



Indianapolis INDIANA

Indianapolis, Indiana, was one of the six sites participating in the *New Skills ready network*. This five-year initiative, launched by JPMorgan Chase in 2020, aimed to improve learner participation in and completion of high-quality career pathways.



NEW SKILLS READY NETWORK SITES:
 Boston, Massachusetts • Columbus, Ohio
 Dallas, Texas • Denver, Colorado
 Indianapolis, Indiana • Nashville, Tennessee

In the first year of this initiative, the Indianapolis, Indiana, *New Skills ready network* team focused on conducting a review of existing career pathways across institutional partners against a quality rubric. This review informed work to improve five career pathways as a pilot for changes to the remaining career pathways. During year two, the project team finalized the alignment of all remaining secondary career pathways with the state's Next Level Programs of Study and piloted performance labs as a core component of the state's Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment. They also began aligning career advising opportunities across partners. In years three and four, the project team focused heavily on developing a new career pathway and building advising tools, drawing upon lessons learned throughout the



career pathways benchmarking process and strengthened by state-level policy. Year five saw focused implementation of ongoing work to enhance the ability for sustainable progress to continue beyond the end of the grant.

In 2024-25, the Indianapolis, Indiana, *New Skills ready network* team focused on:

- 1 Aligning career advising practices for long-term success;
- 2 Strengthening seamless transitions to postsecondary success; and
- 3 Scaling apprenticeships, internships and other intensive work-based learning opportunities.

THE NEW SKILLS READY NETWORK

New Skills ready network, launched by JPMorgan Chase in 2020, bolsters the firm's continued investments to assist people in preparing for and accessing careers in the future of work. Advance CTE and Education Strategy Group worked with sites to improve student completion of high-quality career pathways in six US communities.

The six *New Skills ready network* sites are: Boston, Massachusetts; Columbus, Ohio; Dallas, Texas; Denver, Colorado; Indianapolis, Indiana; and Nashville, Tennessee. Through the *New Skills ready network*, these sites formulated new partnerships among local school systems, higher education, employers, community partners, and government entities to develop and scale pathways and policy recommendations that give underserved students access to higher education and real-world work experiences that lead to high-wage, in-demand jobs.

These snapshots provide an overview of sites' accomplishments in the fifth and final year of the *New Skills ready network* initiative, including the development of priority objectives and action steps toward those objectives. Through the *New Skills ready network* initiative JPMorgan Chase sought to advance the following priority areas to prepare students for good careers and economic mobility:

- Strengthening the alignment and rigor of career pathways;
- Designing, implementing and scaling real-world work experiences;
- Building seamless transitions to support postsecondary success; and
- Closing equity gaps.

PRIORITY 1

Aligning career advising practices for long-term success

In previous years, the Indianapolis, Indiana, project team identified career advising as a priority, in line with both the goals of the *New Skills ready network* and statewide educational priorities. The project team developed a comprehensive career advising framework, which was then leveraged for use statewide through multiple pieces of state policy (House Bill [H.B.] 1002; Indiana high school diploma redesign). This framework seeks to align advising initiatives across all education levels by identifying key terms and developing a multi-tiered support system that helps leverage career-specific components, milestones and resources. In year four, much of the career advising space focused on implementing H.B. 1002 and its numerous implications for career advising. Career coaches from Ivy Tech, who became fully embedded in Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) schools in year three, provided additional coaching and general academic advising support, including administering Gallup's CliftonStrengths assessments to more than 150 learners. Indiana University-Indianapolis (IU-I) expanded its proactive advising efforts to identify barriers to retention and completion before learners are at greater risk of stopping or dropping out.

In the fifth year of the initiative, connected career advising remained a core focus of *New Skills ready network* partners. On the heels of the career advising framework design and subsequent state policy changes, EmployIndy conducted a service mapping of the greater Indianapolis, Indiana, career preparation ecosystem to determine where advising

efforts were being delivered and by whom. A study and report, released in February 2025, provided EmployIndy with a comprehensive look at these individual efforts while demonstrating need across the region. The increased role of an intermediary such as EmployIndy in continuing to coordinate career advising efforts regionally became evident as a result of the report.

