



# FULTON COUNTY

## Rural Economic Development Innovation Initiative

January 2021



Center for Regional Development



University of Kentucky  
College of Agriculture,  
Food and Environment  
*Community and Economic  
Development Initiative of Kentucky*

# Executive Summary

## Many Voices, One Vision

The USDA Rural Economic Development Innovation (REDI) planning process started with a two day countywide community building event, held at The Nature Conservancy Office at Emiquon, on January 22 & 23, 2020. The opening event served as a platform for community members to gather, exchange ideas, discuss common challenges and opportunities, and share ideas to make Fulton County a better place to live, work and play.

More than 20 different businesses and organizations from throughout the county participated in the USDA REDI Workshop. Their discussions focused on four major areas: workforce development, diversity and inclusion, innovation and entrepreneurship, and quality of life and place. The Purdue University Center for Regional Development and University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food and Environment provided demographic and programming support throughout the planning process.

In small breakout groups facilitated by Purdue University and University of Kentucky representatives, participants explored these topics from a county perspective to generate ideas on how we can create a healthy and thriving rural economic development climate. This report summarizes the results of these discussions, initiated in January and continued throughout the year through small group committee meetings.

One of the most important benefits of the REDI efforts is that it created a platform for new connections among community members, expanded networks, built local capacity for action, all while providing critical technical support and allowing us an opportunity to identify and discuss important issues—together.

## Planning outcomes

The process has helped engage a range of partners, including local economic development organizations, community leaders and residents, the private sector, educational institutions, and other stakeholders in planning for the future of Fulton County. As a result, the process has helped identify locally-grown strategies that will guide county economic development, encourage partnerships and collaboration, and improve economic outcomes and overall quality of life in Fulton County. Thanks to the USDA Rural Economic Development Innovation (REDI) Initiative, the Fulton County REDI team has created the capacity-building foundation needed to ensure that public sector entities, working in conjunction with other economic actors (individuals, firms, industries), can create the environment that is essential for achieving county and regional economic prosperity.

## About Fulton County, Illinois

Fulton County is located within the Spoon River Valley of Western Illinois. Canton is Fulton County's most populous city, and is almost 30 miles south of the greater Peoria metropolitan area. Lewiston is the county seat. In terms of a historic and demographic overview, Fulton County was established in 1823 from Pike County and was named in honor of Robert Fulton, who invented the steamboat. According to U.S. Census Bureau records, the population of Fulton County in 2020 was 35,671 persons. The total land area is 883 square miles, with approximately 17 square miles representing water resources. The population density is approximately 41 persons per square mile. The county has four cities, 16 villages, and 22 unincorporated settlements.

Fulton County is surrounded by Knox, Peoria, McDonough, Tazewell, Mason and Schuyler Counties. The interstate highway nearest to Canton is I-74 and connects Peoria to Galesburg. Fulton County is served by U.S. Routes 24 and 136, and Illinois Routes 9, 41, 78, 95, 97, 100, and 116. Fulton County offers a blend of great schools, excellent healthcare, outstanding parks, a lower cost of living and a relaxed lifestyle. Agricultural and related production has long been the basis for the local economy and farming continues to be key today. Employment opportunities in Fulton County cover a diverse range of job types, from agriculture, healthcare, medical manufacturing, education, city and county government, and retail.

Most residents of Fulton County consider Fulton County to be primarily rural. Woods (2005) identifies one popular definition of rural society that reflects a particular geography associated with "values such as harmony, stability, and moderation." This represents a model version of what residents believe Fulton County should be. Problems associated with a rural environment, especially in Fulton County, include the lack of public transportation, lack of affordable health care, increasing outward migration, the need rural infrastructure enhancements, an aging population, loss of manufacturing jobs, limited availability of information technologies, and limitations on the capital needed to invest in community and economic development activities.

## Members of the Local REDI Team

Jason	Beverlin	The Nature Conservancy
Jim	Broemmer	MidCentury Communications
Kathie	Brown	University of Illinois Extension
Sarah	Eddy	Salvation Army
Joe	Higgs	Bank of Farmington
Laura	Kessel	Southern Illinois University School of Medicine and Graham Learning Lab
Rick	Klinedinst	MidAmerica National Bank
Cole	McDaniel	Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development
Josh	Mercer	Village of Vermont
Chad	Murphy	Spoon River College
Patrick	O'Brian	Fulton County Board Chair
Curt	Oldfield	Spoon River College
Dwight	Reynolds	USDA Rural Development, Illinois
Anthony	Rolando	Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, North Central Region
Kelvin	Sampson	Dickson Mounds Museum and Fulton County Tourism
Bob	Senneff	Graham Health System
Greg	Stephenson	Havana National Bank
Elaine	Stone	Fulton County Farm Bureau
Missy	Towery	MidCentury Communications
Amanda	Woodruff	Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development

## Key Facts About the REDI Site

### Population

- The county population is projected to expand from 34,844 in 2018 to 35,761 in 2020. International migration has added slightly to the population.
- The 50 years or older age group increased from nearly 34% to 41% over the 2000-2018 time period. Prime working age residents 30-49 years old declined from 29% in 2000 to 25% in 2018.
- Occupied housing units (owner occupied and renter occupied) have decreased from 2000 to 2018. There were 560 vacant units in 2000, and this number grew to 1,224 units in 2018, a 14 percentage point increase in the 18 year period.
- Individual and minor poverty rates have increased in Fulton County since 2001. The poverty rate for individuals stood at 11% in 2001, increased to 13.9% in 2009, and grew to 14.2% in 2018. The percentage of minors living in poverty increased to 20.5% in 2018.

### Economic Development

- There are 826 stage one business in Fulton County, representing 64% of the business establishments. Stage one companies typically employ 2-9 employees, and represent the largest employment sector for the county.
- More than half of all jobs are tied to one of the top five industries in Fulton County: 21% government; 19% health care and social assistance; 12% retail trade; 8% agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting; and 7% other services except public administration.
- The largest gains in employment occurred in manufacturing (+ 44%); and real estate, rental and leasing (+42%). Employment increases were also found in health care and social assistance (+294) and finance and insurance (+174)

### Workforce Development

- Fulton County has seen impressive improvements in educational attainment, with a 6 percentage gain in the number of adults with bachelor's or high degree, and 4 percentage improvement (964 more individuals) for adults with an associate degree. A sizable proportion of adults (46.5%) have a high school education or less as of 2018.
- Labor force participation rate declined by 19.2 percentage points over the 2010-2018 period. Total number of individuals in the labor force in 2018 was 15,224.

