

INTERMEDIARY ORIGIN STORY

# EMPLOYINDY

Keys to Scale



EmployIndy

**ESG** Education  
Strategy  
Group

# EmployIndy

EmployIndy originally forms in response to the Federal Job Training Partnership Act

Mayor Joe Hogsett is elected. The workforce board's goals shift and focus more specifically on youth pathways and neighborhoods in the community in need of deeper services

EmployIndy launches Talent Bound, a platform that connects employers to multiple Marion County high schools through curated career-connected learning experiences

EmployIndy and Ascend Indiana enroll the first cohort of the Modern Apprenticeship Program



EmployIndy offers career coaching at one-stop centers, runs Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) and Youth Employment Services (YES), and collaborates on a career-day initiative for eighth graders called Job Spark

EmployIndy launches Indy Achieves, and Job Ready Indy and expands out-of-school youth programming via YES Indy — programs that focus on removing barriers to pursuing career pathways and postsecondary education

Indianapolis is selected to participate in New Skills Ready Network, a five-year initiative launched by JPMorganChase to improve student completion of high-quality career pathways



# What is EmployIndy?

EmployIndy is a nonprofit intermediary led by a federally regulated workforce development board. Board membership consists of 26 business, civic, education, and neighborhood community leaders. EmployIndy invests over \$20 million in public, private, and philanthropic funds annually to create economic opportunity and remove barriers to employment for both youth and adults.

As an intermediary, EmployIndy serves as a strategic lead, funder, and convener. It takes a holistic approach to workforce development, supporting students throughout their education and entry into the workforce.



The organization guides the Marion County, Indiana workforce ecosystem, supporting education and workforce development partners in piloting, improving, and scaling programming to meet shared goals. As a result, EmployIndy offers multiple services and programs for youth in and out of school, including:

- **Talent Bound**: An initiative that connects employers to future talent through a continuum of work-based learning experiences that allow students to make informed education and career decisions
- **Youth Employment System Indy (YES Indy)**: A network of local community organizations who offer relationship-based coaching, barrier-busting supports (such as vouchers for child care, legal assistance, housing, or transportation), and connection to education, training, and job opportunities
- **Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG)**: A career exploration and work-based learning program
- **Project Indy**: A professional skills development and job-readiness training summer program
- **Job Ready Indy**: A professional skills and online badging training program
- **Modern Apprenticeship Program**: A high school apprenticeship program that places students at area employers for a three-year experience in project management, HR, business operations, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and more



# The Beginning

EmployIndy was formed in 1983 via the Federal Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). At its inception, the workforce board was charged with directly delivering workforce services to Marion County residents. The focus of EmployIndy's work shifted with the election of Mayor Joe Hogsett in 2016. In the years before Mayor Hogsett's election, EmployIndy had been offering career coaching at one-stop centers, running Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) and Youth Employment Services (YES), and collaborating with Junior Achievement of Central Indiana on a career day initiative for eighth graders called Job Spark.

Mayor Hogsett's administration was particularly interested in filling gaps in talent and workforce development for Indianapolis communities experiencing the highest levels of crime, unemployment, and poverty. During this time, the state requirements for high school graduation were also changing. High school seniors had to complete a project-based learning experience, a service learning experience, or a work-and-learn experience in order to graduate.

**“[EmployIndy is] a convener, and I think they're very integral to helping us get out of our silos ... I've been in CTE for over 20 years, and I'm seeing the shift, and I would say one of probably the biggest things that I've seen in Indiana that has changed over the last few years is the policy landscape around work-based learning and apprenticeships. And that's going to continue. And I mean, it's happening. And I think a big part of EmployIndy and their role in this is to help us manage that and scale that.”**

Jennifer Berry,  
Career and Tech Ed Pathway Director,  
Indianapolis Public Schools



The workforce development board's goals shifted with this new administrative focus and began to work more specifically on youth and young adult pathways. In the Mayor's first term, he established Project Indy, a network of community organizations, employers, and corporate partners that provide job opportunities, soft-skill development, and job-readiness training to in-school and out-of-school youth in Marion County.