IPS also updated and adapted existing career advising practices to align more closely with district priorities, particularly a capital referendum called Rebuilding Stronger, which focused on improving access to district programs and services for all IPS learners. The career advising work supported learner decisionmaking about their futures at IPS, including if they wanted to participate in a career pathway or academy, which is a holistic Career Technical Education (CTE) program that provides academic and technical skill for a given career area. This work included dedicating a person to oversee the academy and career pathways criteria, which are integrated into the learner schedule to help inform learners about the most valuable programs and courses for them to take. Additionally, an updated Career Guide was created to demonstrate all available opportunities for learners within the given CTE pathways. They are currently focused on using online platforms such as Xello to ensure that career advising is more fluid and tailored to the wide variety of learners in the district, including middle-grade learners who are deciding on their secondary pathways. IU-I is similarly expanding its proactive advising efforts,

INDIANAPOLIS INDIANA



LEADERSHIP TEAM PARTNERS

- EmployIndy (*site lead*)
- Ascend Indiana
- Indiana Commission for Higher Education
- Indiana Governor's Workforce Cabinet
- Indiana University-Indianapolis
- Indianapolis Public Schools
- Ivy Tech Community College



VISION FOR SUCCESS

Much of the vision of the Indianapolis, Indiana, team derives from growth in Indiana's economy and workforce. While the coronavirus pandemic has changed this outlook to a certain degree, the need for postsecondary credentials, especially in areas of high demand, remains an important touchstone. As such, the Indianapolis, Indiana, *New Skills ready network* team endeavors to provide Indianapolis youth and young adults equitable access to career pathways leading to economic mobility and future prosperity through an aligned system. This system will connect partners so learners can transition seamlessly through their academic and professional careers. To better align partners within the system, the team seeks to build data capacity, align local and state programs of study to Indiana's labor market demands, and improve the quality of career pathway implementation at all learner levels.

convening a working group to determine outcomes, develop a campus definition of proactive advising and define a four-year plan for the proactive advising initiative.

As a culmination of the significant career advising efforts conducted by partners, IPS, Ivy Tech, IU-I and EmployIndy hosted the first Career Coaching and Advising Summit in April 2025. This summit brought together education professionals involved with or engaged in career development activities to hear from industry experts and network with others in the same field. The invitation list was broad and included participants from local community centers, secondary schools and postsecondary institutions. The goal of the summit was to harness the power of

convening and network building to provide as many best practice examples as possible, ensuring accurate and comprehensive career guidance in a professional and learner-centered manner across Marion County and beyond.

Given the statewide focus on career advising as a cornerstone of an enhanced high school experience and Indiana's goals for postsecondary attainment, college and career advising will remain a high priority for *New Skills ready* network partners beyond the end of the grant. Conversations about a regional group of career coaches and other career advising initiatives sponsored by a regional intermediary are ongoing, and EmployIndy and others will work to ensure that these efforts are implemented in a high-quality manner long term.

HIGH-PRIORITY INDUSTRY SECTORS



Advanced Manufacturing – Life Sciences & Biotechnology



Financial Services



Health Care



Information Technology/ Cybersecurity

PRIORITY 2

Strengthening seamless transitions to postsecondary success

Throughout the previous years of the *New Skills ready* network grant, postsecondary success was always a considerable focus for the Indianapolis, Indiana, project team. Over the course of the initiative, the aforementioned career coaches focused heavily on conversations with learners to ensure that they could access the postsecondary opportunities that are right for them, and postsecondary partners leaned in by publishing program maps for learners participating in 2+2 agreements between IU-I and Ivy Tech.

This focus on aligning postsecondary programs with the needs of secondary learners to remove barriers led to a number of different initiatives. Alongside a 2023 policy of the Commission on Higher Education expanding college pre-admissions, IU-I launched a seamless admissions effort in September 2023, which made enrolling in IU-I easier for IPS learners. The seamless admissions process was initially available only to learners in the five IPS-operated high schools. During this year, initiative leaders built on the early success of the program to expand the opportunity to participate to other IPS schools, regional charter schools and school districts across Marion County. Within IPS alone, more than 450 seniors qualified for seamless admission for fall 2025, and first-year attendance of IPS learners at IU-I increased by more than 80 percent, with enrollment numbers further increasing for fall 2026. Furthermore, other IU campuses — including IU-Bloomington, IU-South Bend and IU-Columbus, among others — have taken up the seamless admissions mantle. This expansion in scale demonstrates the value of this type of seamless admissions program and increases the long-term sustainability of such an effort.