- Fulton County has more workers commuting out than commuting in to the county for work – 63.8% (8,755) workers live in Fulton County but are employed outside the county.
- Combined, the following 14 counties represent 85% of Fulton County’s laborshed (Fulton, Peoria, Knox, Warren, McDonough, Tazewell, McLean, Marshall, Mason, Schuyler, Stark, Woodford, Sangamon, and Henry).

### **E-Connectivity**

- In 2017, nearly one-third (28.4%) of Fulton County households did not have an internet subscription. Fulton County’s non-subscription rate was higher than the statewide average rate of 21% in 2017.
- Fulton County has a Digital Divide Index of 44.86, where 100 indicates the highest digital divide. It is composed of two scores, also ranging from 0 to 100: the infrastructure/adoption (INFA) score and the socioeconomic (SE) score.
- 33% of the population is without access to fixed broadband of at least 25/3 Mbps. The median maximum advertised download speeds for the county is 6 Mbps.

### **Purpose of the REDI Plan**

The Fulton County USDA Rural Development Innovation Initiative plan, which follows, describes specific elements of the vision for the county. The plan captures the values and priorities of the community and serves as a guide for evaluating future economic development planning decisions. The shared vision articulated in series of goals is intended to provide guidance for decision makers at the local, county and state levels. While the goals are broad in nature, they are designed to be relevant and valuable over a longer period of time. Simply put, the goals provide a framework for the development of attainable policies and actions over the long term that align with community values. The goals and objectives are based on the analysis of trends and conditions in the county; conversations with residents, community leaders and farmland owners; and input at public meetings.

## SYNOPSIS OF KEY REDI GOALS

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Goal 1: ACT COLLECTIVELY** – Set conditions that provide a positive climate for business development and growth by working collaboratively among units of local government. *Engaging community leaders throughout the county leverages the economic development potential overall. Through continuous communication and establishment of annual strategic goals, countywide development can be achieved.*

**Goal 2: EXPAND ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE** – Implement community economic development strategies and action plans that will increase overall wages, raise the average annual wage, and increase the total annual municipal and county sales tax collected in Fulton County. *Economic development efforts will give priority to supporting small business startups, through development of tools and mentoring programming to create a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem. Business visitation programs will inform and enhance this ongoing strategy.*

**Goal 3: IMPROVE HUMAN CAPITAL** – By the end of 2024, reverse demographic trends and population mix to ensure a plentiful workforce by increasing total population; the prime workforce demographic of 25–44-year-olds; and the labor force participation rate. *While economic development goals are designed to encourage business and job growth, the workforce development goals work to ensure individuals have the education, skills, and training needed to obtain jobs. Retaining youth and supporting youth in building a career identity is a critical element of this work*

### BROADBAND DEVELOPMENT

**Goal 1: BROADBAND ACCESS** – Improve/upgrade broadband connectivity/access throughout the county in multiple phases. *Completing local needs assessment of broadband services will include surveys of households, businesses, and providers to document areas of greatest need. Data gathered through the assessment process will inform planning and development of broadband throughout the county.*

**Goal 2: Expand and Deepen Technology Adoption by County Businesses and Agencies** – Improve the e-connectivity ranking of the region’s businesses and agencies from “Poor or Weak” to “Good or Strong” by 2022, as measured by an assessment process implemented through a business retention and expansion program and community survey. *Broadband development is improving access and adoption. Working in partnership with Spoon River College and others, targeted programming will be developed to enhance broadband use for businesses, nonprofits, and communities.*

**Goal 3: Integrate digital inclusion** strategies into community and economic development efforts. *Establishing a strong online presence is critical to business development. Digital engagement with businesses and expanding online services to meet expectations of businesses and ‘remote workers’ encourages innovation and broadening opportunities for all.*

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Goal 1: ACT COLLECTIVELY** – Set conditions that provide a positive climate for business development and growth by working collaboratively among units of local government.

**Strategy 1 A:** Strengthen and expand county wide collaboration by creating and implementing new platforms for communication and shared resources.

**Action Plan 1A1** - Recognize the Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development as the county's primary economic development agency by providing a stable and consistent funding source and continued encouragement of collaboration among all local governments and private and public sector organizations promoting economic development.

**Action Plan 1A2:** Work with Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development to ensure countywide representation in all aspects of economic development. Create working groups to address specific aspects of development, which will, in turn, enhance communication and collaboration across community and governmental boundaries.

**Action Plan 1A3:** Annually review and establish economic development programming priorities, aligning funding opportunities with goals and establishing priority areas for strengthening collaboration toward a common goal.

**Key Assets/Partners:** Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, City of Canton and Fulton County Board, local banking institutions, utilities.

**Timeline for launching/completing:** Fall, 2020/May, 2021

**Evaluation:** *Planning documents created, funding generated from strategic goals, and number of different individuals engaged with activities*

**Strategy 1B:** Develop a web presence to promote development opportunities throughout the county.

**Action Plan 1B1:** Review and implement best practices for economic development websites – using storytelling, demographics, available sites, workforce, housing, energy, etc. Ongoing website development will occur to fully leverage internal communication and external marketing opportunities.

**Action Plan 1B2:** Use the county website as a platform for sharing economic development tools at work in our county. Highlight best practices in development from communities of all sizes.

**Key Assets/Partners:** Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, MidCentury Communications, local tech companies, Illinois Economic Development Council/GP EDC, and Purdue.

**Timeline for launching/completing** the strategies for each of the goals listed. Fall, 2020/July, 2021

**Evaluation:** *Documentation of review process and outcomes, number of practice changes implemented*

**Goal 2: EXPAND ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE** – Implement community economic development strategies and action plans that will increase overall wages, raise the average annual wage, and increase annual municipal and county sales tax collected in Fulton County.

**Strategy 2 A:** Strengthen businesses throughout the county by increasing the number of small business starts and increasing the concentration of mid-sized firms (20-50 employees).

**Action Plan 2A1-** Establish a Business Expansion Action Teams through visits to 6-8 firms per year. The focus of the visits will be to identify internal and/or external barriers to growth and take actions to address these barriers for up to 10 firms per year.

