

Randolph County

Ready to Act: Summer 2021



**BALL STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Indiana Communities Institute

WHO WE ARE

Indiana Communities Institute

The Indiana Communities Institute at Ball State University works with partners across Indiana and beyond to enhance quality of community and build human capacity through special initiatives, customized projects, and educational experiences. ICI, through research, policy, and practice, works to connect university resources with regions, cities, towns, and neighborhoods in an effort to support modern and comprehensive community economic development and advocate for talent-focused, asset-based approaches to building stronger, more resilient places that can best serve residents, businesses, and visitors. This dynamic framework and innovative approach have positioned the Indiana Communities Institute as a national model for creatively and effectively advancing community economic development pursuits.

Visit: www.bsu.edu/ici for more information.



Encourages comprehensive, talent-centric community economic development



Connects Communities to BSU expertise and resources



Conducts statewide outreach and engagement



Works to build vibrant, resilient communities

Ready to Act Contact:

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Creative Insight Community Development

CICD is a consulting group with offices in Arizona, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and Texas that specializes in co-creating with communities and local/regional organizations to take advantage of economic and community development opportunities, and to overcome local challenges in highly creative ways. CICD helps communities develop real solutions for real people using state-of-the-art ideas, research, and expertise grounded in community engagement. Although they are often overlooked, CICD believes that rural communities and distressed small-town economies deserve just as much support and attention as large metropolitan areas.

Visit: www.creativeinsightcd.com for more information.

PROCESS FACILITATORS

The **Ready to Act** process will be facilitated by a group of community development experts from both the Indiana Communities Institute and Creative Insight Community Development. Together, the team has more than 150 years of community development experience. In addition to names and faces below, everyone's six-word memoir is included. It's a light-hearted and insightful way to get to know who will be working with you throughout this initiative.

INDIANA COMMUNITIES INSTITUTE



Brian Blackford
*Comfortable in
ties or tennis shoes*



Beth Neu
*Wife, mother, grandmother,
sister, daughter, friend*



Angie Popplewell
*New chapter, new
episode, new intention*



Geoff Schomacker
*I took Latin
in high school*



David Terrell
*Fun so far,
what's next*



Emily Wornell
*Becoming who
I'm meant to be*

CREATIVE INSIGHT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



Ted Alter
*He listens to and
respects everyone*



Michael Fortunato
*Still looking for
utopia's front door*

BACKGROUND

In late 2018, the leadership of the (then) Randolph County Economic Development Corporation (now Randolph County United) approached Ball State University's Indiana Communities Institute (ICI) to assist them in developing a new, innovative, and more comprehensive approach for building a stronger, more sustainable community. Leaders recognized that pursuing business attraction and other traditional economic development schemes had not been particularly successful. Instead, a commitment to build capacity through more comprehensive strategies that prioritized people and place was made. ICI was engaged to help navigate this shift. There were several initial objectives including:

- Educate the community on the importance of building community capacity.
- Undertake information gathering throughout the county in order to ascertain the concerns and priorities of the citizens of Randolph County.
- Perform data analysis relative to the findings.
- Communicate recommendations relative to the data and findings.
- Work with RCEDC (RCU) to develop a decision framework utilizing the Comprehensive Community Wealth Approach.

Cultivating Community: A New Approach to Growing Home was launched in early 2019. It included six stages designed to engage the community, generate interest, and inform recommendations. They unfolded through early 2020.

 **Community Kick-Off:** Approximately 75 community members attended this initial event designed to commence the years-long effort.

 **Show and Tells:** More than 350 community members attended one of six open houses designed to display the photos and allow for more feedback.

 **Local Launches:** 10 meetings in five different communities and all five high schools took place to share with community members the changing economic and demographic realities, explain the Cultivating Community process and launch the creative engagement campaign involving pictures and postcards. More than 250 Randolph County citizens attended one of the meetings.

 **Focus Groups:** Several months were dedicated to a series of 11 focus groups to gather more detailed insights on the challenges and opportunities present in Randolph County. Care was taken to reach a diverse and inclusive mix of residents. Perspectives were sought from people representing a variety of professions, who hail from different parts of the county, and who have varying family sizes, income, education levels, and community roles.

 **Photovoice/Postcards:** To help engage the community and to seek their initial input in a fun and effective way, a campaign was deployed that asked people to take pictures of or write about what they "Like," "Love," and "Would Like to Love" about their communities. 1,749 responses were provided via 120 photos and 381 postcards.

 **Surveys:** Significant time was also dedicated to surveying three different groups of people: stayers (those who have remained in Randolph County), leavers (those who have left Randolph County), and boomerangers (those who left Randolph County, but returned). More than 120 responses were gathered.

