

Indy Achieves

Improving access and creating pathways to college completion for Marion County students

Recommendations of the Indianapolis Promise
Task Force for Mayor Joe Hogsett

November 2020



Overview

Marion County's employment market is evolving rapidly, shifting to high-skill, high-wage jobs and leading to an increased demand for employees with postsecondary credentials. Currently, Marion County residents are not equipped to meet the job market's demand; by 2025, 60% of Indiana jobs will require some form of postsecondary credentials, yet currently just 40% of Marion County residents hold credentials beyond high school.¹ Moreover, the wages of individuals with postsecondary credentials have drastically surpassed those of high school graduates. Today, a Marion County resident's surest pathway to employment and the middle class now runs through postsecondary completion.² Indy Achieves, an initiative of Mayor Joe Hogsett launched in 2018, was designed to ensure that every Marion County resident can pursue and complete a postsecondary credential. Indy Achieves' efforts towards this goal are twofold, to increase the number of K-12 students who pursue and complete postsecondary credentials and to increase the educational attainment level of the existing adult population.

Indy Achieves has produced significant results in the first two years of operation. Reviewing this success and lessons learned, Indy Achieves leadership considered what comes next. This strategic plan outlines the initiative's next steps and vision for its future.

¹ "A Stronger Nation: Indiana." Lumina Foundation. 2020. <https://www.luminafoundation.org/stronger-nation/report/2020/#state/IN>

² Data pulled from the Indy Achieves Policy Paper, "Recommendations of the Indianapolis Promise Task Force for Mayor Joe Hogsett," May 2018.

Indy Achieves

In April 2020, EmployIndy, with the support of Ascend Indiana, began a process to develop a strategic plan to operationally scale Indy Achieves to serve K-12, postsecondary, and adult learners. The strategic plan aims to capture current efforts and lessons learned while charting the path for future progress. The plan was developed with input from core members of the EmployIndy team, Indianapolis Public School leaders and counselors, Ivy Tech Community College Indianapolis (Ivy Tech) and Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) leaders across student advising, career coaching, and financial aid, and leaders from statewide initiatives around postsecondary financial aid services.

Indy Achieves engages in Marion County middle and high schools to drive increased access to a postsecondary education, collaborates with Marion County higher education institutions to support retention and completion for both traditional and re-enrolled adult learners, and partners with local employers designing programs to support employee upskilling. Indy Achieves has also partnered with the Ascend Network towards increased career connections between Marion County postsecondary graduates and Indiana employers.

Vision

Indy Achieves will make postsecondary education attainment a reality for all Marion County residents to enable economic mobility and future prosperity to create a more equitable community.

Mission

Indy Achieves will evaluate and scale proven practices to close attainment gaps for low-income residents, including those who are historically underserved and underrepresented, such as Black and Latinx, through student engagement and advocacy, financial assistance, wrap-around supports, and career connections.

THEORY OF CHANGE

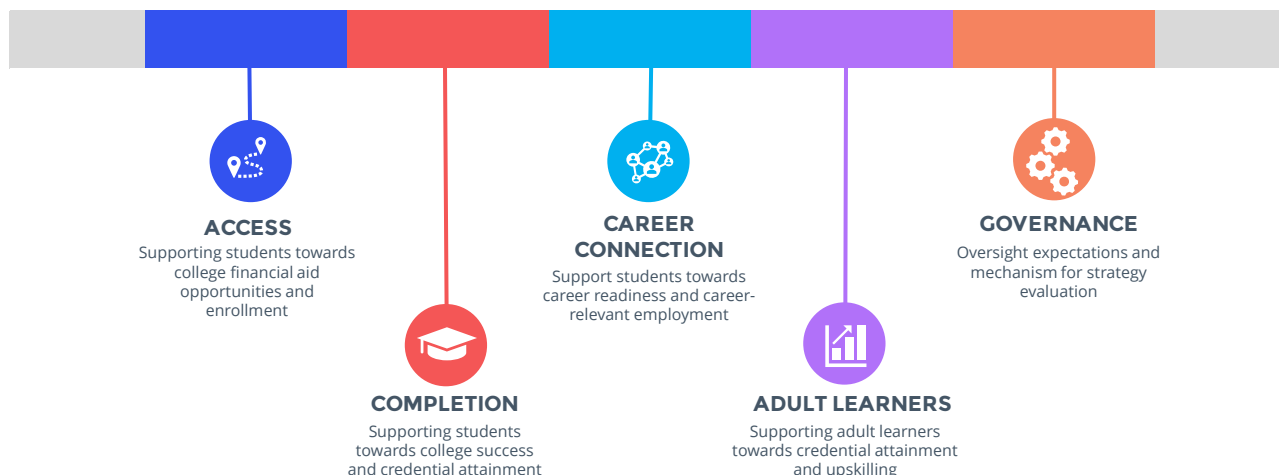
Indy Achieves' theory of change defines the role they will play alongside key stakeholders and outlines the systems-level change the initiative seeks to accomplish in partnership with institutions and organizations. The theory of change is an important foundation for the strategic plan and guides the goals and strategies for this next phase.

Across the Marion County education landscape, it will take coordinated efforts across a multitude of stakeholders to move the needle on credential attainment. Indy Achieves seeks to be the thread connecting institutions, organizations, and stakeholders, providing targeted interventions at inflection points across the pipeline, piloting new ideas and high-impact practices where gaps are identified, and empowering key stakeholders to build systems and capacity to enable ownership in the long-term.

