



# 2025 ADVOCACY AGENDA

## CALL TO ACTION

Governing Principles & Priorities

## PRESENTING SPONSOR



BAPTIST HEALTH®

# CALL TO ACTION

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## TALENT DEVELOPMENT, ATTRACTION AND RETENTION- SUPPORT FOR WORKING FAMILIES

While the Indiana General Assembly made historic investments in workforce development and quality of place programs in 2024, the resounding priority expressed by Southern Indiana businesses continues to be skilled talent. Replacing lost talent, while also hiring for new and emerging skills, has become a business imperative, and no sector is immune from these concerns. Those communities with the ability to attract and retain top talent will be the same communities that will attract and retain desirable companies.

One Southern Indiana's 2025 Call to Action for the Indiana General Assembly continues to be on those primary issues relating to Talent Development, Attraction and Retention:

1. To **strengthen the workforce pipeline for Southern Indiana residents**, there is a need to bolster K-12 college and career readiness and expand post-secondary pathways. Support programs are essential to help individuals from underrepresented populations, including those with disabilities, mental health challenges, in addiction recovery, and those who deserve a second chance at employment. Additionally, skill-up training should be provided to incumbent workers through employer incentives and publicly accessible programs that focus on priority industries and emerging technologies.
2. Develop new and enhanced tools to build and maintain infrastructure in **support of diversified and affordable housing development** to increase available housing stock.
3. **Increase the availability and affordability of childcare and eldercare** so that workers have peace of mind that loved ones are cared for while they engage in the workforce. Medicaid reform to support the needs of the elderly and the health of families.
4. Support policies that **improve access to and provide a competitive cost of basic utilities** such as electricity, gas, broadband and water.



# GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

One Southern Indiana has built its Advocacy Agenda to ensure our current business environment is strong and the foundation for sustainable economic growth is primary.

## SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH IS ONE SOUTHERN INDIANA'S MOST IMPORTANT OBJECTIVE

Economic development is a priority for 1si investors. The goal of the organization's economic development activities is to enhance the area's vibrancy by facilitating economic transactions that generate wealth and add to community prosperity. We work to create a positive environment to support existing business retention and growth, as well as the creation and attraction of new businesses to the area. We need economic development policy and will support those measures that meet one or more of these criteria:

- Encourage flexible and responsible use of local economic development tools to meet business needs.
- Recognizing the importance of regional growth strategies within Southern Indiana as well as the influence of the greater metro area, supporting incentive reciprocity between Kentucky and Indiana.
- Encourage repurpose and remediation assistance for site redevelopment.
- Create pathways to increase environmental sustainability of our major employment sectors.
- Urge continued economic development and technical training for local elected and appointed officials.

- Continue support and resources to combat the disruption many companies are facing in obtaining raw products, components, and finished goods.
- Support our industry groups, including health care, manufacturing, finance, and building and development as they identify areas of concern.



# GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

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## CAREER-READY WORKFORCE AND EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES

Meeting our job attraction and retention goals is increasingly more dependent on the availability of a qualified workforce. The unmet need for talent with specific skills sets continues to have a negative effect on our economic recovery.

This trend is not unique to our region, and many factors – including strong business growth, coupled with declining workforce availability (low participation rate, inadequate childcare and eldercare options, retirements, etc.) – contribute to the tightening labor force. A low unemployment rate is good for area residents, but also concerning for businesses struggling to fill positions or expanding to take advantage of new opportunities.

Ensuring business vibrancy in the community cannot be done without a sustainable pipeline of talent for growing businesses. Removing barriers for area residents to participation in today's workforce is a priority. We will:

- Promote our role as the voice of the demand side of the supply-demand workforce equation.
- Increase the attainment of bachelors and associate degrees, as well as certifications and licenses, in fields that are in demand by area employers, especially in

health care professions.

- Enhance career programs to advance the college and career preparedness of our youth, starting in early levels.
- Enhance social and emotional learning along with career readiness programming within schools (primary and middle school grades) and vocational education facilities for high demand jobs as established by Southern Indiana Works.
- Along with our regional partners, identify short- and long-term solutions to both childcare and eldercare services.
- Promote treatment and recovery efforts designed to prevent, treat and/or support employees and prospective candidates with substance abuse and/or mental health issues.
- Explore opportunities, where appropriate and in the best interest of public safety, for streamlining the expungement process.



# GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

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## INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION

A strong infrastructure network is key to serving the region's existing employers, attracting new companies and growing startup entities. We encourage efforts to identify the critical gaps and develop recommendations for infrastructure that will support economic growth strategies for Southern Indiana.

- Develop and maintain transportation access of critical infrastructure for moving goods and people.
- Support initiatives to deploy reliable and affordable broadband and communications infrastructure across the region, as it is critical to community survival.
- Regulate natural resources such as water aquifers for long-term benefit.
- Enhance regional air service to move goods and people, utilizing the most appropriate assets.
- Encourage flexible yet directed resources to assist local communities in building and maintaining world-class infrastructure services vital to housing and economic growth.
- Develop and implement infrastructure needs (i.e. rural sewer solutions) in support of new housing and community growth.





# GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

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## INCLUSIVITY

1si creates a stakeholder experience that embraces the entire region – along with its diversity of partners – as individual business members with unique opportunities and distinctions that add to the economic and workforce opportunities for our complete communities.

- Support initiatives promoting diversity to drive innovation, which is good for business growth.
- Encourage initiatives to accelerate the success and financial sustainability of minority-owned businesses.
- Identify assistance needed to increase employability of people with mental health challenges and other disabilities.
- Enhance talent development opportunities for minorities to maximize their potential.



# GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

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## REGIONAL INITIATIVES

Coordinating the activities and positions of the communities in Southern Indiana offers several advantages – and creates greater influence – when compared to individual community agendas in other parts of the state. Additionally, recognizing our connectivity to Louisville adds impact in policy discussions that cross state and other jurisdictional boundaries. 1si will monitor and communicate on the following priority areas:

- Advocate for flexible funding opportunities such as the Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative (READI) to foster and enhance collaborations with proven regional benefit.
- Assist the Our Southern Indiana Regional Development Authority in its continued development of regional quality of place solutions.





# GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

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## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Harnessing the voice of business is essential for good policy at all levels of government. By hosting events to increase access to policy makers, we can assure our business voice is heard. 1si will promote civic engagement of our business members in the following priority areas:

- Provide investors and members with access to policy makers at all levels of government through forums, roundtables and one-on-one meetings.
- Provide educational forums for local businesses to access technical updates and opinions from subject matters experts in their respective fields.
- Facilitate appointments to Indiana policy boards and commissions to ensure Southern Indiana business members have their voices heard in matters of importance.



# 2025 Priorities

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1si's role in promoting a fiscally stable business-friendly environment is crucial in allowing businesses of all size and type to sustain and flourish. Economic development is a team sport, and as the world embraces challenges for growth and sustainability, 1si will continue to lead our business community in addressing issues involving people, efficiencies and support. More than ever before, our region has the opportunity to create a better, more inclusive environment moving forward.

By utilizing our contacts in the areas of development, healthcare, manufacturing, and the financial industries, among others, 1si can solicit key issues on which to advocate and better support our members through input from industry experts within the scope of 1si's 2025 Advocacy Agenda.

## **Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative (READI)**

- We strongly encourage regional priorities continue to be supported during the deployment of READI 2.0 funding and any future programs with the goal of continued development of quality of place assets and outdoor recreation to promote population growth.

## **Meeting Workforce Demands**

- Indiana should prioritize talent attraction and retention strategies focused on housing growth, quality of place assets and safety concerns.
- By providing employers with hiring and training resources, individuals with skill development opportunities and educators with college- AND career-ready curriculum, the State of Indiana will help build motivated and productive residents with the skills necessary to support themselves and their families.
- By providing incentives to increase access to childcare and eldercare, we address a main barrier to employment for many potential workers.
- Assist those with disabilities, mental health challenges, in addiction recovery, and those who deserve a second chance so they can join the workforce, increasing Indiana's labor force participation rate.
- Support families and schools in addressing mental health concerns.

# 2025 Priorities

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## **Business Efficiencies and Technologies**

- Indiana has long offered economic growth incentives as critical to enticing corporation location and expansion decisions. These incentives are contingent upon companies committing to new hiring goals. However, at a time when the state is facing declining workforce numbers and businesses can benefit from technological enhancements, incentives should offer flexibility for businesses making capital investment in automation which may not result in additional hiring.
- While great strides have been made toward reducing unnecessary bureaucracy, there are still significant fees and burdens on businesses seeking permitting from certain state agencies and local units. Legislative assistance in creating a clean, streamlined interface with growing companies can continue to ensure Indiana's economic trajectory.
- Establish sensible policies to govern the use of artificial intelligence in Indiana's businesses.

## **Minority Business Development**

- We support opportunity and success initiatives to assist our minority businesses to both overcome the effects of bias and to drive innovation for regional benefit.

## **Broadband Deployment**

- One of the greatest challenges exposed by the pandemic is how a lack of access to broadband affects all aspects of work, learning and health care. With recent state and federal funding initiatives, our communities need assistance and direction in the development of broadband planning in order to maximize the funds available.

## **Infrastructure and Housing**

- State funding for vital infrastructure projects is an investment in Indiana's future. This is the time to assist communities in building and maintaining roads and bridges, water and wastewater and other systems which are essential economic growth strategies for Southern Indiana.
- Infrastructure to support new and affordable housing growth is vital to our communities' and businesses' abilities to attract talent.

## **Ensure Vitality of Healthcare Services**

- Healthcare systems are facing a multitude of concerns, from worker and provider shortages to uncompetitive Medicaid reimbursement for hospitals and local providers. We support Indiana's General Assembly taking a long-lasting, solution-oriented approach to healthcare affordability to ensure the vitality of our systems across the state.



## 1si's ADVOCACY PROCESS

The role of 1si in promoting a fiscally stable, business-friendly environment is deeply impacted by local, regional, state and national issues. Through our advocacy initiatives, we promote positive change by serving as the “Champions of Ideas” to achieve economic and business vitality for the region. Additionally, we strive to provide for our investors and members access to policy makers at all levels of government through forums, roundtables and one-on-one meetings.

The 2025 Advocacy Agenda provides the basis for 1si's supported positions over the next 12 months. Our **Governing Principles**, constituting those matters generally deemed most important to Southern Indiana businesses, serve as the broader foundation for these positions and provide the framework from which specific priorities are developed and supported. In turn, our stated **Priorities for 2025**, which follow our Governing Principles, serve as our hot button legislative and policy issues upon which we expect to focus in the coming year. We will continue to monitor these and any other issues that may arise while new 1si Advocacy policies and processes are implemented during the next several months.

Back this year is the **Call to Action for 2025** which once again ties together concerns expressed by our business community around talent development, attraction and retention.

The goal of our **Governing Principles, Priorities for 2025** and **Call to Action for 2025** is to articulate the opportunities for and concerns of Southern Indiana businesses, and to speak for them as one voice.



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