

FROM PLAN TO PRACTICE

Statewide Apprenticeship Program Ready for Takeoff

By Anthony Schoettle

A ground-breaking statewide apprenticeship program that has been in the works for several years and is backed by a growing number of Indiana workforce development leaders and business operators is nearing its launch.

Leaders for the Indiana Career Apprenticeship Pathway (INCAP) report six “Indiana Talent Associations” (ITAs) have been established to determine which occupations will be the initial focus of the apprenticeships and set the curriculum for those tracts.

Student recruitment for the apprenticeship program began in the first quarter of this year and will extend through the second quarter with onboarding and boot camp-style training taking place this summer, according to Claire Fiddian-Green, president and CEO of the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation, one of the organizations spearheading Indiana’s apprenticeship initiative.

It’s anticipated the first apprentices in this new program will be taking their jobs – statewide – in August.

“This is going amazingly well,” Fiddian-Green stresses. “We hope to finalize soon the number of students that will enter the workforce through this program in August. I was always confident this would be a win-win-win; for employers, educators and the state. But it’s moving faster than even I thought it would.”

CEMETS iLab Indiana, a coalition of more than 200 leaders representing a variety of sectors including business, K-12 education, higher education and government, was established to lead the apprenticeship initiative.

Groundwork now in place

“In September of 2024 we released our strategic plan, and one of the top priorities was setting up the talent associations,” explains Fiddian-Green, co-chair of CEMETS iLab Indiana. “It took a little while to get people hired to lead those talent associations and get them up and running, but now they’re off to the races.”

In July 2025, the last two of six talent associations were announced.

They are the IT Industry Talent Association, which will be organized and led by the Indiana Chamber Foundation, and the Construction Industry Talent Association run by the Indiana Construction Roundtable Foundation.



After a busy 2025 organizing Indiana’s ground-breaking apprenticeship program, project leaders have critical pieces in place to facilitate the startup of student training this summer.

Earlier last year, four other talent associations were announced: Advanced Manufacturing and Logistics, run by Conexus Indiana; Banking, headed by the Indiana Bankers Association; Healthcare, led by BioCrossroads; and Life Sciences, also helmed by BioCrossroads.

Fiddian-Green emphasizes the ITAs will play a critical role in developing and implementing INCAP by engaging employers in their industry, identifying talent needs, choosing occupations for INCAP programs, defining required knowledge and skills, and collaborating with educators to develop education and training materials.

Each talent association is headed by a paid, full-time employee. Some of the talent associations are or will be hiring support positions as well.

Fiddian-Green and other CEMETS iLab Indiana officials have been to Switzerland multiple times to study its apprenticeship program. All but one of the talent association leaders have been dispatched to Switzerland to meet with their counterpart there. CEMETS iLab Indiana officials stress that INCAP is tailored to the needs of Indiana and not a carbon copy of the Switzerland program.

Key collaborative component

In addition to the talent association leadership, Fiddian-Green says 12 “connectors” have been identified and announced. The job of the connectors, which are organizations such as Goodwill Industries and Employ Indy, are seen as a critical piece to the initiative.

“The connectors are very important because we’re trying to create a statewide system at scale and the talent associations

speak for employers statewide within their industry about their talent needs, but we really need some regional partners to help with the actual implementation for the high school portion of this,” she explains.

“So, we did have a (request for proposals), and in October of 2025, we identified 12 (connectors), and they are responsible within their region for connecting the talent associations with the local schools in their region and making sure that communication is happening.”

The connectors also will help students work out their schedules and transportation as well as help with onboarding to train students what they need to know to enter the workforce, Fiddian-Green adds. “Those connectors are now finalizing their operating plans for what this is actually going to look like in practice.”

Going forward

Startup funding for the talent associations and connectors is being provided by the Fairbanks Foundation, but employers will be expected to contribute financially to keep the program going. Switzerland’s apprenticeship model shows there is a strong return on investment for employers involved in such a program, Fiddian-Green stresses.

“In Switzerland, employers pay two-thirds of the cost of the apprenticeship program,” she relates. “There isn’t enough philanthropy to pay for this at scale. There is certainly a positive ROI in Switzerland. Employers are getting the talent they need to provide their product and services. That in turn fuels their economy, and we’re confident the same will be true here.”