



**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Sam Rourke at (913) 206-7678 or [SRourke@gov.in.gov](mailto:SRourke@gov.in.gov)  
Charlee Beasor at (765) 720-0342 or [CBeasor@che.in.gov](mailto:CBeasor@che.in.gov)  
Scott Olson at (317) 614-5679 or [SOlson@dwd.in.gov](mailto:SOlson@dwd.in.gov)

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## Next Level Jobs Program Expanded Through End of 2020

*CARES Act funds allocated to Indiana's workforce recovery initiative will expand Workforce Ready Grant and Employer Training Grant*

(INDIANAPOLIS) – The [Governor's Workforce Cabinet](#) today provided additional details on the temporary expansion of Indiana's [Next Level Jobs](#) program. The two programs that make up Next Level Jobs, the [Workforce Ready Grant \(WRG\)](#) and [Employer Training Grant \(ETG\)](#), will have increased eligibility, program offerings and funding caps through December 30, 2020.

Federal funding of \$50 million, allocated through the CARES Act, enables the expansion of Next Level Jobs through Indiana's "Rapid Recovery for a Better Future" [initiative](#), launched on June 5. Of the money, \$37 million will be used to expand the two grant programs. Other funds will support the development of career coaching initiatives, skills training, and recognition of prior learning and experience.

"Expanding the Next Level Jobs program will give thousands of additional Hoosiers the opportunity to gain the skills needed to succeed in high-demand careers," **said Indiana Governor Eric J.**

**Holcomb.** "Investing in these proven programs with our federal dollars will ensure Hoosiers across our state can recover quickly from the negative economic impacts of COVID-19 and secure quality jobs."

Individuals can receive free job training for jobs in high-demand fields through the Workforce Ready Grant and **\$22 million of CARES Act funding is going toward the WRG**, enabling at least 10,000 additional Hoosiers to utilize the grant. The Workforce Ready Grant, administered by the Commission for Higher Education, will be temporarily expanded in the following ways:

- Hoosiers with two-and four-year degrees are temporarily eligible to receive full tuition reimbursement for short-term Workforce Ready Grant-eligible programs through December 30. (Costs incurred beyond that point will not be reimbursed.)
- Nearly 50 **new** certificates have been approved for addition to the current list of eligible programs. Examples of certificate programs that temporarily qualify for the Workforce Ready Grant include Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Commercial Driver's License (CDL), Phlebotomy and CNC Machining. Individuals can enroll in some of the new certificate programs now at [NextLevelJobs.org](http://NextLevelJobs.org) with additional programs available for enrollment on the site in the coming weeks.

- Certificate programs have been selected based on meeting immediate, regional, and emerging workforce needs. Ivy Tech, Vincennes, and the Department of Workforce Development all added programs to the list.
- The funding cap per individual has been raised from \$5,500 to \$10,000 to cover high-quality programs that cost more than \$5,500 (with program cost frozen at its current level).

The Employer Training Grant, administered by the Department of Workforce Development, supports employers to train new employees, and upskill or reskill incumbent workers. The Employer Training Grant will be temporarily expanded in the following ways, **with \$15 million of CARES Act funding**, enabling 25,000 more Hoosiers to utilize the grant:

- The maximum amount of funding available to an employer has been raised from \$50,000 to \$100,000.
- \$5 million will be allocated specifically for minority-, women-, and veteran-owned businesses.

“Our goal is to ensure that all employers with good, high-demand jobs are aware of the Employer Training Grant funding available, and that each takes advantage of it, including minority-, women- and veteran-owned businesses,” **said Fred Payne, Commissioner of the Department of Workforce Development**. “The inclusion of these businesses assists our state in ensuring that the promise of an educated and skilled workforce is realized by all Hoosiers and Hoosier businesses.”

The Next Level Jobs program was started in 2017 as part of Governor Holcomb’s focus on skilling up Hoosiers for high-wage, high-demand jobs. Since its inception, the Workforce Ready Grant has enrolled over 25,000 Hoosiers in high-demand, tuition-free certificate programs, with over 13,300 Hoosiers completing a Workforce Ready-eligible certificate program. Individuals who have completed a certificate program have seen an average wage increase of \$6,400 a year. The Employer Training Grant has served more than 530 employers and trained nearly 9,000 employees.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, state data show Hoosiers have a heightened interest in Next Level Jobs. The Next Level Jobs site has seen over 100,000 site visits from January to June and the daily average for site visits has doubled during the pandemic. From February 1 to June 1, there have been nearly 10,000 additional leads to Ivy Tech Community College, Vincennes University and other training providers, nearly 1,900 program enrollments, and more than 2,700 individuals have completed a high-value certificate.

"We know the Next Level Jobs programs work for Hoosiers, whether it's individuals seeking education to better their futures or making sure employers have the skilled workforce they require to keep Indiana moving forward in an evolving economy," **said Teresa Lubbers, chair of the Governor's Workforce Cabinet and the state's Commissioner for Higher Education**. "Expanding these programs, focusing on career coaching and honoring the dignity of prior work and education with this funding ensure we can help Hoosiers get back on their feet quickly."

To get more information and enroll in Next Level Jobs, visit [NextLevelJobs.org](https://NextLevelJobs.org). Individuals looking to connect with education, employment, and financial resources available in Indiana are encouraged to visit Indiana’s Rapid Recovery hub, [YourNextStepIN.org](https://YourNextStepIN.org). Free one-on-one assistance helping

Hoosiers navigate the Workforce Ready Grant is available through [INvestEd](#) by calling (317) 715-9007.

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#### **About the Governor's Workforce Cabinet**

The Governor's Workforce Cabinet (GWC) was formed in 2018 with the mission of addressing current and future education and employment needs for individuals and employers, strengthening Indiana's economy by integrating and aligning state and federal resources, and ensuring a talent-driven education and workforce system. The membership of the GWC includes the business community, K-12 representatives, postsecondary institutions, Indiana lawmakers, and leaders from Indiana state agencies.

#### **About the Indiana Commission for Higher Education**

Created in 1971, the Indiana Commission for Higher Education plans, coordinates and defines Indiana's postsecondary education system to align higher learning with the needs of students and the state. The Commission also administers Indiana's financial aid programs, including the [21st Century Scholars](#) early college promise scholarship, which celebrates 30 years in 2020. Learn more about the Commission's Reaching Higher in a State of Change strategic plan at [www.in.gov/che](http://www.in.gov/che).

#### **About the Indiana Department of Workforce Development**

DWD serves the worker and the employer to ensure workplace success. DWD is committed to innovating and invigorating Indiana's economic future by providing WorkOne Career Centers, Unemployment Insurance, Labor Market Information, Regional Workforce Strategies and Professional Training. Through these services, DWD is able to develop a premier workforce that enables Indiana employers to flourish and entices businesses from outside our state to relocate to Indiana.