



NextLevel Jobs
INDIANA

**Workforce Ready Grant Procedures
for Postsecondary Institutions**

Updated March 2021

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Next Level Jobs

Next Level Jobs—part of **Governor Holcomb’s Next Level Indiana agenda**—aims to equip working-age Hoosiers and Indiana employers with the training and skills they need to succeed in the 21st Century economy.

Two million Hoosiers need additional training to succeed in the 21st Century workforce for the jobs that are here today and being created tomorrow—nearly all of which require a quality degree or credential beyond high school.

There will be over 1 million job openings in Indiana due to retirements and the creation of new jobs by 2025. Indiana is taking the state’s workforce to the next level with a focus on the high-priority industries and in-demand, high-paying jobs driving Indiana’s 21st Century economy forward.



99% of jobs created in the last decade require education and training beyond high school



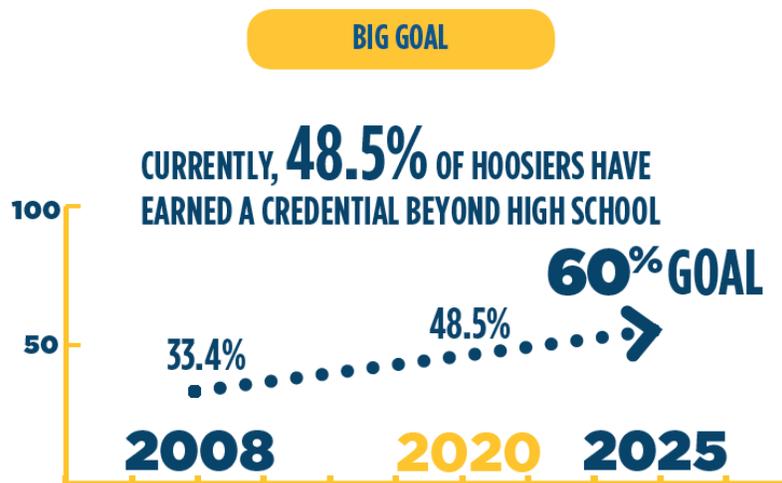
1,000,000 job vacancies are expected over the next 10 years



100,000+ jobs are unfilled because Indiana employers can’t find skilled workers

Developed in partnership by the Governor’s Workforce Cabinet, the Indiana Commission for Higher Education and the Indiana Department of Workforce Development with support from the Indiana General Assembly, Next Level Jobs features two targeted grant programs: the **Workforce Ready Grant** (WRG) program for working-age Hoosiers and the **Employer Training Grant** (ETG) program for Indiana employers.

Both of these initiatives are helping Indiana reach the Big Goal for at least **60%** of Hoosiers to have a quality degree or credential beyond high school by 2025. Currently, Indiana’s attainment rate of **48.5%** ranks the state **35th in the nation**.



Workforce Ready Grant

Next Level Jobs provides Hoosiers with free training in high-growth, in-demand job fields through the **Workforce Ready Grant**, which pays for high-value certificates in one of Indiana's high-growth industry sectors:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Building & Construction
- Health & Life Sciences
- IT & Business Services
- Transportation & Logistics

NextLevelJobs.org serves as a central access point for Hoosiers to compare approved Workforce Ready Grant providers and eligible certificate programs they offer. All approved programs are intentionally short-term to ensure participants can complete them quickly and secure a good job as soon as possible. Training providers and programs are considered based on employer demand, wages, job placements and program completion rates. All approved industries, programs and training providers are reviewed regularly by partner agencies to ensure Next Level Jobs is meeting the needs of Hoosiers and the State.

Program Eligibility Requirements

This manual outlines procedures and requirements specific to institutions of higher education administering the Workforce Ready Grant. More information and procedures for businesses may be found in the FAQs.

