

# The Economic Development System

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To bring new business to Indiana and expand existing business, economic developers must have current, practical information to answer questions such as:

1. How large is the labor pool?
2. What is the educational and skill level of the labor force?
3. Where are the major transportation routes?
4. What training programs are available?
5. What is the generation capacity of the electric utilities?
6. How large is the water supply?
7. Will there be a constant labor supply over the next twenty years?
8. Are there programs available to help finance this business?

All of these questions are being asked, in some form or another, every day in Indiana. In seeking the answers to these questions, people must contact local officials, universities, libraries, utility companies and a whole host of agencies. This can be a very time-consuming and difficult process.

Indiana's *Strategic Economic Development Plan: In Step With the Future* calls for a system or network that will bring together critical economic development information from a broad variety of sources so that these questions can be answered easily and quickly. There is no doubt that Indiana is slowly shifting, along

with the rest of the country, from an industrial to an information-based society. For people involved in economic development there is a critical need to locate, organize and package information.

The Indiana Economic Development Council, a not-for-profit corporation that monitors and coordinates economic development activities in Indiana, awarded a grant to the Indiana Business Research Center at the Indiana University School of Business, to develop a prototype of a system or network to provide consistent, accessible, timely, and useful information for economic development. Now in the second year of development, the prototype of the Economic Development Information Network (EDIN) is well under way. The concept is simple one: "Bring the sources of information and the users of that information together, through personal and technical linkages." It is a network that is based on extensive cooperation among state, federal and local agencies, businesses, chambers of commerce, economic development groups, universities and colleges, and libraries.

The project began with the identification of potential users throughout the state by means of a survey sent to more than 1200 individuals in business, government, education, and

labor. They were asked to describe their involvement in economic development. This can range from direct activities such as business expansion or retention, industrial prospecting, and marketing to indirect activities such as economic development policy-making, strategic planning, and providing economic development information to others. The need for this information was two-fold: 1) to assist in determining the primary focus of the network, and 2) to provide information to the Indiana Chamber of Commerce for developing a directory of "Who's Who in Economic Development in Indiana." Other survey questions focused on specific types of information needs, where the respondent went for information (colleagues, libraries, agencies, databases), and access to microcomputer equipment.

The survey was conducted in two stages. Stage I was sent to 1253 people and was the identification tool. There were nearly 700 responses. Stage II was sent to 456 people, with 324 responses to specific questions on data use and computer access. The data from Stage II are currently being processed with SAS, but we have determined from preliminary analysis that nearly 60% of the respondents have access to microcomputer equipment and 40% are interested in accessing economic development information via computer.

As our users have told us many times, "the network will only be as good as the information it contains." Establishing strong cooperative relationships with federal, state, local, and private sources of information has been a top priority. At our request, Governor Robert D. Orr sent a letter to state agency directors asking them to cooperate with the Indiana Business Research Center in our efforts to obtain information. We received the names of nearly forty key agency

people who will work with us on both providing information for the network and also in determining the uses of EDIN by state agencies. A major emphasis has been maintaining the flow of information we were already receiving from the *Indiana Factbook* and what was INDIES, as well as obtaining new information such as the *Guide to Business Development and Financial Programs*. Efficient data flow is critical and a comprehensive system for the flow of information into the components of the network through computer tapes, printed reports, floppy diskettes, and eventually direct source-to-computer input, is nearly complete.

So, what does EDIN look like at this point in time? There are currently four separate but related computer systems that are included in the network. Three of those systems are being developed at the Business Research Center: the *Statistical Information System* (STATIS); the *Business Activities and Services Information System* (BASIS); and the *Small Area Geography System* (SAGIS). The fourth system is being designed at Ball State University, and is a building and site location system (INSITE).

The *Statistical Information System* is a menu-driven system which has taken over a year to develop. The database has as its core the INDIRS database, but has doubled in size to include not only Indiana counties, cities, and metropolitan statistical areas but also data for all fifty states and significant economic detail for the United States and Indiana. There are nearly two million single statistics on topics such as population, banking, business, transportation, industry, education, income and welfare. Access to the INDIRS system was discontinued in the spring of 1986, but users of that system were invited to access this new statistical component of EDIN.

STATIS is currently being accessed by over 20 organizations, 14 of which have been selected as test sites. We will work closely with these test sites to assist use of new developments for all components of EDIN.

STATIS enables the user to retrieve data in three forms: tables of data, geographic comparisons, and download ready. Many of our potential users have asked that downloading facilities be available. This feature has taken many months to design so that downloading from the database to a personal computer is easy, accurate, and in comma delimited ASCII files that can be read by most spreadsheet, database management, or statistical software programs. Being able to download quickly and in a ready-to-use format means that users can recalculate, redesign, graph, or map the data in any fashion appropriate to their needs. This simple transfer adds tremendous convenience to working with the data. Since the geographic comparisons on STATIS can be downloaded in a matrix-form, the user can have, on one page, a variety of statistics ranging from population of the 50 states to electric consumption to projections of births for the year 2000.

The *Business Activities and Service Information System* (BASIS) is what we generally refer to as a text database. It is in the early design phase, although a significant amount of information is ready for inclusion in the database. BASIS will consist of the *Guide to Business Development and Financial Programs* maintained at the Indiana Department of Commerce (we will receive bimonthly tape updates), a directory file, a calendar of events, a resource and referral file, and electronic mail. The directory file will contain lists such as the Indiana General Assembly (names, addresses, districts, party, committees), business trade associations, newspapers, radio and television stations, Indiana cham-

bers of commerce, colleges and universities, public, academic and special libraries, vocational and technical programs and institutions, and many more directories. The calendar of events will be a direct-upload and/or manual input file containing events that relate to economic development. We hope to have the major providers (such as Indiana Economic Development Academy) of conferences, seminars, workshops and other such events be the primary sources for this information. The resource and referral file will assist people in finding more detailed information or information not found through EDIN and the electronic mail facility will provide a communications link for EDIN users.

The *Small Area Geography Information System* (SAGIS) will consist primarily of census statistical data for census tracts and blocks. Its primary purpose would be for graphic mapping. This system is currently on the drawing board, but the key feature of this system will be the experimental quality of the system design which will later lead to greater enhancements for STATIS and BASIS. SAGIS will be available in time for the 1990 Census so that business and government will have crucial census tract data as early as possible.

The site and building location system (INSITE) is under development at the Indiana Economic Development Academy at Ball State University. In the prototype stage right now, plans call for statewide information to be used in locating appropriate sites or buildings. The user will be able to search on a variety of factors, such as square footage, ceiling height, cost, land area, distance from major transportation routes, and many other location factors. The database will be located and maintained at Ball State with the database updated by the major sources of the site and building information (in most cases the utility

companies). Users of the database will access it through EDIN and we are currently working on the technical facilities needed for access.

It was mentioned earlier that there are currently twenty some users of STATIS. While BASIS, SAGIS and INSITE are still under development there will be no general access to those systems. As the systems near completion we will make access available to the EDIN test sites so that we can work on user-interface and training in order to gain feedback on difficulties. Development of these systems is proceeding. STATIS is functioning and will continue to add new users, expand the database and make technical enhancements. BASIS will be a functioning prototype by the middle of 1987. SAGIS development will proceed as resources are available. INSITE implementation is dependent on the completion of the database and hardware connections.

EDIN is a network that is adaptable and will be adapted to changing technology. We are already incorporating the CD-ROM technology into our design plans. The telecommunications area is under investigation (users currently dial into the nearest Indiana University campus network), and we, along with so many other organizations in Indiana, have high hopes for INTELINET. Although access to EDIN is intended primarily for people with access to microcomputers, we are developing strategies for obtaining information from EDIN for those organizations without computers. Certainly, having EDIN available in libraries throughout the state will be one major means of broadening access, along with access through the state data center affiliates, chambers of commerce, and through other media such as printed reports. While much has been accomplished in the eighteen months of the project, there is still much to be developed, enhanced, and revised.

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