

Indiana Career Apprenticeship Pathway Request for Proposal

LAUNCHED BY: CEMETS ILAB INDIANA GOVERNING COMMITTEE



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Section 1: Program Description & Background

INTRODUCTION

[CEMETS iLab Indiana](#) (iLab Indiana) – a coalition of over 300 Hoosier leaders from various industries, K-12 schools, higher education, non-profits, government, and philanthropic organizations – is seeking up to twelve (12) regional intermediaries to lead the local implementation of the new Indiana Career Apprenticeship Pathway (INCAP) in partnership with Industry Talent Associations (ITAs) and local middle and high schools.

CONTEXT

By 2031, 72% of U.S. jobs will require education beyond high school, but Indiana is not on track to meet that demand. Only 39% of Indiana adults age 25 or older have an associate degree or higher. To create new career preparation opportunities for Hoosiers and strengthen our economy, our state needs more education and training options.

Since December 2023, more than 300 Hoosier leaders have joined a coalition referred to as CEMETS iLab Indiana and are helping to build a new professional education and training pathway – INCAP – to complement the existing high school-to-college pathway.

The foundational element of INCAP is a multi-year paid apprenticeship program that starts in high school and combines classroom learning with on-the-job education and training. There also will be opportunities for adults to learn through industry-led training, whether they're advancing in their current career or training for a new one. Students participating in an apprenticeship program graduate with a high school diploma that includes an Employment Honors Plus Seal, while adult students earn a professional degree. Both are recognized by employers, colleges, and our state.

In September 2024, CEMETS iLab Indiana released a [strategic plan](#) that identified four priorities for the creation of the pathway that provides education and training to 50,000 Hoosier students by 2034:

1. Establish Industry Talent Associations (ITAs) to convene employers, select priority occupations, identify the required knowledge, skills, and competencies for each occupation, and partner with educators to develop education and training materials.
2. Create structured mechanisms for progression, enabling learners to move up and/or across the academic and professional pathways.
3. Design a labor market-aligned career advising system starting in middle school that has the capacity to serve all students in Indiana.
4. Define clear roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders, including employers, educators, nonprofit, and government representatives.

To date, iLab Indiana has launched four talent associations in key Indiana industries facing increased workforce shortages: Advanced Manufacturing & Logistics, Banking, Healthcare, and Life Sciences. Employers in four additional industries – Construction, Information Technology, Microelectronics, and Sports, Entertainment, & Hospitality – are identifying the next steps for their own potential talent associations.

The first cohort of high school students will begin INCAP apprenticeship programs in the fall of 2026.

THE NEED FOR INCAP INTERMEDIARIES

For more than five years, regional intermediaries have been piloting youth apprenticeship programs in Indiana, developing a network of more than 100 employers and 40 school partners and serving more than 450 students through their programs. These programs have been integral to understanding what is critical to success while also elevating systems-level barriers to scaling. These takeaways formed the foundation of the CEMETS iLab Indiana work and the four priority areas of focus.

As ITAs launch to represent employers within their industry statewide, the need for regional intermediaries remains critical to support successful implementation in communities across Indiana. The iLab Indiana Governing Committee envisions INCAP intermediaries working alongside ITAs to implement INCAP programs through strong partnerships with educators, employers, students, and families in their region. Intermediaries serve as the bridge between local K-12 schools and employers, ensuring no gap in program delivery. It is important that INCAP intermediaries have a successful track record of convening regional workforce ecosystem partners and working collaboratively to execute upon shared workforce goals. As partners to the ITAs, intermediaries will:

- Support ITAs in raising INCAP awareness among local K-12 schools and regional employers.
- Leverage existing and create new relationships with K-12 partners to ensure successful program implementation.
- Support the process for recruiting potential student participants in the INCAP program.
- Assist with apprentice onboarding training, high school scheduling, and offer wrap-around support services to ensure student success throughout the program experience.