Workforce Ready Grant eligibility is based on the program type—the grant is offered in two formats:

- **Credit-bearing certificates** are funded by the Indiana Commission for Higher Education (CHE)
- **Non-credit-bearing certifications** are funded by the Indiana Department of Workforce Development (DWD)

Note: CHE also provides funding to non-credit-bearing programs offered by postsecondary institutions

Credit-Bearing Program Requirements

- Be aligned to a four- or five-flame occupation*
- Be aligned to one of five priority sectors
- Be a training program that results in a postsecondary certificate
- Be able to be completed in less than two years in-person, online, or a combination of both
- Be eligible for Title IV aid

Non-Credit-Bearing Program Requirements

- Be aligned to a five-flame occupation*
- Be aligned to one of five priority sectors
- Be a training program that results in an industry-recognized credential
- Be approved on [INTraining](#) for state funding
- Be able to be completed in less than two years in-person, online, or a combination of both
- Not exceed the grant cap of \$5,500



Occupation flame rating* is determined by the [INDemand Jobs](#) methodology which ranks all Indiana jobs based on Indiana’s future job demand, wage level and current job posting data. Workforce Ready Grant eligibility is determined based on the statewide ranking, though occupation is also ranked by region.

Program Review Process

The Commission will review requests for initial and ongoing eligibility to participate in the Workforce Ready Grant program twice a year: in April for programs seeking July 1 - December 31 eligibility and in October for programs seeking January 1 - June 30 eligibility. The Commission will notify institutions of approval, denial or removal by the end of the review month. Should a program lose eligibility, currently enrolled students may continue to receive the Workforce Ready Grant; however, newly enrolled students may not retain the grant. The Commission will not approve new programs outside of this timeline absent extenuating circumstances.

Timeframe of Program	Review & Notification	Application Deadline
July 1 - December 31	April	March 31
January 1 - June 30	October	September 30

Programs seeking approval must submit the Commission’s [Workforce Ready Grant Approval Request Form](#). Institutions are required to submit the following information to be considered.

Credit-Bearing Programs:

- Certificate Program Name
- High Value Sector
- Total Credit Hours
- Total Cost
 - Tuition
 - Consumables
 - Other Fees
- Prior Year Enrollment
- Max Enrollment
- Flame Rating
- Title IV Eligible
- CHEDDS ID Number

Non-Credit-Bearing Programs:

- Certificate Program Name
- High Value Sector
- Program Duration
- Total Cost
 - Training Cost
 - Consumables
 - Other Fees
- Prior Year Enrollment
- Max Enrollment
- Flame Rating
- Industry Certification Earned

Billing & Invoicing

Credit-bearing programs are billed through [ScholarTrack](#) similar to other forms of state financial aid. Non-credit-bearing programs are invoiced through the Commission’s finance department. Please contact Finance@che.in.gov to obtain an updated copy of the invoice template. Non-credit-bearing programs provided by postsecondary institutions may invoice 100% of the program costs upfront. Institutions must refund the Commission any Workforce Ready Grant funds provided to students who drop the course prior to the census date.



Student Eligibility Requirements

The eligibility requirements for Hoosiers vary based on grant type. **The Workforce Ready Grant does not have a centralized application for all providers—it is the responsibility of the training provider to ensure all enrolled students meet the eligibility requirements upon enrollment.**

Non-Credit-Bearing Eligibility Requirements

To qualify for the non-credit-bearing Workforce Ready Grant, students must:

- Be an Indiana resident and a U.S. citizen (or [eligible resident](#))
- Have a high school diploma (or [equivalent](#))
- Have less than a college degree (an associate degree or higher)
- Have not earned a credit-bearing certificate currently covered by the program
- Have not previously utilized WRG funding
- Enroll in a qualifying program at an eligible training provider

Credit-Bearing Eligibility Requirements

To qualify for the credit-bearing Workforce Ready Grant, students must:

- Be an Indiana resident and a U.S. citizen (or [eligible resident](#))
- Have a high school diploma (or [equivalent](#))
- Have less than a college degree (an associate degree or higher)
- Have not earned a credit-bearing certificate currently covered by the program
- Enroll in a qualifying program at an eligible training provider
- File the FAFSA the appropriate award year*
- Qualify for federal and state financial aid (Title IV) as determined by the FAFSA*
- Enroll full-time if the student is Dependent
- Enroll at least half-time if the student is Independent
- Maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) while completing the program
- Meet any other minimum criteria established by the Commission for Higher Education

*While many types of federal student aid, such as the Federal Pell Grant, require students to demonstrate financial need, the Workforce Ready Grant is not limited by family income. Students are not required to meet the April 15th FAFSA deadline for state financial aid in order to qualify for the Workforce Ready Grant. However, students are encouraged to complete the FAFSA by the deadline to maximize their opportunities for financial aid.

