

Request for Proposal (RFP) to select the Indiana Career Apprenticeship Pathway (INCAP) Connector for Region A

JUNE 29, 2026

Section 1: Introduction

CEMETS iLab Indiana, a statewide coalition of over 300 Indiana leaders representing industry, K-12 education, higher education, government, non-profits, and philanthropy, is seeking an INCAP Connector for Region A to support local implementation of the Indiana Career Apprenticeship Pathway (INCAP). Region A covers Jasper, La Porte, Lake, Newton, Porter, Pulaski, and Starke Counties.

INCAP is a new option to help prepare Hoosiers for promising careers. INCAP programs combine classroom learning with paid on-the-job training to prepare high schoolers and adults for careers while simultaneously developing a new talent pipeline for Hoosier employers. INCAP offers two types of education and training programs: the INCAP Apprenticeship Program (INCAP AP) for high schoolers and the INCAP Career Program (CP) for adults. For more information about INCAP, visit IndianaCAP.org.

INCAP Connectors act as a regional bridge between Industry Talent Associations (ITAs) and participating K-12 schools and students. More information on ITAs can be found [here](#). Connectors establish relationships with schools and community-based organizations, help prepare students to apply for and start their INCAP program, and support student success during program participation, among other responsibilities in collaboration with the ITAs. Currently, there are eleven (11) active INCAP Connectors. With this proposal, we seek to select the twelfth and final Connector supporting INCAP.

INCAP Connectors focus their capacity and resources on supporting ITAs and schools as they begin to implement INCAP Apprenticeship Programs (INCAP APs), which consists of a multi-year paid apprenticeship that starts in high school and combines classroom learning with on-the-job education and training. All INCAP APs last at least two years, but in what grade they begin and their duration vary by occupation. The most common INCAP AP structures are the following:

- 3-year apprenticeships beginning in 10th grade
- 2-year apprenticeships beginning in the 11th grade
- 3-year apprenticeships beginning in the 11th grade (lasts one year beyond high school)

What makes INCAP different?



- Employers define the competencies needed for in-demand jobs.
- Industry Talent Associations lead the development of training materials for both the workplace and the classroom in collaboration with employers and educators.
- INCAP AP students spend at least 50% of their time with their employer.
- Employers and colleges recognize INCAP degrees and credentials

Section 2: Context

By 2031, 72% of U.S. jobs will require education or training beyond high school, but Indiana is not on track to meet that demand. Today, 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 a new education and training pathway that complements the high school-to-college pathway.

Since December 2023, more than 300 Indiana leaders have joined a coalition referred to as CEMETS iLab Indiana with support from the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation and are working to build a new professional education and training pathway called the Indiana Career Apprenticeship Pathway (INCAP). To design INCAP, iLab has drawn inspiration from Switzerland's globally renowned Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET) system.

At its core, INCAP is an employer-led, competency-based education and training pathway where learning takes place in two primary locations: the workplace and the classroom. This dual approach to education and training ensures INCAP graduates are well-prepared for either a career or additional education and training. The bulk of the education and training for INCAP students takes place in the workplace, and much of the classroom learning is aligned with the applicable occupation.

INCAP includes two types of programs: 1) INCAP Apprenticeship Program (INCAP AP), which consists of a multi-year paid apprenticeship program that starts in high school and combines classroom learning with on-the-job education and training, and 2) INCAP Career Program (INCAP CP), which provides 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 INCAP AP program graduate with a high school diploma and an Employment Honors Plus Seal, along with an industry-recognized credential, which is recognized by employers, colleges, and our state.

In September 2024, CEMETS iLab Indiana released a strategic plan outlining next steps for launching INCAP. iLab's goal is that INCAP will serve a cumulative total of 50,000 Indiana high school and adult students by 2034. The strategic plan detailed four priorities:



1. Establish ITAs to convene employers statewide, select priority occupations, identify the required knowledge, skills, and competencies for each occupation, develop workplace training materials, and partner with educators to develop related classroom 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 seven ITAs focused on ten industries: Advanced Manufacturing & Logistics, Banking, Construction, Healthcare, Information Technology (IT), Insurance, Life Sciences, Hospitality, and Culinary. Employers in additional industries are identifying the next steps for their own potential ITAs.

Section 3: The Need for INCAP Connectors

INCAP Connectors, which report to ITAs for INCAP purposes, play a leading role in recruiting high school students for INCAP Apprenticeship Programs (INCAP AP). They also play a supporting role for INCAP AP students and their families throughout the recruitment and hiring process, ensuring there are no gaps in program delivery.

