



Southeast Indiana

Arts & Culture Plan Rollout

December 16 & 18, 2025

TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES  **ART**

celebrating the power of arts and culture in community

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Overview

Welcome

The Arts & Culture Plan

The Process

Vision

Goals & Strategies

Measurement

Bonus: Big Ideas

Call to Action

Tools

Next Steps

Go forth. Do good.



Process & Plan

The Project



Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative – READI

An initiative of the Indiana Economic Development Corporation to advance quality of life, quality of place and quality of opportunities through strategic investments that make Indiana a magnet for talent and economic growth.

LEI Arts & Culture Initiative

Funded by the Lilly Endowment Inc. in 2024 focusing on accelerating arts and culture to strengthen the vibrancy of Indiana through Arts & Culture Planning + Investment in transformational arts and cultural projects



Lilly Endowment Inc.

A private foundation since 1937



**TRANSFORMING
COMMUNITIES** ART
through the power of arts and culture

Sara A. Peterson
Paige Sharp



Approach

Arts and...

What is "Arts & Culture"?

The plan values ***the full creative ecosystem*** – ***not only arts organizations***, but the fabricators, makers, artisans, musicians, writers, crafters, podcasters, performers, designers, architects, libraries, and history organizations (and everyone within them).

Together they form the cultural fabric of the region and remind us that we each have a personal connection to the arts, whether through the high school band, having a favorite author, art teacher, or song, writing poetry, learning to play guitar, draw, crochet, dance... or simply loving to create the best music playlist ever.

Local & Regional



Engagement

230⁺

Southeast Indiana Hoosiers

This plan emerged from a community-driven, asset-based approach to arts and culture planning. Together, this allowed for deep and diverse participation across sectors and communities.

- 6** Community Visioning Sessions
- 7** Focus Groups & Regional Leader Discussions
- 30^{ish}** Interviews
- 1** Public Survey

Dozens of online submissions, inquiries, and 100s more website visitors

Participation

230⁺

Southeast Indiana Hoosiers

Arts, Culture & History	30%	Participation by Sector
City/County Government	16%	
Libraries & Other *	14%	
Foundations / Funders	9%	
Chambers & Main Streets	6%	
Economic Dev. & Related	5%	
Tourism & Attractions	4%	
Business & Manufacturing	3%	
Education (K12 & Higher Ed.)	3%	
Finance & Prof. Services	2%	
Health & Social Services	< 1%	
Unknown	9%	

Participation by County

	vs 2020 Pop. ..	
Dearborn	28%	40%
Franklin	24%	18%
Ohio	8%	5%
Ripley	23%	23%
Switzerland	8%	8%
Union	4%	6%
Multi/Other	4%	--

From 30 Cities & Towns

Plan Structure



The Layout

First Page

- Goal
- Regional Plan Alignment
- Success Measures

Second Page

- Strategies & Tactics
- Resources
 - Regional alignment,
 - Digging Deeper
 - Your Input
 - Making the Case
 - Recommended Tools
 - Statistics, quotes, and definitions for context

End of Priority Section

- Recommended Tools

Vision



Economic

A Bolder Southeast Indiana

The natural beauty of our region is one of our vital assets, but we are more than just a scenic stop between Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky.

Together we are crafting a regional vision where natural beauty meets economic vitality, where educational opportunities pave the way for generational prosperity, and where the dream of affordable living becomes a reality.



Arts & Culture

Success in 2035

The Arts are a Thriving, Vital Force that:

- Spark Community & Economic Vitality,
- Amplify Natural Assets & Regional Tourism,
- Foster Regional Collaboration through Local Leadership,
- Are Central to Engaging & Empowering the Next Generation, and where
- Creative Placemaking & Design have Solidified Vibrant Cultural Districts, because...

