



Press Release

Embargoed until 12 p.m. CT/1 p.m. ET

Friday, September 18, 2020

State Officials Designate Northwest Indiana as a 21st Century Talent Region

VALPARAISO, Indiana— Indiana Secretary of Career Connections and Talent Blair Milo joined state and local officials today to announce the Northwest Indiana Region as Indiana’s eighth [21st Century Talent Region](#), a statewide designation awarded to Indiana communities focused on working collaboratively to attract, develop and connect talent.

“As a LaPorte native, this particular 21st Century Talent Region designation is near and dear to my heart. I’m excited about the collaboration happening in the Northwest Indiana Region among business, community and education leaders to create pathways to greater education, training and employment opportunities, and about the region’s dedication toward continued workforce development and economic growth,” said Secretary Milo.

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.

“We are pleased that we are being recognized as having a solid regional plan and clear goals for talent development which supports our economic growth,” said Linda Woloshansky, President and CEO of Center of Workforce Innovations (CWI). “We look forward to our continued collaboration while expanding our base of partners around this exciting and vital effort benefitting Northwest Indiana.”

During the event, Secretary Milo, Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education Teresa Lubbers and Indiana Destination Development Corporation Secretary and CEO Elaine Bedel presented Woloshansky, on behalf of CWI and Northwest Indiana Forum (NWI Forum), with the official 21st Century Talent Region designation. The Northwest Indiana Region is a seven-county region encompassing Jasper, Lake, LaPorte, Newton, Porter, Pulaski and Starke Counties.

“We are very excited to have this important designation,” added Heather Ennis, President and CEO of NWI Forum. “This designation showcases the hard work and planning that is ongoing in the realm of talent attraction, connection and development. It falls directly in line with the Northwest Indiana Ignite the Region strategy and helps to continue to move the initiatives outlined in that plan forward.”

Spearheaded by CWI, NWI Forum and the Northwest Indiana Workforce Board, the Northwest Indiana Region identified key priorities through the 21st Century Talent Region initiative, including:

- Maintain the dashboard intended to serve all regional partners to deepen consistent collaboration

through shared goals and operating practices;

- Analyze data and identify baseline and progress metrics for regional talent attraction and connection by the summer of 2021;
- Adopt an equity focus across the region with the intention of narrowing the achievement gap for minority and underserved high school students by increasing graduation rates by 3 percent each year;
- Increase employer engagement with the education and workforce systems in high-demand industry sectors, to be measured by increasing the number of internship or apprenticeship opportunities available to youth and adults by 10 percent each year, and;
- Increase the number of high school graduates with post-secondary credentials by 5 percent each year.

“Strong regional efforts to align workforce and education systems will help Indiana reach its big goal of having at least 60 percent of Hoosiers with quality education and training beyond high school by 2025,” said Commissioner Lubbers. “Leaders in Northwest Indiana have long been known for collaboration and innovation to help prepare their region for a 21st Century economy, and I commend them for taking the steps to earn this designation.”

“Congratulations to Northwest Indiana on their designation as a 21st Century Talent Region,” said Secretary Bedel. “This recognition demonstrates their commitment to continuous improvement and successful long-term strategic planning focused on quality of place and talent attraction. Their efforts and innovative thinking truly embody our pioneering Hoosier spirit. I look forward to watching Northwest Indiana continue to flourish.”

Currently, 83 Indiana counties are actively engaged in regional planning through the 21st Century Talent Region initiative. The addition of Northwest Indiana brings designations to 47 of Indiana's 92 counties, covering a population of just over 3.2 million Hoosiers. Previously designated 21st Century Talent Regions include [West Central Indiana](#), [Eastside Economic Recovery and Mobility District](#), [South Bend-Elkhart](#), [Hamilton County](#), [Indiana Uplands](#), [EcO Network of Southeast Indiana](#) and [Northeast Indiana](#).

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.

Media Contacts:

Amber Robinson, Communications Coordinator
Indiana Office of Career Connections and Talent
Email: ARobinson1@cct.in.gov
Cell: 317-409-6060

Barb Grimsgard, Communications Manager
Center of Workforce Innovations
Email: BGrimsgard@cwicorp.com
Work: 219-462-2940 ext. 1028