In 2016, EmployIndy received a small grant through the University of Indianapolis to help Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) reimagine their high schools as career academies. EmployIndy brought business leaders to the table and facilitated earlier and deeper engagement between IPS students and businesses in their communities. The partnership has ultimately enabled young people to find apprenticeships, internships, and other work-based learning experiences that could lead them to careers and helped employers grow their local talent pipeline.

## Early Initiatives

In 2018, EmployIndy launched Indy Achieves and Job Ready Indy, and expanded out-of-school youth programming via YES Indy. These programs focus on removing barriers to pursuing career pathways and postsecondary education, including providing on ramps to employment for young people who were already out of school.

**“We were really trying to figure out how we could be a thoughtful and highly effective work-based learning intermediary and we got...lots of small little grants that we were sort of pulling together, convened a lot of stakeholders about what that intermediary could look like, and built the construct as we have it today, and then launched Talent Bound.”**

Marie Mackintosh, President  
and CEO, EmployIndy



- Indy Achieves is an initiative of EmployIndy, the City of Indianapolis, Ivy Tech Community College, and Indiana University Indianapolis to remove financial barriers that prevent Indianapolis residents from obtaining postsecondary degrees or credentials.
- YES Indy braids federal and philanthropic funding to provide guidance, resources, and direction for local community organizations to support young adults aged 16–24 disengaged or disconnected from the workforce and education.
- Job Ready Indy is an online employability skills curriculum that allows job seekers to earn badges in six different categories of in-demand work ready skills. Job Ready Indy was created to align with the Department of Education (DOE) and Indiana Department of Workforce Development (DWD)'s Employability Skills Standards.

At the same time, EmployIndy was securing small grants to develop a career-connected learning strategy in IPS.

In 2019, EmployIndy launched Talent Bound, an platform that connects employers to four Marion County high schools through curated career-connected learning experiences. Through Talent Bound, schools can propose career-connected learning activities, and EmployIndy's team works with business partners to identify appropriate employer partners who can fulfill the school's request. These career activities range from exploratory and informational, such as guest speakers

**“So that’s been the vision...to help find ways that we can ensure that all students in their pathways have opportunities to participate in activities across the continuum. So from ninth grade to 12th grade, we’ve really built it out so that they can do that.”**

Jennifer Berry,  
Career and Tech Ed Pathway Director,  
Indianapolis Public Schools

from industry visiting the schools, to more active and engaging, such as going on industry tours or completing workplace challenges in the classroom, to more experiential and skill-development based, such as apprenticeship opportunities.

To further support this programming, each school employs work-based learning coordinators to manage and facilitate connections between employers and schools. In its first year, more than fifty employers were connected to 1,200 IPS students.



# Scaling, Improving, System- atizing

Building on Talent Bound's initial success, EmployIndy sought opportunities to improve and scale its work by investing in systems-level change and intervention.

In 2020, Indianapolis was one of six cities selected to participate in the New Skills Ready Network, a five-year initiative launched by JPMorganChase to scale access to high-quality career pathways.

Together with partners — Ascend Indiana, the Indiana Commission on Higher Education, the Indiana Governor's Workforce

**“How much do we really need to grow Talent Bound? Shouldn't this be something that the schools can do more effectively with their business partners, with their higher-ed partners, and the like? Can we just teach them how to do it and then provide technical assistance, whatever the case may be, and then they step in, and because they have way more funding capabilities than what we have, it would be more of a systemic change. As that shift was starting and we were pushing on our partners on what high-quality work-based learning means, we started getting the assistance of Education Strategy Group and others to help us think about pathways more broadly and what it really means to be offering a high-quality pathway, have it connected to postsecondary to help people transition, have work-based learning, all of the things... that we now do today with New Skills Ready Network.”**

Marie Mackintosh,  
President and CEO,  
EmployIndy





Cabinet, Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis, Indianapolis Public Schools, and Ivy Tech Community College — the New Skills Ready Network team would work to build a connected and sustainable pathways ecosystem that would enable learners to transition seamlessly from school to work. Their work would focus on:

- Increasing the number and improving the quality of career pathways implementation at all learner levels
- Aligning local and state programs of study to Indiana’s labor market demands

The team began by reviewing five existing pathways using a rubric to assess quality. They then used what they learned to refine these pathways of focus and pilot new ones. They also worked to align career pathways with the state’s Next Level Programs of Study (NLPS). These efforts improved the consistency, quality, and intentionality of CTE instruction across Indiana.