All other forms of aid except for student loans must be used before the Workforce Ready Grant (such as other forms of state financial aid, Federal Pell Grant, etc.).

The credit-bearing Workforce Ready Grant can be renewed once (maximum of two consecutive award years).

Students may use the grant for no more than the number of credit hours required to complete the eligible certificate. Students cannot use the grant for prerequisite coursework prior to admission into the certificate program.

Questions? Contact the Commission at nextleveljobs@che.in.gov.



Frequently Asked Questions

Workforce Ready Grant

I am a student ready to get started! What are my next steps?

Qualifying Hoosiers can get started by visiting NextLevelJobs.org, where they can match their interests to high-demand skills and find eligible training programs by following these steps:

- **Step 1: Review all program requirements and ensure you qualify.** Questions about these requirements can be directed to nextleveljobs@che.in.gov.
- **Step 2: Complete the [online survey](#) to get connected with a training provider.**
 - Select the county where you currently live
 - Provide your educational background
 - Select your desired field of interest
 - Provide your contact information
 - Select your preferred training provider
 - Submit

Once the survey is complete, students receive an automatic email that outlines next steps and a link to our [provider directory](#). Provider(s) should contact individuals either by phone or email, but individuals can also contact their provider directly to enroll.

- **Step 3: Complete the [FAFSA \(Free Application for Federal Student Aid\)](#).** Students interested in non-credit-bearing programs may skip this step.
 - Students are required to complete the FAFSA to receive any form of state or federal financial aid, which includes all credit-bearing programs
 - Students must meet all eligibility requirements to qualify—a FAFSA submission does not guarantee aid
 - Students will be asked to provide personal information such as tax details and social security number
- **Step 4: Apply at your chosen training provider and enroll in a qualifying program.**
 - All information about class schedules, supplies needed for training, etc., will be provided directly from the training provider

What is the difference between credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing training?

The primary difference is that the credits earned toward a credit-bearing certificate may be applied towards an associate or bachelor's degree while non-credit-bearing certificates do not provide college credit.

In addition, credit-bearing programs are funded through state financial aid dollars and require the FAFSA, while non-credit-bearing programs do not. Because of this, individuals interested in credit-bearing programs must qualify for federal and state financial aid to receive funding but do not need to demonstrate financial need. Individuals interested in credit-bearing programs may not:

- owe a refund on a federal student grant or be in default on a federal student loan
- have a conviction for the possession or sale of illegal drugs for an offense that occurred while you were receiving federal student aid (such as grants, work-study, or loans)



Do I have to submit information on the Next Level Jobs website to qualify?

No, students may contact their chosen training provider directly to participate in the Next Level Jobs program.

Grant Amount & Coverage

How much is the Workforce Ready Grant worth? What is the amount of the grant?

The Workforce Ready Grant covers the remaining tuition and mandatory fee charges after other financial aid (excluding loans and GI Bill Benefits) has been applied, up to \$5,500 for non-credit-bearing programs. Residents may receive the grant for up to two (2) years. The grant covers up to the number of credits required by the qualifying program, including up to six (6) credit hours of remedial coursework taken after admission. The grant does not cover courses that do not directly apply to the student's certificate program nor does it cover consumable items such as books.

Will I be reimbursed for any upfront costs?

In most cases, there will not be any upfront costs other than books or other consumables needed for your coursework. Tuition and other mandatory fees are covered by the grant for eligible students. The grant cannot retroactively cover coursework already completed prior to applying for the grant.

Is the Workforce Ready Grant income-based?

No, the grant is not awarded based on family income (Expected Family Contribution or "EFC") as determined by the FAFSA. There are no income requirements or limits to the program. However, because Federal Pell dollars offset costs associated with credit-bearing programs, all students pursuing credit-bearing programs must submit the FAFSA.

What programs are covered under the Workforce Ready Grant?

The grant covers approved [high-value certificate programs](#); all certificate programs can be completed in fewer than two years. The Workforce Ready Grant does not cover associate or bachelor's degrees, per state law. However, many eligible certificate programs are embedded in associate and bachelor's degrees. Upon enrollment, inform your advisor of your plans and determine the best path for you. If your degree path has an embedded certificate covered by the grant, and you are enrolled at an eligible training provider, ask your advisor to enroll you in the certificate program first to ensure you can receive the grant on the way toward your degree.