In previous years of the initiative, embedded career coaches were at the crux of the connection between IPS and Ivy Tech. While the focus of the career coach has changed throughout the initiative, the role remains a success, with Ivy Tech staff members now placed on IPS campuses, including one engaged with the IPS Futures Centers, where learners can more fully define college and career plans and receive guidance and support to implement them. The career coaches previously helped coordinate dual enrollment, with considerable growth in participation and engagement. With more IPS educators eligible to teach dual enrollment courses than ever before due to increased credentialing and professional development, more than 5,000 dual enrollment credits were earned in the first semester of the 2024-25 school year. This expansion enabled career coaches to focus less on dual enrollment and more on expanding instruction in professionalism and career readiness skills that learners need to succeed in their careers and postsecondary journey. Career coaches can work with more than 200 learners every month.

While institutional partners are reviewing all available funding sources to maintain the career coach position and support learners long term, the future of the position remains unclear. Regardless, the expansion of seamless admissions efforts and statewide policy in this space signals that seamless transition remains a focus for the state, as partners have worked to systematize and codify initiatives to ensure the long-term sustainability of these efforts.



PRIORITY 3

Scaling apprenticeships, internships and other intensive work-based learning opportunities

Improving work-based learning efforts was a consistent priority for the *New Skills ready network* project team. Indianapolis, Indiana's work-based learning and employer engagement efforts built on previous initiatives such as Talent Bound and Modern Apprenticeship, initiatives that benefited and expanded due to connections to the *New Skills ready network* and statewide work-based learning cohorts developed in collaboration with this initiative. Building on new statewide definitions of "modern youth apprenticeship," EmployIndy, Ascend Indiana and other connected area organizations were able to pursue aligned high-quality modern youth apprenticeship opportunities for learners. Ascend Indiana's Modern Apprenticeship Program started new cohorts of learners and continued to convene statewide communities of practice, including a meeting in late 2023 in Indianapolis, Indiana.

These connections enabled Talent Bound to be adopted as a statewide program, developing a continuum of work-based learning opportunities and engaging employers to participate in comprehensive work-based learning experiences for learners. A revamped version of the initiative, internally referred to as Talent Bound 2.0, continues the expansion of work, with a focus on meeting school demand and diversifying the pool of

employers participating in the initiative. Program leaders are additionally conducting industry site tours, designing teacher tours and externships to create a new knowledge base for educators and to further strengthen the connection between the employers and educators.

The project team also continued to include intensive work-based learning efforts as a component part of new programs in emerging sectors. A partnership with Eli Lilly and Company expanded upon the success of the IU Health Fellowship at Crispus Attucks High School to develop, among other programs, a Lilly Foundation STEM High School Fellowship, which is focused on providing hands-on experiences in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) career pathways. These career pathways connect to additional postsecondary opportunities. In 2024, Ivy Tech opened a 4,000 square foot biotechnology simulated learning lab in partnership with Eli Lilly as part of Eli Lilly's significant investment in Ivy Tech that extends through 2028. As part of this investment, IPS learners can complete a biopharmaceutical manufacturing certificate, which they can use toward an associate degree at Ivy Tech. The impact of this local innovation continues to be spread statewide through communities of practice, peer learning and other policy-connected spaces.



LOOKING AHEAD

Despite the end of the *New Skills ready network* grant, site lead EmployIndy, alongside each partnering educational institution, is committed to sustaining the progress of the initiative. Most of the initiative priorities, including seamless admissions and the incorporation of consistent and proactive career advising, have become organizational priorities, embedded in other work and funding streams. Partners are also focused on demonstrating the long-term value of these initiatives to help secure future funding opportunities through state, institutional and philanthropic sources.



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Learn about the year five journey and plans for sustainability for all six *New Skills ready network* sites in the 2024-25 Snapshot Series at <https://careertech.org/resource-center/series/new-skills-ready-network/>.



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