



## I. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE & EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**A. Unified or Combined State Plan.** Select whether the State is submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan. At a minimum, a State must submit a Unified State Plan that covers the six core programs. Indiana has opted to submit a Unified State Plan.

**B. Plan Introduction or Executive Summary.** The Unified or Combined State Plan may include an introduction or executive summary. This element is optional.

### **Indiana At a Glance, Humble No More**

Indiana is making significant investments in workforce, education, and health that are transforming the state and lives of Hoosiers.

With a population of 6.8 million and diverse urban, suburban and rural needs, this humble Midwest state has firmly placed itself on the map for business in the U.S. and abroad. Indiana was recently recognized by Forbes as one of the premier states in which to start a business. We have been out in front with bold initiatives to attract jobs and investments and in 2023, Indiana secured another record-breaking year for economic growth.

Indiana continues to strengthen its foundation of good government – low taxes, responsible fiscal stewardship, responsive leadership, and a business-friendly regulatory environment. Indiana has made major upgrades to roadways and trails and is making history with unprecedented investments in local communities for quality of place initiatives.

Coupled with continued improvements in the K-12 system – redesigning high school, modernization of career-technical education and quality work experience – and a world-class network of nationally-acclaimed colleges and universities, Indiana is emerging as a model for embracing rapid change and building sustainable talent pipelines.

### **Strong Industry Sectors Driving Demand for Skilled Workers**

Indiana has long been a leader in advanced manufacturing, engineering, agriculture, biopharma, and life sciences. The State is one of the highest producers of engineering graduates and is working hard to keep more of those students in-state and employed after graduation.

Three major federal infrastructure bills passed during the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress (2022) and are bringing an unprecedented influx of financial investment and workforce opportunity to Indiana. There will be new jobs and increased talent demand in emerging industries including microelectronics and semiconductors, electric vehicles and mobility systems, smart manufacturing and robotics, and clean and alternative energy production.

Key infrastructure projects, such as high-speed internet and enhancements to Indiana's roads, bridges, and waterways, are driving additional need for skilled tradespeople. Coordination at the State level and across industry sectors is critical, as these projects significantly increase the demand and competition for workers where there are already existing labor constraints. Meanwhile, the State remains committed to in-demand jobs that are critical to the well-being of our communities, including healthcare, education, public safety, and more.



Most every sector has demand. Whether these jobs require a two- or four-year degree, a short-term certificate, work-based learning or apprenticeship, there is a pathway to a good job and opportunity for all Hoosiers. The State will continue to build upon recent legislation to promote work-based learning, increase high school graduation and college-going rates, and incentivize training enrollment in high-demand fields.

### **Hoosiers and the Supply Equation**

When it comes to addressing the talent supply portion of the equation, there are two main challenges for Indiana – a declining workforce and a fundamental skills mismatch.

Like many states across the country, Indiana is facing demographic shifts that are fundamentally reshaping the workforce, and therefore the State's ability to meet employer demand for skilled talent. Historically low unemployment in Indiana continues to squeeze the labor force, along with decreased labor force participation due in part to the ongoing retirement of Baby Boomers. Despite these challenges, Indiana's unemployment rate is below the national average and its labor force participation rate is above the national average. There are more jobs and people working in Indiana today than at any other point in state history.

Indiana's labor force is already strained but the situation is compounded when workers lack the skills needed to remain competitive in the 21st century. Innovations in artificial intelligence (AI) and automation are radically altering the way the world works and are spurring demand for increased digital and technical skills across all sectors. The skills, knowledge, and abilities required for the modern worker necessitate a more technically skilled workforce, not less. Rapid change and disruption will remain the status quo and require on-going training and skills development for workers and higher levels of input, engagement and talent co-development from employers.

As more students question the value of higher education, Indiana has been focused on addressing and reversing its declining college-going rate – and with some early success. According to the Lumina Foundation, 54% percent of working-age people in Indiana have attained a high-value certificate or degree. (up from 48% in 2019.) There is more work to be done to meet our goal of 60% but we are on track. Indiana is a national leader in helping individuals obtain high-quality, short-term credentials for in-demand jobs because of the focus and efforts of more than a decade.

More than 671,000 Hoosiers have begun postsecondary programs but do not have a degree and roughly 430,000 Hoosiers lack a high school diploma or equivalency. State and federal resources are being optimized to reach these people and help put them on a forward path.

The skill gaps Hoosiers face are compounded by the increased and changing needs of employers. Job creators in Indiana continue to clamor for more workers across all skill levels, and the number of unfilled jobs is more than 100,000. Underemployment rather than unemployment is also a critical concern.

The silver lining of a tight labor market and influx of federal projects is the opportunity to engage audiences traditionally excluded from the workforce. Indiana has developed initiatives to engage untapped talent pools including veterans, justice-involved individuals, people with disabilities and others. There are ample opportunities for these groups to have access to meaningful work and a livable wage. A win-win for Hoosier workers and employers.

## **Indiana Governor's Workforce Cabinet: Setting a Shared Vision, Eliminating Silos, Driving Collaboration & Success**

Indiana understands that every life stage impacts a person's ability to achieve eventual workplace success – from early childhood, secondary, and postsecondary education to work-based learning. As such, we take a broad “cradle to career” approach to workforce and bring a diverse group of partners to the table.