**Action Plan 2A2** – Identify value chain leakage opportunities within priority industry sectors. The identified opportunities will form the basis for viable business plans to attract or grow mid-sized firms to capture leakage. (*Tourism, Agriculture, Light manufacturing, Trucking etc.*)

**Action Plan 2A3** – Encourage and facilitate access to new markets for agricultural products.

**Key Assets/Partners** and – Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, Spoon River College, City of Canton, Small Business Development Center, University of Illinois Extension, and Greater Peoria EDC.

**Timeline for launching/completing** – Name Business Expansion Action Team – December 2020, Training on BRE with Purdue January 2021; Implement March 2021, ongoing

**Evaluation:** *Formation of business visitation team, # business visits completed, # new market opportunities developed in response, # value chain opportunities discovered*

**Strategy 2 B:** Strengthen small business development through development of a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem, supporting entrepreneurship to increase the pace of annual business starts and success.

**Action Plan 2B1** – Build a system to track and communicate with new business starts within 30 days of business formation.

**Action Plan 2B2** – Establish an innovation ecosystem action team in 2020 to map all existing regional innovation and entrepreneur development assets (training resources, mentors and coaches, legal and financial resources, etc.), and identify gaps to address. Identify funding and leverage resources to fill programming gaps.

**Action Plan 2B3** – Create opportunities for peer learning among entrepreneurs. Development of networks accelerates the dissemination of information and strengthens the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Strive to create a network which spans boundaries to include regional and statewide resources.

**Action Plan 2B4** – Engage with Bradley University communication intern to develop social media marketing campaign to enhance entrepreneurial ecosystem.

**Key Assets/Partners** and – Small Business Development Center WIU, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and Peoria Start-Up Community.

**Timeline for launching/completing Launch June, 2021/ ongoing**

**Evaluation:** *Growth in # businesses participating in networking, # business consultations with new business starts, # regional network engagements*

**Goal 3: IMPROVE HUMAN CAPITAL** – By the end of 2024, reverse demographic trends and population mix to ensure a plentiful workforce supply by increasing total population; the prime workforce demographic of residents aged 25-44 years old; and the labor force participation rate.

**Strategy 3 A:** Create a county talent pipeline 360° approach focused on countywide career readiness and career pathways by strengthening connections to the regional workforce organization and programming.

**Action Plan 3A1** – Establish a Career Readiness Toolkit, which can be accessed by all partners to assist in the personal development of students, job seekers and employees. The Toolkit will incorporate the human skills, talents, behaviors, and attitudes required by all career and job classifications.

**Action Plan 3A2** – Increase the number of high school youth earning college credit by 5% year-over-year (more youth by 2025).

**Action Plan 3A3** – Increase the proportion of 18+ year olds with a post-secondary credential by 10%.

**Action Plan 3A4** – Use the regional system of analytics to continuously assess the capacity and effectiveness of the county’s talent supply pipeline to respond to changing trends and meet ongoing market demand.

**Action Plan 3A5** – Strengthen communication and collaboration across all county educational institutions to most effectively leverage resources and ensure successful outcomes. Engage 750 students annually through regional career exploration activities.

**Action Plan 3A6** – Increase Youth Labor Force Participation by 10% (1000 youth in five years, 200 youth each year).

**Key Assets/Partners** – Area School Districts, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and Area Workforce Development Board.

**Timeline for launching/completing** Fall 2020, ongoing.

**Evaluation:** *Changes in levels of secondary credentials, increase in # youth pursuing post-secondary credential, documenting changes made to available training programs, # youth participating in career exploration activities, # youth participating in workforce*

**Strategy 3B:** Increase the number of residents 25-44 years old to meet the increased demand for prime working age employees and entrepreneurs.

**Action Plan 3B1** – Promote cooperative programs between schools and economic development organizations that provide area youth with opportunities to learn about the local economy, employment opportunities, and entrepreneurship.

**Action Plan 3B2** – Develop capacity for community leadership around tools, incentives, and other resources required to create an investible marketplace. Key community investments in downtown, recreation and other lifestyle amenities in multiple Fulton County communities will enhance the quality of life for residents and make the area more attractive to prospective residents.

**Key Assets/Partners** – Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, Area School Districts, City of Canton, Fulton County Board, local utility companies, and local government leadership.

**Timeline for launching/completing** – Launch with community learning exchanges 2-3 per year, beginning with Havana and Aledo, Fall 2020. Ongoing.

**Evaluation:** # community learning exchanges, document key learning and actions resulting from exchange, # programming partnerships created with schools, document new investments made in communities.

## **BROADBAND BACKGROUND**

Broadband technologies and applications are an integral part of any economic development effort in today's economy. Having access to broadband and enhancing people's knowledge and application of this valuable resource is vital to the social and economic well-being of the region. In a recent USA Today publication, Google research said small businesses that actively use websites and related technologies experience 40% higher growth than non-users.

Imagine an entire community or region actively using broadband technologies and applications in many aspects of their businesses, agencies and organizations. There are a multitude of positive benefits to having and using broadband for nearly any business or organization. For these reasons, Fulton County has formed a broadband strategic plan to advance this mission and outcomes.

The broadband strategy was developed based on online surveys and research, the implementation of broadband awareness sessions throughout the county and region, as well as individual community, carrier, government, and business leadership interviews.

Fulton County Broadband strategy is focused on three key areas:

- Improve/upgrade broadband connectivity/access throughout the county in multiple phases;
- Expand and deepen technology adoption by county businesses and agencies; and,
- Integrate digital inclusion strategies into community and economic development efforts.

## **BROADBAND DEVELOPMENT**

**Goal 1: BROADBAND ACCESS** – Improve/upgrade broadband connectivity/access throughout the county in multiple phases.

**Strategy 1 A:** Gather relevant data to assess broadband infrastructure in the county.

**Action Plan 1A1:** Analyze public data regarding broadband connectivity (e.g., FCC Form 477, Census ACES, Microsoft, MLab, Broadband Now, state broadband maps).

**Action Plan 1A2:** Design and conduct a community survey to validate existing broadband data and document demand aggregation.

**Action Plan 1A3:** Engage in one-on-one conversations with providers to learn their broadband infrastructure footprint as well as potential future investments.

**Key Assets/Partners** – Local Broadband Providers, Connect Illinois, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.

