully connect public and private partners will be better positioned to attract investment and create long-term economic resilience.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Indiana has already demonstrated its competitiveness through major investment commitments from companies such as Eli Lilly and Roche, validating the region's capabilities in life sciences, advanced manufacturing, and research-driven industries. However, peer states continue to make significant investments in talent and business attraction efforts, intensifying competition for future projects. Maintaining and expanding on Indiana's competitive position will require a proactive regional strategy that builds on existing assets, addresses gaps, improves collaboration, and ensures the region is prepared to capitalize on emerging opportunities as they arise.

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

The strategy included in this report is grounded in analysis, benchmarking, and engagement with regional partners. The CIRDA region was evaluated against peer regions including Pittsburgh, Nashville, Kansas City, and Raleigh-Durham. These comparisons highlighted both areas of strength and moments where projects lose momentum as they move toward execution.

During the planning process, CIRDA engaged with BioCrossroads, AgriNovus, Ginovus, the Indiana University Business Research Center, Policy Analytics, and other public and private stakeholders.

The following key insights from those discussions shaped the strategy and six pillars of focus:

- Growth in life sciences and agribusiness is increasingly interconnected, requiring coordination and alignment among research institutions, production environments, logistics systems, and end users to capture the full value of regional assets
- The region's largest opportunity lies in execution. Sites, infrastructure, and talent systems must be prepared in advance to respond quickly when investment opportunities emerge
- Long-term competitiveness depends on regional partners operating within a shared framework, with clear roles and priorities that support consistent decision-making

SIX PILLARS OF THE SYSTEM

Central Indiana's ability to invent, make, and move depends on coordinated action across industry, government, academia, and regional partners. To advance this strategy, CIRDA has identified six pillars that strengthen the systems supporting innovation, production, and investment across the life sciences and agribusiness ecosystem.

The pillars include:

1. Regional Marketing, Opportunity & Business Development
2. Regionalism & Land Use
3. Infrastructure
4. Talent Development & Recruitment
5. Higher Education & Hospital Research Commercialization
6. Regional Funding & Incentive System

To support implementation, CIRDA will prioritize the following initiatives within each pillar:

PILLAR ONE: Regional Marketing, Opportunity & Business Development

A successful life sciences retention and attraction strategy requires both broad market positioning and targeted outreach. A regional awareness campaign creates the credibility and visibility to ensure that Central Indiana is considered among peer markets. A targeted campaign converts that awareness into relationships with site selectors and corporate decision-makers who influence location and growth strategies. Together, these complementary efforts advance the region's competitiveness throughout the life sciences economic development process.

This pillar organizes how the region interprets market signals, responds to company activity, and carries opportunities forward once identified. It creates a defined linkage between external engagement and internal systems, providing clarity in how projects are understood, how they are supported, and how they progress over time.

Key Initiatives:

- Identify and prioritize life sciences and agribusiness opportunities that align with CIRDA's competitive strengths and growth potential
    - Conduct coordinated, recurring analyses to define specific opportunity areas across life sciences and agribusiness
- Manage a life sciences opportunity portfolio that advances projects through coordinated execution
    - Establish and operate a structured portfolio system that captures all life sciences and agribusiness opportunities and makes them visible, trackable, and actionable through a shared project tracking system
- Pursue and convert opportunities through targeted engagement and sustained relationships
    - Use direct outreach to connect industry to place. CIRDA will work with key partners to understand the needs of industry and to identify the assets within the region that can meet those needs (real estate, government navigation, and talent development)
    - Commission research and competitive analyses required to inform effective business development strategy

PILLAR TWO: REGIONALISM & LAND USE

Regions that outperform competitors operate as integrated systems. The goal of this pillar is to go beyond traditional land use planning and communicate to life sciences and agribusiness companies the regional assets that exist in Central Indiana, thereby highlighting the intersection of place and industry.

Key Initiatives:

- Build a region-wide land and site readiness system that ensures projects can move from inquiry to operation with speed, predictability, and confidence
- Amplify existing hubs of innovation such as 16 Tech, Fishers Life Sciences and Innovation Corridor, Innovation Mile, LEAP, and One Health while working with communities to identify available real estate and attraction opportunities

PILLAR THREE: INFRASTRUCTURE

Central Indiana's ability to attract life sciences and agribusiness investment depends on more than talent and site availability. It depends on whether the infrastructure is available, reliable, and capable of supporting projects as they grow and scale. CIRDA will continue working with its water and utility committees and regional stakeholders to ensure infrastructure is available to support further development.

Key Initiatives:

- Create a demand-driven infrastructure planning system that defines capacity, timelines, and gaps based on project pipeline activity and site readiness
    - Because infrastructure data is often sensitive, CIRDA will implement a dual-layer infrastructure system with one layer supporting external decision-making and another supporting internal coordination
- Deliver infrastructure in response to project and pipeline demand through coordinated action and targeted investment
    - CIRDA will track infrastructure constraints identified through project activity and system-wide assessments
- Secure and position land (including through land banking) to support future infrastructure delivery and enable development of priority site types, including lab and specialized facilities

PILLAR FOUR: TALENT DEVELOPMENT & RECRUITMENT

Analysis indicates that regions that outperform their peers do so by developing systems that support specialization and advancement into higher-skill roles. These regions are able to show employers that talent exists, and it can scale, adapt, and perform under increasingly regulated and technology-enabled operating models.

Key Initiatives:

- Establish shared intelligence enabling employers and decision-makers to assess CIRDA's talent capacity as a coherent, scalable system
- Coordinate the region's talent system around the needs of life sciences and agribusiness employers

PILLAR FIVE: HIGHER EDUCATION & HOSPITAL RESEARCH COMMERCIALIZATION

Central Indiana's life sciences and agribusiness ecosystem generates world-class research and early-stage innovation. Analysis shows that research productivity alone does not guarantee economic and wage growth. This pillar coordinates research prioritization, institutional alignment, and infrastructure investments that accelerate the transition from laboratory discovery to commercial scale.

Key Initiatives:

- Bridge the gap between academic and medical research and real-world application
    - CIRDA will work with regional partners, higher education, and hospital leadership to align research focus areas within priority life sciences and agribusiness research areas
- Coordinate innovation infrastructure to support commercialization
    - The greatest risk of regional loss occurs when firms approaching scale are unable to determine whether appropriate space and infrastructure exist. CIRDA will work with stakeholders to inventory regional physical assets

PILLAR SIX: REGIONAL FUNDING & INCENTIVE SYSTEM

Regions that perform at a high level rely on funding and incentive tools that combine multiple sources of capital and align public investment with long-term economic development goals. CIRDA has the authority to fund infrastructure projects, economic development initiatives, and related programs. However, to effectively advance its mission, CIRDA must secure funding sources that are recurring and reliable.

Key Initiatives:

- Build a regional funding framework that enables CIRDA to secure, prioritize, and deploy capital to support regional priorities
- Work with the General Assembly and Department of Revenue to explore funding options, including a life sciences headcount funding model tied to regional life sciences employment growth

TIMING & FUNDING CONSTRAINTS: For all pillars, implementation of the regional strategy will be shaped by funding availability, with timing and other adjustments made as needed to maintain progress.

PILLAR ONE:

REGIONAL MARKETING, OPPORTUNITY, & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

PILLAR GOAL

Pillar One establishes how Central Indiana converts life sciences and agribusiness project interest into investment. It connects industry intelligence, business development, and project progression into a continuous process that aligns regional focus with growth opportunities.

At a system level:

- **Initiative 1.1** identifies where the region engages by mapping priority market segments and dynamics
- **Initiative 1.2** manages a regional project portfolio and guides projects through coordinated processes
- **Initiative 1.3** pursues and converts opportunities through targeted outreach and sustained relationships

BACKGROUND

Economic development begins with understanding how industries are changing and where growth is occurring. Life sciences and agribusiness markets are continually reshaped by technological, economic, and consumer trends. Regions encounter these changes through company expansion, investment trends, and site selection activity. The challenge is turning that information into direction.

Life sciences and agribusiness have become increasingly specialized, with growth concentrated in specific segments of larger value chains. Different segments require different combinations of talent, infrastructure, and investment. Understanding those distinctions shapes how a region sets priorities, allocates resources, and approaches business development. Industry intelligence helps identify where the region is most likely to compete successfully for investment.

Leading regions use industry intelligence to guide market positioning and business development efforts. In the Columbus Region, One Columbus uses industry research, labor market analysis, competitive benchmarking, and company intelligence to guide sector targeting, regional marketing, and business recruitment. Supported by more than 300 public, private, and academic partners, the organization has attracted significant job creation and capital investment through a sustained focus on priority industries and growth opportunities.

Companies, investors, and site selectors evaluate multiple locations. Market position is shaped through consistent communications and an understanding of industry needs. Regions that communicate their strengths clearly are more likely to remain under consideration as opportunities progress.

Central Indiana benefits from established life sciences and agribusiness industries and strong research and industry networks. The opportunity is to connect industry intelligence, business development, and project progression through a common process that focuses effort and drives projects forward.

KEY PILLAR PARTNERS

- County and Municipal Governments
- Education and Training Providers
- Indiana Economic Development Corporation
- Industry and Institutional Partners
- Representatives from core employers, including agribusiness, life sciences companies, and health systems
- Utility Companies
- Workforce Intermediaries

REGIONAL COMPETITIVENESS KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Regions that focus on specific opportunity areas outperform those pursuing broad pipelines
- Conversion of targeted opportunities drives long-term growth
- Companies prioritize locations that deliver strategic engagement and consistent execution over fragmented interactions
- Misalignment between targeting, messaging, and execution reduces conversion rates
- Life sciences and agribusiness opportunities increasingly overlap across value chains, requiring coordinated targeting and engagement

PILLAR ONE INITIATIVES

1.1 Market Intelligence and Opportunity Mapping

INITIATIVE GOAL

Initiative 1.1 establishes a disciplined approach to identifying and prioritizing life sciences and agribusiness opportunities that align with CIRDA's competitive strengths and growth potential.

STRATEGIC RATIONALE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Central Indiana benefits from strong life sciences and agribusiness intelligence, but these insights are often distributed across organizations and not consistently translated into a shared view of where the region is most competitive.

Industry growth is increasingly concentrated within specialized segments of larger value chains. Changes in technology, investment, supply chains, and commercialization activity can create new opportunities while reducing the competitiveness of others. This initiative establishes a process to identify priority market segments. It ensures that industry intelligence informs business development activity and regional outreach.

EXECUTION TACTICS

Tactic One: Conduct Market Analyses and Define Priority Market Segments

CIRDA and its partners will conduct coordinated, recurring analyses to define specific market segments across life sciences and agribusiness.

- CIRDA will integrate multiple categories of intelligence into a unified analysis process, including:
  - Capital flow data (venture funding, private equity, corporate investment trends)
  - Company activity data (facility expansions, relocations, hiring patterns)
  - Supply chain mapping (identifying upstream/downstream gaps tied to regional capabilities)
  - R&D and commercialization pipelines (from universities, corporations, and incubators)
  - Workforce availability and specialization data
  - Global and domestic competitor benchmarking
- CIRDA, in conjunction with its key partners, will synthesize these inputs into distinct areas structured as:
  - Specific use cases (e.g., biologics manufacturing, precision agriculture input production)
  - Value chain positions (e.g., GMP capacity, cold chain logistics, formulation)
  - Company types, not just industries
- Each segment will be documented with:
  - Addressable market size and growth trajectory
  - Typical facility and workforce requirements
  - Capital investment profile
  - Alignment with regional assets (sites, infrastructure, workforce)
- CIRDA will convene quarterly intelligence reviews with key stakeholders and employers to validate:
  - Relevance of priority markets
  - Emerging shifts in industry
  - Gaps between potential and actual pipeline

Tactic Two: Maintain a Dynamic Intelligence System that Informs Outreach

CIRDA will define a continuous market intelligence process that informs business development activity without controlling project-level decisions.

- CIRDA will maintain a living market map that is:
  - Updated based on pipeline composition
  - Informed by conversion outcomes (wins/losses)
  - Adjusted based on investor, employer, and site selector feedback
- CIRDA will produce intelligence outputs, including:
  - Updated opportunity prioritization
  - New or declining segments
  - Key supply chain gaps or emerging needs
- These outputs will be used to:
  - Inform messaging and outreach focus
  - Shape how CIRDA presents itself externally
  - Provide partners with a clear understanding of market direction
- CIRDA will explicitly identify:
  - Market segments with limited traction or conversion
  - Areas where the region lacks competitive advantage
- CIRDA will incorporate portfolio performance data, including conversion rates and project outcomes, into intelligence updates to refine opportunity areas

RESOURCES & ROLES

CIRDA:

- Maintain opportunity areas
- Synthesize partner intelligence into actionable direction
- Drive continuous adjustment based on market and pipeline signals
- Required resources include:
  - Dedicated market intelligence and analytics capacity
  - Formalized data-sharing agreements
  - Industry datasets (capital flows, company expansion data, supply chain data)
  - Analytical tooling for segmentation (GIS, cluster mapping, benchmarking tools)
  - Access to site selector and investor intelligence platforms

GUIDING METRICS

- Maintain three to five priority opportunity areas at any given time
- Update and refine priorities at least annually based on market + pipeline data
- 60% of new opportunities align within designated opportunity areas by year two
- 75% of active portfolio projects fall within defined opportunity areas by year five
- 100% of intelligence updates incorporate portfolio performance data

1.2 Regional Project Portfolio and Advancement

INITIATIVE GOAL

Initiative 1.2 establishes a regional project portfolio that captures life sciences and agribusiness projects and advances projects through a structured, multi-partner process.

STRATEGIC RATIONALE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As projects evolve, they often require coordination across multiple organizations, resources, and decisions. Without a structured process, delays, uncertainty, and ownership gaps can affect outcomes.

This initiative builds a regional opportunity portfolio that provides visibility across projects. It creates a consistent approach to project coordination and progression.

EXECUTION TACTICS

Tactic One: Operate a Structured Regional Portfolio

CIRDA will develop a structured portfolio system that captures all life sciences and agribusiness opportunities and makes them visible, trackable, and actionable.