An effective INCAP intermediary should have strong relationships with regional workforce ecosystem partners (e.g., K-12 schools, career & technical education centers, workforce development organizations, economic development organizations, community-based organizations, chambers of commerce, industry) and serve as a trusted and recognizable entity by educators, students, families, and industry leaders. An intermediary's effectiveness will result in current and future ITAs' ability to launch additional INCAP apprenticeship programs, enroll more students, engage additional K-12 schools in rural, suburban, and urban communities, and provide support to Indiana employers. INCAP intermediaries will be held accountable by the ITAs who will set expectations and provide continuous feedback for program success in the region.

To be considered for this role, applicants will need to identify the counties they are best positioned to serve based on their ability to maximize impact from existing partnerships in the regional workforce ecosystem. The iLab Indiana Governing Committee will review submissions following the Letter of Intent deadline to ensure entire statewide representation is accounted for and, if necessary, will work with interested applicants to evaluate their regional scope.

Section 2: Scope of Proposal

When responding to the scope of the proposal, applicants should provide a clear, detailed explanation of how they will fulfill the outlined requirements. Responses should be structured to directly address each component listed in the question and highlight their relevant expertise to achieve the envisioned outcomes while adhering to page limits.

Organization Overview

1. Briefly describe your organization's history, including the number of years in operation, core services provided, counties of focus, and target audiences served.
2. Explain how your organization's vision, mission, and objectives align with this funding opportunity.

Partnership Experience

3. Describe your organization's relevant experience with implementing workforce development programs in the past three (3) years with an emphasis on highlighting how you collaborated with any or all of the following:
 - a. K-12 partners and students;
 - b. Post-secondary education partners; and
 - c. Industry.
4. Describe the measurable impact and key outcomes that have resulted from your organization's partnership with identified K-12 schools, post-secondary education partners, and/or industry partners in the past three (3) years. This should be related to the workforce development programs referenced in question 3 but can include other initiatives where you have partnered.
5. Describe your organization's partnership management experience within the past three (3) years, including experience with:
 - a. Developing new partner relationships
 - b. Facilitating collaboration with proactive communication across multiple partners
 - c. Resolving conflicts between partners

ITA Partnership: INCAP Program Implementation

6. Describe how your organization will raise awareness and market INCAP programs among:
 - a. K-12 schools
 - b. Students (starting in 8th grade through graduation) & families
 - c. Workforce ecosystem partners in your defined region
7. Describe how your organization will help ITAs stay informed of employer engagement activities at the local level in your region.
8. Describe what measures your organization will adopt to ensure K-12 school readiness across your region for implementation of INCAP programs.
9. Share how your organization will partner collaboratively with K-12 schools to support them in defining student schedules based on ITA program design.

10. Describe the process through which your organization will recruit potential student participants starting in 8th grade (inclusive of in-school and homeschool students) for the INCAP programs in partnership with the ITAs.
11. Share how you will prepare student candidates for the recruitment and selection process.
12. As students engage in an INCAP program, describe how your organization will identify potential barriers, such as transportation, and work to develop a solution.
 - a. Please provide examples of how your organization currently identifies barriers and scales solutions in your community.
 - b. Please share a list of common barriers your organization is currently working toward solving for in your community.
13. Describe how your organization will develop an INCAP onboarding experience for apprentices (virtual vs. in-person, tasks, potential partner collaboration, etc.) to prepare them for their experience. If applicable, share examples of trainings that you deliver today to prepare students for work-based learning experiences.

ITA Partnership: Employer Support

Note: Level of support may vary by industry depending upon what is needed by each of the ITAs. To help ITAs stay informed of an intermediary's capacity, please respond to each of the following requests.

14. Describe how your organization can facilitate connections with regional employers who express interest in participating in INCAP and/or currently engaged in hosting apprenticeships.
15. Describe how your organization can respond to requested support from local employers as they implement their INCAP program.
16. Describe how your organization can provide feedback to ITAs as they develop employer onboarding training. Please highlight any learned experiences and / or share examples of successful employer work-based learning trainings that can illustrate your experience.

Program Outcomes & Quality

17. Describe how your organization will gather input from students (8th grade through high school graduation), their families, and K-12 schools to evaluate implementation success and plan for scale as the INCAP program grows.
18. Describe your organization's experience collecting program outcomes data and how you utilize the data to make informed decisions for improved program experience.
 - a. What systems and tools do you use today to manage the student's journey?
Note: It is not necessary for applicants to purchase their own data collection tool for this grant, but if one currently exists, please identify the tool.
19. Describe how your organization will share program outcomes with ITAs and address program challenges with them, as necessary.