**Timeline for launching/completing** Launch January, 2021/ ongoing

**Evaluation:** *Survey design, # survey responses, data documentation reports, # strategic partners identified*

**Strategy 1B:** Analyze data gathered in objective 1a in concert with stakeholder input to identify and map broadband investment priority areas (BIPAs) in the county.

**Action Plan 1B1:** Define level of service (e.g., minimum advertised speeds, technology) expected in BIPAs (areas identified as first-in-line to make broadband investments).

**Action Plan 1B2:** Document number of households, businesses, farmsteads, and farm fields within BIPAs that may subscribe to the service.

**Action Plan 1B3:** Consider socioeconomic characteristics of BIPAs to anticipate potential adoption barriers such as affordability, age, and lack of computing devices. Document areas identified during this task to be targeted by additional digital inclusion strategies (refer to Goal #2).

**Key Assets/Partners** – Local broadband providers, Connect Illinois, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.

**Timeline for launching/completing** March, 2021/ ongoing

**Evaluation:** *data documentation reports, strategic goals developed, funding leveraged through planning*

**Goal 2: Expand and Deepen Technology Adoption by County Businesses and Agencies** – Improve the e-connectivity ranking of the region’s businesses and agencies from “Poor or Weak” to “Good or Strong” by 2022, as measured by an assessment process implemented by broadband service providers.

**Strategy 2 A:** Adopt technology performance metrics and develop and monitor county best practices.

**Action Plan 2A1** – In 2021, conduct 8–10 Broadband Awareness Seminars to increase adoption and use of broadband for businesses, nonprofits, and communities. Technology integration as a core part of business/community growth strategy will contribute to attraction of workers aged 25–44 years old.

**Action Plan 2A2** – By 2025, up to 50% of municipalities, villages, and townships with population over 1,000 will implement at the rate of 10% per year from 2020 – 2025 key high value applications through on-line services. The applications will connect stakeholders and provide access to databases that improve customer satisfaction, agency effectiveness and efficiency, and deliver better outcomes based on best practices.

**Action Plan 2A3** – Create a county-wide local government action team by 2021 that will identify and prioritize local governments that are ready and equipped to be able to implement key high value applications through on-line services that deliver best practice solutions for stakeholders. Action team will identify and research best practice agencies from outside the region to define and prioritize best practice applications that will be of benefit to regional government departments and agencies and be feasible to implement (ongoing).

**Key Assets/Partners** – Local broadband providers, Connect Illinois, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.

**Timeline for launching/completing Launch January, 2021/ ongoing**

**Evaluation:** # participants in seminars, # communities engaged with programming, # new practices implemented by local governments

**Strategy 2 B:** Broadband task force will develop by December 2020 and implement by 2021 a suite of community and economic development tools, applications and services that make available online all the resources new and existing businesses need to help them connect into the opportunities being created through the Fulton County USDA REDI strategy, and be able to improve their connection to value chain resources across and beyond the region.

**Action Plan 2B1** – In partnership with Spoon River College, local broadband providers and local businesses, identify technology-based applications and tools that enhance the connection of business owners to accelerate growth and job creation for new and existing businesses.

**Action Plan 2B2** – Spoon River College outreach director – will work with two industry cluster teams per year to identify opportunities for use of broadband technology tools and applications that will enable at least 15 business per year to

improve the connections in their value chain in ways that will reduce cost and expand revenue and customer opportunities.

**Action Plan 2B3** – By the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter, 2021, the broadband task force will create a business retention and visitation protocol that includes on-site and/or remote business/organization assessment. Team would complete 4-5 visits per quarter each year to evaluate current operations and provide insight focusing on technology and related broadband applications for past broadband seminar attendees.

**Action Plan 2B4** – On an annual basis, access improvements in technology and application skill levels as measured to inform program design and make progress toward goals.

**Key Assets/Partners** – Local broadband providers, Connect Illinois, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.

**Timeline for launching/completing Launch January, 2021/ ongoing**

**Evaluation:** *Established business visitation protocol, # visits, new tools adopted resulting from visits, document new practices at the business level resulting from business visits.*

**Goal 3: Integrate digital inclusion strategies into community and economic development efforts throughout Fulton County and its municipalities.**

**Strategy 3 A:** Assess the community's online presence and reputation; draft and implement a plan to improve community's online presence and proactively manage online reputation, including expanding online services and digital engagement with residents.

**Key Assets/Partners** – Local broadband providers, Connect Illinois, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, GP EDC, Purdue University, and University of Illinois Extension.

**Timeline for launching/completing Launch December, 2020/ ongoing**

**Evaluation:** *Complete review of web presence, strategic plan for modification to enhance engagement with residents/businesses, document website traffic/use changes*

**Strategy 3B:** Realign economic development efforts to 1) provide support to existing businesses and their online presence and competitiveness; 2) become a “remote work” friendly community; 3) ensure current and future workforce has both relevant digital and soft skills.

**Key Assets/Partners** – Local broadband providers, Connect Illinois, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, local school districts, and University of Illinois Extension.

**Timeline for launching/completing Launch January, 2021/ ongoing**

**Evaluation:** *Document increased use of online services, new marketing materials created that align with remote work ready communities, # workforce development programming efforts and # participants, # certification programs completed, #employees completing remote work certification program.*

**Strategy 3C:** Conduct annual “hackathons” where local students or residents compete to develop apps or online services to improve city services, community responsiveness, and/or quality of life in general.

**Key Assets/Partners** – Local broadband providers, Connect Illinois, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, local school districts, and University of Illinois Extension.

**Timeline for launching/completing Launch January, 2022/ ongoing**

**Evaluation:** # participants, diversity of participation, # new ideas launched

**Strategy 3D:** : Identify and secure a facility in the community to serve as a regional data innovation hub that can be used for activities such as, but not limited to: host digital literacy/skill workshops, serve as a co-working and/or maker space, next teleworkers, and open space for toddlers. This site would contribute to the entrepreneurship ecosystem with an emphasis on developing products and services more aligned to a digital economy (e.g., app development, online services, consulting, data analysis).

**Key Assets/Partners** –Local broadband providers, Connect Illinois, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, SBDC, Economic Development Administration, and University of Illinois Extension.

