



2025 – 2030

Bloomington-Normal Innovation Hub

# STRATEGIC PLAN



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# PLAN

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# INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

The Illinois Innovation Network (IIN) is a statewide network largely based around four-year public universities that was created in 2019 to “ensure Illinois’ role in the 21st century knowledge-based economy.” The vision of the IIN is to drive inclusive and integrated research, innovation, and economic development across Illinois. This is accomplished through collaboration, capacity-building, and integrated systems in education and research by connecting people, organizations, and resources. The Bloomington-Normal Innovation Hub (BN Hub) is one of 15 anchor hubs of the IIN. Illinois State University (ISU) and Heartland Community College (HCC) have participated in the IIN since 2019. ISU provides leadership for the Bloomington-Normal Innovation Hub.

The BN Hub goals are guided by the three pillars of sustainability: social, environmental, and economic sustainability. This approach harnesses the talents and existing efforts at ISU, HCC, and Bloomington-Normal (BN) as a whole and allows us to play an active and central role in the area’s inclusive economic development. This can only be done in the spirit of collaboration and connection, which inspires possibility and action.

We seek to bring together researchers, entrepreneurs, industry leaders, community organizations, and students. We value diversity of industry, research, and individuals to advance the region and sustain it economically, socially, and environmentally. By investing in the people in our community, we contribute to its growth and success. We know that iteration, adaptability, and flexibility are imperative to our success.

The plan is grounded in the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities’ (APLU) Economic Engagement Framework that intersects talent, innovation, and place; it complements ISU’s existing Carnegie Elective Classification for Community Engagement from the American Council on Education. This plan exemplifies HCC priorities to create and model a systemic culture of equity,

diversity, and inclusion; serve as a community resource; ensure resource stewardship; and effectively communicate and collaborate transparently. This plan exemplifies the ISU core values of teaching, learning and scholarship; individualized attention; equity, diversity, access and belonging; collaboration; and community and civic engagement.

## VISION

Bloomington-Normal is a regional leader demonstrating transformative innovation, overcoming critical challenges, and seizing opportunities, making it a place that attracts and retains people and organizations to a diverse, vibrant, and fun community.

## MISSION

The Bloomington-Normal Innovation Hub drives innovation across the community by fostering equitable, inclusive, and sustainable economic development and encouraging cross-sector and cross-disciplinary collaboration.



## **iIN FOCUS AREA**

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In a network so broad and diverse, some guiding structure and focus is key. In 2019 as hubs were being developed, the IIN identified the following nine priority areas, with a tenth added in 2023

- 01.BUSINESS-BUILDING
- 02.BUSINESS INCUBATION
- 03.COMPUTING
- 04.ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- 05.ENTREPRENEURSHIP
- 06.ENVIRONMENT AND WATER
- 07.FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
- 08.HEALTH AND WELLNESS
- 09.SUPPLY CHAIN
- 10.SOCIAL INNOVATION AND IMPACT

## **BN HUB FOCUS AREA**

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Each hub was asked to ground its activities in these areas. As a result of the BN Hub's strategic planning process, the five foci of the BN Hub are:

- 01.BUSINESS INCUBATION
- 02.ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- 03.ENTREPRENEURSHIP
- 04.ENVIRONMENT AND WATER
- 05.FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

## DEFINITIONS

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In economic development and entrepreneurship, definitions of key terms can vary widely. The following definitions were created to provide guidance to the BN Hub.

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### ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS

Anchor institutions are enduring organizations that are rooted in their localities. The success or lack of success of the organization can impact the intellectual, social, economic, human, and physical capital of the community<sup>i</sup>.

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A program, group of policies, or set of activities that seeks to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for a community by creating/retaining jobs that facilitate growth and provide a stable tax base<sup>ii</sup>.

### ENTREPRENEUR

An entrepreneur brings together resources, beyond their current resources, to pursue opportunity. This definition implies going beyond self-employment.

### ENTREPRENEURIAL THINKING

Entrepreneurial thinking is using acumen to connect resources with opportunities.

### ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The pursuit of opportunity beyond resources controlled<sup>iii</sup>.

### INNOVATION

Product, service, business model, or strategy that is both novel and useful. Innovations do not have to be major breakthroughs in technology or new business models; they can be as simple as upgrades to a company's customer service or features added to an existing product<sup>iv</sup>.

### INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

The convergence of economic, physical, and networking assets; a synergistic relationship between people, firms, and place that facilitates idea generation and accelerates commercialization<sup>v</sup>.

### MAKERSPACE

A communal workshop space where makers, innovators, or inventors can learn, design, or create products and prototypes. A makerspace often includes a variety of manual and technologically based tools.