We Grow from Deep Roots —

Cultivating Big Opportunities with Small Town Charm

Goals & Strategies



By Priority

1. Place & Identity

- ☐ Activate the Region
- ☐ Connect Communities

2. Attachment & Opportunity

- ☐ Cultivate Next Generation Roots
- ☐ Generate Creative Opportunity

3. Leadership & Collaboration

- ☐ Mobilize Collaborate & Communicate
- ☐ Formalize Sustainable Commitment



Plant Your Roots Here by Leah Pinney, Liberty

ACTIVATE THE REGION goal 1

Revitalize and activate main streets, waterfronts, byways, and hidden gems through arts and culture. Filled with surprises, public art, entertainment, and food they thrive as **Cultural Districts** — living history hubs blended with creative energy, and small town charm to attract residents and explorers





1.1



Amplify & Celebrate Distinctive Assets

Revitalize and restore community cores, creating cultural districts where you want to sit down and stay for a while.

tactics

- a) Create welcoming, walkable environments that spark **pride** while creating a sense of **place** and **discovery**
 - Programs to maintain and beautify façades, alleys, and streetscapes
 - Intentionally designed signage, gateways, and zoning standards
 - Landscaping, lighting, design features, and public art
- a) Revitalize core areas as well as smaller communities through preservation and **creative reuse** of existing assets.
 - Leverage arts to reuse **historic buildings** as mixed use creative hubs
 - Transform **underused properties** into cultural assets
 - Beautify and activate **open, visible spaces** (alleys and abandoned sites)

1.2

Activate with Public Art & Programming

Bring main streets, waterfronts, and byways to life year-round with arts, culture, and community programming.

tactics

- a) Install, enhance, or revitalize **public art** in strategic locations to reinforce identity and animate gathering places
- b) Expand **programming** across all seasons
- c) Partner with **business, youth, and artists to host** arts and culture activities
- d) Bring celebrated **traditions and living history to life** through art, storytelling, and place-based interpretation. Historical societies, libraries, and tourism bureaus collaborate to highlight shared heritage within and across county boundaries

CONNECT COMMUNITIES goal 2

Knit the region's **Natural & Cultural Assets** together (e.g., public art trails, regional program initiatives, and wayfinding design) to amplify and increase access to both, build relationships, and promote place-based discovery, wellness, and tourism



Bus stop murals by Jayme Pennington, Brookville's Creative Convergence Project



2.1



Amplify & Activate Nature in Combination with Cultural Assets

Leverage the region's unique geography, natural and cultural assets to connect communities, creativity, and recreation.

tactics

- Create thematic, experience "trails"** with designed wayfinding, public art, and intentional connections to key cultural and recreational destinations
- Activate **waterfronts and byways and the small towns along the way** with creative programming,... that encourage exploration and economic activity.

2.2

Build Regional Tourism

Develop regional tourism strategies that tell compelling stories from the region in collaboration with the creative sector.

tactics

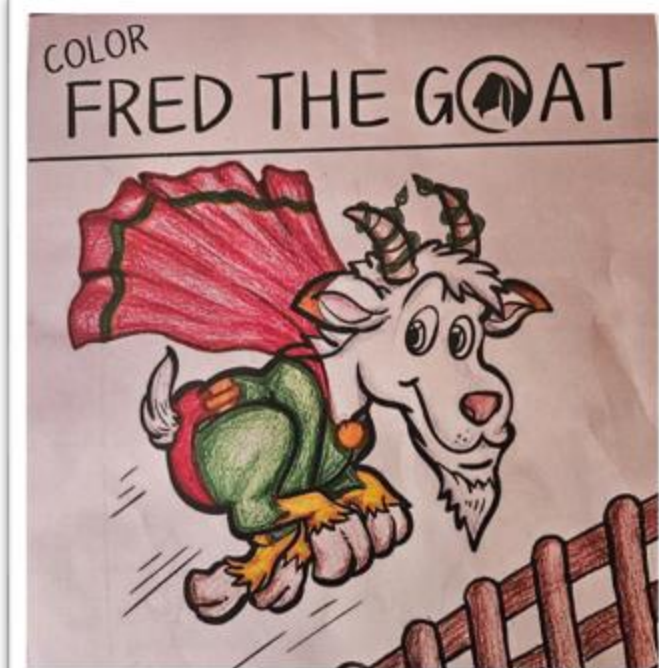
- Develop and deepen **regional relationships and strategies** to support cross-promotion, cross-county marketing, and shared expertise
- Develop **shared marketing assets** that increase local capacity while reducing costs
 - Develop agreed-upon **methods** for marketing key assets
 - Collectively purchase of **tools** to reduce overall costs
 - Mirror **content** county-to-county... to make the most of limited staff capacity
 - Develop a regional **website** aggregating arts and culture opportunities for more complete and effective information sharing
- Intentionally package and promote **experiences** that link the region's:
 - Natural destinations **with**
 - Arts, culture, and heritage assets **and**
 - Downtown and waterfront activities

CULTIVATE NEXT GENERATION ROOTS goal 3

Invest in initiatives with and for the next generation — expanding access to arts programming and education, increasing participation, and opening pathways to creative careers.