**Timeline for launching/completing Launch January, 2021/ ongoing**

**Evaluation:** Planning document created for co-working and maker space, leveraged funding, # of businesses served

Appendix:

**REDI Planning Document: Goals, Objectives & Action Plan**



**Goal: ACT COLLECTIVELY – Set conditions that provide a positive climate for business development and growth by working collaboratively among units of local government.**

**Background Information:** Engaging community leaders throughout the county leverages the economic development potential overall. Through continuous communication and establishment of annual strategic goals, countywide development can be achieved.

**Objective:** Strengthen and expand county wide collaboration by creating and implementing new platforms for communication and shared resources.

How? Specific Strategies	Who? Lead Person(s) from your Team	Partners? Key Partners	Key Resources? Available Assets	Timeline		Measurements to be used
				Start	End	
<b>Action Plan 1A1</b> - Recognize the Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development as the county's primary economic development agency.	Cole McDaniel, SRPED	Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, City of Canton and Fulton County Board, local banking institutions, utilities.		Fall, 2020	May, 2021	
<b>Action Plan 1A2:</b> Work with Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development to ensure countywide representation in all aspects of economic development.	Cole McDaniel, Fulton County Board	Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, City of Canton and Fulton County Board, local banking institutions, utilities.		Fall, 2020	May, 2021	Number of different individuals engaged with activities
<b>Action Plan 1A3:</b> Annually review and establish economic development programming priorities, align with strategies for strengthening collaboration.	Cole McDaniel, SRPED	Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, City of Canton and Fulton County Board, local banking institutions, utilities.		Fall, 2020	May, 2021	Planning documents created, funding generated from strategic goals

Appendix:

**REDI Planning Document: Goals, Objectives & Action Plan**



**Goal 1: ACT COLLECTIVELY – Set conditions that provide a positive climate for business development and growth by working collaboratively among units of local government.**

**Background Information:** Engaging community leaders throughout the county leverages the economic development potential overall. Through continuous communication and establishment of annual strategic goals, countywide development can be achieved.

**Objective: Strategy 1A -** Strengthen and expand county wide collaboration by creating and implementing new platforms for communication and shared resources.

How? Specific Strategies	Who? Lead Person(s) from your Team	Partners? Key Partners	Key Resources? Available Assets	Timeline		Measurements to be used
				Start	End	
<b>Action Plan 1A1 -</b> Recognize the Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development as the county's primary economic development agency.	Cole McDaniel, SRPED	Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, City of Canton and Fulton County Board, local banking institutions, utilities.		Fall, 2020	May, 2021	
<b>Action Plan 1A2:</b> Work with Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development to ensure countywide representation in all aspects of economic development.	Cole McDaniel, Fulton County Board	Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, City of Canton and Fulton County Board, local banking institutions, utilities.		Fall, 2020	May, 2021	Number of different individuals engaged with activities
<b>Action Plan 1A3:</b> Annually review and establish economic development programming priorities, align with strategies for strengthening collaboration.	Cole McDaniel, SRPED	Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, City of Canton and Fulton County Board, local banking institutions, utilities.		Fall, 2020	May, 2021	Planning documents created, funding generated from strategic goals

Appendix:

**REDI Planning Document: Goals, Objectives & Action Plan**



**Goal 1: ACT COLLECTIVELY – Set conditions that provide a positive climate for business development and growth by working collaboratively among units of local government.**

**Background Information:** Engaging community leaders throughout the county leverages the economic development potential overall. Through continuous communication and establishment of annual strategic goals, countywide development can be achieved.

**Objective:** Strategy 1B - Develop a web presence to promote development opportunities throughout the county. Ongoing website development will occur to fully leverage internal communication and external marketing opportunities.

How? Specific Strategies	Who? Lead Person(s) from Your Team	Partners? Key Partners	Key Resources? Available Assets	Timeline		Measurements to be used
				Start	End	
<b>Action Plan 1B1:</b> Review and implement best practices for economic development websites – using storytelling, demographics, available sites, workforce, housing, energy, etc.	Cole McDaniel, SRPED	Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, MidCentury Communications, local tech companies, Illinois Economic Development Council/GP EDC, and Purdue.		Fall, 2020	July, 2021	Documentation of review process and outcomes
<b>Action Plan 1B2:</b> Use the county website as a platform for sharing economic development tools at work in our county. Highlight best practices in development from communities of all sizes.	Cole McDaniel, Fulton County Board	Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, MidCentury Communications, local tech companies, Illinois Economic Development Council/GP EDC, and Purdue.		Fall, 2020	July, 2021	Number of practice changes implemented

Appendix:

# REDI Planning Document: Goals, Objectives & Action Plan



**Goal 2: EXPAND ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE – Implement community economic development strategies and action plans that will increase overall wages, raise the average annual wage, and increase annual municipal and county sales tax collected in Fulton County.**

**Background Information:** Economic development efforts will give priority to supporting small business startups, through development of tools and mentoring programming to create a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem. Business visitation programs will inform and enhance this ongoing strategy.

**Objective:** Strategy 2 A: Strengthen businesses throughout the county by increasing the number of small business starts and increasing the concentration of mid-sized firms (20-50 employees).

How? Specific Strategies	Who? Lead Person(s) from your Team	Partners? Key Partners		Key Resources? Available Assets	Timeline		Measurements to be used
					Start	End	
<b>Action Plan 2A1</b> - Establish a Business Expansion Action Teams through visits to 6-8 firms per year.	Cole McDaniel, SRPED	Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, Spoon River College, City of Canton, Small Business Development Center, University of Illinois Extension, and Greater Peoria EDC.			March, 2021	Ongoing	Formation of business visitation team, # business visits completed.
<b>Action Plan 2A2</b> – Identify value chain leakage opportunities within priority industry sectors.	Cole McDaniel, Fulton County Board	SRPED, SRC, City of Canton, SBDC, University of Illinois Extension, and Greater Peoria EDC.			March, 2021	Ongoing	# new market opportunities developed in response
<b>Action Plan 2A3</b> - Encourage and facilitate access to new markets for agricultural products.	Cole McDaniel, SRPED	SRPED, SRC, City of Canton, SBDC, University of Illinois Extension, and Greater Peoria EDC.			March, 2021	Ongoing	# value chain opportunities discovered

Appendix:

# REDI Planning Document: Goals, Objectives & Action Plan



**Goal 2: EXPAND ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE – Implement community economic development strategies and action plans that will increase overall wages, raise the average annual wage, and increase annual municipal and county sales tax collected in Fulton County.**

**Background Information:** Economic development efforts will give priority to supporting small business startups, through development of tools and mentoring programming to create a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem. Business visitation programs will inform and enhance this ongoing strategy.

