

Compendium:

NORTHEAST
INDIANA
WORKS



Board Newsletter, October 2023

Dear Board Members:

An analysis conducted by Inspire Success focusing on healthcare talent pipeline opportunities in northeast Indiana identified a number of challenges that need to be addressed.

The analysis is part of a healthcare initiative supported through an Indiana Department of Education Explore, Engage and Experience grant secured by the Region 8 Education Service Center. Northeast Indiana Works is a key partner in the initiative and will be developing a healthcare career awareness campaign and helping develop or enhance work-based learning opportunities in northeast Indiana.

Analysis: Healthcare
Career Awareness,
Opportunities Lacking

The Northeast Indiana Healthcare Consortium, formed and facilitated by Northeast Indiana Works, will also play a significant role in guiding the initiative, as will Region 8.

Healthcare is the region's second largest industry sector employer.

Among the challenges identified in the analysis:

- Information on healthcare career and college events and experiences available to students in grades 7-12 is not easily accessed or communicated.
- There is confusion for employers and educators about who is the best person to connect with when attempting to coordinate/provide work-based learning experiences.
- Work-based learning experiences are often based on a relationship held by one person at a school or institution/organization.
- There is a need for more personnel to develop, coordinate and oversee work-based learning partnerships for schools and employers.
- Program providers aren't always aware of what other providers are offering.
- Students lack key employability skills needed to be successful in healthcare work-based learning opportunities.
- Students are generally unaware of what steps to take to pursue a career in healthcare.
- In many instances, employers are not prepared to host high school students and don't know what the students are able or allowed to do.
- There are not enough relevant and engaging work-based learning opportunities to meet demand.
- Students do not have access to many of the health science Career and Technical Education (CTE) course offerings.

Two consortium subgroups are developing strategies to address some of the challenges. One group is focusing generally on communications/awareness and the other is concentrating on work-based learning.

Postsecondary Success Initiatives: Northeast Indiana Works is taking a leading role in initiatives designed to ensure postsecondary and ultimately employment success.

Northeast Indiana Works and its president and CEO, **Edmond O’Neal**, are partnering with Fort Wayne Community Schools (FWCS), which recently was named a Ford Next Generation Learning (NGL) community. As a member of the Ford NGL community, FWCS joined a network of schools supported by the Ford Motor Co. Fund, which encourages schools to prepare students for postsecondary success.

FWCS’ plan is to empower students to reach their potential through equitable and relevant community-connected experiences. Part of that includes having high school freshmen learn about career pathway options and choose a pathway for their remaining high school years.

Ford NGL will provide consulting expertise and opportunities to connect with similar districts that have seen success.

As part of the initiative, O’Neal will help FWCS develop and expand business connections, as well as form steering committees to guide and monitor programs associated with the initiative.

O’Neal is also on the advisory committee for an Achieving Postsecondary Attainment initiative led by the Don Wood and Questa foundations.

That initiative aims to strengthen postsecondary education and training achievement in northeast Indiana through collaboration with regional stakeholders and investment in identified opportunities.

Included in the plan of the Wood/Questa initiative is to uncover and document existing efforts and financial aid opportunities to connect graduating seniors and adult learners to postsecondary education; identify jobs of the future and how they align with resources; address any misalignment of regional efforts to support postsecondary attainment, and create an action plan and track key milestones.

Annual Job Fair Held at PFW: U.S. Rep. **Jim Banks**, R-IN, in conjunction with Purdue Fort Wayne and WorkOne Northeast, hosted a job fair Aug. 16 in the university’s International Ballroom at Walb Student Union.

“Employers are facing a major worker shortage across nearly every industry,” said Banks. “Our annual event has had a lot of success connecting prospective workers with good-paying jobs.”

Seventy-five employers with a revised total of more than 1,000 job openings attended. The employers spanned a variety of industries, including manufacturing, healthcare, government, finance, retail, transportation and logistics, and professional, scientific and technical services.

Representatives of higher education institutions were also on hand for those people interested in furthering their education. Among the institutions: Purdue Fort Wayne, Indiana Wesleyan and Indiana Tech.

Twice as many jobseekers showed up this year compared to last year and employers at the job fair, one of the largest in northeast Indiana, said they were generally pleased with the quality of candidates.

