

Press Release

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State Officials Designate South Bend Elkhart Region year's first 21st Century Talent Region

SOUTH BEND, Ind. – Indiana Secretary of Career Connections and Talent Blair Milo joined state and local officials today in South Bend to announce the [South Bend Elkhart Region](#) as the year's first [21st Century Talent Region](#), a statewide designation awarded to Indiana communities focused on working collaboratively to attract, develop and connect talent.

“The South Bend - Elkhart Regional Partnership has been instrumental in driving innovation across northern Indiana, partnering with local, regional and state leaders through various education and workforce development opportunities such as the Regional Cities initiative,” said Secretary Milo. “As a 21st Century Talent Region, the South Bend Elkhart Region continues to build upon these partnerships to further connect the cities and towns of Elkhart, Marshall and St. Joseph counties, working to create a more talent-driven region.”

The Office of Career Connections and Talent, with support from the [Indiana Economic Development Corporation](#) and technical assistance from [CivicLab](#), launched the 21st Century Talent Region initiative to encourage local governments, businesses, educational institutions, nonprofits, and economic and workforce development partners to create and implement plans to increase educational attainment, raise household income and grow the population in a region. By taking a comprehensive, systems approach, participating regions will identify strategic priorities and projects aimed at helping its communities create a better quality of place, develop and skill up its workforce, and connect talented Hoosiers with businesses seeking to fill high-demand, high-wage jobs.

During the event, Secretary Milo, along with Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education Teresa Lubbers and Indiana Destination Development Corporation Secretary & CEO Elaine Bedel, presented South Bend - Elkhart Regional Partnership President & CEO Regina Emberton and regional partners with the official 21st Century Talent Region designation. The South Bend Elkhart Region encompasses Elkhart, Marshall and St. Joseph counties.

“The South Bend - Elkhart Regional Partnership seeks to unify and collaborate so that together, the communities across the region work together to achieve what cannot be done individually,” said Emberton. “The tools and resources provided through the 21st Century Talent Region designation process have been instrumental in creating a common framework and set of metrics for use as we implement our talent attraction, development, and connection strategies over time, ultimately growing population, increasing educational attainment levels, and fulfilling industry needs in the region.”

The 21st Century Talent Region initiative builds on the momentum created by the Indiana Regional Cities Initiative, which dedicated \$126 million in matching funds to three regions in order to advance long-term plans focused on talent attraction and quality of place investments. To date, \$120.6 million has been awarded to support 65 projects, leveraging \$1.22 billion in additional co-investment from other public and private sources (a 9.1-1 investment leverage ratio).

Spearheaded by the South Bend - Elkhart Regional Partnership, the region identified key priorities through the 21st Century Talent Region initiative, including:

- Establish a digital Center for Work-Based Learning through the development and launch of a Regional Innovation Asset Portal in support of regional industry advancement, entrepreneurship, and talent development initiatives;
- Grow student and adult career coaching through Career Pathway initiatives;
- Launch a regional brand and implement talent retention and attraction marketing strategy; and
- Adopt a diversity, equity, and inclusion focus with the intention of narrowing the opportunity gap for disadvantaged and/or minority populations that have been historically underserved across the region.

“Partnership and collaboration have earned the South Bend Elkhart Region this designation, and the efforts we celebrate today align with the state’s efforts to prepare a 21st century workforce,” said Commissioner Lubbers. “I applaud these communities for the forward-thinking initiatives designed to ensure all their residents can grow and prosper.”

For more information on how to receive the designation, visit in.gov/cct/21CTR.htm or contact the Office of Career Connections and Talent at secretary@cct.in.gov to communicate your interest and discuss next steps.

About the Office of Career Connections and Talent

As part of his Next Level Indiana Agenda, Governor Eric J. Holcomb established the Secretary of Career Connections and Talent as a new cabinet-level position in state government to serve as Indiana’s chief talent and recruiting official. Secretary Blair Milo and the Office of Career Connections and Talent is dedicated to continuously assessing needs, identifying promising practices, connecting Hoosier workers to employment opportunities, and coordinating future priorities to improve the quality and quantity of Hoosier workers to ensure a skilled and talented workforce within the state of Indiana.

About South Bend - Elkhart Regional Partnership

The South Bend - Elkhart Regional Partnership is a collaboration of the economic development partners from 47 smart, connected communities in northern Indiana and southwest Michigan. The organization serves as a single point of contact for regional communication and seeks to create economic opportunities for all partner members through collaborative promotion, marketing and capacity building efforts. The counties include Elkhart, Marshall and St. Joseph Counties in Indiana and Berrien & Cass Counties in Michigan. For more information, visit southbendelkhart.org.

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