



INDIANA COMMISSION for
HIGHER EDUCATION



INDIANA PARTNERSHIP PENTAGON

MEETING 5 | PRE-READ

INTRODUCTION

High-quality career coaching and career readiness education allows all K-12 students to meaningfully navigate postsecondary plans through exploration, engagement, and experience activities inside and outside the classroom. Career coaching and career readiness education should empower students to directly enter skilled positions in the workforce, pursue a postsecondary pathway, or enlist in the military after graduation. At the postsecondary level, career-related experiences and coaching create a [bridge](#) between the classroom and the workforce, while also providing opportunities for adult learners to re-skill, up-skill, or attain a postsecondary degree or credential.

INDIANA'S WORKFORCE AND POSTSECONDARY LANDSCAPE

Indiana's Workforce Needs

In 2031, about [62 percent](#) of jobs in Indiana will require some postsecondary training and only 53 percent of the Indiana working age population has a postsecondary credential beyond high school. Thus, Indiana's goal is to increase the percentage of working-age adults with a postsecondary degree to 60 percent by 2025.

From 2011 to 2021, some of the [fastest-growing industries](#) in Indiana included transportation, Professional, scientific & technical services, and manufacturing. [Data](#) from the Indiana Department of Workforce Development also shows that employment in transportation and food service industries are projected to grow by approximately 28,000 and 24,000 jobs, respectively, by 2031. This [workforce economy dashboard](#) from the Indiana Department of Workforce Development shows the most recent trends in growing industries. Notably, manufacturing jobs and non-farm jobs are some of the fastest-growing industries.

As industry leaders and education institutions gain a better understanding of the workforce's

future needs and areas of opportunity, they must collaborate to ensure that the higher education curriculum is aligned with the economy's needs. Partnerships between higher education institutions and local workforce development boards create a community of practice dedicated to supporting the needs of both students and local economies.

By identifying fast-growing industries in the state, like manufacturing in Indiana, and aligning curriculum to address the skills needed in these industries; workforce and higher education partnerships can support statewide employment needs and Indiana's attainment goals.



Indiana's Postsecondary Attainment Needs

Indiana has set an ambitious postsecondary attainment goal: 60 percent of working-age adults will attain a quality credential or degree by 2025. This objective underscores the state's commitment to fostering a robust economy and enhancing the quality of life for its residents. However, despite making significant strides in non-degree credentialing, about [31% of the population](#) aged 25-64 holds at least a bachelor's degree. These data points are further contrasted by Indiana ranking [5th in the nation](#) for certificate or certification attainment and ranking [first](#) in the Midwest and [fifth](#) in the nation for providing need-based financial aid. It is evident that Indiana is making efforts to address the needs of students seeking a higher education. By expanding efforts for Hoosiers to access stackable credentials and work-based learning opportunities, Indiana can create new avenues for students to attain higher-level degrees and engage in learning that supports the state's workforce needs.

The [HOPE \(Hoosier Opportunities & Possibilities through Education\) Agenda](#), developed by Indiana's Commission for Higher Education, sets a course for raising Indiana's postsecondary education profile across the nation. By addressing critical postsecondary touch points such as student access, completion, and retention of graduates within the state, the HOPE Agenda is working to elevate Indiana's standing in the nation for several postsecondary goals and ensuring an educated and socially prosperous workforce.

Aligning Higher Education with Workforce Needs

As employers struggle to fill [open positions](#), career readiness education plays a critical role in addressing the disparity between jobs available and the skill sets of job seekers—also known as the [skills gap](#)—and helps prepare job seekers for open positions. Middle-skill jobs—jobs that require more than a high school

diploma but less than a four-year degree—make up [roughly 52 percent](#) of the labor market. However, only [43 percent](#) of the workforce have access to the skills training needed to fill those jobs, creating a [worker shortage](#).

As the demographics of higher education and workforce needs continue to change, there is growing recognition of the value diverse credentials provide for students. Postsecondary pathways are the varying opportunities students may pursue to become college and career ready. The full scope of postsecondary pathways includes:

- [Workforce Training Programs](#): Programs that offer students new and/or improved skills often aligned to a specific industry.
- [Industry Credentials](#): Vocational certifications, licenses, or badges that are recognized by local, state, or national business and industry partners.
- [Certificates](#): Awards that usually require less than one or two years to complete and prepare individuals for middle-skill jobs (such as nurses and welders).
- Postsecondary degrees include associate, bachelor's, and graduate degrees that provide students with the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills that can be used toward employment or further study.

MIDDLE-SKILL JOBS

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■ Early colleges also seek to eliminate some of these barriers. Early college programs provide high school students the opportunity to graduate high school with an associate degree or transferable credits to another four-year university. In a study conducted by the American Institutes for Research, [early college students were more likely than their traditional high school counterparts](#) to enroll in any type of college after graduation. Early college students were also more likely to attain a bachelor's degree within four years and six years after high school graduation.