Manufacturing Camp Returns to Noble: A constellation of local and regional organizations is collaborating to bring a free, unique, hands-on learning experience for students Grades 6-8 to the iSMART Lab at the Community Learning Center in Kendallville.

Manufacturing Experience 2023 will be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. October 28. Space is limited to the first 36 kids registered.

A similar camp last year attracted more than two dozen middle school-aged students from greater Noble County. Earlier this year, a Manufacturing Experience camp was held in Allen County for 40 young people. More than 300 Allen County students had expressed interest in attending the camp.

Manufacturing Experience 2023 is one component of a manufacturing awareness campaign (www.beginswith.me) spearheaded by Northeast Indiana Works. The campaign aims to help change misperceptions about what it is like to work in today's high-tech manufacturing sector.

Manufacturing Experience 2023 will feature technology demonstrations, including a drone, competition robot, and industrial robot, plus hands-on learning experiences for middle school-aged learners. A Smart Factory Mechatronics lab will engage kids who like to explore how things work through a live demonstration of fundamental components found in many of today's manufacturing environments. Experts will also be on hand to help provide insight into some of the many career pathways available in Noble County and the region, as well as highlighting high-paying jobs that are, and will continue to be, in high demand.

In addition to demonstrations, campers will be led by iSMART Lab instructors awarded Gold Certification from the Smart Automation Certification Alliance. Kids will learn, hands-on, how to solder, wire an AC/DC circuit, and program a Programmable Logic Controller (PLC).

Participants will also take home free resources to support continued learning at home.

"My boys absolutely loved it and have not stopped talking about it!" said the parent of a Manufacturing Experience 2022 participant.

"Any kid who is a gamer and loves technology, or just likes to tear things apart to see how they work, is going to love this camp," said **Lori Gagen** of Be Noble Inc., one of the collaborators planning the camp.

In addition to Northeast Indiana Works and Be Noble, collaborators include Freedom Academy, Impact Institute, and the iSMART Lab at the Community Learning Center. Funding has been provided by the Don Wood Foundation and Bosch Community Fund.

Employer Seminar at Sweetwater: Northeast Indiana Works and WorkOne Northeast will host their annual employer seminar October 5 at Sweetwater.

The free seminar typically attracts up to 200 employers.

A variety of guest speakers have been lined up to discuss topics such as unconventional labor pools, work-based learning, transportation options, and labor market information. The seminar will be offered in person and virtually.

Tempel, Walczak Will Speak at Workforce Symposium: Kim Tempel, senior director of business services/human resources at Northeast Indiana Works, and Linda Walczak, vice president of business retention and expansions with the Indiana Economic Development Corp., will give a presentation on “Aligning Workforce and Economic Development” at the 2023 Indiana Workforce Board Alliance Symposium October 25 in Muncie.

Their presentation is part of series of keynote and breakout sessions that will also explore developing regional talent pipelines, improving employer engagement, and how a customer-centric design allows for collaboration within the larger workforce ecosystem.

The wide-ranging variety of presentations will benefit workforce system boards and staff, employers, educational entities, elected officials, and economic development professionals, among others.

People can register for the symposium by using the QR code on this page or by visiting www.in-wba.org/2023-inwba-symposium



Providing Input for WIOA Reauthorization: Kim Tempel attended a roundtable discussion with U.S. Rep. Erin Houchin, R-IN, on June 27 along with three workforce board executives in Seymour, IN to discuss reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

The reauthorization, which will include updates to the act, is currently being considered by Congress. WIOA is the legislative strategic guide for workforce boards throughout the country and, for most of them, the chief financial resource.

In Seymour, Houchin mentioned her interest in helping Hoosiers who aren't employed and understanding their barriers to employment, as well as helping young adults aging out of foster care without a high school diploma. Among the other topics discussed: the work and support WIOA requires for employer engagement and business outreach. WIOA allocations do not set aside funding specifically for employer engagement efforts.

Edmond O'Neal recently conferred with James Hitchcock, legislative director for Rep. Banks, regarding the reauthorization. O'Neal presented a robust list of suggested improvements to WIOA, including changes to the funding formula, a set-aside for employer services, and adding a metric to gauge adults and dislocated workers exiting to postsecondary education.

(The next board meeting will be from 9 to 10:30 a.m. October 6, 2023. It will be in person and virtual.)