How were these five sectors and program certificates selected?

These sectors are among the fastest growing industries in the state. The programs were selected based on employer demand, wages, job placements and program completion rates. New programs and providers are reviewed by CHE and DWD respectively and approved if the required criteria are met.

Situational Requirements

I have already completed a Workforce Ready Grant program. Can I enroll in a different program?

Students who complete (or previously earned) a Workforce Ready Grant *non-credit-bearing* certification can enroll in a credit-bearing certificate program. Once a student has completed a credit-bearing program, they are no longer eligible to use the grant again. Any additional certificates would need to be self-funded or covered with other financial aid.

The program/training provider/college I am interested in is not listed. Can I still participate?

Unfortunately, if a program or provider is not listed on our website, the programs are not covered by the Workforce Ready Grant. Visit our website to learn more about [other state financial aid programs](#). For a complete list of eligible Workforce Ready Grant programs and providers, visit NextLevelJobs.org/Job-Seeker/Available-Job-Training.



I have a college degree. Do I qualify?

Adults with an associate degree or higher (including a degree from a foreign country) are not eligible for the Workforce Ready Grant, per state law.

Is a high school diploma from a foreign country recognized as a valid diploma?

Yes, if the institution determines whether the foreign secondary school credentials are evidence of completing the equivalent of a secondary education in the United States. Institutions that do not have the expertise to make that determination themselves may use a foreign diploma evaluation service.

I am a DACA student. Do I qualify?

DACA students are not eligible for credit-bearing programs as they do not qualify for Title IV federal financial aid. However, DACA students may qualify for non-credit programs.

I am a convicted felon. Do I qualify?

The Workforce Ready Grant is not restricted from an individual with a felony. However, participation/enrollment is at the training provider's discretion—some programs or providers may not be offered to those with a felony. For example, all individuals must be state financial aid eligible if enrolled in credit-bearing programs and their eligibility may be impacted if they were convicted of a felony. The individual must report convictions on the FAFSA and depending on the circumstance, it may make them ineligible for Title IV Aid and therefore ineligible for state financial aid. Additionally, enrollment in a program may be restricted if the job field or occupation would be ineligible to an individual with a felony. It is recommended that interested students contact their chosen training provider for more information.

I am currently an incarcerated inmate. Do I qualify?

Current inmates can utilize the non-credit grant with certain pre-approved providers. Funding may not be used for credit-bearing programs as students must be Title IV eligible to receive aid.

I was on academic probation / didn't meet SAP last time I was in college. Do I still qualify?

The Workforce Ready Grant has been designed for **independent students** to be eligible for the grant despite any previous SAP issues as long as you have not attended college for the past two years (or have attended without utilizing financial aid):

- If the student has not attended in the last two years, the student qualifies for an exception to SAP for WRG
- If the student hasn't used financial aid in the last two years but has attended and paid out-of-pocket the last two years, and the student's academic performance during that time meets the GPA and pace components of SAP, then the student qualifies for an exception to SAP for WRG

I received the Workforce Ready Grant, but I still got a tuition bill from my institution. What does this mean?

If you qualify for the grant but you have a balance, it is possible that you are enrolled in courses that do not count toward the certificate program and therefore would not be covered by the Workforce Ready Grant. It is also possible you have exceeded the two-year limit for the Workforce Ready Grant. The Commission recommends contacting your provider's financial aid office to discuss the exact reason for the outstanding balance.

I owe money from the last time I was enrolled in college. Do I qualify?

Maybe, depending on your current standing. The Workforce Ready Grant is not restricted from an individual with an outstanding balance at an institution. However, the decision to re-enroll an individual with a previous balance depends entirely on the provider and program.



I am in default on my student loans. Do I qualify?

Students who are in default on a student loan are ineligible to receive Title IV funding, such as the **credit-bearing** Workforce Ready Grant programs or any other state or federal financial aid. However, you may be eligible for **non-credit-bearing programs** that do not utilize federal and state financial aid dollars. To resolve issues related to default student loans, contact the Federal Student Aid office at 1-800-433-3243 or your loan provider.

I am active duty or recently retired from the military. Do I qualify?