- CIRDA will implement a centralized project tracking system that:
  - Logs all life sciences and agribusiness opportunities from local and regional partners, IEDC, and direct business development activity
  - Establishes a standard progression model for all projects (e.g., initial inquiry, qualified, active, decision, post-decision)
  - Tracks key attributes such as industry type, capital investment, workforce needs, and site requirements
- CIRDA will coordinate with local and regional economic development partners to track qualifying projects and ensure high-value projects are escalated for regional coordination
- CIRDA will outline clear criteria to determine:
  - Level of regional collaboration required
  - Prioritization and resource allocation
  - Whether projects are actively advanced, monitored, or minimally supported

Tactic Two: Manage Project Advancement and Coordinate System Response

CIRDA will actively manage the progression of portfolio projects through structured coordination processes and direct intervention at critical points.

- CIRDA will conduct recurring portfolio review sessions to:
  - Review status of all active projects
  - Identify risks, delays, and decision bottlenecks
  - Summarize next steps and ownership
  - Assign primary relationship owners for target companies
  - Create shared ownership across partners to preserve continuity

- For each priority project, CIRDA will develop a project advancement plan, including:
  - Defined milestones (site selection, workforce commitments, infrastructure readiness, etc.)
  - Identified constraints (labor, utilities, permitting, capital, etc.)
  - Required partner actions
- CIRDA will directly coordinate resolution of constraints to:
  - Engage workforce providers for talent pipeline commitments
  - Align universities or accelerators for commercialization support
  - Advance site readiness or zoning alignment
  - Accelerate infrastructure planning or upgrades
  - Structure funding and incentive packages
- CIRDA will reduce barriers:
  - Elevate issues to local and state leadership when required
  - Reassign resources or partners
  - Adjust project timelines or approach based on feasibility
- CIRDA will make portfolio decisions at key stages, including:
  - Project progression
  - Prioritization level adjustments
  - Commitment of resources
  - Discontinuation or reduced support where appropriate
- Selectivity is applied through the level of coordination each project receives, not through exclusion from the portfolio

RESOURCES & ROLES

CIRDA:

- Manage the regional opportunity portfolio and project progression process
- Coordinate partner actions and resolve barriers affecting project outcomes
- Sustain visibility across projects and escalation pathways
- Required resources include:
    - Dedicated project portfolio and management process
    - Portfolio management system (pipeline tracking with stage visibility)
    - Project tracking dashboards tied to stage progression

GUIDING METRICS

- 100% of life sciences and agribusiness projects are entered into the centralized portfolio system by year two
- 9-12 months average decision timeline from lead or project introduction to secured investment by year two
- 75% of priority projects advance without delay at key milestones by year three
- 70% of portfolio projects require and receive multi-pillar coordination by year three
- Less than 15% of projects stall due to unresolved constraints within four years

1.3 Messaging and Business Development

INITIATIVE GOAL

Initiative 1.3 establishes an aligned approach to messaging, positioning, and business development that generates pipeline and converts project interest into investment.

STRATEGIC RATIONALE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Central Indiana engages companies, investors, and intermediaries across life sciences and agribusiness. Outreach is often influenced by timing, individual relationships, and separate organizational efforts.

Companies rarely make investment decisions based on a single interaction. Trust and understanding are built through consistent communication over time. This initiative creates a unified approach to messaging and business development. It strengthens how the region builds relationships and converts interest into investment.

EXECUTION TACTICS

Tactic One: Develop Segment-Specific Messaging Tied to CIRDA Capability

CIRDA will develop targeted messaging and value propositions for target markets that are grounded in regional capabilities.

- For each opportunity area, CIRDA will develop a clear value proposition tied to:
    - Available sites and infrastructure
    - Talent assets and training capabilities
    - Existing company ecosystem and supply chain presence
    - Supporting data packages (case studies, metrics, benchmarks)

- Messaging will be built around:
  - Speed-to-market
  - How the region addresses operational constraints
  - How the region supports growth, not just market entry
- CIRDA will work with partners to use:
  - Consistent language
  - Aligned positioning
  - Shared materials

Tactic Two: Execute Targeted Business Development and Relationship Management

CIRDA will actively pursue and convert opportunities through strategic engagement with companies, investors, and intermediaries.

- CIRDA and its partners will co-own relationships with target companies, investors, and intermediaries
- CIRDA, with assistance from its key partners, will build target company lists for each opportunity area, including:
  - Companies actively expanding or investing
  - Suppliers or partners needed to fill identified gaps
  - Investors and intermediaries influencing location decisions
- CIRDA and its partners will cultivate relationships by:
  - Tracking interactions
  - Sustaining continuity across interactions
  - Developing tailored value propositions for specific companies
  - Partnering with public relations firms to promote project successes on national and global platforms
  - Working with leading site selectors to promote CIRDA's competitive advantages
- CIRDA will build on existing relationships with:
  - Major site selectors
  - National brokerage firms
  - Industry associations

- When opportunities emerge, CIRDA will ensure:
  - Rapid response
  - Alignment of messaging, incentives, and technical details
  - Continuity through site visits, negotiations, and decision phases
- All business development activity will be incorporated into the regional portfolio for tracking and progression

RESOURCES & ROLES

CIRDA:

- Lead regional business development and relationship management activities
- Coordinate outreach with target companies, investors, and intermediaries
- Maintain alignment between business development efforts and messaging, and priority market segments
- Required resources:
  - Dedicated business development and account management capacity
  - Targeting platform and company intelligence tools
  - Marketing and communications support for segment-specific messaging
  - Budget for outreach, travel, and relationship development

GUIDING METRICS

- Generate 10-20 qualified opportunities annually within priority areas
- 75% of new opportunities aligned to priority segments by year two
- Maintain active engagement with 30 target companies across segments by year two
- Conduct 50-75 targeted engagements per year (BR&E meetings, outreach, events, site selector interactions)
- Engage at least 90% of top-tier target companies annually
- Preserve balanced pipeline distribution across all priority market segments

CONCLUSION

Pillar One defines how market signals are translated into regional action. It provides the framework needed to determine where the region can compete, direct business development activity, and move projects from initial interest to investment.

Initiative 1.1 establishes where the region focuses by translating industry intelligence into priority market segments.

Initiative 1.2 provides the structure needed to manage projects and coordinate action across partners.

Initiative 1.3 strengthens how the region positions itself and builds relationships that convert project interest into investment.

Economic development begins long before a company makes a location decision. Regions must understand where growth is occurring, communicate a compelling market position, and sustain engagement as opportunities develop. Pillar One establishes the process needed to connect market understanding, business development, and project execution across Central Indiana.

PILLAR TWO:

REGIONALISM & LAND USE

PILLAR GOAL

Pillar Two establishes a regional system that optimizes land use, local economic development efforts, and project processes throughout Central Indiana. Its purpose is to ensure that the CIRDA communities operate as a coordinated region.

- **Initiative 2.1** establishes an operating model that defines how member communities align around project delivery, including designation of Centers of Innovation and Corridors for Acceleration
- **Initiative 2.2** builds a region-wide land and site readiness system so projects can move from inquiry to operation with speed and predictability

BACKGROUND

Growth in life sciences and agribusiness does not occur within a single city or development site. Companies rely on networks of research, production, talent, and infrastructure that often span an entire region. In Central Indiana, many of these strengths already exist, but they are distributed among multiple communities with different processes and development patterns. The result is a region that is rich in opportunity but not always organized to respond collectively.

As companies expand, their facility and infrastructure needs rarely remain confined to one location. New facilities and expansion needs often cross jurisdictional boundaries and require decisions beyond any single community. This increases the importance of coordinating land use and development planning.

When those elements are not aligned, uncertainty increases. Development timelines become harder to predict, opportunities become more difficult to advance, and regions can find themselves competing against their own fragmentation. Even communities with strong employers and attractive sites can struggle to convert interest into investment when company expansion requires coordination across multiple jurisdictions.

Peer regions illustrate the benefits of intentionally aligning economic development, land use, and development infrastructure. In the St. Louis region, organizations such as BioSTL, the Danforth Plant Science Center, BRDG Park, and the Cortex Innovation District help connect research, commercialization, and company expansion. Their efforts have supported more than 400 startups, attracted approximately $3 billion in follow-on capital, generated more than $2 billion in economic output, and contributed to an ag-tech ecosystem employing more than 9,000 people. These outcomes demonstrate that companies are more likely to start, grow, and remain in a region when sites, infrastructure, and supporting institutions function as part of a coordinated framework.

Central Indiana's strengths extend throughout the region, and future success will increasingly depend on how effectively those strengths are connected. A more coordinated approach to land use, site readiness, and project delivery can create clearer pathways for investment. Pillar Two establishes the framework needed to turn connections into sustained economic impact.

KEY PILLAR PARTNERS

- County and Municipal Governments
- Indiana Economic Development Corporation
- Industry and Institutional Partners
- Regional and Local Economic Development Organizations
- Utility Companies

REGIONAL COMPETITIVENESS KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Regions that outperform competitors operate as integrated systems, not as collections of independent counties, cities, towns, or sites
- To company decision makers and site selectors, Central Indiana must present as one coordinated operating environment capable of moving at the speed of business
- Multi-county coordination can be inconsistent, slowing projects that require integrated solutions
- CIRDA members must play complementary roles across the value chain rather than competing to serve all functions
- Land use decisions are often made independently at the municipal level, limiting the region's ability to align sites with functional needs of the ecosystem
- Variability in zoning, permitting, and readiness introduces risk that can delay or disqualify projects

PILLAR TWO INITIATIVES

2.1 Regional Operating Model for Project Success

INITIATIVE GOAL

Initiative 2.1 establishes a unified land use operating model based on industry need that organizes the region around a function-based system that enables projects to move efficiently from innovation to scale.

STRATEGIC RATIONALE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Life sciences and agribusiness projects require multi-faceted environments at different stages in their life cycle. CIRDA's competitiveness depends on how clearly and reliably that transition can occur.

Unlike traditional land use planning, this system is driven by project requirements rather than long-range land designation, ensuring real-time alignment between opportunity and location. This initiative introduces a coordinated framework that organizes the region into:

Centers of Innovation: locations where high-complexity and talent-intensive activities concentrate, including:

- Research and development
- Laboratory and testing environments
- Clinical and applied research
- Corporate and innovation leadership functions

Corridors for Acceleration: locations designed for scale, throughput, and deployment, including:

- Advanced and GMP manufacturing
- Logistics, storage, and distribution
- Large-footprint and time-sensitive operations

EXECUTION TACTICS

Tactic One: Establish Designation Criteria

CIRDA will define and adopt formal criteria for designation as a Center of Innovation and Corridor for Acceleration for both life sciences and agribusiness industries.

- Designation criteria will:
    - Reflect real project requirements and site selector / corporate decision maker expectations
    - Be validated with industry, institutional, and economic data
    - Be structured to support current and future system needs
- To ensure the regional operating model functions as a coordinated framework, CIRDA will encourage use of Centers of Innovation and Corridors for Acceleration in the following decision points:
    - Site selection / corporate decision maker engagement
    - Project location decisions
    - Funding and incentive allocation will prioritize projects and sites aligned to designated roles and operating standards
- Centers of Innovation criteria may include:
    - Demonstrated concentration of R&D and/or laboratory activity
    - Access to specialized workforce
    - Presence of research, clinical, and/or institutional partners
    - Capacity to support iterative, high-complexity operations

    - Existing CIRDA life sciences and agribusiness assets:
        - LEAP District
        - 16 Tech
        - One Health District
        - Fishers Life Sciences Park
        - Innovation Mile District
- Corridors for Acceleration criteria may include:
    - Existing business parks or logistics and distribution hubs
    - Availability of scalable land suitable for larger facilities
    - Ability to deliver timely zoning and permitting outcomes
    - Proximity to logistics networks and supply chains
    - Demonstrated ability to meet project timelines and other requirements
- CIRDA and its partners will re-evaluate designations every two years to:
    - Revalidate or reassign designations
    - Adjust roles based on evolving community capabilities
    - Identify gaps and opportunities for collaboration or optimization

Tactic Two: Align Participation & Expectations

CIRDA will establish a shared set of industry-support expectations for its members.

- CIRDA will work with local officials and economic development partners to ensure consistent understanding of:
    - Life sciences and agribusiness project timelines and decision points
    - Site readiness requirements
    - Permitting and approval expectations
    - Roles within multi-jurisdiction projects

- CIRDA will set target benchmarks to stay on track with industry need (e.g., review timelines, process clarity)
- CIRDA may ask its members to prioritize:
    - Zoning compatibility for target industries
    - Clear and predictable permitting or rezoning processes
    - Consistent project response and incentive approval timelines
    - Clear escalation pathways for issue resolution, including Rapid Response activations
    - Annual submission of site readiness data
- These expectations will serve as one of many criteria for CIRDA-supported project participation and funding prioritization

Tactic Three: Optimize Life Sciences and Agribusiness Development Pathways

CIRDA will establish life sciences and agribusiness pathways throughout the Centers/Corridors system that assure companies can grow and scale within the region.

- Innovation and early-stage activity occur within Centers of Innovation
- Scale-up, manufacturing, and distribution occur within Corridors for Acceleration
- CIRDA will use these pathways to:
    - Guide site selector / corporate decision maker engagement
    - Inform project location decisions
    - Ensure continuity from discovery to scale

RESOURCES & ROLES

CIRDA:

- Responsible for defining the regional operating model, including:
    - Centers of Innovation and Corridors for Acceleration designations
    - Operating standards and expectations for participating jurisdictions
    - Project pathway definitions used in site selection and location decisions
- Communicates performance benchmarks for zoning, permitting, and development processes
- Required resources:
    - Funding to support project coordination activities, dashboard integration, and development of shared tools/communication materials
    - Internal capacity to manage designation and review processes

Local Government & Economic Development Organizations:

- Align local land use, zoning, and permitting practices with shared expectations
- Provide clear, consistent development pathways for priority industries
- Participate in project delivery, including:
    - Multi-county coordination when projects span jurisdictions
    - Timely response to site selection and development inquiries
- Support periodic review and adjustment of designated roles and classifications
- Coordinate site marketing and project positioning with Centers of Innovation and Corridors for Acceleration roles

Industry and Institution Partners:

- Provide ongoing input on site requirements, timing expectations, or operational constraints during project evaluations
- Inform refinement of designation criteria and project pathways
- Participate in targeted industry-alignment activities where appropriate, especially for large-scale or system-defining projects

GUIDING METRICS

- 100% of participating CIRDA members aligned to designation criteria within 18 months
- 50% of CIRDA-supported accelerator projects utilize defined Centers/Corridors pathways within three years
- Reduction in permitting timeline variation among participating communities within three years
- 90% of participating CIRDA members meet benchmark zoning and permitting timelines within two years
- 80% of qualified sites meet defined readiness standards within two years
- Twenty-five to forty sites designated as Centers/Corridors within three years
- 75% of designation statuses are consistent across review cycles at first review, increasing to 90% in subsequent cycles

2.2 Regional Site Readiness & Land Use

INITIATIVE GOAL

Initiative 2.2 establishes a site readiness system so projects move from inquiry to groundbreaking at the pace of business.

