SOUTH CENTRAL
REGIONAL REPORT

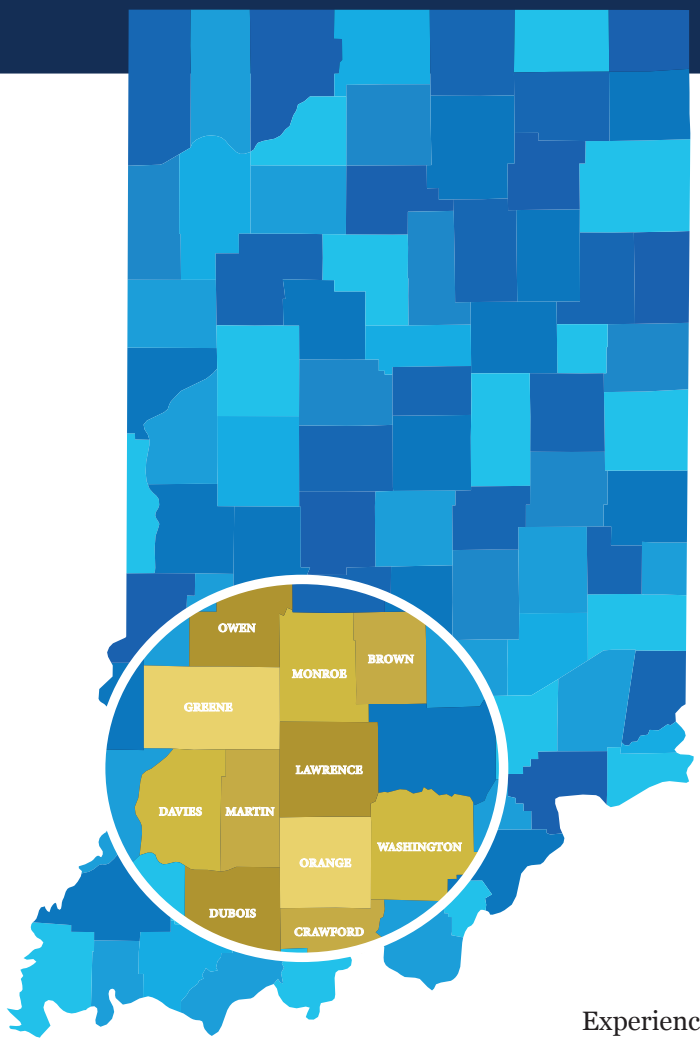
October 2026

"Indiana's strength comes from its people – Hoosiers who work hard, solve problems and take pride in building something better for the next generation.

Across our state, we're seeing what's possible when business, higher education and community leaders come together to solve problems with a shared purpose. Those partnerships are driving growth, creating jobs and opening new doors for Hoosiers.

Here in South Central Indiana, that momentum is clear. The region is bringing together world-class research, a highly skilled workforce and Indiana's growing strengths in defense and life sciences to create new opportunities for Hoosiers. From Kratos' major investment near Naval Surface Warfare Center Crane to Simtra BioPharma Solutions' continued growth in Bloomington, companies are choosing to invest and create high-wage jobs here. With Indiana University helping develop talent and drive innovation, and READI investments strengthening communities across the region, South Central Indiana is showing what's possible when we build on our strengths and work together to compete for the jobs and industries of the future."

— Governor Mike Braun



Regional Impact
SOUTH CENTRAL
In the last 18 months...

- **Seven businesses** committed to locating or growing in the Indiana Uplands
- More than **$447 million in capital investment committed** (almost **$2.5 billion** in the last six years)
- 775 new jobs committed with an **average wage of $41.72/hour**
- Almost **$82 million in new payroll** committed

SCAN TO WATCH
SOUTH CENTRAL ECONOMIC HIGHLIGHT VIDEO

Experience the region momentum in this two-minute video.

Stories from around the region

KRATOS DEFENSE LAUNCHES INDIANA PRESENCE WITH $50 MILLION INDIANA PAYLOAD FACILITY

- Odon facility near Crane Naval Surface Warfare Center will help rapidly scale hypersonic testing
- 68,000-square-foot facility, completed in July, will result in more than 100 jobs with an estimated average annual wage of more than $80,000
- A second Kratos facility in Odon, announced in May, will provide aerothermic testing for materials used on hypersonic systems

"The Indiana Payload Integration Facility represents a strategic investment in our nation's hypersonic capabilities and workforce," said **Eric DeMarco**, President and CEO of Kratos. "As threats evolve, the need for rapid, affordable and innovative solutions is paramount, and Kratos is committed to delivering them. This facility is just the beginning of our long-term investment in the region and the future of hypersonic technology."