**Objective: Strategy 2 A:** Strengthen businesses throughout the county by increasing the number of small business starts and increasing the concentration of mid-sized firms (20-50 employees).

How? Specific Strategies	Who? Lead Person(s) from your Team	Partners? Key Partners		Key Resources? Available Assets	Timeline		Measurements to be used
					Start	End	
<b>Action Plan 2A1-</b> Establish a Business Expansion Action Teams through visits to 6-8 firms per year.	Cole McDaniel, SRPED	Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, Spoon River College, City of Canton, Small Business Development Center, University of Illinois Extension, and Greater Peoria EDC.			March, 2021	Ongoing	Formation of business visitation team, # business visits completed.
<b>Action Plan 2A2 –</b> Identify value chain leakage opportunities within priority industry sectors.	Cole McDaniel, Fulton County Board	SRPED, SRC, City of Canton, SBDC, University of Illinois Extension, and Greater Peoria EDC.			March, 2021	Ongoing	# new market opportunities developed in response
<b>Action Plan 2A3 -</b> Encourage and facilitate access to new markets for agricultural products.	Cole McDaniel, SRPED	SRPED, SRC, City of Canton, SBDC, University of Illinois Extension, and Greater Peoria EDC.			March, 2021	Ongoing	# value chain opportunities discovered

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**REDI Planning Document: Goals, Objectives & Action Plan**



<p><b>Goal 2: EXPAND ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE – Implement community economic development strategies and action plans that will increase overall wages, raise the average annual wage, and increase annual municipal and county sales tax collected in Fulton County.</b></p>						
<p><b>Background Information:</b> Economic development efforts will give priority to supporting small business startups, through development of tools and mentoring programming to create a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem. Business visitation programs will inform and enhance this ongoing strategy.</p>						
<p><b>Objective: Strategy 2 B:</b> Strengthen small business development through development of a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem, supporting entrepreneurship to increase the pace of annual business starts and success.</p>						
How? Specific Strategies	Who? Lead Person(s) from your Team	Partners? Key Partners	Key Resources? Available Assets	Timeline Start	Timeline End	Measurements to be used
<p><b>Action Plan 2B1</b> – Build a system to track and communicate with new business starts within 30 days of business formation.</p>	<p>Cole McDaniel, SRPED</p>	<p>SBDC - WIU, SRC, SRPED, University of Illinois Extension and Peoria Start-Up Community.</p>	<p>SBDC - WIU, SRC, SRPED, University of Illinois Extension and Peoria Start-Up Community.</p>	<p>June, 2021</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p># regional network engagements</p>
<p><b>Action Plan 2B2</b> – Establish an innovation ecosystem action team, map entrepreneur development assets and identify gaps to address.</p>	<p>Cole McDaniel, Fulton County Board</p>	<p>SBDC - WIU, SRC, SRPED, University of Illinois Extension and Peoria Start-Up Community.</p>	<p>SBDC - WIU, SRC, SRPED, University of Illinois Extension and Peoria Start-Up Community.</p>	<p>June, 2021</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p># regional network engagements</p>
<p><b>Action Plan 2B3</b> – Create opportunities for peer learning among entrepreneurs.</p>	<p>Cole McDaniel, SRPED</p>	<p>SBDC - WIU, SRC, SRPED, University of Illinois Extension and Peoria Start-Up Community.</p>	<p>SBDC - WIU, SRC, SRPED, University of Illinois Extension and Peoria Start-Up Community.</p>	<p>June, 2021</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p># business consultations with new business starts</p>
<p><b>Action Plan 2B4</b> –Develop social media marketing campaign to enhance entrepreneurial ecosystem.</p>	<p>Bradley University Intern</p>	<p>SBDC - WIU, SRC, SRPED, University of Illinois Extension and Peoria Start-Up Community.</p>	<p>SBDC - WIU, SRC, SRPED, University of Illinois Extension and Peoria Start-Up Community.</p>	<p>June, 2021</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Growth in # businesses participating in networking</p>

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**Goal 3: IMPROVE HUMAN CAPITAL** – By the end of 2024, reverse demographic trends and population mix to ensure a plentiful workforce supply by increasing total population; the prime workforce demographic of residents aged 25-44 years old; and the labor force participation rate.

**Background Information:** While economic development goals are designed to encourage business and job growth, the workforce development goals work to ensure individuals have the education, skills, and training needed to obtain jobs. Retaining youth and supporting youth in building a career identity is a critical element of this work

**Objective: Strategy 3 A:** Create a county talent pipeline 3600 approach focused on countywide career readiness and career pathways by strengthening connections to the regional workforce organization and programming.

How? Specific Strategies	Who? Lead Person(s) from your Team	Partners? Key Partners	Key Resources? Available Assets	Timeline		Measurements to be used
				Start	End	
<b>Action Plan 3A1</b> – Establish a Career Readiness Toolkit, which can be accessed by all partners to assist in workforce development.	Spoon River College	Small Business Development Center WIU, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and Peoria Start-Up Community.		June, 2021	Ongoing	# regional network engagements
<b>Action Plan 3A2</b> - Increase the number of high school youth earning college credit by 5% year-over-year (more youth by 2025).	Spoon River College	SBDC - WIU, SRC, SRPED, University of Illinois Extension and Peoria Start-Up Community.		June, 2021	Ongoing	# regional network engagements
<b>Action Plan 3A3</b> – Increase the proportion of 18+ year olds with a post-secondary credential by 10%.	Spoon River College	SBDC - WIU, SRC, SRPED, University of Illinois Extension and Peoria Start-Up Community.		June, 2021	Ongoing	# business consultations with new business starts