STRATEGIC RATIONALE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Site readiness is a decisive factor in site selection. Projects are delayed or lost when site readiness is unclear or zoning is misaligned. Site readiness is most critical during late-stage project evaluation and due diligence.

These recommendations are rooted in the following:

- Life sciences companies are shifting from isolated innovation hubs to research incorporated near manufacturing for better speed-to-market
- Agribusiness companies are continually focused on access to logistics corridors and available buildings
- Site readiness is now a non-negotiable and early-stage filter, ranking among the top four global factors influencing decisions
- Fully vetted sites are considered those with environmental reviews, zoning appeals, and predictable permitting processes

EXECUTION TACTICS

Tactic One: Establish a Site Readiness Framework

CIRDA will define a consistent framework for evaluating site readiness throughout the region.

- Categorize sites into three standardized readiness tiers to support project evaluation and decision-making:
    - Tier I: Deployment Ready
        - Sites with confirmed control, appropriate zoning, and defined permitting pathways
        - Suitable for immediate project execution
        - Submitted to the Site Selectors Guild REDI sites program to be verified by an independent, third-party reviewer
    - Tier II: Advancement Ready
        - Sites requiring targeted actions (e.g., site control, entitlement clarification)
        - Can be activated within a defined timeframe
    - Tier III: Strategic Opportunity
        - Sites that align with long-term regional priorities but require substantial advancement

- Readiness may be assessed on:
    - Site control or clear acquisition pathway
    - Zoning
    - Defined permitting path and timeline that meets CIRDA benchmarks
    - Absence of major development constraints
    - Utility access
    - Proximity to transportation infrastructure, logistics networks, or supply chains
- Tier classification will guide CIRDA's prioritization of site-level investments when responding to active project opportunities

Tactic Two: Define a Site Advancement Mechanism

CIRDA will establish a structured process to graduate Tier II and III sites through the readiness framework based on defined actions and timelines.

- CIRDA will work with members to identify a subset of priority sites with the highest potential to support future life sciences and agribusiness opportunities
- For each priority site, CIRDA and the jurisdiction will define:
    - Required actions to move to the next tier
    - Expected timeline for completion
    - Responsible parties for each action
- Typical advancement actions may include:
    - Securing or clarifying site control
    - Aligning zoning with intended industrial use
    - Defining or streamlining permitting pathways
    - Completing due diligence needed to support development

- CIRDA will collaborate with members and partners, including local economic development organizations, municipalities, and utility or site readiness programs, to identify co-funding opportunities for site advancement actions
- Maintain visibility into site progression through regular updates to the Innovation Infrastructure Dashboard
- Advancement will be driven by:
    - Alignment with Centers of Innovation or Corridors for Acceleration
    - Emerging demand from project pipelines and subject to alignment with CIRDA funding priorities
- CIRDA will prioritize advancement of sites that:
    - Fill critical gaps in the portfolio
    - Are capable of reaching Tier I within a defined and near-term timeframe

Tactic Three: Enable Targeted Site Advancement

CIRDA will support site advancement when tied to active or near-term projects.

- Track site readiness gaps identified during active projects and use those insights to:
    - Refine readiness criteria
    - Inform future site prioritization
    - Identify recurring barriers
- CIRDA will activate site-readiness support when:
    - A life sciences or agribusiness project is under active consideration
    - Site readiness gaps are identified
    - The gap materially impacts project timelines or viability
- Support may include:
    - Site acquisition or control
    - Due diligence and pre-development preparation
    - Limited interventions to resolve readiness constraints
- Members seeking CIRDA support must demonstrate:
    - Commitment to co-investing in site control or advancement
    - Ability to meet company demands within project timelines
    - Willingness to coordinate project delivery with CIRDA and regional partners

Tactic Four: Integrate Site Inventory into the Innovation Infrastructure Dashboard

CIRDA will integrate the region's site inventory into the Innovation Infrastructure Dashboard, creating a unified platform for site evaluation and project decision-making.

- Provide a consistent view of sites and corresponding data
- Publish site information relevant to industry project requirements
- CIRDA will encourage use of the site inventory and Dashboard in the following:
    - All CIRDA-supported site selection processes
    - Project readiness and due diligence assessments
    - Infrastructure and funding prioritization decisions
    - Required input for CIRDA deal score and funding prioritization

RESOURCES & ROLES

CIRDA:

- Responsible for the integration of site data into the Innovation Infrastructure Dashboard
- Serves as the coordinating authority for site readiness evaluation and targeted deployment of CIRDA funding to advance sites tied to active opportunities
- Required resources:
    - Annual funding to support:
        - Provide targeted, project-driven site support (e.g., control, due diligence, gap resolution)
        - Close limited readiness gaps that directly impact project timing
        - Site readiness evaluations
    - Dedicated internal capacity to coordinate site readiness, inventory, and project-specific site advancement decisions

Local Government & Economic Development Organizations:

- Maintaining accurate and current site data for inclusion in the shared system
- Advancing site readiness in alignment with CIRDA criteria, including clarifying site control, proactively zoning for intended use, and defining/revising permitting processes and timelines
- Coordinating with CIRDA on project-specific opportunities

GUIDING METRICS

- Reduce time from project inquiry to company site control by 30% within three years
- Ten Tier I sites are submitted to the REDI sites program within three years
- Three new sites are submitted per review cycle by year three
- Six sites graduating from Tier II or III annually by year four
- Fewer than 10% of projects lost due to unclear site control or readiness within three years
- 75% of CIRDA site funding tied directly to active project opportunities
- 3:1 leverage ratio of local/private investment to CIRDA funding by year four

PILLAR TWO CONCLUSION

Regionalism delivers value when land use decisions, site readiness, and project delivery support the full lifecycle of life sciences and agribusiness activity.

Initiative 2.1 defines how the region operates. By organizing jurisdictions into Centers of Innovation and Corridors for Acceleration, it creates a structure through which projects can move predictably from discovery to scale, while aligning local decision-making to shared operating expectations.

Initiative 2.2 ensures the region is ready to act. Establishing a consistent site readiness framework, integrating site data into a unified decision platform, and enabling targeted, project-driven site advancement reduces uncertainty at the point where investment decisions are finalized.

Together, these initiatives make land use and coordination active tools for economic development. CIRDA's success will ultimately rely on its ability to function as more than the sum of its individual communities.

PILLAR THREE:

INFRASTRUCTURE

PILLAR GOAL

Pillar Three prioritizes infrastructure, land, and facility investments needed to support future life sciences and agribusiness development throughout the CIRDA region.

- **Initiative 3.1** creates a demand-driven system that prioritizes closing infrastructure gaps based on project pipeline activity and site readiness
- **Initiative 3.2** secures and positions land to support infrastructure delivery and enable development of priority site types, including lab and specialized facilities
- **Initiative 3.3** delivers infrastructure in response to project and pipeline demand through coordinated action, defined triggers, and targeted investment

BACKGROUND

Infrastructure is often invisible until it becomes a constraint. Companies begin in one type of environment and, over time, require different sites, facilities, and service levels. Whether a region can accommodate those transitions often determines if a company expands locally or begins looking elsewhere.

For life sciences and agribusiness industries, those transitions can happen quickly. A growing company may need upgraded utilities, a larger site, or specialized facilities not required during earlier stages of development. New capacity often requires years of planning and construction. This creates a challenge for regions: determining where demand is likely to emerge and how infrastructure investments should be prioritized before projects are announced.

Central Indiana faces the same reality. Infrastructure investments carry long lead times and significant costs, making it impractical to expand everywhere at once. Future demand is rarely distributed evenly across a region, making it important to understand where development activity is gaining momentum and where infrastructure will be needed next. Without that insight, investments become more difficult to prioritize and growth becomes harder to support.

Model regions recognize that infrastructure creates the greatest value when it is positioned ahead of demand. In Science Square at Georgia Tech, leaders recognized that life sciences expansion would require more than research talent and institutional strength. The district was planned with the sites, facilities, and infrastructure needed for expansion. Today, it encompasses approximately 18 acres and 1.8 million square feet of life sciences and innovation space. Its development demonstrates the value of creating physical readiness before companies need it rather than waiting for demand to force investment decisions.

CIRDA's success will depend on making informed decisions about where infrastructure should be positioned before development demands it. Better visibility into future activity can help support company expansion, reduce uncertainty, and prepare for the next phase of investment.

KEY PILLAR PARTNERS

- Economic Development Organizations
- Private Developers and Industrial Businesses
- State and Municipal Governments
- Transportation and Utility Agencies
- Utilities (Electric, Natural Gas, Water, and Wastewater)

REGIONAL COMPETITIVENESS KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Infrastructure investments are often disconnected from real-time project demand, creating delays
- Infrastructure has become a primary focus in location decisions, with more than half of site selectors identifying it as their top concern
- Project timelines are increasingly driven by infrastructure availability. Nearly two-thirds of companies are selecting sites that are construction-ready
- Life sciences activity is shifting from research-centric hubs toward scaled production environments
- Agribusiness remains stable but logistics-intensive, placing consistent demand on transportation systems and access to available, operational space

PILLAR THREE INITIATIVES

3.1 Infrastructure Demand & Planning System

INITIATIVE GOAL

Initiative 3.1 establishes a system that provides a clear, real-time understanding of infrastructure, delivery timelines, and constraints across the region.

STRATEGIC RATIONALE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Infrastructure decisions fail when capacity and constraints are not clearly understood early in the process. Today, infrastructure information is distributed across utilities and communities and is inconsistent in format and availability.

To function as a competitive system, high-level infrastructure information must be publicly available while recognizing that detailed data cannot be shared. This initiative builds on the Innovation Infrastructure Dashboard, integrating infrastructure inputs into the Dashboard and applying them through the Infrastructure Planning Cycle to guide decision-making.

EXECUTION TACTICS

Tactic One: Align Infrastructure Planning with Project Demand

CIRDA will develop an Infrastructure Planning Cycle aligned with project activity and site readiness tiers to guide infrastructure decisions.

- CIRDA will facilitate ongoing coordination among infrastructure partners (quarterly aligned with pipeline reviews) to:
    - Evaluate projected demand from active and emerging projects
    - Assess infrastructure readiness across Tier I and Tier II sites
    - Identify capacity, timing, and location gaps
    - Coordinate with INDOT and relevant transportation partners when infrastructure planning identifies constraints related to roadway access, freight, or connectivity
    - Collaborate with public and private utility providers to understand key gaps related to site-specific service issues
- Each Infrastructure Planning Cycle will produce:
    - A prioritized list of infrastructure needs by location
    - Expected delivery timelines aligned to project demand
    - Coordination actions across utilities and jurisdictions
- Infrastructure readiness will be assessed using standardized criteria:
    - Capacity
    - Delivery timeline
    - Permitting path
    - Cost clarity
    - Access to transportation networks, logistics infrastructure, and distribution points
- Outputs from the Infrastructure Planning Cycle will be:
    - Captured within the Innovation Infrastructure Dashboard
    - Used to inform land prioritization
    - Used to trigger infrastructure activation decisions
    - Informative for CIRDA deal score and funding prioritization

Tactic Two: Integrate Infrastructure Data into the Regional System

Because infrastructure data is often sensitive, CIRDA will implement a dual-layer infrastructure system within the Innovation Infrastructure Dashboard to support both external decision-making and internal coordination.

- The system will serve as the core input to the Infrastructure Planning Cycle, ensuring consistent use of infrastructure data in projects and decisions
- The External (Public-Facing) Layer provides standardized, non-sensitive information to support site selection and employer evaluation
    - Incorporated into the Innovation Infrastructure Dashboard
    - Used to:
        - Ensure consistent messaging
        - Provide credible and comparable information for site selection / corporate decision makers
        - Protect sensitive infrastructure and operational data
    - Data included:
        - General availability of capacity (e.g., “available,” “constrained,” “expandable”)
        - Estimated delivery ranges
        - Logistics infrastructure details and access
        - High-level infrastructure characteristics aligned to site readiness tiers
    - Designed for:
        - Site selectors
        - Employer decision-makers
        - Market positioning

- Internal (Confidential) Coordination Layer
    - Used to:
        - Maintain detailed, project-specific infrastructure data used for planning and delivery
        - Coordinate across partners
        - Support project-specific needs
        - Align utility and site investments with real project demand and pipeline signals
    - Data included:
        - Available capacity estimates or ranges
        - Delivery sequencing and constraints
        - Cost considerations and funding requirements
    - Accessed by:
        - CIRDA
        - Utilities
        - Local authorities
        - Relevant infrastructure partners

RESOURCES & ROLES

CIRDA:

- Facilitate coordination between infrastructure partners, jurisdictions, and economic development organizations
- Establish and manage the Infrastructure Planning Cycle
- Maintain coordination with Innovation Infrastructure Dashboard data steward
- Required resources include:
    - Funding to support data standardization, system enhancements, and coordination activities across partners
    - Internal capabilities to coordinate planning cycle meetings, outputs, and data integration

Local Government & Economic Development Organizations:

- Provide local infrastructure, permitting, and site-related inputs
- Use system outputs to align local development decisions
- Ensure consistency between site readiness and infrastructure availability

Participating Utility and Infrastructure Partners:

- Provide infrastructure capacity, timing, and constraint data
- Participate in Infrastructure Planning Cycle reviews
- Align infrastructure strategy with identified market signals

GUIDING METRICS

- All priority sites include verified infrastructure readiness data within 12 months
- 60% of CIRDA-supported projects use infrastructure data during site evaluation within three years
- Infrastructure Planning Cycle conducted quarterly with full participation from core partners within 18 months
- 100% of Infrastructure Planning Cycle outputs produce updated broader infrastructure priorities and defined delivery timing assumptions for priority locations
- All Tier I sites include public infrastructure readiness data for site selectors and corporate decision makers within two years
- Internal (confidential) infrastructure data provided for all priority sites within 18 months

3.2 Strategic Land Banking

INITIATIVE GOAL

Initiative 3.2 establishes a defined approach to selecting and securing life sciences and agribusiness sites.