Yes, assuming you meet all of the eligibility requirements for the program. Workforce Ready Grants would only be used after existing, non-GI Bill, military education benefits are exhausted.

Are there employment requirements?

No. Recipients may be currently employed but are not required to be. Unlike some employer-funded programs, recipients of this grant are not required to stay with their current employer for any period of time while enrolled in or upon completing the program.

I am employed full-time but want to go back to school. Are there flexible class schedules?

Yes, there are flexible schedules and online options, but they depend entirely on the provider and program. Contact your chosen training provider for more information on course schedules.

Residency Requirements

What are the qualifiers to be considered an “Indiana resident” for the **credit-bearing grant?**

For the credit-bearing Workforce Ready Grant, Indiana resident and a U.S. citizen (or [eligible non-citizen](#)) includes:

- U.S. citizen
- U.S. national (including those born in American Samoa or Swain’s Island)
- U.S. permanent resident who has an I-151, I-551, or I-551C (Alien Registration Receipt Card)
- Non-U.S. citizen with an Arrival-Departure Record (I-94) from the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS) showing one of the following designations:
 - Refugee
 - Asylum Granted
 - Indefinite Parole and/or Humanitarian Parole
 - Cuban-Haitian Entrant, Status Pending
 - Conditional Entrant (valid only if issued before April 1, 1980)

The qualifications for residency depend on a student’s dependency status, determined by their FAFSA:

- **Dependent Student:** Dependent students and their parent(s) listed on the FAFSA must be domiciled in Indiana on December 31 of the calendar year immediately preceding the award year to receive the award, and students must remain living in the state thereafter. The parents listed on the FAFSA do not need to remain living in Indiana.
- **Independent Student:** Independent students must be domiciled in Indiana on December 31 of the calendar year immediately preceding the award year to receiving the award, and must remain living in the state thereafter.

Do dependent students earning a **credit-bearing certificate have to be registered full-time?**

Yes, dependent students must attend full-time or must be in the final term of their program to be eligible for an exception to this rule.



What are the qualifiers to be considered an “Indiana resident” for the non-credit grant?

For the non-credit Workforce Ready Grant, the student must provide proof of residency at the time of enrollment. Examples of sufficient documentation for citizenship and residency include:

- valid driver’s license or state-issued ID or passport
- Social Security card
- birth certificate
- recent pay stub, W-2 form, bank statement or utility bill
- permanent resident card or I-94 record

How long do I have to be an Indiana resident to qualify?

The duration of residency depends on the type of program. For credit-bearing programs, students need to establish residency before January 1 of the year of desired enrollment. For non-credit programs, students need to show proof of residency through documentation with an Indiana address.

Becoming a Training Provider (Employers and Businesses)

What are the requirements for employers and businesses interested in serving as a training provider?

Employers and businesses must meet and maintain the following requirements to be an authorized Workforce Ready Grant non-credit-bearing (NCB) training provider:

- Must be approved and fundable on the State’s WIOA Eligible Training Provider (ETP) List (see [DWD Policy 2017-01](#))
- Must be approved to offer the Workforce Ready Grant, which includes the following requirements:
 - An eligible training program must result in an approved credential and follow specific requirements for occupations that require a license or certification to practice
 - An eligible training program must include the costs of tuition, materials, supplies and certification fees in the training costs (costs and instructional length must be reasonable and commensurate to like programs)
 - Must inform participants of any related program costs more than the tuition cap
 - Must agree to the 70/30 payment schedule (70% of grant funding upon student enrollment, 30% of grant funding upon student completion)
- Must ensure that each participant receives one WRG NCB paid attempt (included in the program costs) of the associated credential assessment
- Must maintain annual performance standards of an 80% completion rate and a 70% certification attainment rate
- Must complete the dashboard training
- Must meet any other criteria and provider responsibilities established by DWD as outlined in the [Workforce Ready Grant Non-Credit-Bearing Implementation and Procedures Manual](#)
- Must review, acknowledge and accept these and other criteria by annually signing the procedure manual

Employers and businesses interested in serving as a training provider can apply with these steps:

- Review the enclosed requirements to ensure the program qualifies
- Apply and be approved for the [INTraining ETP List](#)—this is recommended for all Indiana employers as it opens up other opportunities for training funding
- Once approved on the ETP List, complete the [WRG Training Provider Application](#)
- Contact the Department of Workforce Development at workforcereadygrant@dwd.in.gov or nxtlevelintraining@dwd.in.gov for more information



What does the Workforce Ready Grant logo on the INTraining website mean?