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<p><b>Goal 3: IMPROVE HUMAN CAPITAL</b> – By the end of 2024, reverse demographic trends and population mix to ensure a plentiful workforce supply by increasing total population; the prime workforce demographic of residents aged 25-44 years old; and the labor force participation rate.</p>						
<p><b>Background Information:</b> While economic development goals are designed to encourage business and job growth, the workforce development goals work to ensure individuals have the education, skills, and training needed to obtain jobs. Retaining youth and supporting youth in building a career identity is a critical element of this work</p>						
<p><b>Objective: Strategy 3 A:</b> Create a county talent pipeline 3600 approach focused on countywide career readiness and career pathways by strengthening connections to the regional workforce organization and programming.</p>						
How? Specific Strategies	Who? Lead Person(s) from your Team	Partners? Key Partners	Key Resources? Available Assets	Timeline Start	Timeline End	Measurements to be used
<p><b>Action Plan 3A4</b> –Continuously assess the capacity and effectiveness of the county’s talent supply pipeline to respond to meet ongoing market demand.</p>	<p>Spoon River College</p>	<p>Area School Districts, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and Area Workforce Development Board.</p>	<p>Area School Districts, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, University of Illinois Extension and Area Workforce Development Board.</p>	<p>Fall, 2020</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Changes in levels of secondary credentials, increase in # youth pursuing post-secondary credential,</p>
<p><b>Action Plan 3A5</b> – Strengthen communication and collaboration across all county educational institutions - engage students annually through regional career exploration activities.</p>	<p>Spoon River College</p>	<p>Area School Districts, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, University of Illinois Extension and Area Workforce Development Board.</p>	<p>Area School Districts, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, University of Illinois Extension and Area Workforce Development Board.</p>	<p>Fall, 2020</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p># youth participating in career exploration activities,</p>
<p><b>Action Plan 3A6</b> - Increase Youth Labor Force Participation by 10% (1000 youth in five years, 200 youth each year).</p>	<p>Spoon River College</p>	<p>Area School Districts, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, University of Illinois Extension and Area Workforce Development Board.</p>	<p>Area School Districts, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, University of Illinois Extension and Area Workforce Development Board.</p>	<p>Fall, 2020</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p># youth participating in workforce</p>

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<b>Goal 3: IMPROVE HUMAN CAPITAL</b> – By the end of 2024, reverse demographic trends and population mix to ensure a plentiful workforce supply by increasing total population; the prime workforce demographic of residents aged 25-44 years old; and the labor force participation rate.						
<b>Background Information:</b> While economic development goals are designed to encourage business and job growth, the workforce development goals work to ensure individuals have the education, skills, and training needed to obtain jobs. Retaining youth and supporting youth in building a career identity is a critical element of this work						
<b>Objective:</b> Strategy 3B: Increase the number of residents 25-44 years old to meet the increased demand for prime working age employees and entrepreneurs.						
How? Specific Strategies	Who? Lead Person(s) from your Team	Partners? Key Partners	Key Resources? Available Assets	Timeline Start	Timeline End	Measurements to be used
<b>Action Plan 3B1</b> - Promote cooperative programs between schools and economic development organizations that provide area youth with opportunities to learn about the local economy, employment opportunities, and entrepreneurship.	Cole McDaniel, SRPED	Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, Area School Districts, City of Canton, Fulton County Board, local utility companies, University of Illinois Extension, and local government leadership.		Fall, 2020	Ongoing	# community learning exchanges, document key learning and actions resulting from exchange.
<b>Action Plan 3B2</b> – Develop capacity for community leadership around tools, incentives, and other resources required to create an investible marketplace.	Cole McDaniel, SRPED	Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, Area School Districts, City of Canton, Fulton County Board, local utility companies, University of Illinois Extension, and local government leadership.		Fall, 2020	Ongoing	# programming partnerships created with schools and document new investments made in communities.

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# REDI Planning Document: Goals, Objectives & Action Plan



**Goal 1: BROADBAND ACCESS** – Improve/upgrade broadband connectivity/access throughout the county in multiple phases.

**Background Information:** Completing local needs assessment of broadband services will include surveys of households, businesses, and providers to document areas of greatest need. Data gathered through the assessment process will inform planning and development of broadband throughout the county.

**Objective:** Strategy 1 A: Gather relevant data to assess broadband infrastructure in the county.

How? Specific Strategies	Who? Lead Person(s) from your Team	Partners? Key Partners	Key Resources? Available Assets	Timeline		Measurements to be used
				Start	End	
Action Plan 1A1: Analyze public data regarding broadband connectivity (e.g., FCC Form 477, Census ACES, Microsoft, Mlab, Broadband Now, state broadband maps).	MidCentury Telephone Cooperative	Local Broadband Providers, Connect Illinois, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.	Local Broadband Providers, Connect Illinois, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.	January, 2021	Ongoing	data documentation reports,
Action Plan 1A2: Design and conduct a community survey to validate existing broadband data and document demand aggregation.	MidCentury Telephone Cooperative	Local Broadband Providers, Connect Illinois, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.	Local Broadband Providers, Connect Illinois, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.	January, 2021	Ongoing	Survey design, # survey responses,
Action Plan 1A3: Engage in one-on-one conversations with providers to learn their broadband infrastructure footprint as well as potential future investments.	MidCentury Telephone Cooperative	Local Broadband Providers, Connect Illinois, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.	Local Broadband Providers, Connect Illinois, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.	January, 2021	Ongoing	# strategic partners identified

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**Goal 1: BROADBAND ACCESS** – Improve/upgrade broadband connectivity/access throughout the county in multiple phases.

**Background Information:** Completing local needs assessment of broadband services will include surveys of households, businesses, and providers to document areas of greatest need. Data gathered through the assessment process will inform planning and development of broadband throughout the county.

**Objective:** Strategy 1B: Analyze data gathered in objective 1a in concert with stakeholder input to identify and map broadband investment priority areas (BIPAs) in the county.

How? Specific Strategies	Who? Lead Person(s) from your Team	Partners? Key Partners	Key Resources? Available Assets	Timeline		Measurements to be used
				Start	End	
<b>Action Plan 1B1:</b> Define level of service (e.g., minimum advertised speeds, technology) expected in BIPAs (areas identified as first-in-line to make broadband investments).	MidCentury Telephone Cooperative	Local broadband providers, Connect Illinois, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.	Local broadband providers, Connect Illinois, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.	January, 2021	Ongoing	data documentation reports, strategic goals developed, funding leveraged through planning
<b>Action Plan 1B2:</b> Document number of households, businesses, farmsteads, and farm fields within BIPAs that may subscribe to the service.	MidCentury Telephone Cooperative	Local broadband providers, Connect Illinois, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.	Local broadband providers, Connect Illinois, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.	January, 2021	Ongoing	data documentation reports, strategic goals developed, funding leveraged through planning
<b>Action Plan 1B3:</b> Consider socioeconomic characteristics of BIPAs to anticipate potential adoption barriers.	MidCentury Telephone Cooperative	Local broadband providers, Connect Illinois, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.	Local broadband providers, Connect Illinois, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.	January, 2021	Ongoing	data documentation reports, strategic goals developed, funding leveraged through planning

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**Goal 2:** Expand and Deepen Technology Adoption by County Businesses and Agencies – Improve the e-connectivity ranking of the region’s businesses and agencies from “Poor or Weak” to “Good or Strong” by 2022, as measured by an assessment process implemented by broadband service providers.

