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boost local and regional economies in Indiana, according to officials with Purdue University's Center for Regional Development.

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Encouraging entrepreneurs to start small businesses or expand existing ones will boost local and regional economies in Indiana, according to officials with Purdue University's Center for Regional Development.

Purdue Extension has created five regions in the state in which it plans to build a network to promote economic and community development.

“The idea is to assist communities in Indiana as they transform their local economies through the development of key components required for entrepreneurship and small business development,” Michael Wilcox, senior associate at the center, said during a workshop Thursday at the Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce and hosted by West Central Indiana Small Business Development Center.

Vigo County has 2,272 businesses that are considered self-employed, with no employees. Those businesses generated more than \$153 million in sales in Vigo County in 2011, Wilcox said.

“This is one of the things that people take entrepreneurship to task about ... that the [sales] figure is not very high. But keep in mind, often times these entrepreneurs are self-employed; many do not do this full time, but rather have a home-based business,” Wilcox said. “It is still sales.”

Small business and entrepreneurs create jobs and broaden the income tax base, as well as buy and supply local products and services.

Also, “home-grown firms are operated by people who have a personal stake in the

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Lionel “Bo” Beaulieu, director of the Center for Regional Development, said knowing your own county can help you look for business opportunities.

Vigo County, in 2011, had 5,042 businesses, excluding the self-employed, Beaulieu said. Of those, 4,023 businesses employed two to nine workers; 935 businesses employed 10 to 99 workers; 74 businesses employed 100 to 499 employees; and 10 businesses employed 500 or more workers.

The biggest employment, Beaulieu said, is in the sector of 10 to 99 employees. That sector employed 23,537 people in Vigo County. “This is an important part and often overlooked part of the economy,” Beaulieu said. “This sector captured nearly \$4.2 billion in sales [in 2011], higher than any other categories, so about half of the sales of the county.”

Beaulieu suggested economic development efforts be made to retain such businesses.

“They are here already and if you can figure out how to help them grow,” it can help bolster the economy, Beaulieu said

Other facts show employment.

In Vigo County, health care/social assistance and government employed the most people in the county in 2012. Government had 8,933 workers and health care had 8,259, yet both saw a decline in its workforce from 2007 to 2012, Beaulieu said.

Health care saw a 4 percent decline from 2007 to 2012, a drop of 387 workers. Government had a drop of 806 workers, a decrease of 8 percent. Retail trade, which had 7,138 workers in 2012, had a 9 percent decrease from 2007 to 2012, he said.

However, educational services, which in 2012 employed 2,303 workers, grew by 787 workers from 2007 to 2012, a 52 percent increase. Mining went from 179 workers to

356 workers, a 99 percent increase from 2007 to 2012.

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From a regional perspective, Beaulieu said 21,271 workers came daily into Vigo County to work in 2011, while 12,470 left daily to work out of county. There were 26,925 workers who lived and worked in Vigo County.

“This is valuable as it shows the labor force and available labor that lives and works here,” Beaulieu said.

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