The logo is meant to assist WorkOne case managers as they assist clients in finding appropriate training. DWD attempts to keep information up-to-date on CHE managed programs; however, if there are programs that need the icon “turned on,” please reach out to workforcereadygrant@dwd.in.gov.

Job Search & Career Advice

Where can I look for a job?

[Indiana Career Ready](#) houses a job search engine for high-demand, high-wage jobs that are available throughout the state. Indiana Career Ready also offers Career Guidance at their WorkOne Career Centers through [personalized appointments](#).

I am receiving unemployment benefits. Can I keep my benefits while in training?

Yes, as long as you meet the qualifications of your unemployment benefits and the Next Level Jobs eligibility, you can learn a new skill while keeping your benefits. Questions about unemployment benefits may be directed to the Department of Workforce Development at 1-800-891-6499. If you are an Unemployment Insurance claimant, you can ask questions via your claimant page on [Uplink](#).

I am an employer looking for new employees. Where do I look for employees ready for hire?

Through [Indiana Career Connect](#), the state's labor exchange system, employers can access the job posting tool, guidance with talent recruitment, and up-to-date labor market information. In addition, employers will have access to the [Office of Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship](#), which serves to develop and implement a framework of various work-based learning pathways for youth and adult populations to high-skilled, high-paying jobs.

Can Next Level Jobs help me change careers?

Maybe. Adults with an associate or bachelor's degree or a certificate currently covered by the Workforce Ready Grant are not eligible for the grant. The Department of Workforce Development offers resources for re-training at [IndianaCareerReady.com](#), including a [job search engine](#) for in-demand jobs and [Career Guidance](#) at their WorkOne Career Centers.



References & Resources

General Inquiries & Media

General inquiries may be directed to: Questions@nextleveljobs.org

Media inquiries may be directed to:

Charlee Beasor
Communications Director
Indiana Commission for Higher Education
CBeasor@che.in.gov

Scott Olson
Media Director
Indiana Department of Workforce Development
solson@dwd.in.gov

Employers, Businesses & Non-Credit-Bearing Programs

Businesses interested in applying to become an authorized training provider for the Next Level Jobs program and eligible for Workforce Ready Grant (WRG) funding may contact the Department of Workforce Development at: nxtlevelintraining@dwd.in.gov or workforcereadygrant@dwd.in.gov

Prior to applying, businesses are encouraged to review:

- [Frequently Asked Questions for Non-Credit Training Providers](#), and
- [WRG NCB Implementation and Procedure Manual](#), and
- [2020 WRG-RR Expansion Addendum](#), or
- Visit INTrainingDWD.org for more information

Workforce Ready Grant **non-credit** inquiries may be directed to: workforcereadygrant@dwd.in.gov

INTraining, Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) inquiries may be directed to: INTraining@dwd.in.gov

Employer Training Grant inquiries may be directed to:

Bryon Silk
Executive Director of Business Services
Indiana Department of Workforce Development
bsilk@dwd.in.gov

All other **Department of Workforce Development** inquiries may be directed to:

Marilyn Pitzulo
Adult Education
Indiana Department of Workforce Development
mpitzulo@dwd.in.gov



Postsecondary Institutions & Credit-Bearing Programs

Postsecondary institutions interested in applying to become an authorized training provider for the Next Level Jobs program and eligible for Workforce Ready Grant (WRG) funding may contact the Commission for Higher Education at nextleveljobs@che.in.gov

Workforce Ready Grant **credit-bearing** inquiries may be directed to: nextleveljobs@che.in.gov

State Financial Aid, FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) inquiries may be directed to 1-888-528-4719 or awards@che.in.gov

All other **Indiana Commission for Higher Education** inquiries may be directed to:

Liz Walker
Director of Strategic Initiatives & Convenings
Indiana Commission for Higher Education
lwalker@che.in.gov

Other Partnering Agencies

Governor's Workforce Cabinet

Sam Rourke
Communications Director
SRourke@gov.IN.gov

Office of Career Connections and Talent

Rachel Zajac
Director of Talent
Indiana Economic Development Corporation
rzajac@cct.in.gov