Staffing & Capacity

20. Share a staffing plan for this work, specifying the annual percent FTE budgeted for each staff (specify title) and a description of the scope of their role for this work.
21. Provide the name and title of who will lead the INCAP Intermediary scope of work. Describe their education and training background, professional experience, skills, and other characteristics that qualify them to lead this work from your organization.

Budget

22. Propose a cost structure that outlines the budget necessary to deliver against the partnership responsibilities outlined in this proposal.
23. Provide a budget narrative that explains each proposed expense included on Attachment B: Budget Form.
24. Identify any in-kind resources/support that your organization may provide.
25. Describe your organization's funding strategy to support full operations of this work at scale. This may include recommendations for a fee structure between the ITA and your organization.

Section 3: Submission, Evaluation, & Funding

TIMELINE

The table below provides a timeline for activities related to this procurement. In the event dates change, Ascend will provide notice at ascendindiana.com/incap-rfp.

Activity	Date
RFP Launch	June 30, 2025
Virtual Q&A Webinar	July 15, 2025
Deadline for Questions	July 15, 2025
Response to Questions Posted	July 18, 2025
Letter of Intent Deadline	July 25, 2025
Invitation to Bid	August 1, 2025
Proposal Deadline	August 15, 2025
INCAP Intermediary Selection Announcement	Week of October 6, 2025

SUBMITTING QUESTIONS

Interested applicants are encouraged to review this RFP in its entirety and submit any questions to rfpinfo@ascendindiana.com.

Ascend will facilitate a virtual Q&A webinar on **July 15, 2025, from 12–1 pm**, which will include an overview of the RFP, proposal instructions, and response to questions received. Please note, questions will be accepted up until the virtual Q&A webinar to accommodate interested applicants who are unable to attend. A recording of the virtual webinar will be available on Ascend's website at ascendindiana.com/incap-rfp, along with other information related to the proposal (questions & answers, timeline, contact information, addenda, etc.)

LETTER OF INTENT INSTRUCTIONS

Upon review of the RFP and participation in the virtual Q&A webinar, all interested applicants are required to submit a Letter of Intent to **rfpinfo@ascendindiana.com** by **EOD July 25, 2025**. The Letter of Intent should be drafted on your organization's letterhead, detailing the following information:

Organization Overview

1. Legal Name
2. Address
3. Point of Contact (name, title, email address, phone number)

Statement of Interest

4. Clear and concise statement expressing organization's "why" for applying
5. Brief overview of relevant experience
6. Proposed geographic reach (by county)
7. Existing regional partnerships (K-12 schools, employers, career centers, etc.)

Supporting Partners

8. Contact information (name, title, organization, email address, phone number) for the following organizations in your region who can attest to your organization's ability and expertise to successfully execute the role of INCAP intermediary:
 - a. Two (2) K-12 organizations
 - b. Three (3) Employers
 - c. One (1) Post-Secondary Education

Please note that the submission of a Letter of Intent does **not** automatically qualify an applicant to submit a proposal for consideration. Letters of Intent will be reviewed thoroughly by iLab Indiana and select applicants will be invited to submit a proposal. All applicants will receive notification of their acceptance status no later than **August 1, 2025**.

PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS

To be considered, applicants must submit one (1) proposal in PDF format per proposed geographic region by **EOD August 15, 2025**, via email to **rfpinfo@ascendindiana.com**.

No proposal submitted after the deadline will be accepted for consideration.

The proposal must contain the following elements:

- Attachment A: Cover Sheet
- Attachment B: Budget Form (no page limit for budget narrative)
- Attachment C: References

- Scope of Work
 - o Organizational Overview (2-page limit)
 - o Partnership Experience (3-page limit)
 - o ITA Partnership: INCAP Program Implementation (5-page limit)
 - o ITA Partnership: Employer Support (3-page limit)
 - o Program Outcomes & Quality (2-page limit)
 - o Staffing & Capacity (2-page limit)
- Budget (1-page limit)
- Appendices
 - o Two (2) Years of Audited Financial History
 - o Proof of tax-exempt status, if applicable

All pages must be numbered, and responses should be recorded using 12-point font, single-spaced.

