

**Clearly Kosciusko:**  
**A Plan for sustainability to support talent attraction and  
retention**

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## Executive Summary

For 2019-2020 KLA whitepaper project

Name of project is: Clearly Kosciusko

"Clearly Kosciusko" is a county-wide voice created in partnership between the Lilly Center for Lakes & Streams, Kosciusko County Convention and Visitors Bureau, Kosciusko Chamber of Commerce, and the Kosciusko Economic Development Corporation. It provides resources to residents and visitors throughout Kosciusko County. In short, Clearly Kosciusko provides a platform to share a united story about the community. It is designed to craft a sense of place, pull all corners of the county together, and encourage residents and visitors to participate in the story.

This project seeks to create a plan to sustain the Clearly Kosciusko brand identity. Clearly Kosciusko has been trademarked and can be licensed for use, but to date its usage is limited to fewer than 20 organizations. At the same time, the brand is also lacking in storytelling narratives that explain what is unique about the community, or what is "clearly" Kosciusko. These narratives are important to market the community for people to "live, learn, and earn" in Kosciusko County.

List of organizations that have joined as members of Clearly Kosciusko as of May 2020:

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Representation</b>	<b>Status</b>
Kosciusko Chamber of Commerce	Non-profit	Active
Kosciusko Convention & Visitors Bureau	Non-profit	Active
Kosciusko Economic Development Corporation	Non-profit	Active
1Eighty Design	Technology	Active
Brian Peterson Real Estate Group	Real Estate	Active
City of Warsaw	Government	Active
Instrumental Machine & Development	Manufacturing	Active
Kosciusko County Community Foundation	Non-profit	Active
The Lab	Technology	Active
Luna.tech	Technology	Active
OrthoWorx	Non-profit	Active
Port Winona	Hospitality	Active
Syracuse-Wawasee Chamber of Commerce	Non-profit	Active
Warsaw Community Development Corporation	Non-profit	Active
Clear Vision Media	Marketing	Active
Lake City Skiers	Recreation	Active
Interra Credit Union	Financial	Pending
Lakeland Pier and Lift	Recreation	Pending
Titus Funeral Home	Funeral	Pending

Source: Lilly Center for Lakes & Streams

The project involved ongoing interactions with contacts at the Lilly Center for Lakes & Streams, outreach to local individuals and organizations, and planning of two focus group sessions that were transitioned to a single online focus group session. Two primary audiences were identified for the focus group discussion:

organizations that can contribute to and benefit from the brand; and transplants to the area who would be a target demographic for the brand.

The project outcome initially involved planning for a booth at the annual Northern Indiana Lakes Festival, an event hosted by the Lilly Center for Lakes and Streams in Warsaw and Winona Lake. However, based on research and interactions, the team expanded the focus to a broader range of activities under the headings of visibility, experiences, and storytelling that provide a framework for the brand identity to support local talent attraction and retention efforts.

**Road to One Million**

The 11-county Northeast Indiana region has adopted the Road to One Million regional development plan of placemaking investments that encourage talent recruitment and retention. Regional business and community leaders seek to increase the regional population to one million residents by 2031, which means that each county will need to contribute toward population growth through increasing in-migration and decreasing out-migration. Kosciusko County’s share of the population increase is approximately 20,000 people, or a 25% increase in the current population, and formation of an estimated 14,000 new jobs.

The City of Warsaw is known as the “Orthopedic Capital” and the region is home to nearly 18,000 jobs in orthopedic device and instrument manufacturing. In addition, the community is home to leading agribusiness and recreation businesses. Many of these companies recruit specialized talent from outside the community, including both national and international locations. Some have shifted work or established facilities elsewhere to overcome shortages in local workforce and/or challenges in recruitment.

Examples of local employers that recruit from outside Kosciusko County:

<b>Agribusiness</b>	<b>Medical device</b>	<b>Other</b>
CTB	DePuy Synthes	Grace College
Louis Dreyfus	Instrumental Machine & Development	Ivy Tech Warsaw
Maple Leaf Farms	Precision Medical Technology	KCH/Lutheran Health
	Zimmer Biomet	Warsaw Community Schools

*Source: Kosciusko Economic Development Corporation*

This project explores how the Clearly Kosciusko brand identify can be used to market the area for talent recruitment and retention, both to support and retain local employers and to drive the community’s contributions toward the Road to One Million regional population goal. Similar talent recruitment initiatives are becoming commonplace among local, regional, and state level economic development organizations. Availability of skilled labor, labor costs, and highway accessibility are identified as the top-three site selection trends in the most recent *Area Development* surveys of corporate executives and site consultants.

## **Focus Group**

In mid-April, a focus group session was held using Zoom that attracted approximately thirty participants. Lilly Center for Lakes & Streams representative Alex Hall shared an overview of the Clearly Kosciusko brand identity and Alan Tio led a discussion about future use of the Clearly Kosciusko brand by local organizations in support of talent recruitment and retention. Notes from the focus group discussion are included as Appendix A.

Participants were asked a series of questions about their perceptions of the community, how they describe the community to outsiders, what amenities in the community make Kosciusko County feel like 'home,' and what amenities they believe are missing in the community. Discussion about the Clearly Kosciusko brand identity confirmed awareness of the brand identity through billboard campaigns and other high-visibility marketing, but lack of understanding about what message is conveyed by 'Clearly Kosciusko.'

Feedback generally focused on the quality of life amenities such as lakes and recreation, events and festivals, and restaurants that make Kosciusko County unique as a rural, Midwest community. Participants were asked to share their 'dream for our community,' which uncovered interests in amenities that might be associated with larger, urban communities, such as more 'things to do on nights and weekends.' Yet, some of these amenities exist in Kosciusko County, which points to opportunities to better communicate what is available in the community.

## **Recommendations**

This whitepaper provides a series of recommendations to sustain the Clearly Kosciusko brand identity, to expand its usage throughout the community, and to position it to support talent recruitment and retention strategies. Recommendations are organized in three categories: visibility, experiences, and storytelling. Tasks, timeline, and budget are provided in order to ensure an initiative that is adaptive, scalable, and sustainable.

At the outset, formation of a volunteer advisory board is recommended to provide ongoing input, feedback, and buy-in on the various proposed activities. Support from staff and/or interns at the Lilly Center is recommended, as well. The proposed work plan involves a series of ongoing activities with numerous community partners that will require coordination and project management, yet will not likely create enough work for a dedicated staff position.

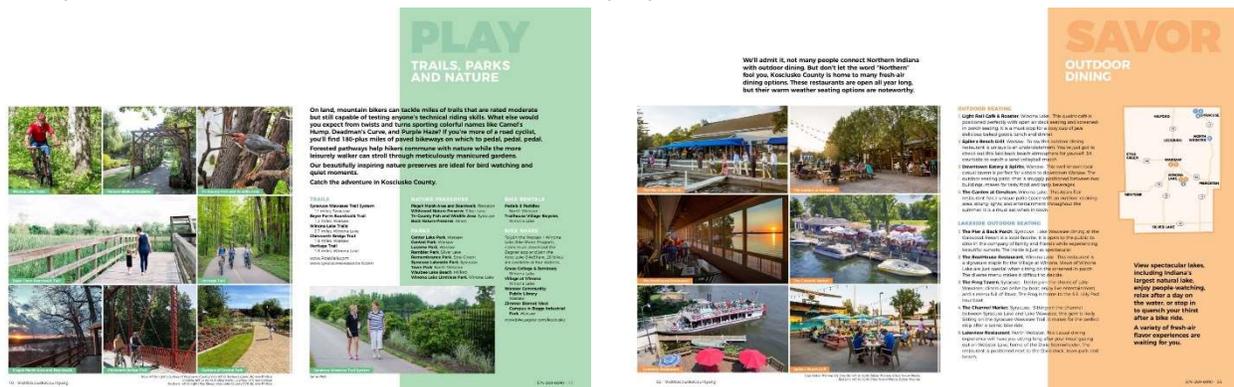
Two projects are recommended to increase the visibility of the Clearly Kosciusko brand identity: use of the brand in community entrance signage and identification of brand ambassador organizations. The Lilly Center for Lakes and Streams has already made plans to provide entrance signage to local cities and towns. Funding is available to support sign construction, as well. A partner organization is needed to lead outreach to town and city leaders. The Kosciusko Economic Development Corporation maintains ongoing

communication with local elected officials and hosts a quarterly ‘elected officials roundtable,’ so is well-positioned to serve as the partner organization for this outreach.

In addition, ambassador organizations can provide visibility for the Clearly Kosciusko brand identity. One example is Lake City Skiers, an award-winning competitive water ski show team that competes nationally and hosts events locally. Specific focus on identifying organizations like the Lake City Skiers – who have agreed to utilize Clearly Kosciusko – that can serve as brand ambassadors in- and outside of Kosciusko County can help to gain visibility for the brand. Member organizations and the proposed advisory board can be called-on to identify and reach out to prospective ambassadors. The project team contacted leadership of Lake City Skiers, who expressed interest in participating in Clearly Kosciusko.

The Clearly Kosciusko brand identity can also be used to develop and highlight experiences that are unique to the community. Focus group participants indicated they would like more shopping and dining options, as well as more evening and weekend activities. Yet, relative to other rural communities, Kosciusko County already offers what seems like a greater amount and variety of these amenities. Therefore, the Clearly Kosciusko brand can be utilized to communicate what experiences exist in the community. The Convention & Visitors Bureau has an award-winning visitors guide that describes many of these amenities. 1-2 page overviews about local shopping, the Warsaw food scene, things to do on nights and weekends, and outdoor recreation opportunities can be repurposed as standalone documents at the Clearly Kosciusko website. Alternatively, thumbnails of these documents could redirect visitors to the CVB website to access relevant content.

Examples of Visitors Guide content that could be repurposed:



Source: Kosciusko Convention & Visitors Bureau

Also recommended is creating opportunities for transplants to the area to meet with and learn from one another. One format to consider is social events similar to the ‘Dinner with Indy’ series of Zoom-based dinner meetings with facilitated discussion. The Indianapolis events featured 10-dinners hosted, each hosted by two community leaders, that took place on the same evening in late-April. A playbook for these events can be developed from the ‘Dinner with Indy’ version and made available at the Clearly Kosciusko website for use by local businesses, organizations, and neighborhoods to plan their own ‘Dinner with K-

County' events. This outreach can support talent retention by providing opportunities for people to learn about community amenities, civic and social organizations, and events and festivals.

Content from Dinner with Indy playbook:



**PROGRAM GUIDE**

Thanks so much for agreeing to take part in Dinner with Indy! Nothing brings together our community like great food and talking about our shared love of our city.

This guide provides a detailed overview of how to host and facilitate the event, with suggested event timing, discussion questions and tips.

The goal is to generate welcoming, open-ended, candid and fun conversations about the future of Indianapolis, while also providing a way for people to connect while we're socially distanced. We also are encouraging attendees to #BuyIndy from their favorite local restaurant, to show our support for the incredible community of entrepreneurs, chefs, bartenders and waitstaff who comprise our hospitality industry. Before we go any further, let's review the event structure and roles.

**EVENT STRUCTURE**

We're organizing ten virtual dinner parties, to take place simultaneously on **Thursday, April 30 | 6:30pm**.

Each dinner party is capped at twenty attendees, so if we fill our parties, we'll have 200 people talking about Indy at the same time (bicentennial, woo!).

Folks also have the option of organizing their own virtual dinner party with friends and family. They just need to share their contact information and we'll send them a pared down version of this discussion guide.

**THIS EVENT IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY**



Source: *IndyHub*

Finally, the focus group participants indicated the 'Clearly Kosciusko' brand identity does not yet communicate what is unique about Kosciusko County. To date, content is limited to website copy and a guest blog series, both managed by the Lilly Center for Lakes and Streams. In addition to partnering with the CVB to repurpose content from the visitors guide, it is also possible to partner with organizations like The Papers to repurpose content from publications like their *Lake Life Magazine*. The inaugural issue included an interview of Polywood CEO Doug Rassi, who described his personal appreciation for the quality of life found in Kosciusko County. Case studies and articles can be posted at the Clearly Kosciusko website and utilized by employers in talent recruitment and retention to 'fill in' the story of what makes the community unique. The magazine also includes profiles of local communities, events, and organizations, which can be similarly repurposed to provide community narratives at the Clearly Kosciusko website, and to redirect visitors to the *Lake Life Magazine* website.

**ROLES**

**CO-FACILITATORS:** Each party has two co-facilitators. The role of the co-facilitators is to get conversation flowing, ask interesting questions, and help connect people's thoughts and ideas. While the co-facilitators are a draw, most of the time their job is to get out of the way of conversation and let others talk, using questions and tips from this program guide. The co-facilitators are not presenters and not lecturers.

**FACILITATION TIPS:**

1. Be yourself and stay curious! Model the kind of inquisitive, casual and engaged behavior you want to see from participants. The vibe should feel like a great dinner party among smart friends, not a meeting or a classroom.
2. Ask open-ended questions that can be answered in a variety of ways. Avoid loaded questions.
3. Try to get the attendees to talk and respond to each other, not just to you.
4. Pay attention to how much you're talking; prioritize others' voices, not your own. Always turn the discussion back to what attendees think.
5. Allow people to opt out of answering questions. Not everyone needs to answer every prompt. Trust your instincts about when it's time to move on to a new question or idea.
6. Better to be over-prepared and only ask 4-5 questions, than force-march everyone through a long list.
7. Where appropriate, add your unique perspective, especially if it helps people get a glimpse of Indy "behind the scenes."

**HOST:** Each party has a host, representing one of the four presenting partner organizations. The host manages and monitors the tech side of things: allowing people into the group, muting folks with background noise, monitoring the chat (if using), and, if absolutely necessary, kicking out unruly guests. At the beginning of the party, the host will also welcome everyone to the event and share a bit about the partner organizations.

**HOST TIPS:**

1. Walk people through Zoom features (raising hands, chat, reaction emojis) that make it possible for people to signal that they have a question or comment.
2. It's okay to kick out unruly or spammer guests, especially if they've been warned.
3. Monitor the chat to see if folks have questions or comments and where possible, unmute them to let them ask questions verbally, rather than you reading the questions to the facilitators.

**SOCIAL MEDIA AMBASSADOR:** We've invited social influencers to live-tweet or Instagram story each conversation. Their role is to share out quotes, discussion prompts and other tidbits from the conversation. This amplifies the conversation and helps capture what happened. While the tweeter may answer questions and talk at times, most of the time they will probably be busy typing!

**ATTENDEE:** These are our party guests! They're here to connect, have a great conversation and learn something new. One of the big goals of the program is to get attendees talking and listening to each other, not just back and forth with the co-facilitators.



Recent profile of Polywood CEO Doug Rassi:

**Anyone familiar with the Rassi family knows this:** these Kosciusko County natives emit a collective, admirable, emanating strength.

**Relational bonds are formed through experience, and the lake provides experiential adventure.**

**LAKE LIFE - HEALTHY LIVING**

Anyone familiar with lake life knows experiential living that starts at the lake. The building blocks of a healthy lifestyle are formed here. Whether you're a retiree, a young professional, or a family, the lake provides a unique opportunity to live well. And it's not just the water that's healthy for you. The lake provides a natural setting for physical activity, mental clarity, and emotional well-being. The lake is a place where you can connect with nature, with each other, and with yourself. It's a place where you can find peace, joy, and a sense of purpose. The lake is a place where you can live well.

**THE HOME**

And to have such a degree of appreciation, the modern suburban home illustrates a balance of simplicity and making a grand statement. And to have "to be successful like me," Doug said, "I had to make the statement, 'I'm not just a retiree. I'm a professional.'"

**FATHERS ROCKS AT RASSI'S**

As a father, Doug knows the importance of spending time with his children. He has three children, and he makes it a point to spend time with them. He takes them to the lake, and he makes sure they have a great time. He also makes sure they have a good education. He wants them to be successful, and he wants them to be happy. He wants them to have a good life. He wants them to be successful, and he wants them to be happy. He wants them to have a good life.

Source: Lake Life Magazine

Finally, Clearly Kosciusko already employs hashtags that feed into an Instagram wall at the Clearly Kosciusko website, which provides an opportunity to assemble and repurpose that content for visual storytelling. An Instagram competition to solicit photographs around questions such as, "What is your favorite restaurant experience?" could generate visual content to develop one or more lookbooks similar to recent publications developed by the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership. This content will help to provide visual storytelling that can be used for talent recruitment and retention, completes the recommendations to fill in the narrative of 'what is' Clearly Kosciusko, and represents the proposed 'halo' project to utilize the \$1,000 cash prize to jumpstart this initiative. Funding will be utilized to design and print the lookbooks to share with member organizations and local employers.

Covers of the recent Instagram-based Northeast Indiana lookbooks:



Source: Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership  
**Tasks, Timeline, and Budget**

	<b>Project</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Budget</b>
<b>Visibility</b>	Entrance Signage	Outreach to local units of government	KEDCo	Q3	In-kind
		Production of entrance signs	Lilly Center	Q3/Q4 2020	Funding on-hand
		Installation of entrance signage	Local units of government	Q1 2021	In-kind
	Brand Ambassadors	Outreach to prospective brand ambassadors	Member organizations and advisory board	Ongoing	In-kind
		Development of Clearly Kosciusko marketing	Brand ambassadors	Ongoing	In-kind
<b>Experiences</b>	Visitors Guide content	Identify content to be repurposed	Lilly Center and CVB	Ongoing	In-house
		Develop content into 1-2 page PDF's	Lilly Center	Ongoing	In-house
		Post PDF's at ClearlyKC.com website	Lilly Center	Ongoing	In-house
		Utilize PDF's in social media	Lilly Center	Ongoing	In-house
	Clearly KC dinner series	Adapt Dinner with Indy playbook	KEDCo and OrthoWorx	Q3 2020	In-kind
		Post playbook at ClearlyKC.com	Lilly Center	Q3 2020	In-house
		Promote playbook on social media	Lilly Center	Ongoing	In-house
		(Optional) plan one or more dinner events	KEDCo and OrthoWorx	Q4 2020	In-kind
<b>Storytelling</b>	Lake Life magazine profiles	Identify content to be repurposed	Lilly Center and The Papers	Ongoing	In-house
		Develop content into standalone PDF's	Lilly Center and The Papers	Ongoing	In-house
		Post PDF's at ClearlyKC.com website	Lilly Center	Ongoing	In-house
		Utilize PDF's in social media	Lilly Center	Ongoing	In-house

	Clearly Kosciusko lookbooks	Develop criteria for Instagram competition	Lilly Center and advisory board	Q3 2020	In-kind
		Identify in-kind sponsors for gift cards	Lilly Center	Q3 2020	In-house
		Advertise Instagram competition	Lilly Center	Q3 2020	In-house
		Select photos for lookbooks	Lilly Center and advisory board	Q4 2020	In-kind
		Provide photographers with gift cards	Lilly Center	Q4 2020	In-kind from sponsors
		Develop lookbook with winning photos	TBD	Q1 2021	In-kind from sponsors
		Print lookbooks	TBD	Q1 2020	TBD
		Post PDF of lookbook at ClearlyKC.com	Lilly Center	Q1 2021	In-house
		Utilize content in social media posts	Lilly Center	Ongoing	In-house

## Summary

In conclusion, this proposal outlines a strategy to sustain the Clearly Kosciusko brand identity under the guidance of a volunteer advisory board and with the support of Lilly Center team members and to develop content under the headings of visibility, experiences, and storytelling so that the brand can be utilized to support talent recruitment and retention. To be determined is whether it will be practical to repurpose content from resources such as the visitors guide for use at the Clearly Kosciusko website, or instead directing visitors to the original content at the CVB website. Also yet to be completed are metrics to measure progress with the initiative. Lilly Center team members have begun tracking website analytics, which provides a starting point to develop metrics that track audience engagement for specific elements of this proposal. Development of the lookbook project can be undertaken to bring attention to the other proposed content items and to jumpstart this project to generate content that describes what is 'clearly' unique about Kosciusko County to support talent recruitment and retention.

## Works Cited

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## Appendix A: Notes from Clearly Kosciusko focus group

During the Zoom meeting, Alex Hall, Associate Director, Lilly Center for Lakes & Streams, shared a presentation about the Clearly Kosciusko brand identity to an audience of approximately 30 business and community leaders. Some participants represented organizations that have already registered to participate in Clearly Kosciusko. Following the presentation, KLA project team members asked a series of questions about Kosciusko County to understand how the Clearly Kosciusko brand might be utilized to support talent recruitment and retention. Following are notes from the discussion.

1. What is your impression of Kosciusko County?
  - People are generous
  - Proud of county, lakes, families, recreational facilities, faith, entrepreneurship, orthopedics
2. What amenities helped you to make Kosciusko County feel like home?
  - Interacting with people in the county
  - Joining YAP, KLA, church
  - Finding friends, salon... (creature comforts)
3. What is your dream for our community?
  - More diversity
  - More public spaces
  - Places to be open later
  - Non-religious activities
  - Outdoor dining spaces
  - Concert venue w/bigger names
  - Shopping with better quality merchandise... series of standalone documents at KC website? Push through KC social media? Offer opportunities to add entities?
  - Expansion of trails, bicycle tourism
  - More activities in the winter, "party" opportunities for kids that you don't have to travel to Fort Wayne
4. What is clearly unique about Kosciusko County?
  - Fantastic festivals, art and music festivals
  - Lakes and lake recreation, fishing, water skiing, wakeboarding, wake surfing
  - Winona lake town is new
  - Warsaw is starting to have a food scene

5. What are ways the brand could be used to 'unite' our community?
  - Points of entry signs
  - First Friday Facebook page
  - To go Kosciusko Facebook page
  - Hooch and Nosh blog
6. How could you use 'Clearly Kosciusko' to talk about our community?
  - How to pronounce Kosciusko
  - Where is Kosciusko county-geographic identity
  - Keep using clearly Kosciusko brand at events
  - Employers use it as a pull. "this is a community for me"
7. How might your organization utilize the Clearly Kosciusko brand?
  - Partnerships between industries, collaborations example: Orthoworx is using part of their intern and virtual event "goose chase"
  - Have a plan for the entity or group on how to use clearly Kosciusko
8. What other organizations could utilize the brand?
  - Need to include other towns in county, corporations, Bowen center, united way and other non-profits
  - Hotels, Airbnb, VRBO
  - Agriculture: Maple leaf, CTB
  - Golf clubs
  - Lake city skiers... Chuck McLaughlin (?)
  - One Warsaw
9. How would you like to see or hear about 'Clearly Kosciusko? Billboards, podcasts, videos, etc.
  - Festival participation, booth @ other events selling t-shirts, pens
  - Contest with prize, photo contest
  - Communication with an activity
  - Using app that Jill Boggs KLA group is developing
  - More wording for what clearly Kosciusko is about and educate others

## Appendix B: Presentation slides