It is important that Connectors have a successful track record of building and maintaining relationships with high school students and families; collaborating with local K-12 schools to identify and address program barriers; convening regional workforce ecosystem partners in partnership with industry; adapting strategies, deadlines, and milestones to execute local workforce development goals. Connectors have the following roles and responsibilities:

- Awareness of INCAP
 - Raise awareness among students, families, K-12 school partners, CTE centers, community-based, and local organizations.
 - Support ITAs in raising awareness among regional employers.
- K-12 Engagement
 - Identify and confirm K-12 partner schools to support INCAP Apprenticeship Programs.
 - Collaborate with school-based staff to finalize student schedules to engage in INCAP programs.
 - Collaborate with school-based staff and ITAs on a transportation plan for students.
- Student Recruitment & Onboarding



- Prepare student candidates for the recruitment & selection process through mock interviews, resume preparation, and other supports as needed.
- Track student progress from engagement to application.
- Support ITAs and regional employers in overseeing the applicant tracking process.
- Develop and deliver employability skills onboarding/bootcamp with criteria identified jointly by Industry Talent Associations (ITAs) and Connectors.
- INCAP Program Experience (Apprentice & Regional Employer)
 - Conduct periodic check-ins with schools at a cadence agreed upon between Connectors and K-12 partners.
 - Conduct periodic check-ins with students on a cadence agreed upon between Connectors, schools, and Industry Talent Associations (ITAs).
 - Manage student INCAP program experience and provide ad hoc wrap-around supports where appropriate.
 - Collect and report data as required by the INCAP Steering Council

Note that the support provided by an INCAP Connector may vary based on regional needs, established partnerships, and the varying needs of ITAs.

Section 4: INCAP Connector Regions

In 2025, the iLab Indiana Governing Committee approved the INCAP Connector regional map, created to maximize the impact of existing partnerships in the regional workforce and education ecosystem. The map aligns most closely with the Indiana Principals Association regional map, given that Connectors are assigned to work with schools in their regions.

To be considered for the Region A INCAP Connector role, applicants must demonstrate their ability to serve the counties outlined in Region A: Jasper, La Porte, Lake, Newton, Porter, Pulaski, and Starke Counties. Below is the complete list of INCAP Connector regions and their associated counties.

INCAP REGION	INDIANA COUNTIES SERVED
A	Jasper, La Porte, Lake, Newton, Porter, Pulaski, and Starke Counties
B	Elkhart, Fulton, Kosciusko, Marshall, and St. Joseph Counties
C	Adams, Allen, De Kalb, Grant, Huntington, Lagrange, Noble, Steuben, Wabash, Wells, and Whitley Counties

D	Benton, Carroll, Cass, Clinton, Fountain, Howard, Miami, Montgomery, Tippecanoe, Tipton, Warren, and White Counties
E	Clay, Parke, Putnam, Sullivan, Vermillion, and Vigo Counties
F	Brown, Daviess, Dubois, Greene, Lawrence, Martin, Monroe, Orange, and Owen Counties
G	Gibson, Knox, Perry, Pike, Posey, Spencer, Vanderburgh, and Warrick Counties
H	Clark, Crawford, Floyd, Harrison, Scott, and Washington Counties
I	Bartholomew, Dearborn, Decatur, Franklin, Jackson, Jefferson, Jennings, Ohio, Ripley, and Switzerland Counties
J	Blackford, Delaware, Fayette, Henry, Jay, Randolph, Rush, Union, and Wayne Counties
K	Boone, Hamilton, Hancock, Hendricks, Johnson, Madison, Morgan, and Shelby Counties
L	Marion County

Section 5: 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:
 - Developing new partner relationships with K-12 schools and regional employers;
 - Facilitating collaboration with proactive communication across multiple partners; and
 - Resolving conflicts between partners.

Industry Talent Association (ITA) Partnership: INCAP Program Implementation

6. Describe how your organization will raise awareness of and market INCAP programs among:
 - K-12 schools
 - Students (starting in 8th grade through graduation) & families
 - 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. Share how your organization will partner with K-12 schools to support them in defining student schedules based on ITA program design and IDOE standards.
9. Describe the process through which your organization will recruit potential student participants starting in 8th grade (inclusive of district, public charter, private and homeschool students) for the INCAP programs in partnership with the ITAs.
10. Share how you will prepare student candidates for the recruitment and selection process.
11. As students engage in INCAP, describe how your organization will identify potential barriers, such as transportation, and work to develop a solution.
 - Please provide examples of how your organization currently identifies barriers and scales solutions in your community.
 - Please share a list of common barriers your organization is currently working toward solving in your community.
12. Describe your organization's experience delivering onboarding and other training to prepare students for success in work-based learning experiences.



Industry Talent Association (ITA) Partnership: Regional Employer Support

Note: The level of regional employer support may vary by industry, depending on the needs of each ITA's region(s). To help ITAs stay informed of the Connectors' capacity, please respond to each of the following requests.

13. Describe how your organization can facilitate connections with regional employers who express interest in participating in INCAP and/or are currently engaged in hosting apprenticeships.