EVALUATION & AWARD

The evaluation of proposals will be overseen by the iLab Indiana Governing Committee, in partnership with an Advisory Committee, representing members from ITAs, the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, and the Indy Chamber. A dedicated proposal team from Ascend Indiana and the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation will support the Advisory Committee by reviewing each proposal to ensure alignment with the selection criteria. The Advisory Committee will support and advise the iLab Indiana Governing Committee on the selection of intermediaries, offering insights and recommendations to inform final decision-making. The iLab Indiana Governing Committee will vote and make a formal announcement the week of October 6th.

Applicants may be invited to participate in a virtual interview with members of the proposal team, along with members from the Advisory Committee and iLab Governing Committee, to respond to questions and offer clarification of their response.

DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS

The disbursement of grant funds to applicants selected to become INCAP intermediaries will occur in two phases:

Phase 1: Planning with ITAs: Selected intermediaries will be awarded \$15,000 following the notice of award to support planning activities and collaboration with the ITAs from October to December 2025. INCAP intermediaries will use these funds to develop an implementation plan to finalize how they plan to allocate funds, expected milestones and timelines, key staffing roles and responsibilities, reporting measures, etc. During this time, INCAP intermediaries will work directly with their ITA partners to finalize expectations, design processes, and be prepared for the partnership. Ascend Indiana will deliver onboarding support to ensure seamless transitions.

Phase 2: Grant Execution: Selected intermediaries will be awarded the remaining \$85,000 in January 2026 to begin implementation activities outlined in their implementation plan. These funds will be provided in a single allocation to intermediaries. The grant period will end December 31, 2026.

NOTICE OF AWARD

The iLab Governing Committee will announce awardees the week of **October 6, 2025**. All applicants will be informed of their award status via email.

Reference Information

ATTACHMENT A: COVER SHEET

Please complete this **mandatory** cover sheet accordingly.

Organization Name			
Address			
Phone Number			
Number of Years in Business			
FEIN #			
Acknowledgement that Proposing Entity is up to date on taxes and not currently disbarred or suspended.			
Type of Organization (check all that apply)	☐	Community-Based Org.	
	☐	Non-Profit Org.	
	☐	Local Workforce Development Board	
	☐	Workforce Intermediary	
	☐	Career & Technical Education Center	
	☐	Economic Development Org.	
	☐	Other (please specify)	
Is your organization a 501(C)(3)? Check Yes/No.	☐	☐	☐
If yes, please identify the type of 509 organization. 509(a)(1), (2), or (3)			
Contact Person			
Contact Person's Title			
Contact Person's Email Address			
Signatory Authority Signature			

ATTACHMENT B: BUDGET FORM

Using this format, applicants are required to complete the following budget form, detailing how grant funds will be disbursed to effectively serve as INCAP Intermediary. The budget form should account for how the \$85,000 will be spent from January – December 2026 (note: \$15,000 will be awarded to grantees to develop an implementation plan in October – December 2025. Those costs do not need to be included in this budget form).

Category	Basis	Total Amount
Administrative Cost		
Staff Positions		
Other Costs		

In-Kind Funds:

Description	Source	Amount

Budget Narrative: Please provide a detailed explanation for each allowable budget line-item to explain the cost. Examples of explanations include job titles, wage rate, hours worked/charged, types of benefits and rates, estimated mileage/visits to locations, office and other supplies, and agency program operation or program costs. No travel expenses may be claimed for commute to/from “official station.”

ATTACHMENT C: REFERENCES

Applicants are required to provide contact information for three (3) references who can verify their qualifications, experience, and impact based on direct partnerships. References from the Letter of Intent’s *Supporting Partners* can be applied in this attachment. References may be contacted to further discuss with the proposal evaluation committee the applicant’s expertise.

Reference #1

Name	
Title	
Organization	
Email Address	
Phone Number	
Description of Partnership	

Reference #2

Name	
Title	
Organization	
Email Address	
Phone Number	
Description of Partnership	

Reference #3

Name	
Title	
Organization	
Email Address	
Phone Number	
Description of Partnership	

