BREAKING THROUGH TO NORTHEAST INDIANA'S ENTREPRENEURIAL FUTURE

Breakthrough Thinking Through an Entrepreneurial Lens

Northeast Indiana stands at an inflection point. The region has the assets, the talent, and the community will to become a national model for entrepreneurial vitality and quality of place — but realizing that potential requires coordinated action across three interconnected systems.

01

BUILD THE FRACTIONAL BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM

Gives entrepreneurs affordable access to specialized back-office expertise they cannot sustain independently.

- A Regionally Branded Fractional Services Platform
- Fortitude Fund grantees as an initial pilot cohort
- This is not a pipeline problem. It is a connective infrastructure problem.
- Built around managed services, not just marketplace access
- First-pilot services: cash flow and financial management, legal services, and marketing and digital commerce

02

STRENGTHEN A BUY LOCAL CULTURE

A connected regional commerce model that competes on experience, relationship, and trust rather than price or convenience.

- A Local Market Network
- A Regional Wholesale Cooperative
- Competing on quality, not just sentiment
- Making local buying an experience
- A Loyalty Club and App

03

BECOME A NET EXPORTER OF QUALITY OF PLACE

Projecting the region's identity and economic output well beyond its borders.

- The startup musician capital of the United States
- Export areas: talent, digital content, creative services, and visitor experience
- A dedicated music sector leader
- Diffusion of effort is fatal to place-based identity strategies

Together, these three pillars form a mutually reinforcing system in which each area strengthens the others.

THE BREAKTHROUGHS EMERGE AT THE INTERSECTIONS

Not three programs. One system.

These three areas are not independent initiatives. They form an interconnected system where each pillar strengthens the others.

Fractional marketing support

enabling local businesses to sell through the regional platform

The music ecosystem

generating digital content that feeds the export strategy

The buy-local network

creating the retail infrastructure that makes quality-of-place tourism viable

The most important strategic discipline is to resist treating these as separate programs with separate champions and timelines.

IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

The challenge in Northeast Indiana is less about the absence of entrepreneurs and more about the absence of connective systems that provide shared talent, digital capability, and operational support at scale. The following actions represent the clearest near-term path forward:

PRIORITY AREA	IMMEDIATE ACTION
Appoint a Platform Champion (1)	Identify one individual or organization to own the fractional ecosystem concept and begin building the provider network within 90 days
Pilot Cohort Selection (1)	Designate Fortitude Fund grantees as the initial cohort; define the service package covering financial management, legal services, and marketing
Greater Fort Wayne Partnership (2)	Align with Greater Fort Wayne Inc. on the Buy Local platform architecture and governance; avoid duplicating existing momentum
Local Market Network (2)	Launch a viable regional digital marketplace focused on a single product category or geography to test demand and logistics
Music Sector Leadership (3)	Formalize the dedicated music economy leadership role; define scope, funding, and a 12-month success scorecard
Shared Metrics Framework	Agree on a common dashboard tracking revenue lift, owner hours saved, buy-local transaction volume, content exports, and visitor spending

Northeast Indiana has everything it needs to become a national model for entrepreneurial vitality and quality of place.

The breakthrough is not in any single idea.
It is in the courage to connect them.

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