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NEWS RELEASE

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Media Contact: Kip Chase, 317/ 232-3396

Innovating Indiana Strategic Skills Initiative Grant Awarded To Northeast Indiana Region

MARION –Northeast Indiana has been awarded a grant from the Indiana Department of Workforce Development as part of a program aimed at creating new jobs and increasing personal income for Hoosiers. Northeast Indiana was awarded \$262,477 as part of more than \$2.6 million in grants in the initial phase of the Innovating Indiana Strategic Skills Initiative. Introduced earlier this year, the \$23 million Strategic Skills Initiative program works with Indiana's 11 regions to identify key skills gaps in high-wage, high demand occupations.

Representatives from business, education, labor, economic and workforce development throughout Northeast Indiana developed the plan, which will identify and quantify short-term and long-term skills shortages, and create and implement regional solutions. The initial funding Northeast Indiana region has been awarded is aimed at identifying resources necessary for executing research and analysis activities throughout the entire six months of the initial phase..

“Historically, Indiana has struggled to effectively address skill shortages, and this has resulted in a loss of jobs and wages lower than the national average,” said Indiana Workforce Development Commissioner Ron Stiver. “Governor Mitch Daniels has charged our agency with identifying innovative ways to help increase jobs and personal income for Hoosiers. This initiative enables us to anticipate skills and occupational shortages, identify their root causes, and implement realistic solutions for prevention of job loss, retention of regional talent and attraction of jobs paying competitive wages.”

The announcement rewards Region 3, comprised of LaGrange, Steuben, Allen, DeKalb, Whitley, Noble, Huntington, Wabash, Grant, Wells and Adams counties, with a grant worth \$262,477 for their work on the initial phase of the Innovating Indiana Strategic Skills Initiative.

“Helping to create high paying jobs for Hoosiers is our top priority,” said Patty Weddle, President of the Northeast Indiana Workforce Investment Board. “These funds will be utilized to ensure that our region be able to identify the workforce needs of our specific counties and will help establish long-lasting and high paying jobs for our citizens.”

Regions will now begin Phase II and compete for the remaining \$20 million to create new jobs, reduce skill gaps, and increase Hoosier income. Regions will be held accountable for achievements in their two-year action plans.



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Additional information about the Innovating Indiana Strategic Skills Initiative, including an overview of the entire effort as well as applications, including region 3, can be viewed at <http://www.in.gov/dwd/employers/ssi.html>

For more information on the Indiana Department of Workforce Development, please visit our website at www.workforce.in.gov or call 1-888-WorkOne.

