

The Perry County Commissioners have met and reviewed submitted proposals from several organizations. During those discussions several questions arose of which we have listed below. While some may be dependent upon collection of additional information, we ask that you be as candid as possible and share your thoughts.

Implementation

- Will you have a dedicated person for Perry County? What is the anticipated time to respond to a community or prospects need for information or answers?
 - Yes, we will have a dedicated person for Perry County. Jonathan Blake, AICP, CPRP, our Senior Director of Planning, will serve as the client manager and primary point of contact for Perry County, both internally and externally. Our anticipated initial response time to community or prospect inquiries is 24 hours.
- If you represent other clients and an opportunity arises that could be of interest to more than one of your clients. How will you handle a potential Conflict of Interest and protect confidential information from being disseminated?
 - RJL Solutions is currently preparing a 5-year economic development strategic plan for Spencer County, where Jonathan Blake also serves as the LEDO, representing the County on the Southwest Indiana Development Corporation (SWIDC) and Indiana First region boards. We have built strong relationships with our regional partners and are committed to seeing the entire region succeed.
 - If an opportunity arises that could be of interest to multiple clients, RJL Solutions will fully disclose the opportunity to all relevant parties while strictly protecting confidential or non-disclosable information. We remain a neutral party in these situations, ensuring fairness, transparency, and professionalism in how we facilitate discussions. Our priority is to act with integrity and in the best interests of each client while upholding confidentiality and supporting regional economic success. Our approach ensures transparency and fairness, and we remain a neutral party in these situations, facilitating discussions without favoring any one client over another.
- In order to keep county officials informed how often would you anticipate providing updates and what would be the manner of distribution?
 - RJL Solutions will provide a written monthly report to the Board of Commissioners prior to their monthly meeting, highlighting progress, challenges, and milestones on key projects and initiatives, including:

- **Project Status Updates:** A summary of all active projects, including current phases, completed tasks, and upcoming objectives.
 - **Key Achievements and Milestones:** Notable accomplishments reached during the month, along with any critical goals or deadlines that were met.
 - **Project Tracking and Timelines:** An update on timelines for each project, with any adjustments or delays explained.
 - **Resource Allocation and Budgeting:** A brief overview of how resources are being allocated, with any financial updates or adjustments.
 - **Long-Term Goals:** Updates on alignment with broader economic development strategies or long-term objectives, including business retention, attraction and expansion efforts.
 - **Financial Overview:** Current budget status for each project, including actual versus planned expenditures; information on new funding secured (grants, investments, etc.), and resource allocation.
 - **Challenges and Solutions:** Any issues encountered during the month, along with proposed solutions or requests for additional support.
- All of the provided proposals were bases upon services for a single year, what are the anticipated cost in year two through five?
 - The proposal provided is based on services for a single year. If we were to progress into years two through five, each year would be evaluated based on the evolving needs of the project and any adjustments that may arise. While the cost for each subsequent year would be determined based on this evaluation, it's important to note that there could be an increase to account for inflation, changes in service scope, or other factors that may affect costs. We would work closely with you to ensure transparency and alignment with expectations as we move forward.
- When a request for information about our county, site selection vendor or an inquiry provided by the state is received, what is your procedure you will follow to assure a timely and accurate response?
 - When a requisition or inquiry is received, we will follow a structured procedure to ensure a timely and accurate response:
 - **Intake and Acknowledgement:** We will confirm receipt of the inquiry within 12-hours (Monday thru Friday), and inform the inquiring party when they can expect an update, additional information, or a full response.

- **Gather Relevant Information:** We will coordinate with the appropriate departments, stakeholders, or databases to compile accurate and up-to-date information.
 - **Quality Assurance:** All information will be reviewed to ensure it aligns with the most current county data, economic trends/reports, and site availability.
 - **Comprehensive Response:** A well-organized, professional response will be sent within the expected timeframe, including any necessary attachments or supplementary materials.
- Depending on the nature of the inquiry, the type of information requested, and/or the level of information that must be gathered, the timeframe for each response will vary.
- It is essential a relationship is established with our largest employers in order to stay abreast of their challenges and potential opportunities for expansion or to gain competitive opportunities within their market. How would you propose to accomplish this requirement?
 - Building strong relationships in Perry County is essential for fostering economic growth and identifying opportunities for expansion. To achieve this, we would implement a Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) program, conducting regular one-on-one meetings with key business leaders to understand their challenges and workforce needs. Additionally, hosting quarterly industry roundtables would facilitate open discussions between employers, local officials, and economic development stakeholders. Partnering with workforce development organizations and advocating for incentives or infrastructure improvements can further support business growth. By maintaining proactive communication and collaboration, we can help businesses remain competitive while driving economic development in Perry County.