SIMTRA BIOPHARMA SOLUTIONS EXPANDS BLOOMINGTON CAMPUS

- Estimated investment of $80 million to build 150,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art manufacturing facility for injectable medications
- Approximately 130 new jobs with an annual average salary of $72,000
- Additional investment of $145 million in cutting-edge equipment to solidify Simtra's position as a key player in the global pharmaceutical landscape

"We are thrilled to embark on this exciting journey within Monroe County," said Bloomington-based plant manager **Pat Adams**. "This expansion underscores our dedication to bringing vital injectables to our customers' patients while simultaneously fostering economic growth in Monroe County."

WABASH VALLEY FOODS ADDS PRODUCTION IN DUBOIS COUNTY TO SUPPLY TYSON FOODS

- $63 million, cooked-egg processing plant supplies Tyson Foods' Jimmy Dean breakfast brand
- Investment repurposed and expanded the former Indiana Furniture Industries Factory building
- 31 jobs added by long-time Dubois County business

"Wabash Valley is a bedrock business for us," said **Ed Cole**, former president of Dubois Strong, the county's economic development organization. "We are fortunate that they want to expand their operations here. They are taking on an old facility, and that's a tremendous plus as well."



Top story

UPLANDS REGION SEES BIG MOMENTUM AS DEFENSE-INDUSTRY HUB

DRAWN TO THE REGION BY THE NAVAL SURFACE WARFARE CENTER CRANE AND MAJOR INVESTMENTS BY KRATOS DEFENSE & SECURITY SYSTEMS, RAFAEL ADVANCED DEFENSE SYSTEMS and others, big players in the nation's defense industry are announcing investments in the region.

The region's institutions of higher education also make up one of the state's most reputable pipelines of K-12 teachers, advanced manufacturing and skilled trade employees.

The early success of the American Center for Manufacturing and Innovation in Greene County offers an example of the momentum. ACMI is in the process of expanding its National Security Industrial Hub campus to 1,500 acres. The campus, supported by a $75 million U.S. Department of Defense Munitions Campus Program, has landed recent commitments from Texas-based Spinner North America, New York-based iRocket and others, prompting the announcement in July of the 400-acre expansion just months after campus construction started.

The defense sector is also buoyed by Crane's collaborations with Indiana University and Purdue University.

GRANTS BOOST REGION

READI GRANTS POSITION BLOOMINGTON, REGION FOR CONTINUED SUCCESS

FROM WORKFORCE HOUSING TO ARTS AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS, $60 million in Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative grants from the state are helping Bloomington and the Uplands shine. The funds, known as READI grants, have leveraged millions more to solidify the region's position as a magnate for critical industries and the people they employ.

- **Westgate@Crane Techology Park.** This two-phase project is meant to provide infrastructure for microelectronics and related technologies that support the Uplands defense sector. The technology park will support the federal government's need for secure facilities with unique testing capabilities. The $141 million invested in WestGate Technology Park will establish cutting-edge assembly and testing capabilities supporting the growing hypersonics and radiation-hardened microelectronics sectors within the region.
- **Cook Medical Housing.** The Indiana Uplands Regional Housing Study found the greatest shortage of available housing in the region is for households making between $50,000 and $75,000 per year. Thanks to READI-grant funded infrastructure improvements, Cook Medical Group is developing housing in Owen, Crawford and Orange counties meant to alleviate the shortage for its employees and other residents of the region.
- **Jasper Regional Wellness Center.** Made possible by a $5 million READI grant that leveraged almost $40 million in additional funding, the wellness center will serve residents and visitors of Dubois County and eight surrounding counties. The 68,000-square-foot facility adjacent to Jasper High School will include a large fitness center, full-court gymnasiums, an indoor walking track, group exercise studios, community rooms and a community kitchen.
- **Sculptural Bus Shelters.** The City of Columbus is partnering with Indiana University's J. Irwin Miller Architecture Program and Ignition Arts to develop, build and implement sculptural bus shelters. READI grant funding will support three more shelters along Columbus' public transit routes, supporting the unique identity for the ColumBus transit system and enhancing the city's reputation for quality architecture.
- **Summit District Housing.** The Summit District on the southwest side of Bloomington will address the regional and county housing gap by creating 4,250 housing units across 140 acres. READI funds in the amount of $4 million will provide the sewer build-out to support this nearly $100 million project.
- **Edgewood Biomedical Training Center.** Beginning in the 2027-2028 school year, the EBTC will provide relevant training and stackable credentials to Richland-Bean Blossom Community School Corporation juniors and seniors to close workforce gaps for partner organizations IU Health, Cook Medical, Boston Scientific and others. The center is being built in part with $500,000 in READI grant funds.