### MEMORANDUM of UNDERSTANDING (MOU)

A formal agreement between two or more parties that outlines how they will work together toward a common goal. It can include details such as roles and responsibilities of all parties, scope of authority, or resource allocation. MOUs are usually non-binding but reflect a commitment to work together.

### PLACE-BASED INNOVATION

Leveraging expertise, networks, and resources in a specific geographic area to build capacity for the local innovation ecosystem. It is an approach to economic growth that requires trust, collaboration, and engagement from a variety of stakeholders.

### PLACE-FOCUSED INNOVATION

An extension of place-based innovation that is community led. Anchor institutions work alongside community members to promote and advance goals.

### STEWARD of PLACE

The role of regional comprehensive universities in supporting their local community and regional economic development<sup>vi</sup>.

### SUSTAINABILITY

A practice in which we consider the implications of our individual and collective actions; the interconnectivity among people and ecosystems coexisting within communities and across the globe; and a vision for an equitable and thriving planet for generations to come<sup>vii</sup>.

# STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1

## SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

### GOAL 1

Meet community educational needs through multiple creative pathways

#### OBJECTIVES

##### 1<sup>st</sup> PRIORITY

Grow a thriving, dynamic community that fosters a desire among higher education graduates to want to stay in the community.



**ACTIONS:** By 2028, establish a consistent way of measuring the number of college and university graduates who stay in the BN community. Participate in community discussions about housing, healthcare, safety, infrastructure, etc. as necessary to support educational success.

**METRICS:** Number of graduates who remain in the greater BN area and observe a steady increase from year to year.

##### 2<sup>nd</sup> PRIORITY

Amplify micro-credentialing initiatives to connect individuals to knowledge resources.

**ACTIONS:** By 2030, develop and expand micro-credentialing opportunities in multiple modalities based on student and employer needs.

**METRICS:** Number of micro-credentials developed and implemented. Number of badges awarded. Satisfaction surveys of students who have participated in micro-credentials and of employers who have hired/employ micro-credential recipients.



# STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1

## SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

### GOAL 2

Support people through fostering an entrepreneurial spirit and innovation across our community, including marginalized communities

#### OBJECTIVES

##### 1<sup>st</sup> PRIORITY

Create spaces for innovation and entrepreneurship that are accessible, inviting, warm, and allow for genuine connections that could lead to collaboration across generations, industries, and disciplines; create sense of community through physical place, mentorship, and skill-building workshops.

**ACTIONS:** By 2028, establish a community-wide business incubator. By 2030, establish a plan for measuring community usage of organizations in the McLean County Makerspace Coalition and community usage of organizations with co-working spaces.

**METRICS:** Community-serving makerspaces usage by individuals who are unaffiliated with institutions of higher learning.

##### 2<sup>nd</sup> PRIORITY

Advance an innovative and entrepreneurial culture rooted in connectivity, equity, and service to humanity that breaks down barriers for historically marginalized communities.

**ACTIONS:** By 2030, develop a way to measure how many community members are served through the local entrepreneurial ecosystem. Participate in local, regional, and state-wide conversations about access to the Internet and barrier reduction of the digital divide.

**METRICS:** Community-serving business incubators and service centers (e.g., SBDC) usage with full representation of historically underserved groups. Increase access to Internet services in underserved areas. Demographic data.



### GOAL 3

Strengthen relationships among local and regional organizations

#### OBJECTIVES

##### 1<sup>st</sup> PRIORITY

Formalize relationships between ISU, HCC, Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington-Normal Economic Development Council, McLean County Chamber of Commerce, and other important organizations through MOUs.

**ACTIONS:** Keep existing MOU's among organizations such as the Bloomington-Normal Innovation Alliance<sup>viii</sup>. In 2025, begin conversations about formalized relationships with other organizations and in other configurations; summarize on website by 2026.

**METRICS:** Number of MOU's.

##### 2<sup>nd</sup> PRIORITY

Leverage faculty expertise, centers and institutes within institutions of higher learning, and experts from government, non-profit, and industry from our entire community to provide human resources to accelerate collaborative solutions.

**ACTIONS:** Keep and publish a list of collaborations and joint initiatives enabled by the BN Hub on the website by 2026.

**METRICS:** Number of collaborations/joint initiatives.

##### 3<sup>rd</sup> PRIORITY

Develop an integrated communication plan to establish branding, marketing opportunities, and processes for participation, which keeps stakeholders and the public aware of efforts and opportunities to facilitate communication and collaboration among local and regional organizations and serve as conduits for the sharing of BN Hub information.

**ACTIONS:** By July 2025, create a communication plan, which includes a complete, mobile friendly website.

**METRICS:** Publish the communication plan on the website.

##### 4<sup>th</sup> PRIORITY

Work in concert with regional IIN hubs to advance research, industry partnerships, and community engagement as well as benefit the IIN mission. Provide technical assistance, expertise, and facilitation for statewide initiatives.

