

ASCEND INDIANA:

Grassroots investment fuels a state strategy for youth apprenticeship expansion

Ascend Indiana is building a system to accelerate youth apprenticeship expansion by investing in local pilots, connecting practitioners and system builders in a community of practice, and advancing state policy priorities.

Ascend Indiana, the talent and workforce development initiative of the Central Indiana Corporate Partnership (CICP), an organization that brings together industry, higher education, and philanthropic leaders, is bringing together partners behind a statewide vision for high-quality youth apprenticeship, including:

- **EmployIndy**
- **Horizon Education Alliance**
- **Ivy Tech Community College**
- **Governor's Workforce Cabinet**
- **Office of Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship**
- **Indiana Department of Education**
- **Indiana Commission for Higher Education**
- **Indiana Chamber of Commerce**
- **Regional Opportunity Initiatives, Inc.**
- **OptIN/Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation**
- **Hamilton County Center for Career Achievement**

These leaders have embraced youth apprenticeship as a strategy for ensuring students are prepared for the growing economic opportunities in Indiana, where fewer than 40% of high school graduates will complete postsecondary education on time.

With support from PAYA, Ascend will provide seed funding and technical assistance to three local intermediaries launching youth apprenticeship across the state: Regional Opportunity Initiatives, Inc., OptIN/Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation Foundation, and Hamilton County Center for Career Achievement. These awardees join current pilot efforts underway through Central Indiana Modern Apprenticeship (led by EmployIndy) and CareerWise Elkhart County (led by Horizon Education Alliance) to build on momentum and establish a connected youth apprenticeship network in the state.



PAYA Grantee Snapshot



For these pilot programs to expand, state policy needs to support youth apprenticeship, so Ascend will work with the Indiana Chamber of Commerce to convene a statewide community of practice (COP) on youth apprenticeship. The COP engages youth apprenticeship leaders and state policymakers who want to create the conditions for these programs to thrive. Information from the COP has already influenced two bills that were passed in the 2020-2021 legislative session. HEA 1549 creates a better inventory of work-based learning options in the state and SEA 196 allows high school course credit to be awarded for work-based learning opportunities.

Ascend Indiana's three-pronged strategy to fuel youth apprenticeship expansion throughout the state includes:

- **Accelerating and expanding modern youth apprenticeship** models through grants and technical assistance to regional pilot sites;
- **Convening a statewide community of practice** that shares challenges, lessons, and effective practices that improve education and workforce outcomes and inform system-building priorities; and,
- **Coordinating actors behind a single policy agenda** to build a statewide youth apprenticeship system.



"With high-quality youth apprenticeships, Indiana's students gain experience through work-based learning, as well as earn in-demand credentials that are critical to preparing them for future success. By blurring the lines between K-12, higher education, and the workforce, it's energizing to see these partnerships scale statewide, ultimately improving student outcomes and helping our students build a bright future right here in Indiana.

KATIE JENNER, *Indiana Secretary of Education*