**Background Information:** Completing local needs assessment of broadband services will include surveys of households, businesses, and providers to document areas of greatest need. Data gathered through the assessment process will inform planning and development of broadband throughout the county.

**Objective: Strategy 2 A:** Adopt technology performance metrics and develop and monitor county best practices.

How? Specific Strategies	Who? Lead Person(s) from your Team	Partners? Key Partners	Key Resources? Available Assets	Timeline		Measurements to be used
				Start	End	
<b>Action Plan 2A1</b> - In 2021, conduct 8-10 Broadband Awareness Seminars to increase adoption and use of broadband.	MidCentury Telephone Cooperative	Local broadband providers, Connect Illinois, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.	Local broadband providers, Connect Illinois, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.	January, 2021	Ongoing	# participants in seminars, # communities engaged with programming.
<b>Action Plan 2A2</b> – By 2025, up to 50% of municipalities, villages, and townships will implement key high value applications through on-line services.	MidCentury Telephone Cooperative	Local broadband providers, Connect Illinois, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.	Local broadband providers, Connect Illinois, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.	January, 2021	Ongoing	# new practices implemented by local governments
<b>Action Plan 2A3</b> - Create a county-wide local government action team identify and research best practice applications that will be of benefit government.	MidCentury Telephone Cooperative	Local broadband providers, Connect Illinois, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.	Local broadband providers, Connect Illinois, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.	January, 2021	Ongoing	# new practices implemented by local governments

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**Goal 2:** Expand and Deepen Technology Adoption by County Businesses and Agencies – Improve the e-connectivity ranking of the region’s businesses and agencies.

**Background Information:** Completing local needs assessment of broadband services will include surveys of households, businesses, and providers to document areas of greatest need. Data gathered through the assessment process will inform planning and development of broadband throughout the county.

**Objective: Strategy 2 B:** Broadband task force will develop by December 2020 and implement by 2021 a suite of community and economic development tools, applications and services that make available online all the resources new and existing businesses.

How? Specific Strategies	Who? Lead Person(s) from your Team	Partners? Key Partners	Key Resources? Available Assets	Timeline		Measurements to be used
				Start	End	
<b>Action Plan 2B1</b> –Identify technology-based applications and tools that enhance the connection of business owners to accelerate growth and job creation.	Spoon River College	Local broadband providers, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.		January, 2021	Ongoing	Established business visitation protocol,
<b>Action Plan 2B2</b> – Work with two industry cluster teams per year to identify new opportunities for use of broadband technology application.	Spoon River College	Local broadband providers, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.		January, 2021	Ongoing	# visits, new tools adopted resulting from visits,
<b>Action Plan 2B3</b> –Create a business retention and visitation protocol that includes business/organization assessment.	Spoon River College	Local broadband providers, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.		January, 2021	Ongoing	Established business visitation protocol,
<b>Action Plan 2B4</b> –Assess improvements in technology and application skill levels as measured to inform program design.	Spoon River College	Local broadband providers, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.		January, 2021	Ongoing	

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<b>Goal 3:</b> Integrate digital inclusion strategies into community and economic development efforts throughout Fulton County and its municipalities.						
<b>Background Information:</b> Establishing a strong online presence is critical to business development. Digital engagement with businesses and expanding online services to meet expectations of businesses and ‘remote workers’ encourages innovation and broadening opportunities for all.						
<b>Objective:</b>						
<b>How? Specific Strategies</b>	<b>Who? Lead Person(s) from your Team</b>	<b>Partners? Key Partners</b>	<b>Key Resources? Available Assets</b>	<b>Timeline</b>		<b>Measurements to be used</b>
<b>Strategy 3 A:</b> Assess the community’s online presence and reputation; draft and implement a plan to improve community’s online presence and proactively manage online reputation, including expanding online services and digital engagement with residents.	Spoon River College	Local broadband providers, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.		January, 2021	Ongoing	Complete review of web presence, strategic plan to enhance engagement with residents/businesses, document website traffic/use changes
<b>Strategy 3B:</b> Realign economic development efforts to 1) provide support to existing businesses and their online presence and competitiveness; 2) become a “remote work” friendly community; 3) ensure current and future workforce has both relevant digital and soft skills.	Spoon River College	Local broadband providers, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.		January, 2021	Ongoing	Remote work ready communities, # workforce dev. programming efforts and # participants, # certifications, #employees remote work certification program.

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<p><b>Strategy 3C:</b> Conduct annual “hackathons” where local students or residents compete to develop apps or online services to improve city services, community responsiveness, and/or quality of life in general.</p>	<p>Spoon River College</p>	<p>Local broadband providers, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.</p>	<p>January, 2021</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p># participants, diversity of participation, # new ideas launched</p>
<p><b>Strategy 3D:</b> Identify and secure a facility in the community to serve as a regional data innovation hub that can be used for activities such as, but not limited to: host digital literacy/skill workshops, serve as a co-working and/or maker space, next teleworkers, and open space for toddlers. This site would contribute to the entrepreneurship ecosystem with an emphasis on developing products and services more aligned to a digital economy (e.g., app development, online services, consulting, data analysis).</p>	<p>Spoon River College</p>	<p>Local broadband providers, Spoon River College, Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, and University of Illinois Extension.</p>	<p>January, 2021</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Planning document created for co-working and maker space, leveraged funding, # of businesses served</p>

## 10. Acknowledgements

Fulton County has benefited a great deal from their engagement with the USDA Rural Economic Development Innovation grant, thanks in no small part to the exceptional technical assistance and mentoring support received from Purdue University's Center for Regional Development; University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture, Food and Environment Community and Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky; University of Illinois Extension Kathleen Brown, USDA Rural Development Dwight Reynolds, and other Rural Development staff at the state and national levels. We greatly appreciate their generous support and dedication to rural development, and know we will continue to reap the benefits of this investment of time and talent for a long time into the future.