Deeply engaging the next generation in a vibrant **Cultural Life** will feed talent pipelines while increasing resident retention across the region .





3.1



Expand Arts Opportunity

Increase access to meaningful arts and culture experiences for all ages.

tactics

- a) Create safe and affordable **third spaces** in **every** community
- b) Directly work with the next generation to **co-design / co-lead** programming according to their creative wants and needs
- c) Youth **engagement** is prioritized through art recognition in schools, STEAM programming, and intergenerational creative initiatives
- d) Expand arts program offerings to engage each community and to reach young audiences where they are

3.2

Empower Youth Engagement & Volunteerism

Build a culture that welcomes and empowers civic engagement of youth, young adults, and young families.

tactics

- a) Intentionally **empower** formal and informal forms of **youth leadership**
- b) Actively support **youth-driven initiatives** and involvement in decision-making
- c) Ensure participation is **welcoming and accessible** for any project or engagement

3.3

Build Creative Career Pathways

Connect high school and college-aged youth to arts opportunities, skill-building, and pathways to creative careers

tactics

- a) Integrate **creative career pathways** into K-12, after-school, community, higher ed.
- b) Establish **intern and mentorships** (apprenticeships) that connect students and creatives to the business community for skill-building

GENERATE CREATIVE OPPORTUNITY goal 4

Focus on the **Art, Artists, & Creation** — and opportunities to create — to position the creative sector for success.

Generate opportunities with, by, and for artists, creative entrepreneurs, and cultural nonprofits through training, program development, and material supports needed to grow authentically.





4.1 ★ Expand Access to Space for Creatives

Develop the spaces artists and creative entrepreneurs need to live, work, and showcase their talents

- tactics**
- a) Develop and sustain **affordable spaces** for creatives
 - b) Facilitate **retail opportunities** to reduce start-up risk, encourage sustainable growth
 - c) Encourage **cooperatives** to collectively co-market

4.2 Empower Creative Capacity

Provide artists, creative entrepreneurs, and nonprofits with the resources, training, and infrastructure they need to thrive.

- tactics**
- a) Connect creative businesses and artists to existing state... **support systems**
 - b) Develop tools and training to fill **unmet needs** of artists and creative businesses
 - c) Supports for **up-skilling** particularly in digital commerce

4.3 Grow Teaching & Learning

Expand local and regional opportunities for practitioners to teach arts and culture in programs for all ages

- tactics**
- a) Support programs that contract with and provide **visibility to artists**
 - b) **New educational programs** to share craft and knowledge across generations
 - c) **Rosters and databases** for artist referrals, teachers, and mentors

MOBILIZE, COLLABORATE & COMMUNICATE goal 5

Collaborate to advance **Cultural Development & Regionalism**.

Systemize collaboration and communication among county and regional leaders to align planning, build networks, share resources, and create joint programs to strengthen the region's collective capacity for long-term cultural growth.





5.1

Mobilize Mutual Support Networks

Build support networks that facilitate resource sharing, joint programming, skill-building, and plan alignment region-wide.

tactics

- a) Commit to regular, **EASY, face-to-face meetups / mixers** within the creative sector
- b) Develop creative sector **support networks** and initiatives to foster collaboration, communication, and resource sharing among and between ...
- c) Curate **cross-sector interactions** where the experience organically leads to new relationships, ideas, and initiatives with the creative sector

5.2

Expand Implementation Capacity

Build sustainable implementation capacity within the creative sector through leadership development and dedicated staff.

tactics

- a) Balance grassroots "**mini projects**" **AND large** signature events to maximize impact and avoid volunteer burnout
- b) Where possible, transition from **volunteer to staffed** and from informal to formal
- c) **Sustain volunteerism** with next generation recruitment and training coupled with cross-sector partnership to expand capacity

5.3



Catalyze a Regionwide Arts & Culture Movement

Strengthen the region's capacity for arts and culture success through cross-sector collaboration, communication, and the power of celebrating together.

tactics

- a) Facilitate understanding between the region's **tourism and creative sectors** to align goals and leveraging best practices
- b) Facilitate cross-sector communication **within each county**, sowing the seeds for organic partnership, resource sharing, as well as arts and culture initiatives ...
- c) **Convene all** established and newly established individual sector and cross-sector networks and groups at least annually to...



