

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 have three full-time employees dedicated to Perry County. In 2024, we logged more than 5,500 hours working to improve economic development in our community. Our team takes pride in responding to requests in a timely manner and we are often able to respond immediately, if not within the same day. For more involved projects, like RFI's (requests for information) from the IEDC (Indiana Economic Development Corporation), which often require responses within a week (sometimes less), we prioritize this work to ensure submission prior to the deadline.
- 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?
 - All of our clients are located within Perry County. Our organization understands the critical importance of confidentiality, and we adhere to the strictest standards of confidentiality and professionalism. Additionally, we ask our Board of Directors to review and sign a confidentiality policy on an annual basis.
- In order to keep county officials informed how often would you anticipate providing updates and what would be the manner of distribution?
 - Historically, the County has had two seats on the PCDC Board of Directors which has resulted in a close working relationship, including those members attending quarterly board meetings where they receive detailed updates from each member of the staff. More recently, our President & CEO has attended meetings of the Perry County Commissioners on a quarterly basis and provided a public update there. The updates were also provided in electronic format and posted on the county's official website following the meetings.

Members of our staff also attend the monthly meetings of the Perry County Redevelopment Commission and provide updates there. In between those monthly meetings, we communicate regularly with the RDC President, including

sharing information about potential projects that align with property owned by the RDC.

Additionally, when potential projects or important developments arise, we communicate directly with county officials. A recent example is the direct outreach of our President & CEO to Commissioner Cole regarding a potential project. Other examples include the meetings held in 2023 with Waupaca Foundry regarding their potential expansion/upgrade.

- All of the provided proposals were bases upon services for a single year, what are the anticipated cost in year two through five?
 - The PCDC has historically been funded based on an interlocal agreement with different governmental entities dedicating 20% of their EDIT dollars to funding shared economic development efforts. Over the past few years, that process has changed, which has impacted funding. The most recent funding history is as follows:
 - 2022 - \$228,494
 - 2023 - \$188,161 (20% would have been \$259,388)
 - 2024 - \$180,000 (lower than the \$190,000 requested)
 - 2025 Request - \$180,000

We anticipate our ongoing annual request to be at or around \$200,000 for the next 2-5 years.

- 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 request for information is received, it is reviewed immediately to determine whether or not there is a suitable site in Perry County. If there is a local site that meets the project requirements, our team communicates with the owner of the property to confirm its availability. Once confirmed, we begin gathering all of the necessary/requested information which often involves outreach to area utility providers, conducting extensive research, and often on-site visits to document specific elements of the property. The property, including all additional requested information/resources, is submitted/presented to the requestor.
- 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?

- Business Retention & Expansion is one of our key areas of focus and as the established economic development arm of Perry County for the last 34 years, we have developed and maintained trusted relationships with our local industry leaders. Our team communicates with them on a regular basis and as a result, many of our programs and initiatives have been developed in response to their needs. Examples include working with our local Ivy Tech campus to expand offerings tailored to meet the training needs of local employers, obtaining nearly \$1M in funding for facility and equipment upgrades, facilitating funding for instructor travel to ensure that critical courses can be offered, etc. Other examples include our work to expand local housing inventory in response to area industries' need for additional workforce, and even working one-on-one with their employees to secure essential services like housing, childcare, transportation, training, etc. Another example is our work to expand access to licensed child care within our community in response to the needs of area employers.

We engage with local industry leadership in a variety of ways including one-on-one discussions, industry roundtable meetings, coordinated site-visits with the Indiana Economic Development Corporation, workforce development events like ASPIRE and the Skilled Trades Fair, and when necessary, after-hours/weekend calls or texts.

Some examples of past business retention & expansion activities include:

- Facilitating time-sensitive communication with state officials to expedite the transportation of manufacturing equipment across multiple state lines
- Rapidly assembling community information packets for potential out-of-state employees being offered the opportunity to relocate to Perry County; and then working with several of those employees over the course of many months/years to settle into Perry County
- Assisting in the identification of a suitable location for the establishment of an employee medical clinic

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?
 - With more acres of Hoosier National Forest than any other county in the state, we understand both the opportunities and the challenges this unique feature presents. In 2016, in collaboration with the Perry County Chamber and the Perry County Convention & Visitors Bureau, the PCDC launched an updated website and centralized community brand that has been recognized across the state and

nation, even earning international attention via the International Economic Development Council's Excellence in Economic Development Awards. The campaign has highlighted the array of recreational opportunities in Perry County and our website and social media channels continue to promote these assets. Most recently, we have invested in upgrading the entire pickperry.com site and have established plans with a strategy & design firm to develop targeted content and to drive increased traffic to the platform.