STRATEGIC RATIONALE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Infrastructure cannot be delivered without access to suitable land. As companies grow, their infrastructure or location needs change. If suitable locations are not available or positioned for development, companies look elsewhere. Strategic land banking ensures that the region is prepared for company expansion.

- The pressure to launch operations has reached a breaking point, leading to a “Quantity over Quality” trend in site selection according to the Site Selectors Guild (SSG) 2025 & 2026 reports.
- 42% of SSG Guild members identify a lack of development-ready sites as a crisis. Data centers have “consumed” much of the prime industrial land, driving up costs for all other sectors
- 49% of site selectors cite availability of development-ready sites as a top factor, reinforcing that land banking is now a core competitive requirement

- The market is shifting away from mega sites (1,000 acres or more) toward a portfolio approach (5–150+ acres), increasing the importance of diversified land banking strategies
- The CIRDA region lacks sufficient lab and specialized facilities needed to support early-stage and scaling life sciences companies

EXECUTION TACTICS

Tactic One: Identify and Prioritize Strategic Sites

CIRDA will identify priority sites for land control through the Infrastructure Planning Cycle and project pipeline review process.

- Site identification and prioritization will be based on:
  - Projected company expansion locations identified in pipeline reviews
  - Tier I and Tier II site readiness alignment
  - Infrastructure gaps identified through the Infrastructure Planning Cycle
- CIRDA will establish a defined evaluation process to:
  - Compare sites against needs and opportunities
  - Determine priority sites for banking or partnership
- Each cycle will result in:
  - A defined list of target sites for land banking
  - Recommended action (acquire, option, partner, or hold)

Tactic Two: Establish Land Banking and Partnership Structures

CIRDA will implement a Land Banking Playbook to secure and manage strategic sites.

- The Land Banking Playbook will define:
  - How priority sites are selected based on pipeline demand, site readiness tiers, and infrastructure gaps
  - The most appropriate forms of control, including acquisition, optioning, development agreements, or public-private partnerships
  - Roles and responsibilities of CIRDA, local government, and private partners in site control and advancement
  - Criteria for CIRDA or third-party participation, including when funding or coordination support is appropriate
  - Expected timelines and milestones for moving sites from identification to control and readiness
- CIRDA members will use the Playbook to:
  - Evaluate potential sites within their communities against regional priorities
  - Structure deals with private landowners and developers consistently across the region
  - Align local site control efforts with infrastructure strategy and project activity

- CIRDA will apply the Playbook to:
    - Coordinate strategic land holding decisions across jurisdictions
    - Ensure consistency in how sites are secured and advanced
    - Align timing of land availability with infrastructure delivery
- All strategic land holdings or priority sites will be:
    - Tracked in the Innovation Infrastructure Dashboard
    - Linked to infrastructure readiness and project activities

Tactic Three: Position Land for Infrastructure and Facility Development

CIRDA will position land-banked sites to support infrastructure delivery and targeted development based on site readiness and projected demand.

- Site advancement will be aligned with the Site Readiness Framework:
    - Tier II sites will be prioritized for actions that move them toward Tier I readiness
    - Tier III sites will be evaluated for longer-term positioning based on pipeline demand
- CIRDA will coordinate advancement actions including:
    - Zoning alignment
    - Development pathway clarification
    - Coordination with infrastructure providers
    - Preparation for near-term buildout where appropriate
- Sites will be prioritized based on their ability to:
    - Support company movement between Centers of Innovation and Corridors for Acceleration
    - Align with infrastructure investment timing
    - Enhance the regional site portfolio
- CIRDA will prioritize sites that enable delivery of lab and specialized facilities, where gaps currently limit company expansion
- Using banked sites, CIRDA will:
    - Prioritize locations that support early-stage and scaling companies within Centers of Innovation and sites where lack of specialized facilities would otherwise force companies to leave the region
    - Align site readiness and infrastructure to support these facility types
    - Work with private developers to:
        - Structure development opportunities
        - Position sites for near-term investment
        - Reduce barriers to delivering specialized space

RESOURCES & ROLES

CIRDA:

- Define the Land Control Playbook, aligning land banking efforts with infrastructure strategy and activation
- Required resources include:
    - Annual funding for:
        - Land acquisition, optioning, or partnership structures
        - Targeted site advancement activities
    - Dedicated internal capabilities to manage land banking pipeline and prioritization

Local Government & Economic Development Organizations:

- Identify candidate sites within their jurisdictions
- Partner with CIRDA to secure and advance priority sites
- Align zoning and development pathways with regional priorities

GUIDING METRICS

- Priority site list updated through the Infrastructure Planning Cycle twice annually
- Minimum of nine strategic sites under active control or formal partnership within three years
- At least 75% of controlled sites aligned to Tier One or Tier Two readiness levels within four years
- At least three sites positioned for lab or specialized facility development within three years
- 50% of identified lab / specialized facility gaps addressed through active development efforts within five years
- 75% of expansion-stage projects have an in-region site option aligned to their next stage of growth within three years

3.3 Infrastructure Activation & Delivery

INITIATIVE GOAL

Initiative 3.3 enables coordinated, timely delivery of infrastructure to ensure projects can proceed without delay.

STRATEGIC RATIONALE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As companies move through the ecosystem, they transition between locations that support different stages of activity. These transitions require infrastructure in new locations, delivered within defined timelines.

These recommendations are rooted in the following:

- Over 52% of site selectors cite infrastructure as their top concern. Transmission and grid expansion timelines often exceed four years, meaning pre-served, infrastructure-ready sites are an advantage
- Electric power availability is now rated as a top location driver for industrial projects, elevating infrastructure readiness above traditional cost factors
- Site selection has shifted to prioritize locations that have at least one viable, ready site
- Infrastructure readiness now determines whether a location is considered, with permitting speed, utility commitments, and cost certainty acting as early-stage elimination factors
- Agribusiness remains highly logistics-centric, reinforcing that highway access and distribution proximity are key drivers of location decisions

EXECUTION TACTICS

Tactic One: Establish Coordinated Infrastructure Responses

CIRDA will implement an Infrastructure Activation Protocol to coordinate infrastructure delivery in response to project and pipeline demand.

- Infrastructure activation will be triggered through:
    - Outputs of the Infrastructure Planning Cycle
    - Active project requirements
    - Recurring pipeline activity signals
- Under the Protocol, CIRDA will determine whether the response requires:
    - Coordination only
    - Accelerated delivery
    - Funding support
- CIRDA will convene partners on a defined schedule to:
    - Confirm delivery timelines
    - Establish responsibilities across utilities and jurisdictions
    - Resolve constraints preventing infrastructure deployment

- When infrastructure timing becomes a constraint for an active project, CIRDA will integrate infrastructure coordination into the Rapid Response framework, including:
    - Accelerating infrastructure decision-making timelines
    - Elevating coordination across utilities, jurisdictions, and partners
    - Aligning infrastructure delivery with workforce and project requirements
    - Prioritizing projects at risk due to timing or constraints
    - Encouraging projects to locate on sites aligned with Centers and Corridors movement
- Projects receiving coordinated infrastructure response must meet CIRDA funding and evaluation thresholds

Tactic Two: Track Infrastructure Gaps and Adjust Investment Strategy

CIRDA will track infrastructure constraints identified through project activity and system-wide assessments.

- Constraints will be documented through:
    - The Infrastructure Planning Cycle
    - Infrastructure Activation Protocol outcomes
    - Project feedback
- CIRDA will use this information to:
    - Update infrastructure priorities
    - Adjust land control strategy
    - Inform future cycles
- Recurring constraints will:
    - Trigger proactive infrastructure planning
    - Inform targeted infrastructure investments

Tactic Three: Deploy Targeted Infrastructure Funding

CIRDA will work to identify and deploy infrastructure funding through the Infrastructure Activation Protocol.

- Funding decisions will be based on:
  - Project urgency and timing constraints
  - Pipeline activity
  - Alignment with site readiness and location strategy
- CIRDA will require:
  - Defined delivery timelines
  - Clear linkage to project or pipeline demand
  - Public-private funding match
- For projects activated under the Rapid Response framework, CIRDA may deploy infrastructure funding on an accelerated basis or focus on targeted, gap-closing investments

RESOURCES & ROLES

CIRDA:

- Manage the Infrastructure Activation protocol, coordinating infrastructure responses across partners, and deploying funding to support project and pipeline demand
- Required resources:
  - Annual funding to support targeted infrastructure investments and gap-closing/ acceleration activities
  - Dedicated internal capabilities to coordinate activation decisions and manage partner alignment with delivery timelines

Local Government & Economic Development Organizations:

- Coordinate permitting and approvals with project timelines and other requirements

Participating Utility and Infrastructure Partners:

- Coordinate with CIRDA/companies on timing, sequencing, activation, and rapid response processes

GUIDING METRICS

- 75% of infrastructure investments tied directly to active project or pipeline-driven demand
- Reduction in baseline time from infrastructure need identification to delivery by 25% within four years
- All Tier I sites have confirmed infrastructure delivery timelines within three years
- No projects lost primarily due to infrastructure timing or gaps within four years
- 3:1 leverage ratio of partner and private investment to CIRDA infrastructure funding
- Infrastructure Activation Protocol applied to 100% of projects requiring coordinated infrastructure response within two years

- 90% of infrastructure activation decisions made within defined response timelines under Rapid Response framework conditions
- 75% of scaling companies supported through CIRDA initiatives expand within the region

PILLAR THREE CONCLUSION

Pillar Three builds a system for anticipating infrastructure needs and directing investment where it can best support future development. It connects infrastructure strategy, land control, and delivery into a coordinated process that supports movement across the region.

Initiative 3.1 ensures the region understands its infrastructure and constraints in real time. Integrating infrastructure data into the regional system to align with project demand creates a clear and consistent basis for decision-making.

Initiative 3.2 positions the region for growth. By securing and preparing sites aligned to pipeline demand and site readiness priorities, it creates conditions for infrastructure to be delivered where it will be needed.

Initiative 3.3 enables the region to act. It creates clear triggers, coordination processes, and funding mechanisms to deliver infrastructure within the timelines required for project success.

Future investment will depend in part on decisions made long before projects are announced. Pillar Three provides a framework for making those decisions with greater clarity and confidence.

PILLAR FOUR:

TALENT DEVELOPMENT & RECRUITMENT

PILLAR GOAL

Pillar Four treats talent as economic infrastructure. Its aim is to move the region from a collection of efforts to a unified regional workforce system focused on employer need.

At a system level:

- **Initiative 4.1** establishes shared intelligence that enables employers and decision-makers to assess the region's talent capacity as a coherent, scalable system
- **Initiative 4.2** translates that intelligence into aligned development and advancement pathways that improve productivity
- **Initiative 4.3** provides rapid execution capability, ensuring workforce constraints do not delay investment, expansion, or time-sensitive projects

BACKGROUND

Central Indiana's long-term competitiveness in life sciences and agribusiness depends on its ability to develop and grow talent. As employers expand and technologies evolve, workforce readiness has become an increasingly important factor in business growth and investment decisions.

The region's talent spans manufacturing, quality and regulatory functions, data and automation, and applied biological sciences. These capabilities support nearly every aspect of the life sciences and agribusiness industries. Historically, workforce and training efforts within the CIRDA region have largely developed independently, making it difficult to understand and present talent as a unified regional asset.

This challenge is becoming increasingly important as life sciences and agribusiness employers compete for the same talent. Companies seek confidence that the workforce they need exists today and can grow alongside future operations. Regions that can provide greater visibility into workforce capacity and clear pathways into higher-value roles are often better positioned to attract investment and support expansion.

For example, the Kansas City Animal Health Corridor has built one of the world's largest concentrations of animal health activity through sustained collaboration between employers, educational institutions, workforce organizations, and industry partners. Today, the corridor accounts for nearly 60% of global animal health, diagnostics, and pet food sales, and is home to more than 300 animal health companies. Workforce alignment has helped strengthen industry specialization while creating a talent pipeline capable of serving research, manufacturing, and commercial operations across the sector.

Central Indiana possesses many of the same foundational assets, including leading employers, higher education institutions, healthcare systems, and a growing life sciences and agribusiness base. CIRDA's greatest opportunity is to organize its workforce into a regional system that supports long-term growth.

KEY PILLAR PARTNERS

- Education and training providers
- Representatives from core employers, including agribusiness, life science companies, and health systems
- Workforce Intermediaries

REGIONAL COMPETITIVENESS KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Multiple analyses benchmarked the CIRDA region against a set of peer and aspirational regions including Kansas City, Nashville, Pittsburgh, and Raleigh-Durham. Comparisons assessed performance across several core dimensions: talent competitiveness (wages and educational attainment), employment and wage growth, and industry concentration
- CIRDA's labor force is more concentrated in life sciences-related sectors than many peer regions, indicating a strong foundation for specialization
- CIRDA has lower wages across all skill levels and the smallest share of bachelor's and advanced degree attainment among peers, limiting competitiveness for target industry projects
- Peer regions that intentionally support advancement into higher-skill, higher-value roles, rather than focusing primarily on entry-level employment, achieve greater productivity and stronger wage growth
- Life sciences and agribusiness employers draw from overlapping occupational skill sets, including laboratory technicians, quality control, regulatory compliance, process engineering, and advanced manufacturing
- Raleigh-Durham has experienced greater pharmaceutical manufacturing industry growth, while CIRDA's growth has been more concentrated in agribusiness. However, several recent, significant investments by global life sciences leaders within the CIRDA region indicate industry readiness to expand at the convergence of these sectors
- Central Indiana's best opportunity is elevating workforce quality, progression, and specialization to position its talent as the region's primary competitive advantage

PILLAR FOUR INITIATIVES

4.1 Workforce Intelligence and Talent Gateway

INITIATIVE GOAL

Initiative 4.1 establishes the CIRDA Talent Gateway, enabling employers, site selectors, and regional partners to assess workforce capacity to inform investment decisions.

STRATEGIC RATIONALE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Gateway is not a job board. It is a regional operating system for workforce insight and data. As projects grow more complex, employers and site selectors value regions that clearly demonstrate workforce capacity by function, skill level, and geography.

The Gateway addresses three recurring challenges identified through prior analyses:

- Workforce data is fragmented across institutions, counties, and intermediaries
- Employers and site selectors sometimes struggle to evaluate regional readiness for growth, not just initial hiring
- Workforce insight is rarely translated into infrastructure, site readiness, and investment planning

EXECUTION TACTICS

Tactic One: Designate an Official Workforce Intelligence Platform

CIRDA will work with key stakeholders and partners to develop the Talent Gateway as the standard workforce intelligence platform for life sciences and agribusiness.