FORMALIZE SUSTAINABLE COMMITMENT goal 6

Hardwire Arts & Culture Strategy into governance, economic development, funding, and civic frameworks.

Embedding arts and culture into local and regional plans and policies will ensure their sustainable visibility, investment, and impact



6.1

Build Support for Arts & Culture Strategy

Expand the pool of community champions, leaders, and volunteers actively committed to arts and culture strategy.

tactics

- a) Engage key leaders as **champions** then expand pool through **civic institutions**
- b) Encourage **businesses** to directly engage with local creatives

6.2

Build a Supportive Public Policy Infrastructure

Formalize local government policy and practice that directly support – and limit those that hinder – arts and culture strategy.

tactics

- a) Adopt **Percent for Art and related** policies that create opportunity and support the creative sector. Simplify and streamline policies that create barriers to success
- b) Institute government-appointed **arts councils and small grant programs**
- c) Commit to **direct representation of the creative sector** in public processes

6.3



Secure Sustainable Funding

Cultivate and solidify a diversified approach to long-term arts and culture support and investment

tactics

- a) Designate **public funds** and revenue streams that demonstrate commitment ...
- b) Cultivate **local philanthropy** with each county's community foundation
- c) Pursue **grants** for arts initiatives – leveraging public, private, corporate matches
- d) Advocate for supportive **state and federal** policies, grants, and programs that reinforce local investment.



Recap

1. Place & Identity

- ☐ Activate the Region
- ☐ Connect Communities

2. Attachment & Opportunity

- ☐ Cultivate Next Generation Roots
- ☐ Generate Creative Opportunity

3. Leadership & Collaboration

- ☐ Mobilize Collaborate & Communicate
- ☐ Formalize Sustainable Commitment

Measurement



Developmental

The Plan Belongs to the Region and every community comes from a different place

Each Community + The Region

- ☐ Develop & Prioritize Action Plan
- ☐ Set Developmental Steppingstones & Applicable Benchmarks
- ☐ SEI READI = Facilitator, Convenor, Partner, & Doer

Considering

1. Arts & Culture Outputs

Activity tied to any of the plan goals or strategies, engagement of community in the process, and capacity built toward plan goals

2. Arts & Culture Outcomes — Proposed

Indicators to consider in setting targets toward vision achievement

3. Existing Success Measures — SEI READI Benchmarks

- Attracting and Retaining Population
- Increasing Degree Attainment
- Building Housing Units
- Boosting per Capita Income
- Increasing Business Start Ups



Arts & Culture Vision

Success in 2035

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We Grow from Deep Roots —

Cultivating Big Opportunities with Small Town Charm

Bonus

An abstract, vibrant painting in a circular frame, featuring bold, expressive brushstrokes in shades of orange, red, yellow, green, and blue. The text 'Big Ideas' is overlaid on the left side of the circle.

Big Ideas

1. ALL-IN MARKETING
Art Connected to Nature
2. FROM EVERY CORNER OF THE REGION
Indiana's Music Corridor
3. DEEP TRADITIONS & PRACTICE
The Region as Folk School

Offered for exploration and consideration to maximize impact

ALL-IN MARKETING:

Art Connected to Nature

What would it look like to go “All-In” — to *showcase incredible natural assets* like the Ohio River Way, Versailles State Park, and Monarch Preserve *alongside a treasure trove of cultural attractions and sites*?

Imagine a *shared regional marketing strategy* across multiple platforms that creates a clear “brand” or sense of united identity centered on art and nature .