In order to provide students with support throughout their career-connected learning experience, the team developed a comprehensive career advising framework. The framework aligns advising initiatives across all education levels by identifying key terms and developing a multi-tiered system of supports that leverage career-specific components, milestones, and resources.

The team also expanded existing partnerships between IPS and Ivy Tech Community College to embed career coaches who advise on career pathways, including through postsecondary education, that align with those developed through the New Skills Ready Network.

**“Ivy Tech Community College embraced the chance to join the New Skills Ready Network, where our grant coaches built trusting relationships with IPS staff at both the school and district levels. This collaboration resulted in more equitable access for students to career development, dual enrollment courses, career advising, and transitioning to post-secondary education. These relationships have provided underserved populations with a high level of service rarely targeted to their schools.”**

Julie Johns–Cole,  
Vice Chancellor of Ivy+ Career Link,  
Ivy Tech Community College  
Indianapolis



With support from an Accelerate ED grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the New Skills Ready Network team and other local partners, including TechPoint and MSD of Warren Township, worked together to create a new career pathway in information technology operations and cybersecurity. Learners in this career pathway will earn an associate degree at the end of a 13th school year. The collaboration enabled partners to see first-hand how labor market analyses can inform the design of a new pathway.

EmployIndy has also leveraged the New Schools Ready Network to build necessary technology and data infrastructure and collect more robust information about students' career-connected learning experiences. For example, Talent Bound's online platform facilitated connections between schools, employers, and EmployIndy.

The Talent Bound platform also provides important data about the types of career-connected learning experiences schools request.

**“So we have a human-powered portion to this, but also we’re trying to leverage technology to simplify the processes for all these different types of work-based learning experiences that can exist....”**

Marie Mackintosh, President and CEO, EmployIndy



# Impact

EmployIndy's impact can be measured by the number of programs and services available to young people and the number of young people participating. Highlights since 2016 include:

**60,000**

Services through EmployIndy programs, initiatives, and community partners have **increased** by more than **20 percent**, serving more than 60,000 Marion County residents, **77 percent** of whom identify as people of color

**36,616**

work-based learning and career-connected learning activities facilitated or supported by Talent Bound and EmployIndy partners in 2023

**4,710**

clients and participants enrolled in coaching and training through EmployIndy programs and Initiatives in 2023

**90%**

JAG participants maintain better than a **90 percent** graduation rate and over **80 percent** positive outcomes (full-time hours in postsecondary education or job)

**16**

of the **25 pathways** offered in IPS high schools offer at least nine dual credits

Beyond the figures above, the mindset of ecosystem stakeholders has also changed.



# Looking Ahead

In the future, President and CEO Marie Mackintosh sees an opportunity for EmployIndy to facilitate greater connections between the business community and secondary and post-secondary institutions.

*“...because of the pace of change that happens, [the] acceleration of technology...what’s going on right now with AI, we really need for the business community to be engaging earlier with our most diverse populations more intentionally and more specifically on the occupations that they know they’re going to need more people going into... and they have a much bigger role to play to inform education than what they have done to date.”*

**Marie Mackintosh, President and CEO, EmployIndy**

In addition, EmployIndy will continue to coordinate the programs and initiatives that makeup Indianapolis’ pathways ecosystem, providing necessary strategic alignment across key partners.

**“So I think from a strategy standpoint, ... [I] see them having a lot of success in the work they do because they’re intentional about having long-term measurable outcomes that they’re chasing towards, that they have a really clear adult strategy and they’ve got a really clear youth strategy as well.”**

Dennis Trinkle, Senior Vice President for Talent Strategy and Partnerships, TechPoint