



## Catalyzing Opportunities for Working Learners in Indiana

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### Background

Thomas P. Miller and Associates (TPMA) was contracted by the ACT Foundation to provide assistance to Indiana's efforts to scale work-and-learn opportunities in Indiana and to infuse new models of connecting working and learning with particular emphasis on the growing population of working learners. Throughout this project, TPMA is working collaboratively with leadership within Indiana's workforce and education systems and its employer partners to champion the need to expand work-and-learn opportunities as the state embraces the new learning and performance economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and to gather intelligence that will create a foundation for spurring systemic enhancements that better link workforce, education, and employer partners together around work and learn experiences.

### Indiana Challenges and Vision for Work and Learn

#### Challenges

- 1.2 million youth and young adults (16-29) live in Indiana;
- The unemployment rate is between 8 and 15% for this population and only 47% of young adults remain in Indiana after earning a bachelor's degree;
- Indiana will have approximately 1 million jobs to fill over the next 10 years; and
- There is misalignment of employer demand and the talent pipeline/skills development

#### The Vision

- Work-and-learn is *the* strategy to stop the brain drain in Indiana; and
- Work-and-learn is the best method for demonstrating employability skills that employers demand.

### Opportunities for Enhancements being researched by TPMA

- More accurately identify and communicate reliable data on the make-up of working learners throughout Indiana. This data, taken from "Learning While Learning: The New Normal," (Carnevale, et al, 2015), will help to inform workforce and education system partners of the size and scope of the working learning economy in Indiana and to identify strategies and actions to proactively engage those working learners into wealth-creating career and educational pathways.

- Expand the standard model of work-and-learn, where work-and-learn opportunities begin with connections/enrollment in formal education, into a model that balances that approach with one that recognizes and capitalizes on the large number of working learners that are working while in educational programs, even if it is not a formal internship or other work-and-learn model. In essence, how can Indiana enhance its work and learn model by recognizing and rewarding workers already engaged in both working and learning.
- Recognize and expand the opportunity that the retail, hospitality, and food services industries provide to working learners. A very large percentage of working learners are working in one of these industries, but historically, there has been little to no action in linking work-and-learn opportunities to them. How can Indiana position itself to leverage the working learners in these industries to:
  - Further promote career pathways within the industries; and
  - Identify and promote the transferrable skills and certifications gained while working and learning in these industries to other wealth-generating industries within Indiana.
- Identify and systemize working learners' on-the-job experiences into college credit or industry-recognized certifications through the expansion of competency-based education programs and/or prior learning assessments.

