

Request for Proposals to Select an INCAP Connector in Region A (2026-2027)

Frequently Asked Questions

BACKGROUND: INDIANA CAREER APPRENTICESHIP PATHWAY

Can you clarify the anticipated distinctive roles and responsibilities (Industry Talent Associations & Connectors)?

Industry Talent Associations (ITAs) (1) Represent employers statewide regarding their talent needs at both the high school and adult trainee levels, (2) Convene employers statewide to assess talent needs, both current and projected, (3) Identify the key occupations within the industry and prioritize according to employer demand, (4) Develop on-the-job work cases and identify the resulting competencies that must be demonstrated for each occupation, (5) Determine which competencies are best trained within high school or college, by the employer, and by intercompany training centers, (6) Develop a training manual for the employer-led training and for the intercompany training courses, and (7) Provide training for company supervisors overseeing trainees in the workplace.

Connectors will (1) Support ITAs in raising INCAP awareness among local K-12 schools and regional employers, (2) Leverage existing and create new relationships with K-12 partners to ensure successful program implementation, (3) Support the process for recruiting potential K-12 student participants in the INCAP Apprenticeship Program (INCAP AP), and (4) Assist with apprentice onboarding training, high school scheduling, and offer wrap-around support services to ensure student success throughout the program experience.

Is there an expectation for the size of the cohort launching in Fall 2027?

The number of apprenticeships in a region is defined by the ITA and participating employers. The cohort launching in Fall 2027 will likely be relatively small as INCAP scales. Fall 2026 is the first INCAP cohort and is anticipated to be less than 75 apprentices statewide; Connectors should plan to serve 2 to 20 employers in their region with a varying number of apprenticeship slots (1 to 10 slots per employer are available in 2026-2027). ITAs and Connectors continue to recruit potential employers for launch in Fall 2027.

Is the scope to recruit youth apprenticeships or also adults who are looking for career changes?

This funding opportunity supports youth apprenticeships only. However, there will be other opportunities for adults to learn through industry-led training created as part of the INCAP program.



ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

Who is eligible to apply for this funding?

Organizations submitting applications for this funding must be tax-exempt and will be required to verify their tax-exempt status for eligibility. Fairbanks Foundation funding can support organizations that are classified as tax-exempt under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and as public charities under section 509(a)(1), (2), or (3) of the Code, or to public organizations that are designated under section 170(c) of the Code. There are a few subclassifications that are not eligible for Fairbanks Foundation funding; for further guidance, please contact Madison Weintraut at weintraut@rmff.org.

Eligible grant applicants must provide proof of their tax-exempt status. Federal laws under the Internal Revenue Code require the Foundation to verify an entity's tax-exempt status prior to making a grant payment.

What are the key elements you are looking for?

An effective Connector should have a strong strategy and relationships with regional workforce ecosystem partners (K-12 schools, career & technical education, local workforce development boards, economic development organizations, community-based organizations, chambers of commerce, industry, etc.) and serve as a trusted and recognizable entity by educators, students, families, and industry leaders. Connectors should demonstrate flexibility and adaptability as INCAP is a rapidly developing program, and adjustments to implementation plans may be necessary to meet industry needs.

May an outside consultant be used to support the implementation plan? If so, can the allocated dollars be used to fund these efforts?

The selected Connector may use some of the grant funds to hire a contractor/consultant to support program implementation. However, the grantee organization is ultimately responsible for all grant outcomes and will be expected to participate in Connector meetings focused on planning, continuous improvement, and evaluation.

Our organization does not currently reach all the counties listed in Region A. Are we eligible to apply?

Yes; however, organizations that do not currently serve all Region A counties should discuss in their Letter of Intent and, if invited, their formal proposal, their potential ability to engage with the entire region. Counties in Region A include Jasper, La Porte, Lake, Newton, Porter, Pulaski, and Starke Counties.

If we do not serve 8th grade students and only serve high school-aged and adult high school students, does this disqualify us from applying?

No; while Connectors will primarily serve high school-aged students, iLab Indiana has identified a strong need for a greater level of career coaching and planning in middle school. Connectors that do not currently serve middle school-aged students should describe how their experience can be leveraged to reach this population.