This approach is a reason that Governor Holcomb in 2018 designed, and the Indiana General Assembly codified, the structure for the Governor's Workforce Cabinet (GWC) and charged it with the authority to direct the State agencies required to strategically address current and future workforce and education needs. The ongoing waiver granted by the U.S. Department of Labor – to enable this makeup of members to serve as the state's workforce board – has strengthened the Cabinet's ability to bring together Indiana's departments of workforce development, education, economic development, Hoosier employers, postsecondary training institutions, local workforce development boards, community partners, and legislators. GWC has worked to set a common vision, align strategies, eliminate silos, and develop innovative policies and programs while preserving the tenets of local control and employer guidance that are central to the spirit of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

GWC has made significant strides in improving stakeholder collaboration. Over the past two years, the Cabinet has prioritized meeting every other month in one of Indiana's twelve respective Economic Growth Regions. This has provided an opportunity for more local employers, workforce development board members, city/county leaders, and community partners to participate. We have taken a deep dive into the data of each Economic Growth Region by reviewing WIOA performance metrics, education attainment rates, labor market information, barriers to employment, and much more. We have heard from several employers, including Cummins, Stellantis, Cook Group and Gaylor Electric, who have shared their workforce challenges and potential solutions. Educators from K-12 and postsecondary institutions, including Vincennes University and the nation's largest single-accredited community college system, Ivy Tech Community College, are at the table. Even high school students have joined to showcase their work-based learning successes and plans after graduation. Where opportunities exist to champion and replicate regional success, or identified barriers can be addressed, the Cabinet serves as a change agent.

In advance of the 2023 legislative session, outside of regional meetings, industry members worked closely with the GWC Chair and Executive Director to lead working groups, which culminated in the Cabinet's first formal set of legislative recommendations. These recommendations were prepared for the Governor and Indiana General Assembly and proposed solutions for helping employers find skilled workers, removing barriers to employment for potential workers, and preparing future skilled workers. This collection is the work of statewide Cabinet members and is based on many hours of collaboration, interviews with subject matter experts and review of programs, outcomes, and best practices both locally and nationally.

Many items championed or proposed in the Cabinet recommendations received legislative support. Examples of advanced priorities include the expansion of early learning opportunities, increasing kindergarten readiness and third grade reading level proficiency, development of a career navigation network using intermediaries for in-school youth and select individuals, K-12 *Career Scholarship Accounts* to remove barriers related to work-based learning opportunities, scaling career technical



education graduation pathways and funding, accelerating digital development, increased funding for short term certification programs and employer training grants, increased credential attainment and stack ability, on-the-job education opportunities, establishment of college funding formula for in demand STEM degrees, in state college retention incentives, increased adult education state funding, and more.

Another recent highlight of GWC leadership and collaboration includes the development and launch of a statewide workforce development campaign. On January 8, 2024, Governor Holcomb announced the launch of a statewide workforce development campaign, *One Stop to Start*, (<https://onestoptostart.in.gov/>), aimed at connecting Hoosiers with existing workforce and job-related training programs and resources. The program offers Hoosiers and employers one-on-one assistance through a team of dedicated navigators. The overall goal of *One Stop to Start* is to ensure Hoosiers have awareness of and access to the programs that can get them on the path to realizing a high-wage career.

Potential opportunities include accessing tuition-free certification in high-demand sectors, becoming an apprentice or engaged in a work-based learning program, accessing college financial aid, supporting marginalized population groups without a high school degree, individuals who are disabled, or justice-involved, those in need of earning a high school diploma or equivalence, and more. The site serves to connect employers with business services resources available through State and federal grant programs, WorkOne business services functions, and skilled talent recruitment from veterans, justice-involved, and vocational rehabilitation programs via the community college systems.

The campaign is being led by the GWC and the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC), in partnership with the Indiana Department of Workforce Development (DWD), Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA), Indiana Commission for Higher Education (CHE), Indiana Department of Corrections, Ivy Tech Community College, and Vincennes University. The initiative will also connect to Indiana's *Next Level Jobs* program (NLJ).

### **Strategic Elements**

The vision of the State's workforce development system is to be a national workforce leader, connecting employers and skilled workers, supporting critical need jobs of today while preparing for emerging industries – to drive economic mobility and opportunity for all Hoosiers.

Empowered by this vision, Indiana has established the following pillars and corresponding goals for achieving the State's strategic vision for its Unified WIOA State Plan:

#### **I: REMOVING BARRIERS FOR WORKERS**

*To meet Hoosiers where they are and help remove obstacles to work and learning.*

- **Goal 1:** Harness opportunities through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), which includes the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment program (BEAD), the CHIPS and Science Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) for populations that have been historically excluded from the labor force.
- **Goal 2:** Remove barriers for workers including providing affordable and accessible childcare.
- **Goal 3:** Create digital equity through digital skills training.



## II: PREPARING FUTURE SKILLED WORKERS

*To ensure Indiana can deliver the training and skills needed for a modern workforce.*

- **Goal 1:** Transform as a State to prepare for emerging industries specific to federal opportunities and strategic industries.
- **Goal 2:** Meet people where they are for career pathway planning to customize to their unique potential and experience.
- **Goal 3:** Develop additional workers with skills-based technical training and/or a high-quality credential, certification, or degree to fill in-demand jobs.

## III: HELPING EMPLOYERS FIND AND/OR DEVELOP SKILLED WORKERS

*To ensure employers have the talent needed for the economy of today and tomorrow.*

- **Goal 1:** Deliver bespoke customer service and solutions to key employers.
- **Goal 2:** Increase quality job exposure and experience through apprenticeships, work-based learning, and employer supported training programs.
- **Goal 3:** Continue to champion and promote skills-based hiring practices through career coaching for underserved jobseekers and employer hiring and training models.

Indiana is excited to unleash the potential of the state's workforce system and over the next four years, will continue to monitor and measure success from these goals to ensure we sustain positive, sustainable, and scalable solutions across the Hoosier State.