An Abundance to Build From

NATURE & RECREATION

- Indiana’s largest wildlife refuge — Big Oaks
- 2nd largest state park — Versailles
- And largest canoe race — Brookville Canoe fest

ARTS & CULTURE

- Key Community Festivals
- Dozens of Music & Arts Festivals
- Four Renovated Historic Theaters
- Established Arts Anchors & Networks

HISTORIC ASSETS

- Historic Communities in Franklin & Switzerland Co.
- Unique Attractions across the region such as:
- Historic Districts in every county — 13 in all

And so much more...



Happy Valley Bluegrass Festival,
Batesville

FROM EVERY CORNER OF
THE REGION :

Indiana's Music Corridor

Celebrating southeastern Indiana's deep musical roots — from Richmond, birthplace of recorded jazz to Madison's “music city”.

Music is in Southeast Indiana's DNA.

Musicians celebrate, support, share, and mentor one another, and there's no shortage of venues for folks to play — from backyards and bars to senior centers and event centers.

DEEP TRADITIONS & PRACTICE:

The Region as Folk School

Rooted in its legacy of music, craft, and making, Southeast Indiana has the ingredients to become a nationally recognized center for folks arts learning.

By establishing a folk school or a network of creative learning centers, the region can foster creative careers and lifelong learners while strengthening local businesses.





...pursued...

First.

- ❑ Get the rest of the plan up and running,
- ❑ Network groups meeting, and
- ❑ Past the region's first convening

Once that's done...

- ❑ Start small,
- ❑ Develop, test, improve
- ❑ With cross-sector partners.

Don't forget Cincinnati

Getting Started

Call to Action: First Steps

SEI READI

Will take the lead on Goals 5 and 6

- ☐ Roll Out (host discussions, present, build buy-in all counties)
- ☐ Begin Implementation & Support Early Action

Organizations & Councils at Any Level

- ☐ Review and Discuss Plan
- ☐ Take Action (publicly endorse plan, use plan resources as guide)
- ☐ Get to know your creatives

County Level

- ☐ Community Foundations & Tourism
Start Coffee & Calendar-like groups in your county;
call peers, convene, start discussions
- ☐ Economic Development
Invite creative sector to tour empty sites to gather their ideas



Call to Action: More First Steps...

Community-Level

Main Street, Civic Orgs, Local Government

- ☐ Convene & discuss plan
- ☐ Join county or regional “coffee & calendar” meetings

Creative Sector

- ☐ Meet with your county and regional peers
- ☐ Join Chamber, Main Street, etc.
- ☐ Get to know leaders above and join the conversation – ***better yet, take the lead***



Lucy Yatso, Chalkfest 2025, Osgood

Ideas & Inspiration

Executive Summary

The Region

Regional Overview
State of the Arts
Vision for Success
Goals & Strategies
The Big Ideas
Call to Action

The Counties

The Toolkit

Ideas & Inspiration
Project Funding
Data & Advocacy
Glossary

Appendix

Data Tables
Methodology
Acknowledgements

Need Ideas? Inspiration? Resources?

Use the Toolkit for:

Marketing
Funding
Public Art
More...



The cloud points to links a reader might miss.



The lightbulb points to footnotes and tips.



The toolbox identifies a recommended tool.

The Document is also color coded. Here's the Key:

priority • priority • priority
big ideas • counties • appendix • everything else

Call to Action: Next Steps

What's Next?

Now it's for the region – ***all eight counties, all communities within them, creative and other sectors*** – to

- 1) Find their place in the goals and strategies,
- 2) Convert them into specific actions to take.

It's hard to express how important our READI work is across so many communities and so many sectors.

The scale and breadth of this work in this sector has never been done before.

Even beyond the awards we'll be able to make in the next year, the impact of having this many people focused specifically on Arts & Culture has the

chance to fundamentally impact generations of Hoosiers.

— Jim Rawlinson, Director of READI
Indiana Economic Development Corporation



Miah Michaelsen
MMichaelsen@iac.in.gov



Congratulations!

from the Indiana Arts Commission

*When arts thrive
in a community, the community thrives.*

About

A state agency working directly with communities, creatives, and organizations to harness the power of creativity to strengthen Indiana.

Its programs and services fund and support arts experiences, arts education, and the arts economy that together enhance the quality of life for Indiana's people and places.

Learn More

Visit arts.in.gov or call 803.734.8696

Follow @inartscommission on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn



Thank you!



Questions?

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