**ACTIONS:** Keep and publish a list of collaborations and joint initiatives involving participating entities across the IIN on the website by 2026.

**METRICS:** Number of collaborations and joint initiatives.



### GOAL 4

Increase cross-disciplinary and cross-industry research

#### OBJECTIVES

##### 1<sup>st</sup> PRIORITY

Improve opportunities for discovering unique solutions to unaddressed or unresolved issues related to social sustainability in BN.

**ACTIONS:** By 2028, the BN Hub has created and made publicly available a list of issues related to social sustainability in BN as determined by the community and its stakeholders. By 2030, the BN Hub enables at least one external (to the IIN but potentially enabled by IIN seed grants) funding award to a participating organization that focuses on enhancing social sustainability in BN.

**METRICS:** Number of funding awards that ISU or HCC participates in or leads.

##### 2<sup>nd</sup> PRIORITY

Address cultural and structural barriers that discourage cross-disciplinary and cross-industry research that include institutions of higher learning.

**ACTIONS:** By 2028, the BN Hub enables a professional development series of activities focusing on overcoming cultural and structural barriers to cross-sector collaboration. Explore a partnership with Distillery Labs for this initiative.

**METRICS:** Number of programs in series. Number of participants.

##### 3<sup>rd</sup> PRIORITY

Create community-informed mechanisms to support cross-institutional research teams across institutions of higher learning.

**ACTIONS:** By 2026, the BN Hub hosts annual community-embedded mixers to enable the formation of cross-institutional research teams.

**METRICS:** Number of mixers. Number of participants. Teams formed.



### GOAL 1

Advance environmental research

#### OBJECTIVES

##### 1<sup>st</sup> PRIORITY

Foster collaborations between local communities and academic institutions to co-develop research projects that address community-specific environmental challenges.

**ACTIONS:** By the end of 2025, develop a mechanism to track and monitor projects between municipalities/organizations and academic institutions utilizing the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)<sup>ix</sup> targets (or the new iteration thereof).

**METRICS:** Create and make public database/inventory of collaborative projects by sustainability challenge/SDG.

##### 2<sup>nd</sup> PRIORITY

Support and expand innovation and research focused on environment, water, food, and agriculture.

**ACTIONS:** By the end of 2025, develop a mechanism to track and monitor projects between municipalities/organizations and academic institutions utilizing the UN SDG targets (or the new iteration thereof).

**METRICS:** Create and make public database/inventory of collaborative projects by sustainability challenge/SDG.

##### 3<sup>rd</sup> PRIORITY

Increase research on integrating Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), and data analytics into environmental monitoring systems for more effective water conservation, energy efficiency, and agricultural practices.

**ACTIONS:** In 2027, explore a partnership with Distillery Labs' Central Illinois Living Laboratory. By 2030, enable at least one new external (to the IIN but could be enabled by IIN seed grants) funding award to participating researchers that focuses on environmental monitoring systems.

**METRICS:** Number of funded projects. Amount of money awarded.

##### 4<sup>th</sup> PRIORITY

Expand research into sustainable building practices, materials, and urban design aimed at reducing the carbon footprint of the region's built environment.

**ACTIONS:** By 2030, enable at least one external (to the IIN but could be enabled by IIN seed grants) funding award to participating researchers that focuses on sustainable building practices.

**METRICS:** Number of funded projects. Amount of money awarded.



# STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

### GOAL 2

Practice environmental stewardship

#### OBJECTIVES

##### 1<sup>st</sup> PRIORITY

Invest in and support organizations, businesses, and research that will produce less waste, better the earth, and pose the least possible risk to the population.



**ACTIONS:** By 2026, incorporate language into its business transactions and research initiatives indicating prioritization of partners, organizations, and projects that emphasize sustainable practices. If funding for research projects should become available for the BN Hub to offer, those opportunities will indicate that funding support will prioritize entities and projects that emphasize sustainable practices.

**METRICS:** Number of entities that emphasize sustainable practices. Amount of funding provided by the BN Hub/IIN. Data collected and impact measured from grant funded projects.

##### 2<sup>nd</sup> PRIORITY

Promote local food production and sustainable agricultural practices by supporting urban farming initiatives, regenerative agriculture, and farm-to-table networks.

**ACTIONS:** By 2030, convene an ongoing network of stakeholders concerning local food production and sustainable agricultural practices

**METRICS:** Increase of instances whereby sustainable agriculture practices are implemented.

##### 3<sup>rd</sup> PRIORITY

Develop educational campaigns focused on environmental stewardship, highlighting the importance of sustainable practices in everyday life, and fostering a culture of environmental responsibility among residents, students, and local businesses.

**ACTIONS:** By 2028, incorporate the education of sustainability practices into meetings and professional/personal development sessions for stakeholders.

**METRICS:** Topics covered and number of sessions where education of sustainability practices was incorporated.

##### 4<sup>th</sup> PRIORITY

Implement sustainable practices when hosting events or meetings.

**ACTIONS:** By 2026, ISU Office of Sustainability will work with IIN and the BN Hub to enact zero waste practices when hosting events or meetings. IIN will host at least one zero waste event. BN Hub events and meetings will all be zero waste.

**METRICS:** Number of zero waste events.

### GOAL 3

Further environmental initiatives through leadership

#### OBJECTIVES

##### 1<sup>st</sup> PRIORITY

Collaborate with public and private stakeholders to increase the adoption of renewable energy sources like wind, solar, and bioenergy, aiming to reduce dependence on non-renewable energy.



**ACTIONS:** By 2030, provide support to the existing network of stakeholders concerned with renewable energy to showcase and advance their work.

**METRICS:** Increase number of instances whereby renewable energy is implemented.

##### 2<sup>nd</sup> PRIORITY

Become a recognized regional leader in clean energy, natural resources and agriculture, advanced manufacturing, and bioprocessing.

**ACTIONS:** Continue to promote the submission of external proposals for investigators for research and technical assistance projects. Those proposals will produce new data about urgent priorities impacting our region.

**METRICS:** Number of news articles or mentions of the BN Hub in any form of media. Number and amount of external funding secured.

##### 3<sup>rd</sup> PRIORITY

Support businesses and research efforts aimed at promoting a circular economy model, focusing on reusing, reducing waste, and recycling in local industries and communities.

**ACTIONS:** By 2026, incorporate language into its business transactions and research initiatives indicating prioritization of partners, organizations, and projects that emphasize sustainable practices. If funding for research projects should become available for the BN Hub to offer, those opportunities will indicate that funding support will prioritize entities and projects that emphasize sustainable practices.

**METRICS:** Number of entities that emphasize sustainable practices. Amount of funding provided by the BN Hub.

# STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3

## ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

### GOAL 1

Develop a business incubator to serve campuses and community

#### OBJECTIVES

##### 1<sup>st</sup> PRIORITY

Serve as the premier starting point or connecting point for anyone in the community who has an idea and wants to develop or scale it; support innovators, entrepreneurs and researchers at the ideation and start up stages.



**ACTIONS:** In 2025, utilize the BN Economic Development Council's entrepreneurship ecosystem inventory to guide programming and resource development. By 2028, provide programming and staffing to support innovators and entrepreneurs, and serve as the connecting point for campus and community resources and information sharing; design programs and services that reflect gaps in the entrepreneurship ecosystem and are driven by campus and community need.

**METRICS:** Number of programs. Program topics. Number of program attendees. Number of individual consultations. Level of community awareness.

##### 2<sup>nd</sup> PRIORITY

Invest in and assist clients over time with the intention of growing local businesses and keeping them in the local community; empower businesses and organizational models of all types with clients to develop and eventually graduate innovative firms that meet a range of needs within various aspects of the community.

**ACTIONS:** When programming begins in 2026, recruit and retain participants that will serve as strong conduits for a more diverse entrepreneurial ecosystem in BN. When the incubator space opens in 2028, recruit and retain tenants that will serve as strong conduits for a more diverse entrepreneurial ecosystem in BN.

**METRICS:** Number of start-ups launched or supported. Demographic data. Business type. Level of community awareness.

##### 3<sup>rd</sup> PRIORITY

Design a space that is synonymous with an environment that fosters and invites an inclusive community and supports innovation; create a desirable, multi-purpose accessible physical space for collaborative, team-based work, and organic innovation.

**ACTIONS:** Open a community business incubator space by 2028.

**METRICS:** Number of tenants. Common space usage. Meeting room reservations. Number of organic relationships that develop. Programs hosted.



## GOAL 2

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Advance entrepreneurship

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### OBJECTIVES

#### 1<sup>st</sup> PRIORITY

Provide resources for innovators to develop patents, participate in tech transfer, and for faculty to create business spin outs.

**ACTIONS:** Provide staff with expertise in these areas to support faculty business and research commercialization ventures by 2026. Develop resources available on the website by 2026.

**METRICS:** Number of faculty meetings with staff. Web analytics of resources accessed. Number of patents and business spin outs.

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> PRIORITY

Develop resources for innovators to access public or private capital to scale ideas.

**ACTIONS:** Identify local banks and revolving loan programs that are willing to fund small business ventures by December 2025. Host Central Illinois Angels or similar investment organization at least one time per year to meet entrepreneurs and hear pitches beginning in 2026. Partner with Distillery Labs and Innovate Springfield to leverage investments in the region. Identify local, state, and federal grants available.

**METRICS:** Resource lists. Number of meetings with banks reported by entrepreneurs. Number of grants/loans applied for by entrepreneurs. Number of pitches to investment organizations. Projects funded. Amount of capital received.

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> PRIORITY

Utilize campus and community resources to provide innovators and entrepreneurs access to maker spaces and prototyping labs.

**ACTIONS:** Catalog all spaces and equipment available in the community and make the information publicly available by June 2025.

**METRICS:** Referrals to website. Web analytics. Number of people using the maker spaces for invention or entrepreneurship.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> PRIORITY

Encourage ownership and entrepreneurial agency across diverse disciplines and demographics.

**ACTIONS:** By 2027, establish relationships with the organizational and informal leaders of diverse communities to promote and participate in maker spaces and incubator programs and services.

**METRICS:** Relationships established. Demographic data of groups promoting and using the spaces.

#### 5<sup>th</sup> PRIORITY

Offer existing entrepreneurship majors/minors as a community accessible micro credential.

**ACTIONS:** Work with existing entrepreneurship majors and minors to translate them into an online, micro-credential experience by 2028.

**METRICS:** Number of students/participants enrolled. Number of badges awarded. Time to completion. Student feedback.

### GOAL 3

Embrace the role of anchor institution and economic driver

#### OBJECTIVES

##### 1<sup>st</sup> PRIORITY

Serve as an active member of the BN entrepreneurial ecosystem contributing to business attraction and retention in the local community.

**ACTIONS:** Create an action committee that meets quarterly to discuss urgent topics and strategies impacting the ecosystem; representatives should be selected from a wide range of community members and encouraged to propose plans, white papers, and proposals for support of this ecosystem. Engage the Illinois Black Chamber of Commerce, Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and Women’s Business Development Center for office hours, mentorship, and programming virtually and in the business incubator space when programming begins in 2026. Conduct a bi-annual higher education institution economic impact study beginning in 2027.

**METRICS:** Attraction of new businesses and reduction in number of businesses leaving BN for other communities. Number of consultations, programs, and attendees with aforementioned groups. Economic impact study findings/data.

##### 2<sup>nd</sup> PRIORITY

Contribute to regional economic success through place-based research and place-focused research.

**ACTIONS:** Encourage faculty to apply for IIN seed grants. Collect data on place-based/place-focused projects.

**METRICS:** Number and extent of place-based/place-focused research projects.

##### 3<sup>rd</sup> PRIORITY

Conduct the APLU economic engagement framework assessment.

**ACTIONS:** Complete the assessment in 2028.

**METRICS:** Assessment findings and improvements implemented in 2029.



### GOAL 4

Retain people in the community

#### OBJECTIVES

##### 1<sup>st</sup> PRIORITY

Integrate research, curricular and other opportunities to attract and retain individuals in an environment that excites personal and regional growth and improves the quality of life.

**ACTIONS:** In 2028, partner with community organizations and schools to provide students and parents information about academic and entrepreneurial success that can be achieved in BN. In 2029, build on the work of the business incubator and increased entrepreneurial activity to develop supportive services for businesses who “graduate” or scale up.

**METRICS:** Number of graduates who remain in the greater BN area and observe a steady increase from year to year. Analyze the quality of relationships contributing to new partnerships that impact retention.

##### 2<sup>nd</sup> PRIORITY

Create pipelines of communication and collaboration between universities, local/regional organizations, and especially industry partners to develop internship/apprenticeship opportunities.

**ACTIONS:** By 2028, connect with existing efforts and design new efforts as a part of comprehensive strategy for interns/apprentices to learn more about the community.

**METRICS:** Number of new partnership agreements. Number of communication mechanisms and occurrences. Number of local internship sites and interns.



## TEAM

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This plan was developed collaboratively to reflect the needs and future of the BN Hub and community more fully. Tremendous gratitude is expressed to all team members for their time and dedication to the process.

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## TIMELINE

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### MARCH 2024

Planning Team kick-off meeting and visioning session

### APRIL 2024

Planning Team discussion and analysis of relevant data sources

- 2017 Economic Impact Study
- 2020 hub survey results
- 2021 ISU business incubator report
- Association of Public and Land Grant Universities' Economic Engagement Framework and Economic Prosperity award winners
- Bloomington-Normal Economic Development Council website and strategic plan
- CHIPS & Science Act white paper
- Illinois State University Entrepreneurship Minor data
- History of Research Parks white paper
- Illinois Innovation Network strategic plan
- Illinois North Central Region economic development priorities
- Illinois State University proposed strategic plan
- Illinois State University Sustainability Strategic Plan
- International Town-Gown Association select presentations
- United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

### MAY– JULY 2024

Campus and community focus groups

### JULY – AUGUST 2024

Plan drafting and editing

### SEPTEMBER 2024

Campus and community feedback survey

### OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2024

Plan drafting and editing

### JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2025

Layout and design

### MARCH 2025

Implementation begins

# PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

● ONGOING | OPERATIONALIZED

|              |                                                                                                                 | 2025 |    |    |    | 2026 |    |    |    | 2027 |    |    |    | 2028 |    |    |    | 2029 |    |    |    |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|----|----|----|------|----|----|----|------|----|----|----|------|----|----|----|------|----|----|----|
|              |                                                                                                                 | 1Q   | 2Q | 3Q | 4Q | 1Q   | 2Q | 3Q | 4Q | 1Q   | 2Q | 3Q | 4Q | 1Q   | 2Q | 3Q | 4Q | 1Q   | 2Q | 3Q | 4Q |
| <b>1.1.1</b> | Establish a consistent way of measuring the number of college graduates                                         |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
|              | Participate in community discussions about housing, healthcare, safety, infrastructure, etc. as necessary       |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
| <b>1.1.2</b> | Develop and expand micro-credentialing opportunities in multiple modalities based on student and employer needs |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |

## SUPPORT PEOPLE THROUGH FOSTERING AN ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT AND INNOVATION ACROSS OUR COMMUNITY, INCLUDING MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

|              |                                                                                                                                                                       |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| <b>1.2.1</b> | Establish a community-wide business incubator                                                                                                                         |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|              | Establish a plan for measuring community usage of organizations in the McLean County Makerspace Coalition and community usage of organizations with co-working spaces |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>1.2.2</b> | Develop a way to measure how many community members are served through the local entrepreneurial ecosystem                                                            |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|              | Participate in local, regional, and state-wide conversations about access to the Internet and barrier reduction of the digital divide                                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

## STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS AMONG LOCAL AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

|              |                                                                                                         |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| <b>1.3.1</b> | Begin conversations about formalized relationships with other organizations and in other configurations |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>1.3.2</b> | Keep and publish a list of collaborations and joint initiatives enabled by the Hub on the website       |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>1.3.3</b> | Create a communication plan, which includes a complete, mobile friendly website                         |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>1.3.4</b> | Keep and publish a list of collaborations and joint initiatives enabled by the Hub on the website       |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

## INCREASE CROSS-DISCIPLINARY AND CROSS-INDUSTRY RESEARCH

|              |                                                                                                                                              |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| <b>1.4.1</b> | Create and make publicly available a list of issues related to social sustainability in BN as determined by community and its stakeholders   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|              | Enable at least one external funding award to a participating organization that focuses on social sustainability                             |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>1.4.2</b> | Enable a professional development series of activities focusing on overcoming cultural and structural barriers to cross-sector collaboration |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>1.4.3</b> | Host annual community-embedded mixers to enable the formation of cross-institutional research teams                                          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

# PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

● ONGOING | OPERATIONALIZED

|                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                   | 2025 |    |    |    | 2026 |    |    |    | 2027 |    |    |    | 2028 |    |    |    | 2029 |    |    |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|----|----|----|------|----|----|----|------|----|----|----|------|----|----|----|------|----|----|----|
|                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                   | 1Q   | 2Q | 3Q | 4Q | 1Q   | 2Q | 3Q | 4Q | 1Q   | 2Q | 3Q | 4Q | 1Q   | 2Q | 3Q | 4Q | 1Q   | 2Q | 3Q | 4Q |
| <b>ADVANCE ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH</b>                       |                                                                                                                                                                                   |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
| <b>2.1.1</b>                                                | Develop a mechanism to track and monitor projects between municipalities/organizations and academic institutions utilizing the UN SDG targets                                     |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
| <b>2.1.2</b>                                                | Explore partnership with Distillery Labs Central Illinois Living Laboratory                                                                                                       |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
| <b>2.1.3</b>                                                | Enable at least one new external funding award to participating researchers that focuses on environmental monitoring systems                                                      |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
| <b>2.1.4</b>                                                | Enable at least one external funding award to participating researchers that focuses on sustainable building practices                                                            |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
| <b>PRACTICE ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP</b>                   |                                                                                                                                                                                   |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
| <b>2.2.1</b>                                                | Incorporate language into business transactions and research initiatives indicating prioritizations of partners, organizations, and projects that emphasize sustainable practices |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
| <b>2.2.2</b>                                                | Convene an ongoing network of stakeholders concerning local food production and sustainable agricultural practices                                                                |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
| <b>2.2.3</b>                                                | Incorporate the education of sustainability practices into meetings and professional/personal development sessions for stakeholders                                               |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
| <b>2.2.4</b>                                                | Work with Sustainability at ISU to enact zero waste practices when hosting events or meetings                                                                                     |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
| <b>FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES THROUGH LEADERSHIP</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                   |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
| <b>2.3.1</b>                                                | Provide support to the existing network of stakeholders concerned with renewable energy to showcase and advance their work                                                        |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
| <b>2.3.2</b>                                                | Continue to promote the submission of external proposals for investigators for research and technical assistance projects                                                         |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
| <b>2.3.3</b>                                                | Incorporate language into business transactions and research initiatives indicating prioritizations of partners, organizations, and projects that emphasize sustainable practices |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |

# PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

● ONGOING | OPERATIONALIZED

|                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                        | 2025 |    |    |    | 2026 |    |    |    | 2027 |    |    |    | 2028 |    |    |    | 2029 |    |    |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|----|----|----|------|----|----|----|------|----|----|----|------|----|----|----|------|----|----|----|
| DEVELOP A BUSINESS INCUBATOR TO SERVE CAMPUSES AND COMMUNITY |                                                                                                                                                                        | 1Q   | 2Q | 3Q | 4Q | 1Q   | 2Q | 3Q | 4Q | 1Q   | 2Q | 3Q | 4Q | 1Q   | 2Q | 3Q | 4Q | 1Q   | 2Q | 3Q | 4Q |
| 3.1.1                                                        | Utilize the BN Economic Development Council's entrepreneurship ecosystem inventory to guide programming and resource development                                       | ●    | ●  | ●  | ●  |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
|                                                              | Utilize the BN Economic Development Council's entrepreneurship ecosystem inventory to guide programming and resource development                                       |      |    |    | ●  | ●    | ●  | ●  | ●  | ●    | ●  | ●  | ●  | ●    | ●  | ●  | ●  | ●    | ●  | ●  | ●  |
|                                                              | Provide programming and staffing to support innovators and entrepreneurs, and serve as the connecting point for campus and community resources and information sharing |      |    |    |    | ●    | ●  | ●  | ●  | ●    | ●  | ●  | ●  | ●    | ●  | ●  | ●  | ●    | ●  | ●  | ●  |
| 3.1.2                                                        | Recruit and retain participants that will serve as strong conduits for a more diverse entrepreneurial ecosystem in the BN                                              |      |    |    |    | ●    | ●  | ●  | ●  | ●    | ●  | ●  | ●  | ●    | ●  | ●  | ●  | ●    | ●  | ●  | ●  |
|                                                              | Recruit and retain tenants that will serve as strong conduits for a more diverse entrepreneurial ecosystem in BN                                                       |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    | ●    | ●  | ●  | ●  | ●    | ●  | ●  | ●  | ●    | ●  | ●  | ●  |
| 3.1.3                                                        | Open a community business incubator space                                                                                                                              | ●    | ●  | ●  | ●  | ●    | ●  | ●  | ●  | ●    | ●  | ●  | ●  | ●    | ●  | ●  | ●  | ●    | ●  | ●  | ●  |

## ADVANCE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

|       |                                                                                                                                                                            |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.2.1 | Provide staff with expertise in these areas to support faculty business and research commercialization ventures                                                            |   |   | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
|       | Develop resources available on the website                                                                                                                                 | ● | ● | ● | ● |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 3.2.2 | Identify local banks and revolving loan programs that are willing to fund small business ventures                                                                          |   |   | ● | ● |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|       | Host Central Illinois Angels or similar investment organization at least one time per year to meet entrepreneurs and hear pitches                                          |   |   |   |   | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
|       | Partner with Distillery Labs and Innovate Springfield to leverage investments in the region                                                                                | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
|       | Identify local, state, and federal grants available                                                                                                                        | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| 3.2.3 | Catalog all spaces and equipment available in the community and make information publicly available                                                                        | ● | ● |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 3.2.4 | Establish relationships with the organizational and informal leaders of diverse communities to promote and participate in maker spaces and incubator programs and services |   |   |   |   | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| 3.2.5 | Work with existing entrepreneurship majors and minors to translate them into an online, micro-credential experience                                                        |   |   |   |   | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

# PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

● ONGOING | OPERATIONALIZED

|                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                    | 2025 |    |    |    | 2026 |    |    |    | 2027 |    |    |    | 2028 |    |    |    | 2029 |    |    |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|----|----|----|------|----|----|----|------|----|----|----|------|----|----|----|------|----|----|----|
|                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                    | 1Q   | 2Q | 3Q | 4Q | 1Q   | 2Q | 3Q | 4Q | 1Q   | 2Q | 3Q | 4Q | 1Q   | 2Q | 3Q | 4Q | 1Q   | 2Q | 3Q | 4Q |
| <b>EMBRACE OUR ROLE AS AN ANCHOR INSTITUTION AND ECONOMIC DRIVER</b> |                                                                                                                                                                    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
| <b>3.3.1</b>                                                         | Create an action committee that meets quarterly to discuss urgent topics and strategies impacting the ecosystem                                                    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
|                                                                      | Engage the IL Black Chamber of Commerce, IL Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and Women's Business Development Center for office hours, mentorship, and programming    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
|                                                                      | Conduct a bi-annual higher education institution economic impact study                                                                                             |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
| <b>3.3.2</b>                                                         | Encourage faculty to apply for IIN seed grants                                                                                                                     |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
|                                                                      | Collect data on place-based/place-focused projects                                                                                                                 |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
| <b>3.3.3</b>                                                         | Conduct the APLU economic engagement framework assessment                                                                                                          |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
| <b>RETAIN PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY</b>                                |                                                                                                                                                                    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
| <b>3.4.1</b>                                                         | Partner with community organizations and schools to provide students and parents information about academic and entrepreneurial success that can be achieved in BN |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
|                                                                      | Build on the work of the business incubator and increased entrepreneurial activity to develop supportive services for businesses who graduate or scale up          |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
| <b>3.4.2</b>                                                         | Connect with existing efforts and design new efforts as a part of comprehensive strategy for interns/apprentices to learn more about the community                 |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |

# BN HUB GOALS

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

### SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

-  **01** NO POVERTY
-  **02** ZERO HUNGER
-  **03** GOOD HEALTH AND WELL BEING
-  **04** QUALITY EDUCATION
-  **05** GENDER EQUITY
-  **06** CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
-  **07** AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY
-  **08** DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
-  **09** INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
-  **10** REDUCED INEQUALITIES
-  **11** SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE
-  **12** RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
-  **13** CLIMATE ACTION
-  **14** LIFE BELOW WATER
-  **15** LIFE ON LAND
-  **16** PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
-  **17** PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

### STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1 SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

| BN HUB | SDG   |
|--------|-------|
| 1.1.1  | 8     |
| 1.1.2  | 4     |
| 1.2.1  | 9     |
| 1.2.2  | 9, 10 |
| 1.3.1  | 17    |
| 1.3.2  | 8, 17 |
| 1.3.3  | 17    |
| 1.3.4  | 17    |
| 1.4.1  | 11    |
| 1.4.2  | 9     |
| 1.4.3  | 9, 17 |

### STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2 ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

| BN HUB | SDG          |
|--------|--------------|
| 2.1.1  | 11           |
| 2.1.2  | 2, 6, 13, 15 |
| 2.1.3  | 2, 6, 7      |
| 2.1.4  | 11           |
| 2.2.1  | 12           |
| 2.2.2  | 2            |
| 2.2.3  | 12, 13       |
| 2.2.4  | 12           |
| 2.3.1  | 7, 11, 12    |
| 2.3.2  | 2, 7, 12, 15 |
| 2.3.3  | 12           |

### STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3 ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

| BN HUB | SDG      |
|--------|----------|
| 3.1.1  | 9        |
| 3.1.2  | 9        |
| 3.1.3  | 9, 11    |
| 3.2.1  | 8, 9     |
| 3.2.2  | 8, 9     |
| 3.2.3  | 9        |
| 3.2.4  | 8, 9, 10 |
| 3.2.5  | 4        |
| 3.3.1  | 11       |
| 3.3.2  | 8        |
| 3.3.3  |          |
| 3.4.1  | 8, 9     |
| 3.4.2  | 4        |

## REFERENCES

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<sup>i</sup><https://www.margainc.com/initiatives/aitf/>

<sup>ii</sup>International Economic Development Council. (2015). Introduction to economic development.

<sup>iii</sup><https://hbr.org/2013/01/what-is-entrepreneurship>

<sup>iv</sup><https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/importance-of-innovation-in-business>

<sup>v</sup><https://www.brookings.edu/articles/rise-of-innovation-districts/>

<sup>vi</sup><https://aascu.org/resources/stepping-forward-as-stewards-of-place-a-guide-for-leading-public-engagement-at-state-colleges-and-universities/>

<sup>vii</sup><https://illinoisstateuniversity.foleon.com/ofc-of-sustainability-strategic-plan/oossp/>

<sup>viii</sup>The Bloomington-Normal Innovation Alliance is a cooperative agreement between the City of Bloomington, Town of Normal, County of McLean, Illinois State University, Illinois Wesleyan University, and Heartland Community College to promote innovation and to collaborate, research, develop, deploy, and evaluate technology and analytically based solutions to problems facing the systems and infrastructure that serve the quality of life and economy of the community.

<sup>ix</sup><https://sdgs.un.org/goals>