Priority Areas

Priority areas represent key components of the strategic plan and create segmentation between work streams. The Indy Achieves priority areas are **Access, Completion, Career Connection, Adult Learners, and Governance, Communications, and Budget.**

These priority areas were informed by the following factors: too few Marion County high school students directly matriculating to postsecondary institutions, too few postsecondary students completing their credentials and degrees, and too few adults skilling up and completing industry-recognized certifications or traditional degrees. Each factor has expanded the gap between supply and demand in the local employment market. Moreover, the gap is further driven by the lack of communication and available resources connecting individuals, higher education, and employers.



ACCESS

The Access priority area consists of goals and strategies towards increasing direct matriculation into postsecondary. The Access timeline spans 7th through 12th grade, and in this space, Indy Achieves is engaged in Marion County middle schools and high schools.

In middle schools, Indy Achieves is focused on increasing enrollment in the 21st Century Scholars program, an early commitment college promise scholarship and Indiana’s most generous aid program. Strategies include implementing a strategic engagement framework across middle schools based on their current successes and barriers around 21st Century Scholars enrollment, leveraging Community-Based Organizations to expand the reach and capacity of schools towards enrollment, securing data-sharing agreements to help school leaders track and monitor enrollment of eligible students, and increasing awareness of the 21st Century Scholars program across Marion County. Ultimately, Indy Achieves aims to help build a system of school leaders and community organizations to own 21st Century Scholars enrollment.

In high schools, Indy Achieves’ work centers on supporting critical milestones for high school students towards postsecondary enrollment, specifically increasing FAFSA filing rates and college application submissions. Strategies include surveying high schools to identify their best practices and barriers

around those critical milestones, leveraging the expertise and capacity of Indiana’s largest FAFSA initiative, INvestED, to increase the Marion County FAFSA completion rate, and relaunching the Scholar Success Coalition to bring together Marion County education leaders and identify policies and pilots to help students towards postsecondary enrollment.

COMPLETION

The Completion priority area consists of goals and strategies towards increasing postsecondary completion and credential or degree attainment. Indy Achieves is partnered with Ivy Tech and IUPUI and supports students through the Promise Scholarship program and last dollar Completion Grants.

Indy Achieves aims to pilot high-impact practices around academic support, financial aid, and proactive advising and to develop partnerships with campus offices to strengthen systems and practices that help students succeed. Indy Achieves has noted lessons learned from the past two years of operation to define the ideal engagement framework for their Student Success Coaches to execute and share with their postsecondary partners. Completion strategies include mapping existing resources and supports around high-impact practices, identifying systems to track student engagement, building and leveraging data around high-impact practices, sharing outcomes with postsecondary partners, and connecting Ivy Tech and IUPUI students to the resources that exist on their campuses. Indy Achieves also aims to evaluate the process for identifying eligible students for Completion Grants and explore opportunities for additional funding mechanisms.

CAREER CONNECTION

The Career Connection priority area consists of the goals and strategies around career readiness and connecting Marion County postsecondary graduates to promising jobs relevant to their programs of study. Indy Achieves will partner with Ivy Tech’s Office of Career Coaching and Employer Connections and IUPUI’s Center for Transfer and Adult Students to build awareness and strong support systems around the critical milestones that indicate successful outcomes for students as they navigate the job market. Indy

Achieves will also partner with the Ascend Network, encouraging students to leverage the unique connectivity the Network provides to Indiana employers and promising jobs.

Career Connection strategies include mapping campus supports around career readiness and connection, developing a mechanism to understand students' post-graduation plans, deploying a career readiness toolkit for students in partnership with Ivy Tech and IUPUI career services offices, and connecting students to the Ascend Network as they begin their job search.

ADULT LEARNERS

In addition to supporting access, completion, and career connection for traditional-aged students, Indy Achieves is also pursuing goals and strategies towards supporting the same outcomes for Marion County adult learners. Indy Achieves seeks to leverage its unique position and relationships to connect adults interested in postsecondary credentials to the Marion County adult learner ecosystem and existing resources and programs. Indy Achieves has recognized three specific target populations to which it has existing relationships and is well-positioned to offer support and connection: caregivers of 21st Century Scholars, adults who attended Ivy Tech or IUPUI but did not complete their degree, and employees at employer partner companies seeking further education.

Adult Learner strategies include leveraging existing opportunities through middle and high school engagement to connect with caregivers, partnering with Ivy Tech to review and strengthen existing processes and mechanisms around adult re-enrollment, supporting IUPUI initiatives specific to adult learners, and serving as a resource for employers who launch programs to support employees pursuing postsecondary credentials or degrees.

Indy Achieves will also partner with the Indiana Department of Workforce Development (DWD), the Indiana Commission for Higher Education (CHE), and EmployIndy to map existing resources in the adult learner ecosystem,

understand which programs apply to different populations, and know where and to whom to refer interested adult learners. This work will allow Indy Achieves to build bridges across the Marion County adult learner landscape and further connect adult audiences to existing programs and resources.

GOVERNANCE

Governance for Indy Achieves will be provided by the EmployIndy Board of Directors. The Board has representation from critical partners, including Ivy Tech, the Mayor's Office, and relevant Community-Based Organizations.

CONCLUSION

Marion County is in need of an organization dedicated to providing support that begins in middle schools and continues through to the existing adult population with the goal of postsecondary credential attainment. Indy Achieves seeks to be that organization, operating as a thread connecting systems, processes, and organizations, providing services at inflection points in the pipeline, and piloting new ideas and systems where gaps are identified. To support long-term systems change, Indy Achieves aims to empower key stakeholders across the K-12, postsecondary, and adult learner landscape to build proven, effective, and sustainable systems towards closing Marion County's attainment gap. Through the above priorities and strategies outlined, EmployIndy will scale the operations and impact of Indy Achieves and support Marion County residents towards postsecondary credential attainment and a pathway to economic mobility.