BACKGROUND

Following months of different types of outreach to engage as many community members as possible and after extensive data analysis, ICI created a report. Five key themes were identified within the report:



Housing and blight. There is a need for new middle-income stock; however, there is also a high inventory of aging houses, in addition to houses that need to be demolished.



Drug epidemic. Randolph County has been hard hit by the drug epidemic in the last decade. In the last five years, the opioid usage has risen dramatically and its impact on the community, and particularly students, is palpable.



Broadband infrastructure. The need for high-speed internet, especially in the rural areas around the county, is recognized as a barrier to positive development and growth in terms of education, health, and the local economy.



Education. Declining school enrollments and the quality of education was a major concern to residents. Even though a consolidation effort was voted down recently, there is growing recognition that some sort of consolidation or other partnerships will be necessary in the coming years.



Quality of life. Quality of life is the critical component that pulls the community together and lays the groundwork for growth. It is a necessary part of discussions about how to address the issues listed above. How community leadership understands and addresses quality of life may well determine whether the community thrives.

ICI presented these findings to a group of community members in February 2020. During that meeting, a prototype for the innovative Comprehensive Community Wealth Approach (CCWA) decision-making process was also deployed. Participants used the CCWA to asset map and analyze impacts. Additional efforts to experiment with and finalize a CCWA-based framework for community economic development analysis and execution, the first of its kind, was delayed due to COVID, but future work will continue that undertaking.

Randolph County United and the Community Foundation of Randolph County also worked with ICI and Creative Insight Community Development to conduct a Community Development Course in late 2019. Thirty participants from across Randolph County were given a crash-course in topics including: foundational principles, readiness for change, community engagement, local economies, civic design, storytelling, and the CCWA. A small planning session also occurred.

The Community Development Course augmented the ongoing Cultivating Community process and both efforts have laid the foundation for the next phase of this effort: **Ready to Act.**

READY TO ACT OVERVIEW

A series of four meetings, each approximately three hours in length, are scheduled to initiate action related to five focus areas determined as a result of previous Cultivating Community efforts. When completed, each committee will re-affirm (adjust) their focus; identify and prioritize issues and opportunities; set a vision for and prototype solutions; consider impacts through the Comprehensive Community Wealth Approach; and establish networks, deadlines, metrics, and immediate next steps to get started. All committee members and other interested people are invited to attend each session. A *general* outline for each meeting's agenda follows:



Setting the Stage Session:

Committee Updates
Data Checkpoint
Current Plan Inventory
Committee-Specific Turbo SWOT Analysis
10 Steps towards Action-Based Planning

Issues and Opportunities Session:

Committee Work

- Identifying Issues and Opportunities
- Prioritizing Issues and Opportunities

Cross Pollination Discussion

Impacts and Solutions Session:

Committee Work

- Impact Analysis using the Comprehensive Community Wealth Approach
- Solutions Broking, Parts I & II

Cross Pollination Discussion

Networks and Accountability Session:

Committee Work

- Network Identification
- Set Deadlines and Metrics
- Action Plan Outline

Cross Pollination Discussion





SESSION 1: OVERVIEW, DATA, AND PLANS

Which committee most interests you and/or suits your skill sets best? Why?

Which data point(s) are most intriguing to you? Why?

How do these data points relate to your committee's work? Your committee is: _____

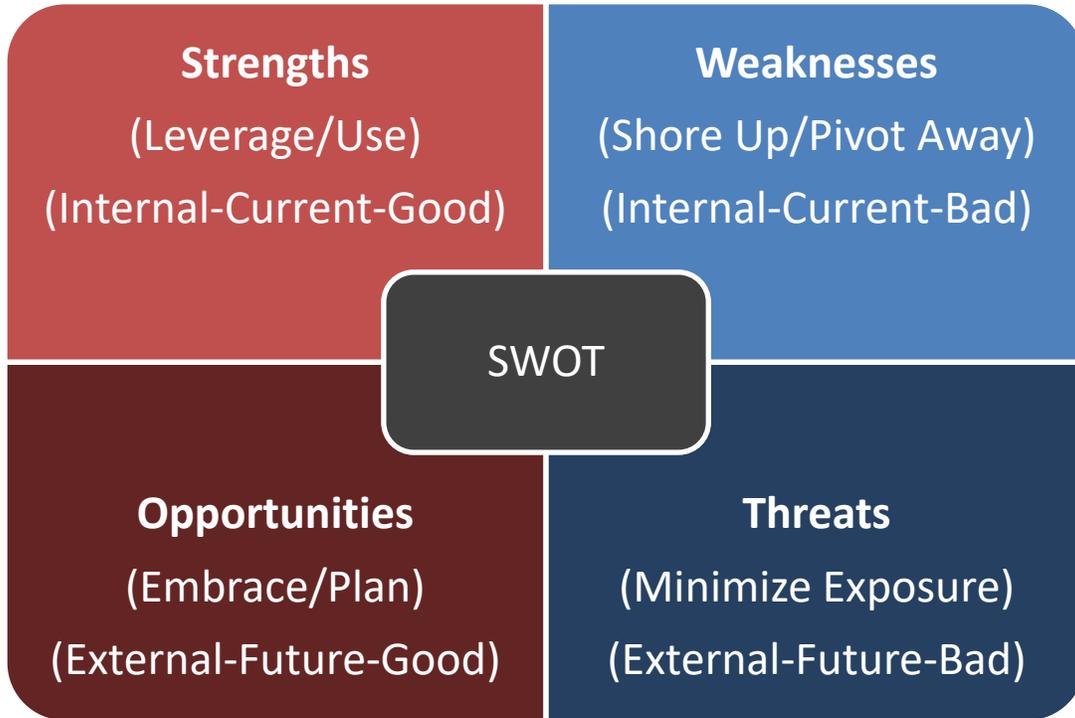
What plans currently exist in the community? What plans would you like to explore further, if any?