Program Outcomes & Quality

14. Describe your organization's experience collecting program outcomes data and how you utilize the data to make informed decisions for improved program experience.
 - What systems and tools do you use today to manage the students' 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.
15. Describe how your organization will share program outcomes with ITAs and address program challenges with them, as necessary.

Staffing & Capacity

16. Share a staffing plan for this work, specifying the annual percent FTE budgeted for each staff member (specify title) and a description of the scope of their role for this work.
17. Provide the name and title of the person 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

18. Propose a cost structure that outlines the budget necessary to deliver against the partnership responsibilities outlined in this proposal.
19. Provide a budget narrative that explains each proposed expense included on Attachment B: Budget Form.
20. Identify any in-kind resources/support that your organization may provide.
21. 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 6: Submission, Evaluation, & Funding

Timeline



The table below provides a timeline for activities related to this procurement. In the event dates change, the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation will provide notice on the organization's [website](#).

ACTIVITY	DATE
RFP Launch	June 29, 2026
Virtual Q&A Webinar	July 10, 2026
Deadline for Questions	July 10, 2026
Response to Questions Posted	July 17, 2026
Letter of Intent Deadline	July 24, 2026
Invitations To Submit Proposal	August 14, 2026
Proposal Deadline	August 31, 2026
INCAP Connector Region A Selection Announcement	Week of September 28, 2026

Submitting Questions

Interested applicants are encouraged to review this RFP in its entirety and submit any questions to Weintraut@rmff.org and Francis@rmff.org.

The Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation will facilitate a virtual Q&A webinar on July 10, 2026, 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 the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation's website [here](#), along with other information related to the proposal (questions & answers, timeline, contact information, addenda, etc.)

Eligibility

Grant funding will be awarded by the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation to **tax-exempt organizations**. Organizations must be located in Indiana to submit a proposal. Eligible organizations must provide proof of



their tax-exempt status as part of their proposal materials. Federal laws under the Internal Revenue Code require that the Foundation verify an entity's tax-exempt status prior to making a grant payment.

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 Weintraut@rmff.org and Francis@rmff.org by EOD July 24, 2026. 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. Note the focus on INCAP Region A, and provide a brief overview of why you are best positioned to serve this region
7. Existing regional partnerships (K-12 schools, employers, career centers, etc.) within the desired region

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 an INCAP Connector:
 - Three (3) K-12 organizations
 - Three (2) Employers
 - One (1) Community-based or local organization

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 thoroughly reviewed by the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation, and selected applicants will be invited to submit a proposal. All applicants will receive notification of their acceptance status no later than August 7, 2026.

Proposal Instructions

To be considered, applicants must submit one (1) proposal in PDF format for INCAP Connector Region A by EOD August 31, 2026, via email to Weintraut@rmff.org and Francis@rmff.org. **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
 - Organization Overview (2-page limit)
 - Partnership Experience (3-page limit)
 - ITA Partnership: INCAP Program Implementation (5-page limit)
 - Program Outcomes & Quality (2-page limit)
 - Staffing & Capacity (2-page limit)
- Budget (1-page limit)
- Appendices
 - Two (2) Years of Audited Financial Statements
 - Proof of tax-exempt status
 - Partnership Experience (3-page limit)

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 Governing Committee, in partnership with an Advisory Committee, representing members from Indiana's Industry Talent Associations, the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation, and the State of Indiana. A dedicated proposal team from the Fairbanks Foundation will carefully review each proposal to ensure alignment with the selection criteria. The Advisory Committee will support and advise the iLab Governing Committee on the procurement decision, offering insights and recommendations to inform final decision-making. The team, along with the Advisory Committee, will make a final recommendation to the iLab Governing Committee on which applicants should be selected. The iLab Governing Committee will vote and make a formal announcement thereafter.

Applicants may be invited to participate in a virtual interview with members of the proposal team, along with members from the Advisory Committee, to respond to questions and offer clarifications on their responses.

Distribution of Funds

The disbursement of grant funds to the selected organizations will occur in October 2026 and extend through December 2027 in the amount of \$150,000. These funds will be disbursed in two tranches: \$50,000 in October 2026 and \$100,000 in January 2027.

Notice of Award

The iLab Governing Committee will announce the Region A INCAP Connector the week of **September 28, 2026**. 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#	
Acknowledgment that the Proposing Entity is up to date on taxes and not currently disbarred or suspended.	
Type of Organization (<i>Community-based org, non-profit org, local workforce development board, workforce intermediary, career & technical education center, economic development organization</i>). If other, please specify.	
Is your organization a 501(c)(3)? (Yes/No) If other, please specify.	
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 an INCAP Connector. The budget form should account for how the \$150,000 will be spent from October 2026 to December 2027.

Category	Basis	Total Amount
Administrative Cost		
Salary Positions		
Other Costs		

In-Kind Funds

Description	Source	Amount

Budget Narrative

Please provide a detailed explanation for each allowable budget line item to justify 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 the applicant's expertise with the proposal evaluation committee.

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:

