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## **Unity Foundation Joins Forces with Regional Partners to Launch NWI BizHub Online Entrepreneurial Resource Tool**

LA PORTE COUNTY, IN — A pioneering collaboration among Unity Foundation of La Porte County, Legacy Foundation, Crown Point Community Foundation, Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Center and the Center of Workforce Innovations has culminated in the development of NWI BizHub ([nwibizhub.com](http://nwibizhub.com)), a new network to advance economic growth in Northwest Indiana.

Indiana is home to over 500,000 small businesses that support over 1 million jobs. Outside of Indianapolis, Northwest Indiana is the second largest business population. This new online platform builds upon previous research conducted by the NWI Forum as part of the Ignite the Region: A Regional Strategy for Economic Transformation.

“The Ignite the Region process showed that our entrepreneurial ecosystem was fragmented,” said Maggi Spartz, Unity Foundation President. “The lead task was to create a database or tool that would help entrepreneurs of any kind, find resources more quickly. We heard it from almost every entrepreneur, ‘I didn’t know where to look for help. I stumbled around until I got lucky. It took a lot of time.’ We are fortunate to now have NWI BizHub to solve this critical need for our community.”

NWI BizHub is the first of several projects which Unity Foundation, Legacy Foundation and Crown Point Community Foundation will be supporting. Their overall goal is to encourage an ecosystem that supports all entrepreneurs to become major players in the regional innovation economy.

“We believe in the importance of equitable opportunity for all prospective and current business owners and NWI BizHub provides that access,” said Carolyn Saxton, Legacy Foundation President. “We look forward to working with many owners in the Northwest Indiana region to help guide and support their continued growth and are excited to be part of the NWI BizHub effort.”

NWI BizHub will provide local entrepreneurs with the resources and tools to start and grow their business through an easy, free online referral network.

“The process of matching a small business’ needs to the right resource is simple, convenient, and easy-to-use,” said Donna Catalano, NWI BizHub Network Navigator. “Anyone can access the network by going to [nwibizhub.com](http://nwibizhub.com) and clicking on resources in the menu bar, or the let’s work together button. Concurrently with this launch, we have been recruiting area organizations that support owners to join the network, and now feature almost 60 resource partners who are ready to connect on NWI BizHub.”

NWI BizHub launched Nov. 12 as part of the 2020 E-Day Entrepreneurship Excellence Awards, sponsored by the Indiana Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Northwest.

“We are thrilled to host the launch of NWI BizHub during the E-Day event program, said Lorri Feldt, SBDC Regional Director and NWI BizHub partner. So fitting that an engaging new online entrepreneurial resource hub should have its premiere at the E-Day Entrepreneurial Excellence awards.”

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NWI BizHub joins a national network of organizations doing this work through SourceLink®. Founded in 2003, SourceLink® is a national nonprofit that has been providing consulting and technical expertise for the effort.

“I’m excited to see the NWI BizHub network launch,” said Rob Williams, SourceLink® Director. “It was born out of both a need and with key collaboration partners at the table. From what I have experienced working with the team behind NWI BizHub, I expect this region will fast become a leader among our network and inspire other communities to champion and support their local entrepreneurs just as well.”

For more information about NWI BizHub, go to [nwibizhub.com](http://nwibizhub.com) or contact Donna Catalano, Legacy Foundation at (219) 836-1880 or [dcatalano@legacyfdn.org](mailto:dcatalano@legacyfdn.org).

*Since 1992, Unity Foundation of La Porte County has served donors, nonprofits and local communities. As La Porte County’s community foundation, it manages approximately \$32 million in assets, administers more than 325 charitable funds, and has distributed more than \$21 million through direct grants and scholarships. The Council on Foundations has deemed Unity Foundation in compliance with all Indiana and national ethical and operating standards for community foundations. Unity Foundation’s mission is to strengthen La Porte County now and forever by building permanent endowments; providing leadership; offering philanthropic vehicles for everyone; and, being a catalyst for social and economic vitality. For more information, please visit [www.uflc.net](http://www.uflc.net) or call 219-879-0327.*

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