- CIRDA will work with partners on platform development and employer engagement
- CIRDA and its partners will define and document:
    - Data ownership and stewardship responsibilities
    - Validation standards for employer, education, and pipeline data
- CIRDA will establish a landing page specifically for corporate decision makers and regional workforce planning
- Adopt a system-level framework organizing talent by:
    - Ecosystem function (manufacturing, lab, quality, regulatory, applied biology, etc.)
    - Current employment by career stage (entry, mid-career, senior)
    - Estimated depth of specialized roles critical to scaling
    - Geography within the CIRDA region

Tactic Two: Integrate Education and Training Pipelines

CIRDA will work with employers, education, and training partners to provide standardized pipeline data tied directly to priority roles.

- CIRDA will work with education and training partners to gather annual data for aligned programs, including:
    - Enrollment
    - Completions
    - Industry-recognized credentials and certifications issued
    - Time-to-completion

- Life sciences or agribusiness employers receiving economic development incentives within the CIRDA region will submit annual data for aligned programs as part of the regular compliance process, including:
    - Total employment by career stage (entry, mid-career, senior)
    - Employee average wages
    - Employee participation in training pipelines
- Employer data submission requirements will be incorporated into incentive agreements used by all CIRDA member organizations
- Pipeline data should be mapped to ecosystem function, not listed by program title
- Pipeline data should highlight information related to council-identified priority roles

Tactic Three: Define CIRDA Usage Requirements

Establish formal requirements for the use of Talent Gateway insights at key CIRDA decision points to ensure workforce intelligence is consistently applied to planning, investment, and business attraction decisions.

- CIRDA will review Gateway insights for:
    - All life sciences and agribusiness site selection projects
    - Workforce investment or pilot program approvals
    - Site readiness and prioritization initiatives, infrastructure planning, and funding and investment decisions
- CIRDA will document:
    - What gateway information must be reviewed
    - How it informs the “deal score” and supports actions and incentive decisions

Tactic Four: Enable Lead Generation Through the Talent Gateway

CIRDA will use the Gateway as a lead generation and qualification platform.

- CIRDA will incorporate engagement and contact mechanisms into the Talent Gateway
- Inbound engagements will be logged as qualified leads, routed to CIRDA for follow-up, and tracked through existing tracking systems
- Workforce-based leads will be integrated into employer attraction pipelines and retention and expansion efforts

Tactic Five: Embed the Talent Gateway into the Employer Decision Process

CIRDA will use the Gateway as an input to employer and site-selector discussions.

- CIRDA will use the Talent Gateway to inform life sciences site selection, expansion, and major retention projects it supports
- CIRDA will use the data from the Talent Gateway to produce an externally facing "Workforce Readiness Summary" that presents a clear, standardized view of regional workforce capacity tailored to the target employers' needs. The summary should highlight:
    - Depth of talent by ecosystem function and career stage
    - Aligned education and workforce pipeline pathways and metrics

Tactic Six: Drive Adoption Through Standard Use

CIRDA will encourage consistent Talent Gateway use across members and partners so that workforce messaging and analysis are aligned throughout the region.

- CIRDA and its partners will develop a standard Talent Gateway orientation and user guide for CIRDA members and partners engaging in life sciences and agribusiness projects
- User guides should define standard outputs and visuals to be used in employer conversations
- CIRDA will monitor uptake and address gaps to ensure regional alignment

RESOURCES & ROLES

CIRDA:

- Ensure insights influence investment, site readiness, and workforce decisions
- Required resources:
    - Annual funding to support the Gateway in collaboration with key partners

GUIDING METRICS

- Talent Gateway used as the primary workforce reference in 75% of CIRDA-supported life sciences and agribusiness initiatives and projects within three years
- Median time to deliver an externally facing Workforce Readiness Summary of ≤10 business days after employer request
- 100% of Talent Development Council priority roles represented in the Gateway with current workforce supply and aligned pipeline data
- Five documented instances per year where Gateway insights inform:
    - Council priority changes
    - Credential alignment decisions
    - Rapid response activations
- Workforce and pipeline data updated annually, with no category more than 15 months out of date
- At least 75% of Gateway-identified workforce constraints result in a defined action

4.2 Talent Development Councils and Advancement Pathways

INITIATIVE GOAL

Initiative 4.2 recommends that CIRDA collaborate with key partners to align the region's talent system around the needs of life sciences and agribusiness employers.

STRATEGIC RATIONALE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are grounded in the following observations:

- Regional economic performance and peer comparisons indicate that growth and productivity are sensitive to workforce specialization, occupational mix, and internal mobility. Regions that outperform do so by supporting advancement into higher-skill roles over time rather than solely expanding entry-level pipelines
- Employer decisions increasingly hinge on execution readiness, including the availability of specialized and mid-career talent
- One Health is used to define an integrated, collaborative approach that recognizes the deep interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment
- Life sciences and agribusiness employers draw from a shared talent base across operations, making a coordinated One Health workforce strategy necessary to support sustained growth

EXECUTION TACTICS

Tactic One: Establish Function-Based Talent Development Councils

CIRDA, through its partners, will work with stakeholders to identify and establish five standing Talent Development Councils, organized by shared life sciences and One Health agribusiness function:

1. Advanced manufacturing and GMP operations
2. Quality, regulatory, and compliance systems
3. Laboratory, testing, and applied biology
4. Bioinformatics, automation, and data systems
5. One Health production platforms (animal and plant health, biologicals)

Each council should include:

- 8-10 total members to encompass multiple voices but maintain efficiency
- 5-6 employers with a minimum of two life sciences and two agribusiness employers
    - Employers should be expected to:
        - Participate consistently in Talent Development Councils
        - Validate priority roles and skill requirements
        - Recognize aligned credentials in hiring and advancement
        - Co-invest where appropriate in pilot advancement programs
        - Provide baseline employee metrics for the Talent Dashboard
        - Provide annual, high-level employee data to support the Talent Dashboard
- Educators and training providers that best align with the council focus
- CIRDA and its partners to streamline target priorities
- Quarterly meetings

Tactic Two: Conduct Baseline Assessment

Each council will evaluate:

- Roles and skills that limit expansion or productivity
- Mid-career transition points where internal or regional pipelines fail
- Existing degrees, certificates, and training programs, including total enrollment numbers, completion rates, and average time-to-completion
- Areas of duplication, misalignment, or outdated curriculum
- Each council will identify:
    - Three to five priority roles and transitions
    - Specific pipeline gaps that can be easily addressed through credential alignment
- Workforce priorities will be informed by project pipeline demand, including projected hiring needs and role-specific constraints identified through active and emerging projects

Tactic Three: Align Stackable Credential and Advancement Standards

CIRDA and its partners will establish regional alignment for 8-12 stackable credentials that address priority roles constraining life sciences and agribusiness growth.

- Each Council will identify two to three credentials that:
    - Address roles where skill gaps reduce productivity
    - Can be delivered by multiple institutions within the CIRDA region
    - Support progression within a career pathway
- Education council partners should be expected to standardize competency standards and assessment criteria based on direct input from the employers represented on the council

- Council member employers should be expected to reinforce the credential programs through:
    - Inclusion in new job descriptions
    - Recognition in advancement, promotion, or wage progression policies
    - Integration into tuition assistance or internal training programs

Tactic Four: Launch Mid-Career Advancement Pilots

CIRDA and its partners will sponsor employer-led advancement pilots that create clear pathways for incumbent workers that address workforce shortages in life sciences and agribusiness while increasing worker retention and earnings.

- Each Council will recommend one to two advancement pilots targeting transitions such as:
    - Manufacturing technician to quality assurance or regulatory technician
    - Agribusiness operations to applied laboratory roles
    - Assembler to production supervisor
- Each pilot must include:
    - Named employer sponsors
    - Cohorts of 15-20 workers
    - Defined job outcomes
    - Clear title and wage progression expectations
    - Credential completion milestones
- Employer sponsors will commit to job placement or advancement for successful participants

RESOURCES & ROLES

CIRDA:

- Active collaboration with key partners to prioritize workforce needs around industry demands

Talent Development Council Partners:

- Responsible for convening, priority setting, and performance tracking
- Required Resources:
    - Annual operating funds to support council facilitation, credential alignment, documentation, and seed funding for pilot advancement programs
    - Reallocation of existing workforce training dollars
    - Employer co-investment in advancement pilots
    - Use of existing training facilities and labs

GUIDING METRICS

- 15% increase in industry-recognized credentials awarded in priority roles within five years
- Increase participation in aligned credential or training programs to 10-12% of the sector workforce within five years
- 80% of council-identified priority roles supported by at least one aligned credential or advancement pathway within 3 years
- 15% of workers who participate in new advancement pathways advance into higher-skill or responsibility roles within 3 years
- Increase current baseline productivity by 10% within five years
- Reduce average time-to-competency for priority roles by 20% within five years
- Reduce average days-to-fill for council identified constraint roles by 25% within three years
- 60% of participating employers report measurable productivity improvements attributable to aligned training or advancement pathways
- Median wages in life sciences and agribusiness grow 15% faster than the national median in 3 years
- Credential completers experience wage growth of 25% within two years
- 75% of new jobs in targeted sectors pay at least 100% of the regional median wage
- Achieve LQ growth of 0.15 or greater in at least three life sciences and agribusiness subsectors (manufacturing, etc.) within five years
- 15% increase in number of establishments in upstream and downstream supplier roles tied to council priorities within seven years

4.3 Rapid Workforce Alignment And Response

INITIATIVE GOAL

Initiative 4.3 provides a rapid workforce response capability to address project-critical talent needs without disrupting longterm workforce alignment.

STRATEGIC RATIONALE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Employer investment decisions increasingly hinge on speed and execution certainty. Regions can lose projects when short-term workforce constraints are not addressed in a timely manner.

Prior analyses informing the CIRDA strategy indicate that:

- Rapid response needs emerge late in the deal cycle, during due diligence or pre-activation
- Employers desire regions that can mobilize existing talent, training capacity, and partners rapidly to bridge near term gaps
- Rapid response actions are most effective when they are:
    - Targeted
    - Time-limited
    - Clearly connected to longer term alignment efforts

EXECUTION TACTICS

Tactic One: Define Workforce Response Triggers

CIRDA will define the limited set of conditions under which a rapid workforce response may be initiated, ensuring the mechanism is used only for time-sensitive, project-critical needs.

Rapid responses should only be activated when certain conditions are met:

- Workforce readiness risks are identified through:
    - Talent Gateway analysis, or
    - Direct employer confirmation during due diligence or pre activation
- The required talent cannot be supplied through existing aligned pipelines within the project's required timeframe
- The risk is material enough to delay, downsize, or jeopardize project execution

Tactic Two: Formalize a Rapid Response Network

CIRDA will designate a standing network of partners capable of rapid mobilization, eliminating the need to assemble adhoc response teams under time pressure.

Network Makeup

- Education and training providers
- Workforce intermediaries and industry partners
- Employers participating in Talent Development Councils
    - Select state or regional workforce entities where appropriate

Network Expectations

- Agreement to participate in rapid response activation on short notice
- Pre-alignment on instruction modes, credential standards, and reporting
- Commitment to post-response review and system learning

Tactic Three: Establish a Rapid Response Playbook

CIRDA will develop and maintain a standardized rapid workforce response playbook that defines exact response options, roles, and timelines.

Playbook Components

- A menu of pre-approved response actions, including:
  - Accelerated upskilling or refresher cohorts
  - Compressed credential delivery
  - Targeted upskilling for incumbent workers or underemployed individuals
  - Cross employer talent redeployment strategies
  - Employee recruitment partners and strategies
- Defined decision authority for:
  - Activation approval
  - Partner engagement
  - Funding deployment
- Standard response timelines, with expectations for:
  - Initial response design (≤15 business days)
  - Cohort or intervention launch (≤60–90 days where feasible)
- The playbook is reviewed annually and updated based on prior response outcomes

Tactic Four: Execute Rapid Response Interventions

Upon activation, CIRDA will design project-specific workforce interventions to address the identified constraint.

- Each intervention must include:
  - A clearly defined employer sponsor
  - Identified roles and workforce quantities
  - A defined start and end date
  - Connection to credential or advancement pathways where feasible
  - Coordination with multiple talent recruitment partners
  - Clear success criteria tied to project execution (e.g., positions filled, readiness achieved)

Tactic Five: Integrate Rapid Response Outcomes into Long-Term Alignment

CIRDA will track each rapid response to ensure accountability and improvement. Tracking successes and system gaps is critical to maintaining a reputation as a region that can deliver talent when needed.

- Relevant Talent Development Councils review each response:
  - What triggered it
  - What worked
  - What systemic gaps were exposed
- Insights are used to inform:
  - Credential alignment updates
  - New or adjusted advancement pathways
  - Talent Gateway updates

RESOURCES & ROLES

CIRDA:

- Serves as the point of contact for activating and closing rapid responses.
  - Defines and approves rapid-response trigger activation
  - Streamlines response actions across partners
  - Ensures responses are project-specific and time-limited
  - Documents response outcomes and impacts on supported projects
- Required resources:
  - Flexible funding mechanism to support training and hiring partners to meet the needs of the employer

Education, Training, and Industry Partners:

- Delivering accelerated or compressed training aligned to defined response needs
- Adjusting schedule, format, or cohort size to meet project timelines where feasible
- Reporting completion and readiness outcomes to CIRDA that are tied to response interventions
- Coordinating with talent recruitment partners to fulfill headcount requirements
- Support employer engagement and validation of workforce needs across the region

GUIDING METRICS

- Time from verified workforce trigger to response activation of no more than 30 days within 12 months of program development
- 80% of eligible projects receive a rapid response action within the defined activation window within 18 months
- 65% of projects receiving rapid response intervention report that the intervention prevented a delay or enabled the projects timeline within three years
- Zero CIRDA-supported projects lose a committed investment primarily due to unaddressed short-term workforce constraints within two years
- Five to eight rapid response activations annually within three years

PILLAR FOUR CONCLUSION

These strategies create a workforce system that gives employers and investors greater confidence in Central Indiana's ability to support growth.