Entrepreneur Success Stories

ENTREPRENEURSHIP & INNOVATION

SMALL BUSINESSES MAKE UP THE HEART OF THE INDIANA ECONOMY and employ more than 1.2 million Hoosiers. The state, including the Indiana Small Business Development Center, supported more than 10,000 entrepreneurs and small businesses in 2025, an effort that helped launch more than 450 businesses statewide. The South Central Indiana Small Business Development Center has assisted 800 entrepreneurs and small businesses since early 2025, helping launch 50 new businesses and helping clients secure $71.7 million in capital investments. These are examples of some of the SBDC's recent success stories:

- Huntingburg Mechanical Inc. (Dubois County): Almost 65 years ago, Ruger Kerstiens' grandfather started a homebuilding business that eventually grew into a multi-family housing developer and property manager. The missing piece of the puzzle for the Kerstiens was the ability to do plumbing, HVAC and electrical work in-house. In 2024, Ruger Kerstien solved the problem by purchasing a business in the mechanical space. The company reported almost $10 million in revenue in its first year under new ownership, beating expectations by 42 percent.
- Clutch Fabrication and Design (Monroe County): Josh and Rose Smith started their business in 2011 using old-school skills to design, fabricate, install and maintain everything from metal handrails to ornate doors and decorative gates. Now they're relying on new technologies to lessen their administrative burden and more efficiently design and create products for what so far is a mostly residential customer base. The company has averaged growth of 8 percent to 10 percent a year.
- Marshall Security LLC (Monroe County): Jeff Nesbitt, a former law enforcement officer, held a series of jobs at private security companies before deciding to strike out on his own in 2016. With business partner Megan Bentley he's grown Marshall Security to 65 employees. Keeping a reliable staff is among Nesbitt's top goals. "Making an investment in your people really does pay off," he said.
- Mother Bear's Pizza (Monroe County): Mother Bear's Pizza is an iconic brand for generations of IU-Bloomington students. Owner Ray McConn started Mother Bear's after graduating from IU in 1971. Just 11 years later, People magazine declared it the best pizza in America. Since 2016, Mother Bear's has been in expansion mode. Now McConn has visions of opening in the Indianapolis area or near another Big Ten school.
- Tell City Pretzels (Dubois County): Sandy and Brad Smith resurrected a pretzel brand started in 1858 after Sandy noticed that her husband's favorite snack had disappeared from grocery store shelves. When she discovered that Tell City Pretzels had closed, she and her husband decided to buy the business. Now business is going gangbusters, and an Indiana Manufacturing Readiness Grant is boosting efficiency.
- Mom Water (Dubois County): Authenticity is at the center of everything Jill and Bryce Morrison do to make and promote their product, Mom Water, a vodka- and fruit-infused water drink. "We're unabashedly who we are. We're not corporate people," said Jill. "We're Hoosiers, and we're family owned and operated." Whatever they're doing is working. Five years in, they're moving one million cases annually. They've even added a second drink, a tequila-infused product called Dad Water.

MAKING AI ACCESSIBLE FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

Powered by a Community Collaboration Fund Grant awarded by the state, The Builder's Room is a new cohort-based program from Amplify Bloomington and the Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce. It equips established local business owners with the skills to create real, custom digital tools for their operations using AI-assisted development—no coding experience or technical background required. Think automated inventory systems, customer-facing chatbots, back-office dashboards, built by the owners themselves, in plain English. In six weeks, participants go from identifying a business problem to demonstrating a working solution at a live Showcase & Demo Day.

Headlines from around the region

INSIDE INDIANA BUSINESS

Indiana University lands record $100 million donation for business, philanthropy schools (Sept. 16, 2026)
General Motors to invest $40 million in Bedford casting plant (Sept. 15, 2026)
The Mill in Bloomington completes renovation as demand for co-working space grows (Aug. 20, 2026)
ACMI defense manufacturing hub expands with new tenants, more acreage (July 22, 2026)
Plans unveiled for $70 million Bloomington Convention Center hotel (July 16, 2026)
Kimball Electronics acquires European contract manufacturer to bolster medical division (July 2, 2026)
Brown County joins IU's Sustaining Hoosier Communities initiative (Jan. 29, 2026)