Between now and the next meeting, consider ways that you can work with your fellow committee members and the community to make a positive change related to your committee's focus area. Talk to 3-5 people, including at least one person you don't know very well or at all. Summarize your thoughts and their thoughts. Use the "notes" pages found at the end of this workbook if needed.



SESSION 1: TURBO SWOT

Committee:



Strengths:

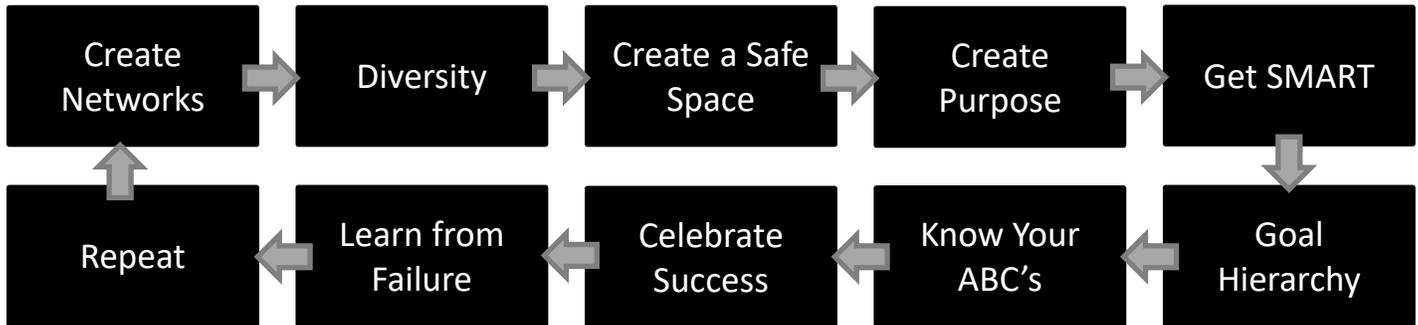
Opportunities:

Weaknesses:

Threats:



SESSION 1: 10 STEPS TOWARDS ACTION-BASED PLANNING



ADDITIONAL NOTES:



SESSION 2: ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY PRIORITIZATION

Committee:

Brainstorm: Issues

Brainstorm: Opportunities

Your Top 3 Most
Essential:

Your Top 3 Least
Essential:

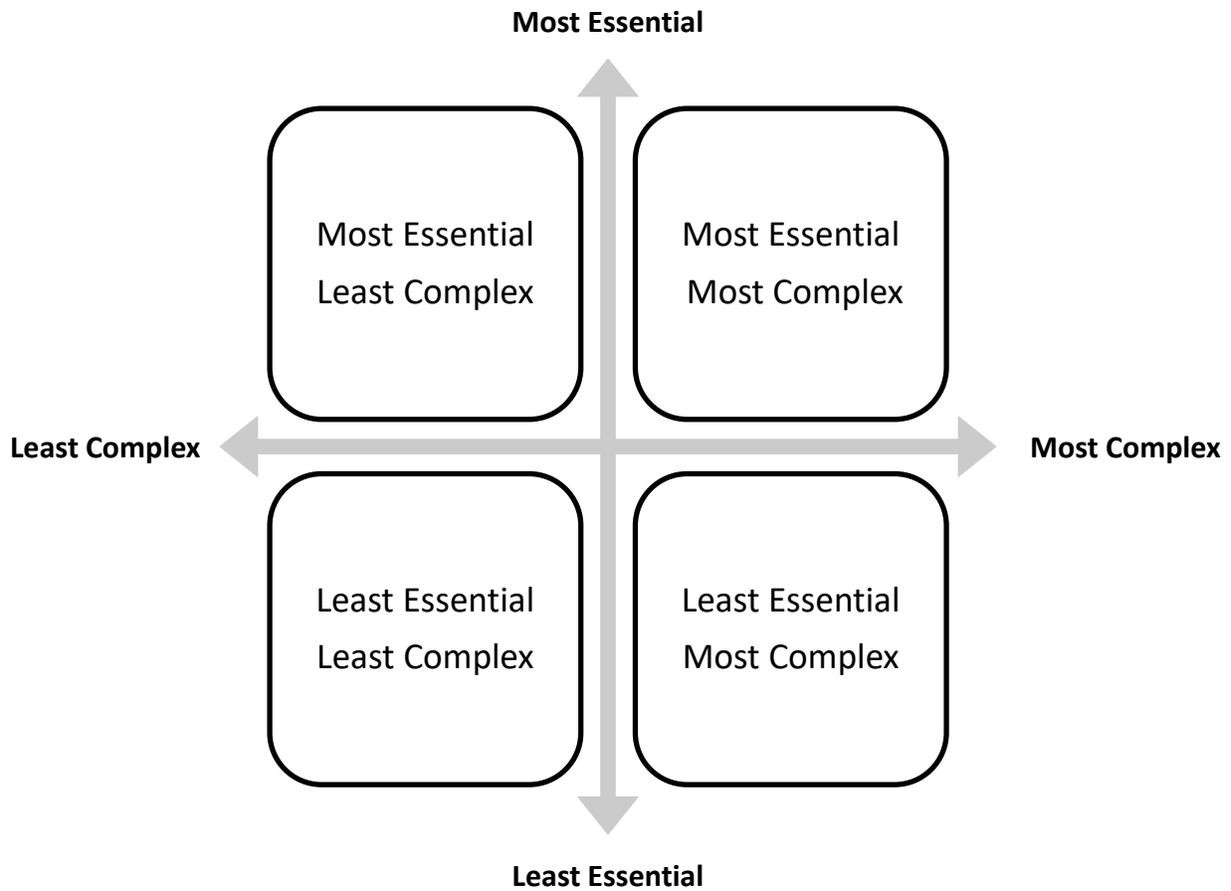
Your Top 3 Most
Complex:

Your Top 3 Least
Complex:



SESSION 2: ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY PRIORITIZATION

Committee:



What are your committee's top three issues/opportunities to get started on:

When considering the top three issues/opportunities identified by the other committees, where might there be some cross over or chance to partner?:



SESSION 3: COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY WEALTH APPROACH

Committee:

In your opinion, what are your community's greatest assets per each capital and related to your committee?

Financial	Money & other liquid assets that can be readily converted to money
	Local Examples:
Intellectual	Human knowledge, innovation, & ideas
	Local Examples:
Human	Productive capabilities of a population (education, health)
	Local Examples:
Social	Trust, relationships, and networks
	Local Examples:
Cultural	Practices, values, and identity based in society (art, beliefs)
	Local Examples:
Political	Influence, power, & goodwill that is held, spent, or shared
	Local Examples:
Physical	Built capital and physical infrastructure
	Local Examples:
Natural	Resources provided by nature (clean air/water, landscapes, flora, & fauna)
	Local Examples:



SESSION 3: COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY WEALTH APPROACH

Committee:

ONE issue/opportunity:

Consider what impacts, both short- and long-term/positive and negative, your ONE identified issue/opportunity may have on each capital (if you can't think of any impacts for a capital, leave it blank.)

Capital	Positive Impact(s)		Negative Impact(s)	
	Short-Term	Long-Term	Short-Term	Long-Term
Financial				
Intellectual				
Human				
Social				
Cultural				
Political				
Natural				
Physical				



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Intellectual				
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Physical				



SESSION 3: SOLUTIONS BROKING, PART 1 (PROTOTYPE SOLUTIONS)

Committee:

Consider one issue or opportunity:

How do we deal with it? What do we do about it? List 3-5 steps to solve this one issue or opportunity:

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SESSION 3: SOLUTIONS BROKING, PART 2 (SOLUTIONS VISION)

Committee:

Consider one issue or opportunity:

What would it look like if we solved/removed a barrier for this issue or opportunity? What are the solutions to get there?

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SESSION 4: INITIAL ACTION PLAN OUTLINE

Identified Issues/Opportunities	Why Is It Relevant? (Data, etc.)	Prioritization Description (Matrix classification, order)	CCWA Impacts (Indicate Short- and Long-Term & Positive and Negative)







THANK YOU

We know life is busy. Taking time to invest in your community, while extremely gratifying, is not always easy.

We appreciate your willingness to participate in the *Cultivating Community: Ready to Act* process. *Ready to Act* is designed for you and your community to co-create and lead together.

You love where you live and your passion to make it even better will ensure success!