Initiative 4.1 establishes the Talent Gateway as the region's official workforce intelligence system, providing employers and decision-makers with a view of workforce capacity, specialization, and pipelines to support hiring, expansion, and site decisions tailored to their needs.

Initiative 4.2 connects talent development to employer demand by using function-based councils to identify high-impact roles and transitions, standardize credentials and training across institutions, and advance workers into higher-value positions that constrain growth.

Initiative 4.3 enables rapid workforce response by activating targeted, time-limited interventions when project timelines compress, ensuring short-term workforce constraints do not delay or jeopardize life sciences and agribusiness investments.

Talent functions as connective infrastructure that positions CIRDA to compete as an execution-ready region.

PILLAR FIVE:

HIGHER EDUCATION & HOSPITAL RESEARCH COMMERCIALIZATION

PILLAR GOAL

Pillar Five advances the commercialization of research and innovation, helping translate breakthroughs from higher education and healthcare institutions into market-ready products, companies, and technologies.

- **Initiative 5.1** focuses research priorities on industry demand and translational feasibility
- **Initiative 5.2** aligns how institutions prepare and engage with the system
- **Initiative 5.3** establishes a single, expert-driven accelerator and advancement process
- **Initiative 5.4** coordinates infrastructure and financial support as companies scale

BACKGROUND

Central Indiana's life sciences and agribusiness ecosystem generates world-class research and early-stage innovation; however, research productivity alone does not guarantee economic growth. The greatest economic value is created when discoveries move beyond the laboratory and become companies and long-term investment.

Many regions struggle at this stage. While they generate significant research activity, they lack the systems needed to move innovations efficiently through commercialization and growth. As a result, promising technologies often face delays, scale elsewhere, or fail to reach the market altogether.

As projects mature, companies need access to specialized facilities, capital, and commercialization support. When those resources are difficult to navigate, uncertainty increases and commercialization timelines extend.

Benchmarked regions support commercialization through deliberate coordination between research institutions, industry, investors, and commercialization organizations. For example, Pittsburgh has built an innovation ecosystem around the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon University, major health systems, and industry partners. The result has been more than 6,100 life sciences and healthcare establishments, $1.3 billion in annual research and development expenditures, and $4.37 billion in life science and healthcare capital investment over the last decade. In 2024 alone, Pittsburgh companies attracted nearly $500 million in life sciences venture capital. These outcomes demonstrate that long-term economic impact depends on a region's ability to move innovation from discovery to commercialization and scale.

For CIRDA, the opportunity is to increase the economic return on the region's research activity. The path from discovery to commercialization depends on capital and infrastructure being available at the right time. Greater coordination can help more innovations reach the market and strengthen the region's long-term economic impact.

KEY PILLAR PARTNERS

- Education and research partners
- Representatives from core employers, including agribusiness and life science companies and health systems

Participating institutions and organizations are encouraged to collaborate, and will be supported in doing so, when opportunities arise that advance shared regional objectives. Such collaboration is intended to foster alignment, coordination, and collective impact in areas of mutual interest. Participating entities will not be expected to disclose proprietary, confidential, or competitively sensitive information, nor will they be required to engage in activities that conflict with their individual missions, strategic priorities, or competitive interests. Rather, this pillar seeks to create opportunities for voluntary partnership where collaboration can strengthen outcomes for the region as a whole.

REGIONAL COMPETITIVENESS KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Corporate site selection and investment decisions increasingly depend on whether a region demonstrates focus and clear areas of strength
- Peer regions that outperform on growth velocity concentrate translational effort rather than attempting to advance all research areas equally
- Universities and hospital systems are central to CIRDA's innovation advantage, but their impact depends on how effectively research transitions into applied and operational settings
- Companies evaluating expansion or partnership opportunities place high value on speed and long-term institutional support
- The greatest risk of delay or relocation occurs when firms reach scale and face uncertainty around space and infrastructure
- Central Indiana's value chain is geographically distributed, requiring regional coordination across counties rather than isolated, local responses

PILLAR FIVE INITIATIVES

5.1 Industry-Anchored Research

INITIATIVE GOAL

Initiative 5.1 establishes a disciplined approach to research prioritization that strengthens pathways from discovery to commercialization.

STRATEGIC RATIONALE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Without regional focus, applied research scatters across many fields, slowing translation and weakening industry pull required for commercial scale. Regions that scale effectively align research coordination around areas with clear demand and realistic deployment paths.

- Central Indiana has a deep base of applied research in life sciences and agribusiness, but those efforts are often pursued independently rather than as a regional portfolio
- Without shared priority areas, translational resources spread too thinly, increasing friction for downstream coordination
- Applied research advances more efficiently when it occurs in areas where industry engagement and commercialization pathways already exist

EXECUTION TACTICS

Tactic One: Designate Priority Research Areas

CIRDA and its partners will designate a limited set of research areas where the region shows active collaboration and innovation potential.

- Initial fields could include:
    - Neuroscience & Alzheimer's disease
    - Oncology & pharmacology
    - Diabetes & metabolic disease
    - Radiopharmaceuticals & nuclear medicine
    - Biologicals & plant-human interface platforms
    - Seed and crop production technology
    - Applied chemistry and biological sciences
- Designation criteria:
    - Existing industry-academic and industry-hospital research partnerships
    - Active research pipelines
    - Defined commercialization pathways
- Priority areas will be reviewed and refreshed on a biannual basis

Tactic Two: Form Joint Innovation Councils

For each priority area, CIRDA will convene a Joint Innovation Council to manage pipeline direction.

- Councils will be comprised of 8-10 members and should include:
    - Faculty researchers and technology transfer leads
    - Industry R&D and translational leaders
    - Health system and clinical research leadership
    - Regulatory and commercialization advisors

- Councils will meet quarterly to:
    - Review discovery and applied research pipelines
    - Identify projects approaching translational readiness
    - Flag regulatory, validation, or infrastructure constraints
    - Formally recommend candidates for entry or consideration under the Central Indiana Translational Accelerator

Tactic Three: Accelerate Research through Industry-Academic Talent Exchanges

CIRDA will support targeted talent exchanges to accelerate research readiness.

- Models:
    - Industry experts (e.g., scientists, engineers, regulatory specialists) embedded in university and hospital labs or programs
    - Academic researchers embedded in corporate R&D, manufacturing, quality systems, or applied research operations
- Talent exchanges should be time-bound (e.g., 6–18 months) and anchored to defined milestones (study launch, process validation, etc.). Each exchange will document:
    - Milestone targets and achieved metrics
    - Commercialization and deployment insights
    - Skill and talent gaps
- CIRDA will share takeaways with:
    - Joint Innovation Councils to shape research pipelines
    - Commercialization and Scale Committee to guide accelerator decisions
    - Talent Development Councils to guide curriculum and certification development

RESOURCES & ROLES

CIRDA:

- Work with key partners to designate priority research areas, establishing Joint Innovation Councils, and ensuring research alignment informs decisions across Pillar Five
- Required resources:
    - Funding to support:
        - Joint Innovation Council convening, facilitation, and documentation
        - Modest engagement costs for industry, regulatory, and clinical experts participating in councils
        - Reporting of research-pipeline insights

Programmatic Lead:

- Support sector-specific coordination for designated life sciences and agribusiness research areas
- Provide industry insight, translational context, and employer engagement support
- Assist CIRDA in convening councils and aligning research activity with industry demand and deployment pathways

Higher Education and Research Partners:

- Participate in Joint Innovation Councils for designated research areas
- Provide access to applied research pipelines, faculty leadership, and translational initiatives
- Align institutional engagement efforts with designated regional priorities

GUIDING METRICS

- Four to six priority research areas formally designated within six months
- 100% of designated research areas supported by an active Joint Innovation Council within 12 months
- 75% of participating higher-education and hospital institutions engaged in at least one Joint Innovation Council within 18 months
- 20-40 applied research projects reviewed annually by Joint Innovation Councils by year two
- 25% of reviewed projects formally recommended for consideration by the Central Indiana Translational Accelerator within 36 months
- 10-20 industry-research talent exchanges launched within three years
- 50% of exchanges produce documented regulatory or commercialization insights within 12 months

5.2 Innovation to Industry Bridge

INITIATIVE GOAL

Initiative 5.2 aligns higher education and hospital research with commercialization and industry needs. It positions higher education institutions and hospitals as operating partners that actively shape how projects transition from the lab or clinic to the market.

STRATEGIC RATIONALE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Commercialization success depends equally on institutional operating behavior and research quality. In a system where speed and execution capacity increasingly shape location, investment, and expansion decisions, universities and hospitals must function as reliable partners where discovery meets application.

The tactics outlined below are rooted in the following:

- CIRDA's universities and hospitals generate strong applied research but encounter recurring challenges when projects move toward commercialization
- Institutions receive limited feedback from downstream commercialization and scale decisions, reducing their ability to adapt practices in response to observed outcomes
- The ecosystem is strongest when higher education and other institutions treat commercialization outcomes as operational feedback rather than project results

EXECUTION TACTICS

Tactic One: Align Institutional Research Priorities to Designated Regional Priorities

CIRDA will work with higher education and hospital leadership to align research focus areas with priority life sciences and agribusiness research areas.

- Universities and hospitals will identify how existing research assets and initiatives map to designated priority areas
- Alignment does not require exclusive focus, but does require:
    - Clear points of contact for each institution
    - Willingness to coordinate applied and translational efforts with industry partners
- While all research will remain valued, regional support and coordination will be most intensive for projects that align with collective strengths

Tactic Two: Establish Clear University and Hospital Accelerator Connection Points

CIRDA will work with participating institutions to define clear connection points for industry engagement and accelerator participation.

- Universities and hospitals will designate defined entry points for:
  - Industry-sponsored research
  - Translational partnerships
  - Participation in the Central Indiana Translational Accelerator
- Expectations will be set regarding:
  - Responsiveness and decision timelines
  - Data sharing and reporting needed for advancement gates
  - Roles of technology transfer, research administration, and faculty/researcher leads

Tactic Three: Align Research to Industry Needs

CIRDA will work with higher education institutions to support university- and hospital-based researchers to collaborate in the regional innovation pipeline.

- CIRDA will define minimum information and readiness requirements for university-based projects entering the Central Indiana Translational Accelerator
- Participating institutions are expected to support timely preparation of projects for advancement review, including:
  - Regulatory considerations
  - Validation requirements
  - Infrastructure and scale implications
- Universities and hospitals will receive aggregated, non-confidential feedback on:
  - Common reasons for project deferral or non-advancement
  - Recurring regulatory, validation, or infrastructure gaps
  - Talent and skill deficits surfaced during scale readiness reviews
- Institutions will be expected to:
  - Use this feedback to adjust translational support structures
  - Inform research coordination, training design, and faculty/researcher support
- Feedback will be routed through Joint Innovation Councils and Talent Development Councils to reinforce cross-pillar alignment
- Frequent project deferrals or lack of advancement will signal a collaborative review of institutional readiness and regulatory gaps to drive optimization in the innovation pipeline
- Observed commercialization outcomes will be used to refine regional pipeline priorities and inform future funding and workforce alignment decisions

RESOURCES & ROLES

CIRDA:

- Encourage institutional alignment across participating universities, hospitals, and research organizations
- Facilitate engagement between higher education, healthcare, industry, and commercialization partners
- Required resources:
    - Staff support for partner coordination, meeting facilitation, and performance tracking
    - Annual operating funds to support institutional convening, documentation, and reporting

Programmatic Lead:

- Provide commercialization and market insight to inform institutional alignment efforts
- Assist with tracking recurring commercialization barriers and opportunities identified through accelerator and industry engagement activities
- Support communication between Joint Innovation Councils, participating institutions, and CIRDA

Higher Education & Hospital Partners:

- Designate institutional points of contact for priority research areas and commercialization engagement
- Participate in Joint Innovation Councils and accelerator-related activities where applicable
- Utilize feedback from commercialization outcomes to strengthen translational support structures

GUIDING METRICS

- 75% of participating higher-education and hospital institutions formally aligned to at least one designated priority research area within 12 months
- 90% of institutional connection points meet defined responsiveness and data-sharing expectations within 24 months
- 50% of university and hospital-originated projects entering the Central Indiana Translational Accelerator meet minimum readiness requirements on first review within 36 months
- If over 40% of university and hospital-originated projects are repeatedly deferred for the same readiness issue over 24 months, CIRDA initiates:
    - Review of institutional interfaces and readiness support practices
    - Escalation to Joint Innovation Councils or Talent Development Councils

5.3 Accelerate Innovation & Commercialization

INITIATIVE GOAL

Initiative 5.3 establishes a regional accelerator that provides consistent advancement criteria for promising innovations within the CIRDA region.

STRATEGIC RATIONALE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Projects entering commercialization encounter inconsistent expectations and decision criteria. As a result, readiness gaps surface late and under pressure, increasing delay and uncertainty.

These recommendations are grounded in the following observations:

- Central Indiana has multiple commercialization and innovation programs but lacks a region-wide framework for advancement decisions once projects move beyond early proof-of-concept
- Companies evaluating expansion, spinout, or platform development prioritize regions that can offer clear advancement expectations and timelines, particularly after technical risk has been reduced.
- Economic development outcomes depend not only on attracting innovation, but on ensuring that firms are rapidly integrated into partners and deployment environments once advancement decisions are made

EXECUTION TACTICS

Tactic One: Establish a Central Indiana Translational Accelerator (CITA)

CIRDA will establish the Central Indiana Translational Accelerator (CITA) as the pathway for regionally supported commercialization across life sciences and agribusiness. CITA is not a standalone accelerator. It will provide a common intake, review, and advancement process across existing regional programs.

- Convene existing programs to serve as delivery channels and execution partners within CITA
    - CIRDA will not recreate curricula, mentor networks, company coaching, lab access, or validation programs already operating effectively
    - CIRDA will formally designate which existing program components satisfy specific CITA needs (e.g., proof-of-concept validation, pilot readiness, regulatory preparation)
    - CIRDA will select a single regional standard if multiple tools or templates exist across partners
- Establish standard operating procedures for intake review procedures and advancement documentation
- Coordinate with industry partners to align on priority areas.
    - Distinct tracks will be established for:
        - Life sciences and agribusiness
        - Startups and existing companies launching new products or platforms
- CIRDA will not evaluate on technical merit but will manage accelerator operations by:
    - Coordinating intake materials
    - Preparing advancement documentation for the Commercialization & Scale Committee
    - Tracking decisions and conditions
    - Ensuring timely communication with applicants and delivery-lane partners

Tactic Two: Milestone-Based Advancement Gates and Conditional Deferral Process

CIRDA will convene a standing Commercialization & Scale Committee (CSC) with delegated authority to advance, defer, or exit projects within CITA to ensure advancement decisions are grounded in expertise.

