

REFINING the VISION

Task Force
Updates 2025
Blueprint

By Tom Schuman



Chris LaMothe, third from left, leads the discussion as chair of the *Indiana Vision 2025* task force.

Any long-range effort requires benchmarks or checkpoints along the way to ensure the original plan is on track. The same is true for *Indiana Vision 2025*, the economic development blueprint that was adopted by the Indiana Chamber in 2011 and unveiled in early 2012.

That important evaluation took place during the first four months of 2016. A 30-person statewide task force of business and organization leaders – with many returnees from the 2010-2011 group that developed the vision along with some newcomers to provide a fresh perspective – focused on three areas:

1. Reviewing progress
2. Updating goals and metrics
3. Identifying potential new research to enhance future Report Cards

“At the approximate one-third mark toward the end time frame, it was important to step back and take a comprehensive look at *Indiana Vision 2025*,” says Indiana Chamber President and CEO Kevin Brinegar. “While we found many goals and metrics still stand the test of time, the group took part in robust discussions and offered many suggestions and strategies for achieving even greater success.”

Chris LaMothe was president of the Indiana Chamber when it created the original *Economic Vision 2010* plan in 1999. He chaired the initial *Indiana Vision 2025* task force and returned in the same role this time around.

“It was exhilarating to work with top leaders from throughout the state so interested and dedicated to building a strong future for Indiana,” offers Chris LaMothe, who now serves as CEO of Elevate

Ventures. “It was challenging, as each meeting included passionate and informed discussions on everything from retaining and attracting outstanding talent to building on the momentum Indiana is experiencing in its dynamic business environment.”

Getting to 2016

The listing of the original 33 goals on Page 20 includes some of the progress that has taken place over the last four-plus years. Among the highlights:

- Two boosts to an already Attractive Business Climate driver with passage of a right-to-work statute and elimination of the state inheritance tax. The state’s recent top 10 rankings in a variety of national comparisons is due to work that began early this century as part of *Economic Vision 2010*.
- Strong progress toward the Superior Infrastructure goal of developing and implementing a strategic water resource plan. It began with a highly-regarded 2014 Chamber-led study – *Water and Economic Development in Indiana: Modernizing the State’s Approach to a Critical Resource* – and continued the last two years with legislation to collect additional information on water supplies and usage. The “data before decisions” approach is a solid one.

- An increased focus on connecting employers and educators for both the short- and long-term benefit of students. The Indiana Chamber and its foundation continue to contribute through various activities, including local and regional Postsecondary Pathways events (featured in *BizVoice*® in March-April 2015 and again this year).

Brinegar: “The progress noted on many of the goals is far from an indication that the work is done. Few would argue today, as in 2011, that attracting and retaining Outstanding Talent remains a tremendous challenge. And despite some momentum in certain parts of the state, Indiana still lacks in overall business start-ups and the corresponding venture capital investment.”

Updating the plan

The task force adjusted the language in 12 goals. Several of these changes resulted from the difficulty in obtaining reliable

The per-capita income goal was debated a great deal before being excluded in the original plan. All involved acknowledge the difficulty in moving the needle – Indiana was 39th in 2015, a drop of one spot from a year earlier. Several point to the ultimate goal of top 10 status, but are more comfortable with a still ambitious top 25 target for 2025.

With goal metrics, some existing and new work from both the Lumina Foundation and Indiana Commission for Higher Education was identified to supplement current measures. In addition, future Report Cards will be augmented by a narrative approach to certain goals (the previously-mentioned strategic water plan being one prime example).

Finally, task force members urged additional research into areas that include, as examples, entrepreneurial best practices, impact of venture capital tax credits and the potential use of PSAT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test) scores to complement

- **Outstanding Talent:** Remains a top priority, not only with today’s students but continuing efforts to address the skills shortages of current workers. This becomes even more critical with more Baby Boomers heading to retirement in the very near future.
- **Attractive Business Climate:** Indiana fares best in this area, but the local government reform needs and poor health status of too many of the state’s residents are of particular concern.
- **Superior Infrastructure:** The immediate attention this summer and in the 2017 Indiana General Assembly is long-term infrastructure funding. Increasing industrial electricity prices must be addressed and security challenges are not unique to our state.
- **Dynamic and Creative Culture:** As noted earlier, Indiana’s statistical achievements lag the anecdotal stories and



Task force members (from left) include Jean Wojtowicz, Elaine Bedel, Mike Rechin and Alisa Wright.

2016 Task Force

Devin Anderson, E&A Industries
Allison Barber, WGU Indiana
Sonny Beck, Beck’s Hybrids
Elaine Bedel, Bedel Financial
Mike Bosway, City Securities Corp.
Wally Brant, Indiana Oxygen Co., Inc.
Leslie Carter-Prall, Regions Bank
Ron Christian, Vectren
Drew Coolidge, SIRVA
Dan Elsener, Marian University
Heather Ennis, Northwest Indiana Forum
Larry Gigerich, Ginovus
Jeff Hagerman, Hagerman Group
Tom Hirons, Hirons & Company
David Johnson, Central Indiana
Corporate Partnership
Jerry Jones, Cannon IV
Mike Kubacki, Lake City Bank

Chris LaMothe, Elevate Ventures
Teresa Lubbers, Indiana Higher
Education Commissioner
Mark Maassel, Indiana Energy Assoc.
Marilyn Moran-Townsend, CVC
Communications
Mark Richards, Ice Miller
Mike Rechin, First Merchants Corp.
John Sampson, Northeast Indiana
Regional Partnership
Tom Snyder, Ivy Tech Community
College
Bill Soards, AT&T Indiana
Bill Stephan, Indiana University
Mike Wells, REI Investments
Jean Wojtowicz, Cambridge Capital
Management Corp.
Alisa Wright, BioConvergence

international education metrics; instead, future Report Cards will focus on the significant progress still needed for Indiana against its national competitors. Others adjustments provide clarity to the intent of the goals.

Three goals were added:

- Breaking out associate degrees (already used as a metric) from bachelor degrees with the goals being to rank top 10 nationally in each. The current rankings are 45th (associate’s) and 42nd (bachelor’s), respectively.
- Ensure strong security measures (both physical and cyber) are in place for all of Indiana’s critical infrastructure.
- Improve Indiana’s per-capita income ranking to “Top 25” nationally.

existing fourth- and eighth-grade NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) test scores.

Brinegar: “Another focus was reasserting the importance of local government reform. The momentum generated by previous Chamber studies and the 2007 Kernan-Shepard Commission report resulted in eliminating some, but not enough, past practices that simply don’t stand up today. The opportunity to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery is too important to ignore.”

Looking ahead

There was general agreement on the status of the four drivers:

momentum taking place in some locations. The final goal – promote a diverse and civil culture that attracts and retains talented individuals – is critical to the overall plan.

“We discussed *Indiana Vision 2025* with both gubernatorial candidates at our spring board of directors meeting and will continue to have conversations with legislators, local stakeholders and others throughout the state,” Brinegar affirms.

“The Indiana Chamber is the only organization with a long-term plan for the state. It has served our members and the state very well thus far,” he continues. “Much progress has been made, but there is much more work to do.”