Another recently implemented opportunity for promoting activities in Perry County, including the Hoosier National Forest, is becoming part of the Discover Southern Indiana brand, a 12-county regional marketing program managed by Radius Indiana, a regional economic development organization. Our President & CEO facilitated the inclusion of Perry County into this program in 2024 and the PCDC paid half the annual membership fee. In 2024, the Discover Southern Indiana brand had:

- 13.5M Impressions
- 323K Clicks
- 2.4% Click-Thru-Rate (above industry standard)
- 163K New Users to the Website
- 2,768 New Newsletter Subscribers

The Nature & Recreation page of the Discover Southern Indiana website generated the highest Click-Thru Rate of 10.41%. With Perry County having a significant portion of the Hoosier National Forest and other outdoor recreation resources including direct access to the Ohio River, assets and attractions from Perry County are receiving benefits from these paid Google Ads. There is also a blog dedicated solely to Perry County on the brand's website, which features five fun facts about Perry County including highlighting the Hoosier National Forest.

Additionally in 2024, Discover Southern Indiana bought into the Visit Indiana Co-Operative Marketing campaigns for Spring and Summer. The Spring Campaign costs \$15,000 and the Summer Campaign costs \$50,000. This includes paid marketing in several markets including Chicago, Louisville, St. Louis, and more. The Spring Campaign ran from mid-March through the end of April. The Summer Campaign ran from June through September. The plan is to participate at this same level in 2025.

Discover Southern Indiana has also partnered with Nate Spangle/Get Indiana for a 12-month period that will include 10 videos/reels for social media. Perry County will be included in this very popular series and our office will assist in coordinating the attractions and activities included in the video.

Lastly, in terms of the tax revenue received for acreage within the Hoosier National Forest, we have and will continue to advocate to the Indiana General Assembly for more equitable adjustments to the per acre payments received.

- 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.
 - Our local greenways are a tremendous community asset and are heavily utilized by residents and visitors alike. We would encourage local officials to look for ways to expand our existing trail network with initiatives like the planned River Road project. The extension of these very popular walking & biking paths enhances opportunities for recreation as well as hosting competitive runs, rides, races, and other community events that have the potential to draw in visitors from outside the area. Collaborating with community groups and organizations, like Paddle Perry, Friends of the Rome Courthouse, the Bristow Car & Community Center, etc. presents another opportunity for cultivating increased tourism in Perry County.

Additionally, we would strongly recommend continued participation in the Discover Southern Indiana brand, as well as working closely with the Perry County Convention & Visitors Bureau to strategically market the abundance of recreational activities available in Perry County. Lastly, we would also suggest working closely with local small businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs to cultivate additional services and amenities that complement our existing tourism assets and strengths.

- 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.
 - Our organization is very familiar with the challenges associated with site (residential/commercial/industrial) and infrastructure development in Perry County due to our unique topography and rural make-up. Addressing these challenges requires strong relationships between local units of government as collaboration is critical to expanding water and waste-water services to a greater portion of county residents. Funding these projects can be very expensive with return on investment numbers falling short. Our organization monitors all potential funding sources by maintaining close communication with local, regional, state and federal partners and contacts. Often those funds can bridge the gap making project investments financially feasible.

- 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?
 - We would recommend revisiting Perry County's Comprehensive Plan, which was last updated in 2015. An updated plan should take a balanced approach to growth, and will likely require strengthening housing, workforce, and infrastructure in both the Ohio River corridor and rural areas. Expanding housing options, enhancing the community's overall quality of life and investing in workforce training will increase the county's ability to attract and retain talent. Ensuring all residents have access to essential services and amenities is critical. Public-private partnerships and strategic investments will help revitalize communities, foster business expansion, and create a thriving, interconnected county where all residents benefit from sustainable growth.
- 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?
 - The work of economic development is to align a community's resources and needs with opportunities available at the time. We are immensely proud of the past work of the PCDC and our county's industrial rebirth as the epicenter of gray and ductile iron manufacturing following the loss of GE and the wood/furniture industries. With that said, we believe that reflection and analysis of strengths and weaknesses are important strategies for the ongoing improvement and success of any organization. For this reason, we have eagerly welcomed the opportunity to participate in 'Mystery Shopper' or Mock Site-Selection exercises. In 2020, our organization participated in a two-day mock site-selection program through the Southwest Indiana Development Council (SWIDC) which involved the economic development organizations of seven counties responding to a mock RFI (request for information) from a national site-selection consultant. Each respondent had the opportunity to present a site as well as general community information and then receive feedback and suggestions from the site-selector as well as from peers. The site submitted by the PCDC was selected as the number #1 site and the entire group, including the site-selector, traveled to Perry County to visit it. In 2021, the PCDC had another opportunity to participate in a similar program through the Indiana Municipal Power Agency (IMPA). Ginovus, a national site-selection company, provided an RFI which we responded to. The activity also included a thorough website review and site visit. We received excellent feedback on our proposal, the visit and the website. We are currently in talks with our regional partners and with IMPA about replicating these valuable experiences.

Lastly, fostering a diverse local economy is a key priority, and efforts are focused on working alongside local officials and community partners to support, encourage, and incentivize small business entrepreneurship while also attracting investment from larger businesses and industries.