- The committee should be comprised of eight to ten standing members, including:
    - Industry translational leaders
    - Regulatory pathway expert
    - Validation or deployment environment leader
    - Manufacturing or scale operations expert
    - Capital readiness expert from a growth or strategic capital perspective
    - Workforce or operational readiness expert
- CSC will define clear gates for advancement:
    - Proof-of-concept
    - Validation and pilot readiness
    - Regulatory feasibility
    - Manufacturing and/or deployment realism
    - Workforce requirements

- The CSC will determine if a concept is ready to move forward and either:
    - Advance to the next stage
    - Defer with conditions and specify:
        - Missing readiness elements
        - Required actions to progress
        - Recommended existing regional resources
        - Operational or infrastructure gaps
        - Clear reentry thresholds and earliest reentry date
    - Concepts that fail to meet advancement criteria across multiple review cycles or lack a feasible path forward may be exited from CITA, with documented rationale and, where appropriate, guidance on alternative pathways
- CITA will establish a monthly intake review cycle and quarterly advancement gate reviews, to build predictable decision timelines for participants

Tactic Three: Continual Industry-Research Alignment

CIRDA will institute a recurring process to ensure accelerator decisions remain continuously aligned with research activity and industry priorities.

- CIRDA will share insights from Commercialization & Scale Committee (CSC) decisions with Joint Innovation and Talent Development councils on a quarterly basis
- CIRDA will organize annual industry-research alignment sessions to review:
    - Emerging industry needs and technology gaps
    - Lessons learned from recent accelerator cohorts
    - Shifts in regulatory, validation, or deployment environments
    - Workforce readiness
- Participants should include:
    - Industry partners
    - Commercialization & Scale Committee members
    - Joint Innovation Council leads
    - Select industry and research representatives tied to target research fields

Tactic Four: Pathway Playbooks

CIRDA will collaborate with partners to standardize common commercialization pathways to reduce friction and improve predictability.

- Playbooks may include:
  - Startup spinout from university research
  - Industry adopted platform or product licensing
  - Existing firm expansion into adjacent life sciences or agribusiness markets
- Playbooks will draw from existing best practices already used by partners to outline:
  - Typical validation and regulatory steps
  - Common handoff points between research, translation, and deployment
  - When projects should enter or exit the accelerator
- Playbooks will be used to:
  - Guide intake deferrals and reentry conditions
  - Support consistent counseling across delivery lanes
  - Improve transparency for researchers and companies entering the system

RESOURCES & ROLES

CIRDA:

- Establish the regional system, including convening partners, managing intake and review processes, and tracking system-level performance
- Required resources:
  - One full-time accelerator lead responsible for:
    - Managing CITA operations and intake cadence
    - Staffing the Commercialization & Scale Committee (CSC)
    - Coordinating advancement documentation and decision follow-up
  - Annual operating funds to support expert participation on the CSC, standardized processes documentation, and pathway playbooks

Programmatic and Sector Partners:

- Support sector-specific alignment between life sciences and agribusiness pipelines and CITA priorities
- Provide industry insight, translational context, and partner coordination
- Assist CIRDA in continuous calibration of advancement expectations based on industry realities

Delivery-Lane Partners:

- Existing accelerator, translational, validation, and field-trial programs (e.g., IU LAB, BioCrossroads Startup Catalyst, and AgriNovus Velocity programs)
- Deliver programmatic support consistent with CITA-defined requirements and milestones

GUIDING METRICS

- Twenty-five to forty projects reviewed through CITA intake annually within two years
- 40% advancement rate from intake to next milestone annually within three years
- Target annual deferral rate of 50% to build readiness and ensure strategic application
- 100% of deferred projects receive written conditions and reentry thresholds within 12 months
- 50% of projects advancing beyond pilot or validation stages remain headquartered or operationally anchored within CIRDA within three years

5.4 Coordinated Innovation Infrastructure

INITIATIVE GOAL

Initiative 5.4 addresses the point at which commercialization success begins to outpace infrastructure clarity and readiness.

STRATEGIC RATIONALE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The greatest risk of regional loss occurs when firms approaching scale are unable to determine whether appropriate space, infrastructure, or support systems exist locally or can be made available. These constraints are often shared across sectors and projects, yet are typically addressed in a reactive, case-by-case manner.

CIRDA analyses support:

- Firms are most likely to delay growth or relocate activity when scale decisions outpace clarity around infrastructure availability and operational readiness
- Infrastructure constraints are shared, not company-specific, particularly in laboratory capacity, specialized facilities, and permitting environments
- Private markets alone do not reliably resolve infrastructure gaps at the pace required by advancing innovation pipelines

EXECUTION TACTICS

Tactic One: Establish an Innovation Infrastructure Dashboard

CIRDA will create an Innovation Infrastructure Dashboard to serve as a single source for infrastructure, space, and scale-related options for growing life sciences and agribusiness firms.

- The dashboard will be designed to help companies of all sizes identify innovation infrastructure within the CIRDA region
- Data will be updated annually or when material changes to space availability occur
- Inventory regional physical assets based on:
    - Function and use case:
        - Wet and dry lab
        - GMP and pilot manufacturing
        - Shared instrumentation and testing
        - Clinical trial and applied research environments
        - Agribusiness field, demonstration, greenhouse, and processing capacity
    - Operational characteristics:
        - Scale stage (startup, expansion, platform scale)
        - Sector (life sciences, animal health, plant health, biologicals, food-health)
        - Geography
        - Size, configuration, and expansion potential
        - Proximity to workforce, logistics, and supply-chain assets
- The Innovation Infrastructure Readiness Dashboard should be used as a reference for:
    - Accelerator decisions
    - Projects seeking CIRDA funding, co-investment, or priority support
    - Public infrastructure or facility investments supported by CIRDA
    - Capital alignment efforts under Tactic Four
- Outputs from the Dashboard will inform workforce planning, site prioritization, infrastructure planning, and funding decisions

Tactic Two: Activate Pathways for Growth within Innovation Infrastructure

Define standardized pathways for progression from translation to operation within the region.

- Define regional growth pathways that clarify what infrastructure readiness looks like at key stages. They will specify:
    - Facility and space types needed at each scale stage
    - Typical utility, permitting, and compliance timelines
    - Workforce timing and skill expectations

- When a company advancing through the Central Indiana Translational Accelerator is deemed ready to prepare for scale-up, CIRDA will initiate an Innovation Infrastructure Review in coordination with the company and relevant partners to determine:
    - Whether suitable innovation infrastructure currently exists in the region
    - If identified scale-up gaps are:
        - Shared and system-level requiring regional coordination and potentially addressable by CIRDA within the required timeline
        - Company-specific responsibility
    - Infrastructure reviews are diagnostic and action-oriented and do not guarantee infrastructure availability or public support

Tactic Three: Enable Scale-Up Through Targeted Financial Support Mechanisms

CIRDA will establish targeted financial support mechanisms that help companies absorb early scale-up costs.

- CIRDA may provide targeted financial support for activities such as:
    - Short-term access to specialized facilities (e.g., pilot, GMP, shared labs) during transition
    - Relocation or expansion costs associated with moving into scale-appropriate space within the region
    - Incremental talent progression directly tied to scale transition
    - Limited cost offsets for compliance, permitting, or operational preparation that enable timely scale progression
- Decisions for support should emphasize retention of core functions within CIRDA
- Support will be time-limited and contingent on continued alignment with advancement milestones

Tactic Four: Coordinate Innovation Infrastructure Around Active Innovation Pipelines

CIRDA will coordinate targeted public-private development to address infrastructure bottlenecks constraining active and advancing innovation pipelines.

- Infrastructure gaps should be prioritized when they:
  - Enable retention of core functions (R&D, manufacturing, deployment) within the region
  - Address readiness gaps that private markets alone are unlikely to solve
  - Support active, advancing innovation pipelines
- CIRDA should utilize a portion of its funding to support:
  - Site pre-development
  - Environmental or utility preparation
  - Early planning or feasibility studies

RESOURCES & ROLES

CIRDA:

- Establish regional innovation-infrastructure response once readiness is identified
- Responsible for:
  - Maintaining the Innovation Infrastructure Dashboard
  - Initiating and managing Innovation Infrastructure Reviews
  - Coordinating public–private response actions across jurisdictions and partners
  - Enforcing discipline so actions are project-specific and time-limited
- Required resources:
  - Dedicated person to manage infrastructure review processes, partner coordination, and response tracking
  - Annual funding to support short-term infrastructure access, site pre-development, utility preparation, and feasibility work for active pipelines

Strategic Data and Asset Partners:

- Provide sector-specific context on facility, validation, and deployment needs
- Support coordination with industry partners and delivery environments

GUIDING METRICS

- 100% of relevant regional innovation infrastructure assets reflected in the Innovation Infrastructure Dashboard within 12 months
- 100% of projects deemed scale-ready receive an Innovation Infrastructure Review within 60 days after year two
- 70% of identified shared infrastructure gaps addressed or action-planned within required project timelines within year three
- Reduction in baseline time between scale-readiness and access to appropriate facilities within two years

PILLAR FIVE CONCLUSION

Regional innovation only delivers value when it converts into real-world use and sustained growth.

Pillar Five creates a system that helps promising innovations advance from discovery to growth within the CIRDA region.

Initiative 5.1 narrows the region's focus to research domains where industry engagement, validation pathways, and scale conditions already exist, concentrating regional effort where translation is most likely to succeed.

Initiative 5.2 aligns higher education and hospital research with commercialization needs by clarifying project entry, readiness expectations, and institutional feedback loops.

Initiative 5.3 provides a consistent framework for advancing promising innovation. By applying shared milestones and decision standards, it reduces late-stage friction and gives companies predictable pathways as they move to scale.

Initiative 5.4 ensures the region is prepared when growth accelerates. Rather than reacting to constraints after they emerge, it aligns infrastructure visibility and targeted support to ensure growing companies remain and expand within the region.

Together, these initiatives strengthen the pathway from research to commercialization, helping more innovations translate into companies, investment, and economic growth within the CIRDA region.

PILLAR SIX:

REGIONAL FUNDING & INCENTIVE SYSTEM

PILLAR SIX: REGIONAL FUNDING & INCENTIVE SYSTEM

PILLAR GOAL

Pillar Six establishes the systems needed to turn economic development opportunities into committed investments. It provides CIRDA with the framework to evaluate projects, allocate resources, and pursue strategic opportunities.

- **Initiative 6.1** builds a regional funding framework that enables CIRDA to generate and deploy capital to pursue CIRDA priorities
- **Initiative 6.2** defines a consistent system for evaluating and structuring incentives and deal participation based on regional fit and impact
- **Initiative 6.3** coordinates regional decision-making, real estate, infrastructure, and regulatory processes with project expectations

BACKGROUND

Economic development strategies are ultimately tested when a company decides whether to invest. By that stage, sites have been evaluated, workforce needs have been assessed, and infrastructure requirements are largely understood. What remains is the question of whether the region can assemble the resources needed to advance the project and move quickly enough to secure an investment decision.

For life sciences and agribusiness industries, investment decisions often narrow to a small group of locations that can satisfy core business requirements. At that point, differences between competing regions are driven more by execution than individual assets. Companies begin looking beyond the incentive package itself and evaluating who will participate in the project, how long decisions will take, and whether commitments can be delivered as promised. The answers can become just as important as the incentives offered.

Regions that consistently win projects bring structure to those decisions. They institute reliable funding sources, apply incentives with a defined purpose, and create predictable pathways for project approvals. The objective is to reduce uncertainty when companies are weighing investment decisions.

Peer communities have established recurring funding sources to sustain long-term priorities. In Pittsburgh, the Local Services Tax applies to employees working within the city and generates approximately $12.5 million annually through a flat-rate assessment of $52 per employee. Workers earning less than $12,000 annually are exempt, and employees with multiple jobs pay the tax only once. While modest at the individual level, the tax provides a dedicated source of revenue that is not tied to a specific project or grant cycle. The result is greater flexibility to pursue long-term priorities and respond to opportunities as they emerge rather than waiting for funding to be assembled.

The CIRDA region's objective is to create a more predictable environment for investment. A consistent approach to project participation can improve competitiveness while providing greater confidence that investment decisions will be translated into action.

KEY PILLAR PARTNERS

- County and municipal governments
- Central Indiana Corporate Partnership
- Private, institutional, and philanthropic capital partners
- State government and legislative leadership

REGIONAL COMPETITIVENESS KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Regions that maintain dedicated, recurring funding sources are better positioned to sustain long-term economic development strategies and respond to emerging opportunities
- Competitive regions utilize multi-layered deal structures, combining public incentives, regional funding, and private, institutional and/or philanthropic capital to secure economic growth
- Companies and site selectors prioritize regions that provide clear timelines, processes, and consistent decision-making, reducing uncertainty and accelerating site selection and investment decisions
- Fragmentation across communities reduces competitiveness; regions that integrate incentives, funding, and processes are able to present unified and compelling value propositions

PILLAR SIX INITIATIVES

6.1 Regional Funding Framework

INITIATIVE GOAL

Initiative 6.1 creates a coordinated funding framework that enables CIRDA to secure and deploy capital for long-term economic development objectives.

STRATEGIC RATIONALE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A regional strategy requires reliable sources of funding. CIRDA has the authority to invest in regional economic development, but it does not have a dedicated and sustainable funding structure to fulfill that role. Existing funding sources are limited, vary across communities, and lack a shared regional approach. Without a defined funding framework, the region cannot competitively invest in strategic projects.

This initiative outlines a coordinated approach to capital deployment. It ensures that CIRDA can act as an investment partner and that funding decisions advance the broader regional strategy.

EXECUTION TACTICS

Tactic One: Identify Current and Potential Regional Funding Sources

CIRDA will build on existing policy and fiscal analysis to establish funding sources that sustain CIRDA's operations and long-term capacity.