Challenges

- Perry County has over 60,000 acres of Hoosier National Forest which amounts to nearly 25 percent of the county acreage. The acreage is controlled by the Federal Government which creates challenges effecting infrastructure, tax revenue, usage and promotional activities. What techniques would you pursue in order to promote this area and provide additional benefits to Perry County?
 - This will require a strategic approach that balances economic opportunities with budget considerations. Efforts may include targeted tourism marketing, supporting eco-tourism businesses, and collaborating with federal and state agencies to enhance infrastructure and accessibility. However, all initiatives will

need to be evaluated against available budget to ensure the most effective and sustainable investments for Perry County's long-term growth.

- Tourism, consisting of trails, hiking, biking ATV, canoeing, boating and other outdoor activities, may be the best prospect for growth in Perry County. Is this a sustainable opportunity and if so, how would you suggest the county pursue this opportunity.
 - Outdoor tourism presents a sustainable growth opportunity for Perry County, given its natural assets and recreational offerings. To maximize this potential, the county should invest in infrastructure improvements, such as enhanced trail systems, signage, and visitor amenities, while also promoting the area through targeted marketing campaigns. Partnering with local businesses to expand eco-tourism services, such as guided tours, equipment rentals, and lodging, can further drive economic benefits. Additionally, securing state and federal grants for conservation and outdoor recreation projects will help maintain sustainability while boosting tourism-driven revenue. A strategic, long-term approach will ensure that outdoor tourism remains a key driver of economic growth for Perry County.
- Perry County is the hilliest county in the State of Indiana. The topography creates additional obstacles and in many areas of the county potable water is unavailable along with suitable roads. The lack of infrastructure severely reduces the number of families who would consider locating in Perry County. What steps would you pursue to address this challenge.
 - To address Perry County's infrastructure challenges, we would recommend exploring the feasibility of establishing a county-wide or regional water and sewer utility to expand access to potable water and wastewater services in underserved areas. Securing state and federal infrastructure grants would be a priority to help fund these improvements, along with pursuing public-private partnerships to reduce costs and increase efficiency. Additionally, advocating for road and transportation upgrades through regional planning efforts would improve accessibility and encourage residential and business development. A comprehensive infrastructure strategy will enhance quality of life, attract new residents, and support long-term economic growth in Perry County.
- Perry County has concentrated population along the Ohio River in the South of the County. The remainder of Perry County is rural with sparse population. How do we create a growth plan that meets the need of the entire county?
 - Creating a comprehensive growth plan for Perry County requires a balanced approach that supports orderly development while preserving the county's rural

character. The plan should focus on targeted growth zones, encouraging development in areas with existing infrastructure near the Ohio River while implementing strategic rural development policies that protect farmland, forests, and open spaces. Zoning regulations and land use planning should guide growth in a way that promotes economic opportunities without compromising the county's natural assets and rural identity. Ideally, this would be a key focus area of a new countywide comprehensive plan however, it can be created as a standalone strategy, if needed.

- Additionally, investing in infrastructure improvements, broadband expansion, and rural utilities will make targeted growth more feasible while ensuring that residents in sparsely populated areas have access to essential services. Collaboration with local stakeholders, businesses, and residents is critical to developing policies that reflect community needs. A thoughtful, long-term strategy will ensure Perry County grows in a sustainable, well-planned manner that benefits both urban and rural areas while maintaining the county's unique character.
- In the past attempts have been made to encourage businesses to join our community. If records were available from these past attempts could strengths and weaknesses be discovered and a plan to resolve the weakness be established? If available, how would you propose to carry out this task?
 - If records from past business recruitment efforts are available, they could provide valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of previous strategies. A thorough analysis of these records would help identify patterns in successful business attraction and pinpoint barriers that may have discouraged investment, such as infrastructure challenges, workforce limitations, or incentive gaps. By evaluating this data, we can develop a targeted action plan to address weaknesses and build on past successes.
 - To carry out this task, we would propose forming a review committee consisting of economic development professionals, local officials, and business leaders to analyze the data and gather additional feedback from past prospects. Based on these findings, we could implement policy adjustments, infrastructure improvements, or new incentive programs to make Perry County more competitive. Additionally, refining our marketing and outreach strategies would ensure that future business recruitment efforts are more effective, leading to sustained economic growth.

Opportunities

- Considering what you know about Perry County is there a type of business or industry or service that you would recommend we pursue to obtain growth within our county?
 - Given Perry County's access to the Ohio River, investing in logistics and port infrastructure could be a promising opportunity for economic growth. The county's location makes it well-suited for transportation, distribution, and manufacturing industries, which could benefit from improved river access and intermodal logistics. Additionally, manufacturing - particularly in sectors that align with regional strengths and workforce capabilities - could provide stable job opportunities and long-term economic benefits.
 - However, before making any firm recommendations, it is essential to engage with the community, local businesses, and key stakeholders to better understand their priorities, workforce capacity, and infrastructure needs. Through listening sessions, economic assessments, and collaboration with regional partners, we can identify the industries that best align with Perry County's resources and community vision, ensuring a sustainable and well-supported growth strategy.
- Our youth often time leave our county to pursue opportunities elsewhere, what suggestion for the county might you propose in order to deal with this migration?
 - To understand why young people leave the community, and do not return after college or trade school, it will be important to engage them in local planning efforts (typically through an economic development strategy or comprehensive plan) to gain insights as to what drives them away and what they feel should be added to the community to make it a more attractive place to return.
- Several of our local businesses are currently struggling, how might we help now and plan for the future to ensure a strong a vibrant business community?
 - Supporting local businesses requires a clear understanding of the specific challenges they are facing before developing effective solutions. To provide meaningful assistance, we would first need to gather more information from business owners about their struggles - whether they stem from workforce shortages, infrastructure limitations, supply chain disruptions, or other economic factors. Conducting listening sessions, surveys, or one-on-one meetings with local businesses would help identify key issues and guide immediate support efforts.
 - For long-term sustainability, we can explore strategic economic development initiatives, such as workforce training programs, small business grants, infrastructure improvements, or business networking opportunities. However, without more detailed insights, it would be premature to propose specific actions. What are the biggest obstacles businesses are currently facing? Understanding

these challenges will allow us to develop a targeted and effective plan to strengthen Perry County's business community.

- In the past attempts have been made to persuade businesses to join our community. If records were available from these attempts could strengths and weaknesses be discovered and a plan to resolve the weakness be determined. How would you propose to carry out this task?
 - Duplicate question.
- Currently ReadI 2 is an active program within the State of Indiana. How would you propose to ensure funds are received and utilized in a way that delivers the greatest benefits to residents of Perry County?
 - RJL Solutions currently manages READI 1.0 and 2.0 for the Wabash River Regional Development Authority, Spencer County, and Carroll County, while maintaining strong relationships with Governor Braun's office and the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC). With the transition in administration, the IEDC is undergoing significant changes, creating uncertainty about the future of the organization and its programs.
 - RJL played a key role in assisting Spencer County with challenges related to a stalled READI 1.0 housing project. Upon being engaged by the County, we conducted a thorough assessment of all READI 1.0 projects to evaluate their feasibility within the State and IEDC's established deadlines. When it became clear that one project would not progress in time, we successfully advocated for the reallocation of its funding to another active initiative, ensuring the County and region retained access to those resources. As a result, Spencer County has successfully completed all but one of its READI 1.0 projects.
- We have funds available from earlier projects, rental and real-estate sales. How would you propose to leverage these funds in order to promote growth?
 - Leveraging available funds to promote growth is an important opportunity, but without additional details—such as the total amount of funds, any earmarks or restrictions, and the intended purpose—it is difficult to provide a specific strategy. To ensure the most effective use of these resources, we would first need to assess the funding parameters and align them with the county's economic development priorities.