Example

■ [Achieve Your Degree Program \(Ivy Tech Community College\)](#) | This initiative is a collaborative effort between Ivy Tech Community College and nearly 300 Indiana employers. If a student's employer is part of this partnership, they can earn an associate degree or credential in a discipline approved by their employer for minimal or no up-front cost. Through this alignment between postsecondary and local workforce, the HOPE Agenda goal of increasing post-high school training and education going rates for youth and adults across all demographics is reflected. Through this intentional partnership, adult learners can engage in academic course-taking that coincides with the field they work in at an affordable rate. Not only does this promote access, but it also promotes a more well-informed workforce.

ENGAGING INDUSTRIES AND EMPLOYERS IN ATTAINMENT EFFORTS

In an era where the demand for skilled workers is ever-growing, collaboration between academia and industry is paramount. These collaborations not only benefit businesses by cultivating a skilled workforce but also empower individuals to pursue higher education, ultimately driving economic growth and social mobility.

Engaging employers in efforts to reduce barriers to higher education for their employees can be

instrumental in enabling students who are full-time workers to pursue postsecondary education. Business leaders should be engaged in conversations with postsecondary leaders to ensure that course and program offerings align with the needs of the business community.

Promising Initiatives

- [Connect-iX](#) | iXplore™ began planning and prototyping the Connect-iX Career Exploration concept nearly three years ago. They heard directly from thousands of Indiana students, counselors, & community stakeholders about how this approach and technology can close the gaps in understanding career options. They are now working with industry partners to expand the program & roadshow for fall 2025 and beyond.
- [OneAmerica Pathways Program](#) | This initiative by OneAmerica, an Indianapolis-based organization, provides local talent with financial internship opportunities, one-on-one mentoring and career coaching, and resources for financial literacy. The Pathways Program awards about \$25,000 in scholarships monthly and has over 60 graduates from its programs.
- [Ascend Indiana](#) | An initiative through the Central Indiana Corporate Partnership, Ascend Indiana seeks to expand economic opportunities for Hoosiers to meet workforce needs.
- [Jobs for America's Graduates](#) | This program provides advising, employer engagement, and other services to ensure that students understand all the options available to them for postsecondary education.

POLICY PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Current Indiana Policy Practices

- [EARN \(Employment Aid Readiness Network\) Indiana](#) | This program is an Indiana work-study initiative that provides students with career coaching and development opportunities. Employers also receive 50% of the student's

hourly rates for hiring them.

- [Indiana Career Scholarship Accounts](#) | CSAs are state-funded scholarships that aid in aligning students with career development opportunities like internships, apprenticeships, work-based learning opportunities, and credential attainment.
- [CTE Employer Connector](#) | This tool allows employers throughout the state of Indiana to view how many seniors are participating in CTE programs in various counties. It also allows employers to request information on students to help connect them with work-based learning opportunities.

Policy Practices from Other States

- Missouri | The [Apprenticeship Missouri](#) program, coordinated by the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development, seeks to collaborate with employers, providers, and partners to “skill up” the Missouri workforce by expanding opportunities for work-based learning and apprenticeships. Through this program, Missouri is now [ranked third nationally](#) in registering new apprentices and ranked fourth in the nation for completed apprenticeships.



ALIGNING INDIANA'S WORKFORCE AND POSTSECONDARY NEEDS

- [Upskill OK](#) | Facilitated by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, Upskill OK connects employers, students, and educational institutions with credential programs to promote the skilling and upskilling of the Oklahoma work force, especially in high-need fields. Employers can submit interest forms to partner with Oklahoma institutions of higher education and students & employees can utilize the platform to be connected to these opportunities.
- [BlueSky Tennessee Institute](#) | This program involves Blue Cross Blue Shield and East Tennessee State University developing an accelerated curriculum to offer bachelor's degrees in two years. While not in Indiana, this partnership in Tennessee reflects the purpose of aligning curriculum with workforce needs. Programs like BlueSky Tennessee Institute engage students in the relevant coursework quickly, to help them secure employment with Blue Cross Blue Shield afterward. This type of partnership aligns with HOPE Agenda goals, which aim to increase college completion in a student's area of study and retain local talent.





Established in 2001, [The Hunt Institute](#) honors the legacy of James B. Hunt, Jr., the former governor of North Carolina who distinguished himself as an ardent champion of education.

The Hunt Institute brings together people and resources to inspire and inform elected officials and policymakers about key issues in education, resulting in visionary leaders who are prepared to take strategic action for greater educational outcomes and student success.

In 2016, The Hunt Institute became an independent, nonprofit entity and joined forces with Duke University's Sanford School of Public Policy to pursue research, educational partnerships, and events related to improving education policy.

Learn more at www.hunt-institute.org.



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