- CIRDA will utilize the Policy Analytics assessment as the foundation for identifying:
    - Existing funding mechanisms available across the region
    - Potential revenue tools and structures previously evaluated
    - Initial feasibility, constraints, and applicability of each mechanism
- Build a centralized system that:
    - Tracks existing and potential CIRDA funding sources
    - Categorizes tools by type (recurring, project-based, emerging)
    - Identifies status (active, proposed, authorized, inactive)
    - Highlights constraints, eligibility, and administrative requirements

- CIRDA will coordinate existing funding tools to:
    - Identify underutilized or fragmented revenue sources across member communities
    - Assess opportunities to reinstate or reallocate funding toward strategic objectives
    - Integrate local funding approaches into the regional system
- CIRDA will distinguish between:
    - Funding mechanisms that can be implemented in the near term through existing authority
    - Funding mechanisms that require further governance or legislative authorization

Tactic Two: Structured Decision Framework

CIRDA will apply a decision framework to prioritize funding mechanisms identified through existing analyses that strengthen long-term sustainability.

- Evaluate funding tools using a consistent framework focused on:
    - Revenue reliability and scalability
    - Implementation feasibility
    - Legislative and governance requirements
    - Fit with CIRDA's operational and investment needs
- Maintain a funding prioritization pipeline that:
    - Tracks funding mechanisms under active consideration
    - Categorizes tools based on readiness and priority
    - Creates a pathway for each tool
- Define implementation pathways:
    - Funding tool proposals ready for legislative development
    - Tools that can be implemented through interlocal coordination or administrative action
    - Tools that are held for future activation based on market conditions or regional readiness

- CIRDA will assign ownership for prioritized tools:
    - Identify responsible entities (CIRDA, communities, state partners)
    - Next steps and timelines for advancement
- Coordinate regional alignment prior to implementation:
    - Engage counties and municipalities to validate prioritization outcomes
    - Balance funding priorities across member organizations
    - Ensure a unified regional approach before pursuing legislative or governance changes

Tactic Three: Advance Legislative Pathways and Strengthen Regional Funding Capacity

CIRDA will implement prioritized funding tools through legislative pathways and governance mechanisms to create new and sustained revenue capacity.

- Develop legislative proposals to enable new funding mechanisms:
    - Translate funding tools into policy proposals
    - Coordinate with state leaders and regional stakeholders to streamline priorities
    - Facilitate the adoption of new legislation
- Define governance and administration structures for new funding tools:
    - Determine how funds are collected, managed, and allocated
    - Outline oversight and reporting requirements
    - Incorporate governance into CIRDA's operating structure
- Coordinate regional partners prior to legislative consideration:
    - Secure local support for proposed funding approaches
    - Reduce fragmentation in advocacy efforts
    - Present a unified regional position
- Incorporate additional capital resources (private, institutional, and partner capital) to support funding:
    - Identify capital sources that can fund strategic objectives
    - Ensure capital complements, but does not replace, core CIRDA funding mechanisms

RESOURCES & ROLES

CIRDA:

- Manage CIRDA's funding system, including the evaluation and implementation of funding mechanisms
- Coordinate legislative and regional strategy for new funding tools
- Required resources include:
    - Funding to support execution
    - Dedicated internal capacity to manage funding and legislative efforts
    - External policy and legal expertise to develop funding mechanism and legislative proposals
    - Funding to support administrative setup and early implementation of new funding tools

GUIDING METRICS

- 80% of CIRDA funding is comprised of recurring sources within five years
- $15M is reallocated from existing sources over the first three years
- $20M annual regional funding capacity achieved within five years (combination of public, private, and philanthropic sources)
- At least three new funding mechanisms moved into implementation within four years (legislative, administrative, or partnership-based)
- 75% of CIRDA funding deployed toward projects meeting strategic objectives within three years

6.2 Incentive & Deal Structuring System

INITIATIVE GOAL

Initiative 6.2 introduces a consistent approach to evaluating projects and structuring incentives, ensuring that investment decisions are integrated with economic development objectives and produce measurable returns.

STRATEGIC RATIONALE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Incentives shape outcomes only when they are applied with a consistent logic and financial analysis. Incentive structures are often developed independently and tailored to individual deals. While this provides flexibility, which can be important at times, it also creates variability in how projects are evaluated and supported. Companies may receive different signals depending on location, and the region lacks a consistent method for determining which projects should be prioritized.

This initiative creates an impact-based system for evaluating and structuring deals. It ensures that decisions are based on a shared framework and that capital is directed toward projects that reinforce the regional system rather than isolated project opportunities.

EXECUTION TACTICS

Tactic One: Establish a Standardized Deal Scoring Framework

CIRDA will create a system to evaluate and score projects for incentive activation.

- Build a multi-factor deal scoring system where projects are evaluated based on:
    - Economic Impact
        - Job creation and job quality
        - Wage levels and workforce contributions
        - Contribution to regional tax base
    - Regional Alignment
        - Workforce development goals
        - Advancement within innovation and commercialization pipeline
        - Fit within Centers of Innovation and Corridors system
        - Infrastructure needs
        - Target industries receive higher weighting

    - System Leverage
        - Ability to unlock additional investment, infrastructure, or partnerships
        - Potential to catalyze broader ecosystem or cluster growth
        - Prioritization reflects activity and demand shifts
- CIRDA will incorporate location-sensitive scoring thresholds to promote regional growth to:
    - Determine thresholds that reflect realistic growth expectations and potential for each community
    - Reflect differences in infrastructure, workforce capacity, and economic conditions
    - Enable equitable participation across member organizations
    - Ensure all communities can compete effectively within the regional system
- CIRDA will integrate scoring into a deal evaluation system, which:
    - Requires scoring before incentive structuring begins
    - Updates scores as projects evolve
    - Applies scoring consistently across all partners
    - Targeted industries receive higher weighting
- CIRDA will review project outcomes to update deal scoring criteria, incentive structures, and investment objectives

Tactic Two: Structure and Deal Management

CIRDA will coordinate how projects are structured and executed using integrated funding systems.

- CIRDA will deploy funding as part of a stacked deal structure, integrating:
    - Local incentives
    - CIRDA funding resources
    - Private, institutional, and philanthropic (P3) capital contributions
- Align funding access and incentive structuring with deal scores by:
    - Scaling participation based on regional impact
    - Prioritizing high-scoring projects for integrated participation
    - Maintaining flexibility across industries and project types
- CIRDA will manage deals through a centralized deal tracking system, which:
    - Tracks projects from evaluation through approval
    - Identifies dependencies across funding, timelines, and partners
    - Monitors execution progress

RESOURCES & ROLES

CIRDA:

- Manage the deal score system, coordinating incentive structures, and overseeing deal execution processes
- Ensure alignment between deal scoring and investment priorities
- Required resources include:
    - Annual funding capacity to participate in deal structures and incentive negotiations
    - Dedicated internal capacity responsible for scoring and deal structuring
    - Centralized deal tracking and data management system

GUIDING METRICS

- 100% of projects are evaluated using the deal score within 18 months
- 75% of deals use a coordinated funding and incentive stack within two years
- 75% of funded projects meet or exceed ROI thresholds within five years
- Average deal score of funded projects improves by 15% over first three years (reflecting improved discipline and selection)
- 80% of incentives tied to performance metrics within three years
- 60% of funded projects aligned with Centers of Innovation or Corridors and workforce and infrastructure priorities within four years
- 150 days or less is the average time from deal score to commitment
- 80% of projects meet timeline expectations

6.3 Decision Certainty & Regulatory Processes

INITIATIVE GOAL

Initiative 6.3 clarifies how projects move through evaluation and approval by coordinating partners around shared decision processes and resolving barriers that impact execution.

STRATEGIC RATIONALE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Projects depend on clear decisions. Projects can stall when decision-making is unclear. Differences in how communities interpret requirements, sequence approvals, or respond to issues create friction when certainty matters most.

This initiative defines how decisions are made and issues are resolved region-wide. It does not replace local authority or permitting systems, but it builds a shared process that connects partners.

EXECUTION TACTICS

Tactic One: Regional Decision Processes and Timelines

CIRDA will establish a standardized process that outlines how projects move through evaluation and approval.

- Define a formal regional deal workflow that includes:
  - Standard stages of project progression
  - Required inputs at each stage
  - Outline handoffs between local, regional, and partner entities
- Outline expected timelines by stage:
  - Specify timeline expectations for evaluation and approval stages
  - Socialize timelines to key partners prior to project engagement
  - Position speed and reliability as competitive advantages
- CIRDA will synchronize partners while engaging companies to:
  - Coordinate expectations and roles internally
  - Reduce conflicting signals to external partners
  - Present a unified regional approach
- CIRDA will provide companies with clear visibility into decision requirements and timelines

Tactic Two: Establish a Process to Resolve Regulatory Barriers

CIRDA will develop a formal system to track, escalate, and resolve process and regulatory barriers that impact project execution across the region.

- The centralized issue tracking system will:
  - Log delays in approvals and decision-making
  - Capture partner miscues and coordination gaps
  - Track duration and impact of each issue
- Integrate tracking into its deal pipeline and execution processes to:
  - Log issues in real time as projects move through evaluation and approval stages
  - Assign ownership of issues to relevant partners
  - Monitor the duration and impact of each issue on project timelines
- Specify formal escalation triggers and pathways, including:
  - Timeline delays beyond expected benchmarks
  - Conflicts across community boundaries
  - Multi-party coordination failures
  - Designated escalation channels based on issue type (local, regional, or state-level)
  - Identified decision-makers responsible for resolving escalated issues

- CIRDA will act as the coordinating body during escalation that will:
    - Convene relevant stakeholders
    - Facilitate resolution discussions between partners on required actions or timelines
    - Identify acceptable pathways forward within existing regulatory and process frameworks
    - Coordinate adjustments across member communities where needed
- CIRDA will use tracked data and escalation outcomes to:
    - Identify patterns in delays and barriers
    - Elevate systemic issues for regional coordination or policy consideration
    - Inform future process improvements
    - Update process expectations and coordination requirements

RESOURCES & ROLES

CIRDA:

- Outline regional deal processes and manage issue tracking and escalation
- Maintain consistent application of timelines and process requirements across members
- Required resources:
    - Annual funding to manage processes and issue resolution
    - Dedicated internal capacity to track deal progression and escalation pathways

GUIDING METRICS

- 100% of CIRDA-supported projects receive clear instructions on required approvals and conditions at the start of project engagement within 18 months
- Less than 10% of CIRDA-supported projects are delayed or compromised due to unresolved regulatory or coordination issues within four years
- 90% of issues identified during project evaluation are assigned ownership and actively managed through resolution within two years
- All participating localities meet participation requirements for CIRDA-supported projects within three years
- Less than 10% of CIRDA-supported projects encounter a regulatory barrier that delays the project timeline

PILLAR SIX CONCLUSION

Pillar Six outlines how investment opportunities move from evaluation to commitment. It provides the framework needed to allocate resources consistently and invest in projects that further strategic objectives.

Initiative 6.1 provides the financial capacity needed to pursue regional priorities through sustainable funding sources.

Initiative 6.2 applies discipline to how incentives and funding are used by introducing a structured approach to project evaluation and deal design.

Initiative 6.3 creates a clearer path for projects by clarifying decisions and resolving barriers across communities.

Economic development strategies are ultimately tested at the point of commitment. Companies need confidence that projects will move forward as expected and that commitments will be carried through to completion. Pillar Six establishes the framework needed to convert opportunity into investment across Central Indiana.

CONCLUSION

Central Indiana's life sciences and agribusiness economy is shaped by thousands of decisions made across companies, institutions, communities, and public organizations. Taken individually, these decisions often appear disconnected. Over time, their effects converge, shaping the opportunities available to the region. The economic future of a place is ultimately defined by how those forces accumulate across decades.

Most decisions affecting the regional economy are made independently by organizations pursuing their own missions, responsibilities, and priorities. Their consequences, however, accumulate within a shared economic system. CIRDA's role extends beyond supporting individual opportunities. It provides a regional perspective through which decisions occurring across different institutions, investment cycles, and areas of responsibility can be understood in relation to a common vision for the future of Central Indiana. The six pillars establish the means through which that vision is carried forward, creating a durable connection between long-term priorities and the decisions that shape the region over time.

This is how Central Indiana strengthens its ability to invent, make, and move.

CIRDA recognizes and appreciates the contributions of its members, local economic development organizations, industry leaders, higher education institutions, workforce and intermediary partners, and state and local governments. Organizations including Central Indiana Corporate Partnership, BioCrossroads, AgriNovus Indiana, Ginovus, the Indiana University Business Research Center, Policy Analytics, and many others contributed data, expertise, and leadership throughout the development of this strategy. Their continued partnership will remain essential as implementation moves forward.

Through CIRDA, the region is establishing a capacity for long-term stewardship of its life sciences and agribusiness economy. The foundation for that future already exists in the region's institutions, industries, and capabilities. The responsibility ahead is to ensure those strengths continue to compound, contributing to an economy increasingly defined by its own choices.

APPENDIX

This appendix consolidates all data sources, analytical inputs, and supporting documents used in the development of the CIRDA regional strategy. These materials provide the empirical, comparative, and conceptual foundation for the strategy's recommendations, including ecosystem design, competitive positioning, workforce alignment, infrastructure planning, and funding systems.

Access all Appendix items listed below here.

Appendix A: One Health & System Framework

- A1. One Health Economy White Paper
- A2. Life Sciences Ecosystem Overview
- A3. Key Categories to Life Sciences Ecosystem
- A4: Six Pillars Framework
- A5. Life Sciences Sector Summary

Appendix B: Competitive Analysis & Benchmarking

- B1. CIRDA vs. Peer Regions Comparison
- B2. CIRDA Regional Overview and Benchmark Context
- B3. CIRDA FDI, Patents, & Sector Mix
- B4. Case Studies (Peer Region Deep Dives)
- B5. Regional Agribusiness Employment and Wage Growth
- B6. CIRDA Agribusiness Overview
- B7. One Health Subcluster Location Quotients

Appendix C: Economic Analysis & Forecasting

- C1. Indianapolis Metro Forecast (2026)
- C2. CIRDA Regional Economic Analysis
- C3. CIRDA Narrative & Economic Analysis

Appendix D: Site Selection & Execution Strategy

- D1. Site Selection Insights
- D2. Life Sciences Funnel

Appendix E: Fiscal Capacity & Funding Strategy

- E1. CIRDA Revenue Toolbox
- E2. CIRDA Fiscal Briefing
- E3. CIRDA High-Level Fiscal Profile

Appendix F: County Strategy

- F1. Strategic One Health Industries by County
- F2. County by County Revenue and Employment Estimates

BIOHEARTLAND

CIRDA
CENTRAL INDIANA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY