



INDIANA'S GAME PLAN

Putting the Pieces Together Statewide

By Rebecca Patrick

“Success isn’t defined the same for downtown Indianapolis as it would be for Paoli. And if you start with that premise that success can vary, then you find there are different strategies to get to success,” declares Drew Klacik, senior policy analyst, Indiana University Public Policy Institute.

It’s about making sure communities are started along that path – whatever theirs looks like.

That’s a simple enough statement but there are overriding factors and it’s not something that can happen in the blink of an eye.

Yet it’s a process that needs to be ramped up and strived toward, according to the Indiana Chamber’s *Indiana Vision 2025* plan, which contends all areas of the state must be successful for Indiana to reach its potential.

Joining Klacik (www.policyinstitute.iu.edu) to discuss how we get to that lofty destination are:

- Tom Easterday, executive vice president, Subaru of Indiana Automotive, Inc.; www.subaru-sia.com

- Indiana Lt. Governor Sue Ellspermann; www.in.gov/lg
- David Johnson, president and CEO, BioCrossroads (www.biocrossroads.com) and Central Indiana Corporate Partnership (www.cicpindiana.com); and
- Tom Snyder, president, Ivy Tech Community College; www.ivytech.edu.

Shared dilemma

The workforce will ultimately tell the story for Indiana. And an integral part of continuing that talent pipeline is retaining graduates.

Nine out of every 10 college students say they want to live in a big city, Klacik shares.

“A decade ago it was only six out of every 10. Yes, they’re Indiana trends, but they’re also global trends.

“That doesn’t mean every college student is going to go to a big city, but when you work in a Monticello or a Jasper and one of the first things people say is, ‘What are we doing wrong? We’ve worked really hard, we send our kids off to college and they don’t come back.’ That’s really seeing that nine of 10 trend,” he surmises.

“So the challenge for rural Indiana is that to some extent the more education you have

the more likely you are to relocate to a metropolitan area.”

That puts an even greater emphasis on reaching the students before they get their degrees.

“We know that if students – particularly college graduate level, but high school as well – have experiences in working in their area of the state (no matter where it is), they’re much more likely to take those positions



“I think nationally and internationally Indiana has become a location where people and companies want to be.”

– Tom Easterday

rather than go off into the yonder to take some job opportunity,” Ellspermann asserts.

“We (the state and Indiana Career Council in particular) will be working with Indiana employers to encourage them to create many more of those kind of opportunities to have our talent see what’s in their own backyard because quite often our kids just don’t know.”

While Indiana does see its share of returnees who come back later to settle down and raise a family, for example, Johnson notes that “studies do indicate that we still need to do a better job of retaining people coming out with associate’s degrees and bachelor’s degrees at that point.

“That’s one of the things that the Lilly Endowment has been very focused on with their grants, and have gone to all the schools across the state, to the higher institutions, to try to have more connectivity between graduates of those institutions and opportunities in the workplace.”

Help wanted

The Indiana tech sector, including life sciences, actually has more job openings than people to fill them. Ditto modern manufacturing.

“That’s an area where we can actually attract people to move here who didn’t grow up here,” Johnson begins. “We just need not to undersell the attributes of this state. We need to do a better job of telling our story.”

Case in point: The reaction last summer of 50 people from around the country who came to Indianapolis to take internships in technology-intensive jobs through the Indy Xtern program.

In the beginning, Johnson says 78% indicated they weren’t interested in moving to Indiana for a career but were attracted to the internship experience. After their time on the job, a whopping 90% said they would be open to living here “in part because of the work, in part because of the place.”

It’s also a case of needing to change perception regarding the manufacturing industry.

“I grew up in manufacturing; it really wasn’t the most attractive work environment. But today, the technology, the cleanliness, the environment is fabulous and yet so many don’t know,” Ellspermann laments.

“We’ve not done a very good job of educating our younger workers on what modern manufacturing looks like.”

Ellspermann reiterates that lack of awareness by sharing the results of a survey in her home community of Dubois County that found only 1% of local high school students were interested in manufacturing.

She concludes, “If students knew what those jobs were, if they had an accurate view of them, many more would choose advanced manufacturing for a career.”

Easterday agrees. “Modern manufacturing, which is what we have in Indiana right now, is leading the nation. If you walk into an automobile plant nowadays, for example, all of our body assembling/welding is robotic. All of our paint application is robotic, and so we require a lot of robotic techs, a lot of engineers. A lot of high-skilled maintenance associates that work on problem-solving and trouble-shooting with their laptops all day.”

He believes internship and co-op education programs are invaluable avenues “to give students a chance to see what’s actually done in these companies to see if that’s the type of thing they’d like to do.”

Snyder, whose lengthy General Motors career included leadership of Delco Remy, believes incorporating wage data into the picture would certainly help.

“Manufacturers have always been reticent (to do that) because of the inflationary impact.



“With our life sciences, there’s an innovation element which suggests metropolitan areas, but there’s a production element which suggests rural areas and small towns. ... Not every state is blessed to have that kind of diversity of economic opportunity.”

– Drew Klacik



“We should look at peer states we want to emulate; find out if they’re doing some things that we haven’t thought about doing or are doing them better.”

– Tom Snyder

Whereas everybody in our RN program knows exactly how much a nurse is going to make when they graduate and they know the starting pay is going to be \$20 an hour at a minimum so it’s well worth it to go through nursing school.”

Also at issue, Klacik believes, is that Indiana did too good of a job selling the need for four-year degrees, which aren’t required for many modern manufacturing positions.

“We’ve been so effective at saying that for the last 25 years that we’re now struggling with how we say: ‘Not everyone needs a bachelor’s degree.’”

Grow or wither?

Established mindsets are changing along another front too.

It wasn’t long ago there was some reluctance from rural areas to modernize – to the point of even maybe not pursuing a possible employer if that meant losing farmland.

That notion, Ellspermann emphasizes, has “shifted and shifted rapidly because you realize if you don’t grow, you die.”

Easterday interjects, “I think smaller cities and towns in Indiana have really come to realize that they can maintain their unique characteristics and history, and grow at the same time. And to grow, they need to engage in and develop activities on a pretty major scale.”

On Ellspermann’s 92-county tour of the state last year, she didn’t encounter one community leader or official who wasn’t concerned about growth.

“My hometown of Ferdinand (2,200 people) said 10 years ago: ‘We’re not where we used to be. Even though we’re the same size, we’re older. We’re not getting as much talent back, we do need to be recruiting companies, we do need to grow, and we do need to look at our quality of place,’” she shares.

“The challenge is how we do that with limited resources coming out of a recession where assessed values are dampened, so they’re trying to figure that out.”

She adds that the Office of Community and Rural Affairs is “working very hard to partner with those communities to try and help them as they envision what they want to be and how they want to grow.”

The opportunity is definitely there in rural Indiana, particularly to grow the manufacturing sector, Easterday says.

“If you just look at our supply base. Subaru has 30 direct suppliers in the state and many of them are in small communities from Topeka to Auburn to Mooresville to Greensburg to Elwood, all across the state,” he tells. “It’s primarily because of the infrastructure that’s already been put in place that allows those small communities to be able to supply some of the larger manufacturers in the state.”

Instilling rural leadership

Ellspermann is hoping the state’s five-location pilot program called My Community, My Vision will spur engagement among Hoosier youth.

Ball State University students act as consultants to high school students in planning for the future of their local rural communities. Student leaders participating



“There is a role increasingly for public and university funding in helping very small ideas and companies get started with some sort of seed capital or early stage commercialization funding. ... It’s something you do to invest longer term in the economy.”

– David Johnson

hail from Hanover, Pekin, Rushville, Vevay and Lawrence County. The goal is to grow the program across Indiana’s rural landscape.

“Our young people need to be at the table and driving a lot of the change. We need to make sure that we have our young talent being a part of these conversations about what we want our communities to be going forward,” Ellspermann offers.

“They may not know all of the tools of economic development and things like that, but we need to listen to that (unique) wisdom and we need to engage them so that they have buy-in and a commitment to want to be a part of the future someday.”

And it’s not just the next generation of rural leaders that could use a helping hand.

While Snyder praises the efforts of Bedford (the Indiana Chamber’s 2013 Community of the Year) under Mayor Shawna Girgis – “she thought through what she could do with the downtown and what her resources were” – he speculates about how to best encourage other small towns to do the same.

“If you are in a rural county and you’re an elected official or businessperson, do you know the assets that you have to make a change, or do we all help? Do we need a rural leadership academy?”

“We can’t move all these people to metro areas,” he states.

