



STATE OF INDIANA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
State House, Second Floor
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Eric J. Holcomb
Governor

Taking Indiana's Workforce to the Next Level

Every day, I hear from hardworking Hoosiers who want better jobs, healthier communities and more opportunities for their children. I also hear from business owners who have open positions but can't find people with the skills to fill them. I am convinced that perhaps my greatest charge as governor is to bring these folks together.

I don't believe we need to choose between improving the lives of individuals and meeting the needs of our highest demand industries. In fact, the two go hand-in-hand. When our people do better, businesses do better—and our state's economy grows as those companies invest back in our citizens and communities.

That's what my workforce agenda, Next Level Jobs, is all about. The premise is simple: Meet Hoosiers wherever they are on their career path—whether they're a kindergartener, high school student, college student or career veteran looking for a new opportunity. We need to give them the tools they need to achieve lifelong success.

At every step along the way, we're making wise investments, starting with our youngest students—expanded pre-kindergarten; a focus on STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) and computer science; and incentives for adults to return and get the skills they need in a dynamic economy.

For high school students, we're aligning career and technical education courses to high-wage industries. We created graduation pathways to help students map out a path to their next step—reflecting their personal aspirations and strengths while tailoring interests to the communities where they live. We want to provide students with the fundamentals and the intellectual curiosity they'll need, should they have to change course in a dynamic economy.

Nearly every job being created will require something beyond a diploma, and Indiana will maintain its commitment to making sure our high school students who work hard have the opportunity to earn credentials that lead to great careers. Our 21st Century Scholars program, which provides scholarships to low-income students who commit to academic success and activities that make them more likely to graduate, is a vivid example. With more than 27 years of experience under our belts, Indiana has the most fine-tuned "free college" program in the nation. Building on lessons learned since its inception, our 21st Century Scholars are entering college at the highest level of all high school students and are earning a credential at dramatically higher levels than their low-income peers.

Additionally, we created NextLevelJobs.org to support Hoosier adults by offering programs that can be accomplished while working. Our ultimate goal? To fill the 90,000+ jobs available right now and make our workforce system better aligned to employer need. As part of Next Level Jobs, the Employer Training Grant provides financial support to Indiana companies to hire, train and retain Hoosier adults while the Workforce Ready Grant offers tuition-free certificates at Ivy Tech or Vincennes University in high-demand industries.

These grant programs are valuable because they get Hoosiers into high-demand jobs quickly. For employers, they fill an immediate economic need. For working Hoosiers, they provide a foot in the door to a new career with opportunities for advancement. Individuals and businesses alike must accept the reality of our modern economy. People must be willing to learn new skills throughout their careers, and employers must invest time and resources into the ongoing development of their workforce.

As Indiana continues to commit record-level funding to education, we are encouraged by the success of our investments, such as Jobs for America's Graduates—with a 90 percent success rate. Additionally, we helped more than 14,000 Hoosiers with some college but no degree finish what they started through You. Can. Go. Back., and we are currently breaking new ground in our corrections system with the coding academy The Last Mile. In short, we are making higher education more focused on student outcomes.

That said, these programs are not enough to crack the workforce code. We must do more.

This month, my Workforce Cabinet will complete a report detailing what's working and what's not. We'll recommend ways to improve our education and workforce system so that people, businesses and—ultimately—our state's economy see even greater returns for our state's investment.

I refuse to accept that we must choose between programs that move Hoosiers quickly into today's jobs and those that strengthen our future economic vitality. The stakes are too high.

Indiana is proving every day that we can do both.

- ***Indiana Governor Eric J. Holcomb***