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?
 - Our organization recently assisted in the development of a regional Economic Impact Analysis which analyzed data and community input to identify strategic areas of opportunity, including the in-flow/out-flow of goods and services throughout the region as well as for each individual county. The report is rich in data, and we would welcome the opportunity to review it with you.
- 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?
 - Talent Attraction/Retention and Workforce Development are two of our key areas of focus and our organization has been diligently working in this area for years. In 2019, the Pick Perry Campaign was selected as a best practice in Ady Advantage's 2019 Talent Strategy Study and showcased at the 2019 Mid-America Economic Development Council's Best Practices Conference. Later that year, the campaign won the Mid-America EDC's Small Community Marketing Program Award and was featured in the January 2020 Edition of Site Selector Magazine. In 2020, our organization won the Gold Award in the Talent Development & Retention category from the International Economic Development Council. Additionally, we have and continue to partner with our local school corporations, Ivy Tech, and our local employers to ensure that the skills needed by area businesses are available within our community. We also host a variety of events and initiatives aimed at exposing our youth to the many rewarding careers available locally, as many are not fully aware of work opportunities that exist in our region. In 2024, we added a Workforce Development Specialist to our staff, who is a full-time employee dedicated to working one-on-one with our schools and our local employers to further develop a sustainable talent pipeline within our community.
- 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?
 - While it is true that a handful of local small businesses, particularly retailers, are struggling, we believe it is critical to acknowledge and celebrate the recent addition of some important services and amenities in our community, including

an audiologist, a medical clinic, a physical therapy provider, etc.

The PCDC partners with the Perry County Chamber of Commerce to provide support and services to local businesses as well as aspiring entrepreneurs. The most effective way for the county to 'help now and plan for the future to ensure a vibrant business community' is to support this long-standing partnership. Some examples of our work in this area include:

- Working one-on-one with local small businesses and entrepreneurs to connect them with resources, access to capital, networking opportunities, etc.
 - Partnering with the Southwest Indiana Small Business Development Center (ISBDC) to provide no-cost business advising, training, referrals, and a library of cultivated tools and resources to help businesses, from startup through sale or retirement, to succeed. Beginning in 2024, an ISBDC business advisor is available to meet with clients in our conference room every Monday.
 - Supporting local businesses through workforce development and talent attraction assistance including posting open positions (at no cost) on our website. (The Job Opportunities page is consistently one of the most visited pages on our website.)
 - Providing marketing support through targeted social media campaigns (ex. Small Business Spotlight Series)
- 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?
 - [See response to last question under Challenges.](#)
 - 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?
 - The PCDC has partnered with the Southwest Indiana Development Council (SWIDC) for more than 30 years, and we were proud to take a leadership role in the organization that created the Indiana First Region, ensuring that Perry and our surrounding counties had the opportunity to participate in the READI 1.0 and READI 2.0 programs. In addition to contributing more than \$18,000 towards the cost to develop the required regional plans/applications, our staff spent countless hours working together with our regional partners to secure a cumulative \$30M. For the first round, more than \$2.7M of READI funds are being invested in Perry County, resulting in an anticipated private investment of \$15M+. Our office is

currently in the process of accepting applications for READI 2.0 funds and, together with our regional partners, we will look to the IEDC's funding criteria, our regional development plans, and the application scoring criteria to guide us to the projects that will be the most beneficial to Perry County and the overall Indiana First Region.

- 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?
 - We believe a wise use of these funds would be continued focus and investment in the critical areas of business attraction, business retention & expansion, workforce development & talent attraction, community development, and marketing. These funds typically support site preparation because as previously noted, the general topography of the county presents challenges for having attractive, shovel-ready sites for development.
- The statement below is from the Perry County Development Corporation documentation within the records of the Perry County Redevelopment Commission. What is the balance of funds available for investment at this time?

Sale fund usage – As per all funds received from Perry County activities other than the annual contractual funds, these funds are utilized to accomplish the redevelopment plans adopted by the Perry County Redevelopment Commission and county. A most recent example is the sale of the spec building at Troy generated the funds that paid for the grading of the new pad at Industrial Park South across the road from ATTC. The remaining funds from this sale and those from the sale of the 7th Street Warehouse will be utilized to accomplish the grading of Riverview Industrial Park's South building pad.

- While we appreciate your interest in our organization's operations, the specific balance of our accounts is considered internal financial information and not publicly disclosed. We are happy to answer any other questions you may have about our programs or initiatives.

Thank you for the opportunity to share information about our organization, its accomplishments, and the vital role we play in Perry County's economic growth. As you know, our current contract expired on December 31, 2024. However, given the importance of ongoing projects, we have continued to provide services in good faith to ensure that critical economic development efforts do not stall. To maintain continuity and effectively plan for the future, we respectfully request that the Perry County Commissioners and Council render a decision on our continued partnership no later than April 1, 2025. Strong leadership and financial commitment from all governing bodies are essential to sustaining Perry County's economic momentum. Should a contract not be in place by this date, our organization will be forced to reassess and refocus its economic development efforts accordingly.