Johnson wonders about striking that right balance for community assistance.

“One thing that will become increasingly important to look at as we think about different regions of the state developing in different ways is whether they have the proper tools and whether, in fact, we can make these communities truly responsible for their own future by giving them more tools to do that.

“Indiana has overall a very low, low tolerance for a government state,” he asserts. “Yet oftentimes local governments find themselves in a position where they have to go to the General Assembly every time to take any steps. That’s an issue really worth looking at. It’s a complicated policy issue and question.

“Would they be willing to take responsibility for themselves more if they had tools to do so? And frankly had to deal with the policy and political choices, which is all part of the game,” he concludes.

Let’s play nice

The dynamics of a metropolitan region are also tricky, specifically the relationship



“We don’t want to be a state of haves and have-nots. We want the opportunity for prosperity across the state, and sometimes that will mean making a big investment like I-69 in southwest Indiana.”

– Lt. Gov. Sue Ellspermann

between the core and its surrounding communities.

“They need each other to thrive and they all have to realize that. But that kind of means that they all need to both win and lose as they work together as a region, and that’s really a hard thing to get folks to understand,” Klacik explains. “If you need to come out on top in every negotiation, then somebody else is not, and you can’t have a thriving region if only one of the places is thriving.

“If we were on a basketball team, I push you as hard as I can and you push me as hard as you can; that theoretically means we both get better. That’s what we do with Carmel and Indianapolis. That’s kind of the way we want to learn to function as regions.”

This doesn’t mean competition shouldn’t and isn’t going to happen within a region, Klacik continues, “but you have to learn better how to cooperate within a region in order to make sure that our regions thrive.”

Adds Easterday, “Particularly those sectors that are competing against the world; we’ve got to cooperate with each other.”

Snyder puts it this way: “If Carmel’s expanse is successful at the total expense of IPS (Indianapolis Public Schools), that’s not good. Then that’s a zero sum game.”

While that may be beneficial to Carmel short-term, Klacik says eventually it won’t.

“If Indianapolis is not thriving relative to the other major metropolitan areas in the U.S., then Carmel eventually won’t thrive.”

Biggest reason Indiana succeeds

The group is optimistic that Indiana’s communities will be able to seize the opportunities that are here or on the horizon.

“We have such genuine collaboration of the public, the private and the philanthropic sectors. This is a state that has really, really mastered the ability for people to come together, to be honest and open about what the challenges and opportunities are and to try to take very concrete steps to solve them,” Johnson praises.

“It doesn’t mean it always works, but it does mean that people remain willing and open to do that. I’ve seen it happen with increasing urgency, frankly, over the last decade or 15 years.”

The lieutenant governor points to the state’s attractive business climate.

“Assuming those policies we’ve put in place stay, what says to me that we’re going to succeed is our current focus on the workforce and really, for the first time – through the Career Council and regional Works Councils – helping to align the futures of our young incumbent workers to the jobs out there, those priority high-growth, high-tech kinds of jobs that are coming.

“Then I think we set ourselves up for a great future, a great place for young talent to choose to remain here,” she determines.

Klacik looks for Indiana’s appeal to start coming into play more and more, with all the walkable downtown areas and general livability.

“We’re not Austin (Texas, named one of *Forbes* Coolest Cities in 2014), but we really are pretty cool in Indiana. When you add in convenience and affordability, we pretty much blow any place in the United States out of the water.”

Leaders Speak: Most Bold Idea to Reshape Indiana by 2025



“Indiana Humanities is a statewide nonprofit, so part of why I was so interested in attending the sessions in different regions is because we work statewide and have a statewide audience. It was exciting for me to visit so many corners of our state and listen to the feedback from all of the community leaders who attended.

“What excited me about the exchange is that the conversations at many of the tables I sat in were about important subjects such as education – both K-12 and beyond. I was glad

to see there was so much conversation on the need for talent attraction and the need for Indiana to be viewed as a place that’s welcoming to all people.

“The big idea is that this broad notion of economic development is one that appears to be embraced by the leaders of our state. I certainly sensed an urgency in the air that we are a great state, but we can do better, and there was a real desire to pull around these elements.

“The way we’re going to see progress in all of these areas is to bring a wide sector together to solve the problems – it isn’t something just shouldered by the business community.”

– Keira Amstutz, President and CEO, Indiana Humanities, Indianapolis



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