Is the awardee able to subcontract with a partner to expand our reach?

Yes, however, we recommend that, if necessary, awardees partner with organizations that are aligned with the criteria as outlined in the RFP.

K-12 ENGAGEMENT

Will there be a standard process or protocol for Connectors when promoting INCAP in our designated area?

Once selected, iLab Indiana and the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation team will provide initial onboarding of all Connectors and connect them with Industry Talent Associations (ITAs) to better understand the programs each ITA is creating. Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation staff will also provide Connectors with branded materials that they can customize to support the promotion of INCAP to schools, students, and parents. Lastly, all Connectors are expected to participate in a Community of Practice led by EmployIndy, which provides technical assistance and support to Connectors during implementation. The Community of Practice convenes monthly with one-on-one support as needed.

What role will teachers and career coaches play in this process?

ITAs partner with educators to develop education and training materials. Many Connectors have demonstrated successful student recruitment by working with school counselors, teachers, and career coaches to identify students who may fit well in an INCAP apprenticeship.

What training will be provided for school personnel, such as guidance counselors, career coaches, and administrators regarding how INCAP will be rolled out by the state?

Organizations invited to submit a formal proposal will be required to describe how they will assess K-12 readiness across their region. The selected Region A Connector will be provided with resources, including a readiness checklist, to help guide conversations and assessments with schools. In 2026, Connectors, Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation staff, and representatives from the Indiana Office of Education attended several events targeted toward school personnel as presenters, vendors, and participants to spread general awareness of INCAP.

What expectations are there for community engagement?

Broad community engagement is important. For example, Connectors may engage community partners to determine how resources and services can be provided in your region to help overcome identified barriers to student success. Additionally, Connectors will communicate regional employer and school events to the Industry Talent Associations to ensure no gaps occur in program delivery.



EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

If selected, will we work with employers already in the ITA network, or will the partners we are looking to work with need to join an existing ITA?

Industry Talent Associations are actively recruiting employers to join their network. Employers that work with Connectors in one of the priority industries (Banking/Insurance, Healthcare, Advanced Manufacturing and Logistics, IT/Tech, Construction, Life Sciences, and Hospitality and Culinary) are encouraged to connect with the relevant ITA if they are interested in participating.

BUDGET

What percentage of the budget can be used for Administrative Funds?

There is no set limit on the portion of funds that can be allocated to administrative expenses. However, we encourage applicants to focus their funding on activities that will maximize impact and deliver tangible outcomes. We recommend that the allocation of funds be focused on driving the overall success of the project while ensuring effective and efficient administration. All administrative costs must be detailed in the project budget and not requested as a percentage of the overall grant budget (e.g., the project budget should include the amount requested for each type of administrative cost rather than simply noting that 5% of the overall project budget will be allocated toward indirect costs).

PROPOSAL PROCESS

In the LOI, under Partners, we are asked to include contact information for a specific number of partners in each category (K-12, employers, post-secondary). If we have additional partners we believe can attest to our expertise and execution ability, can we include more partners than the number listed? Or should we limit the number of partners to the number identified for each category?

Please do your best to limit your references to two K-12 organizations, three Employers, and one Post-Secondary Education partner. If you are unable to provide references for the categories listed, please contact Madison Weintraut at weintraut@rmff.org to discuss further.

Is there a maximum page limit for the Letter of Intent?

There is no page limit for the Letter of Intent, but we ask that organizations follow the LOI Instructions and include the required sections in their letter, as outlined in the RFP.

What are reporting requirements for grant recipients?

The awardee will be expected to complete brief narrative and financial report at the end of the funding period, as well as participate in data collection and evaluation as instructed by Mathematica. Further details will be provided to the selected Connector.



Is this an opportunity for a one-time funding, or do you anticipate multiple-year funding?

This is a one-time funding opportunity. However, iLab Indiana convenes a Funding Model Working Group to inform future funding for Connectors, evaluating several funding sources for viability and sustainability. Over the course of the next year, Connectors will collaborate with Industry Talent Association to develop a plan for long-term sustainability.

How many grants will be awarded?

The Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation will award one grant to a single organization to serve Region A. This Connector will join eleven (11) other organizations across Indiana that receive funding from the Foundation.

