





Indianapolis, Indiana

Indianapolis, Indiana, is one of the six sites selected to participate in the *New Skills ready network*. This five-year initiative, launched by JPMorgan Chase & Co. in 2020, aims to improve student completion of high-quality career pathways.

In the first year of the initiative, the Indianapolis, Indiana, *New Skills ready network* team developed an internal project management infrastructure that supports strong cross-sector partnerships through regular monthly leadership team meetings. The team selected five career pathways to focus on and pilot future work around, and they conducted a meta-analysis of labor market indicators. The team also initiated foundational work around data sharing and data infrastructure to allow partners to measure learner

progress across the initiative. State agencies, in their work alongside Indianapolis partners, continued their work on the Next Level Programs of Study, which Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) will help to pilot throughout the next school year.

In 2020-21, the Indianapolis, Indiana, *New Skills ready network* team focused on two major priorities:

-  Identifying initial career pathways of focus to pilot implementation of upcoming work; and
-  Creating data infrastructure to guide strategic planning and increase access to outcomes data for learners and families.

THE NEW SKILLS READY NETWORK



NEW SKILLS READY NETWORK SITES:

- Boston, Massachusetts
- Columbus, Ohio
- Dallas, Texas
- Denver, Colorado
- Indianapolis, Indiana
- Nashville, Tennessee

New Skills ready network, launched by JPMorgan Chase & Co. in 2020, bolsters the firm's efforts to support an inclusive economic recovery, as part of both their \$350 million, five-year New Skills at Work initiative to prepare people for the future of work and their new [\\$30 billion commitment](#) to advance racial equity. Advance CTE and Education Strategy Group are working with sites to improve student completion of high-quality career pathways in six US communities.

The six *New Skills ready network* sites are formulating new partnerships between local school systems, higher education, employers, and government entities to develop pathways and policy recommendations that give underserved students access to higher education and real-world work experiences that lead to high-wage, in-demand jobs.

These snapshots provide an overview of sites' accomplishments in the first year of the *New Skills*

ready network initiative, including the development of priority objectives and action steps toward those objectives. While the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic presented challenges to launching the work, the sites demonstrated strong early progress toward developing high-quality career pathways through collaborative stakeholder engagement.

Through the *New Skills ready network* initiative JPMorgan Chase is looking to advance the following priority areas to prepare students for good careers and economic mobility:

- Strengthening the alignment and rigor of career pathways;
- Designing, implementing and scaling real-world work experiences;
- Building seamless transitions to support postsecondary success; and
- Closing equity gaps.

Partners engaged on the leadership team

- EmployIndy (site lead)
- Ascend Indiana
- Indiana Commission on Higher Education
- Indiana Governor's Workforce Cabinet
- Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis
- Indianapolis Public Schools
- Ivy Tech Community College

Indianapolis, Indiana's Vision for Success

Much of the vision of the Indianapolis, Indiana, team derives from growth in Indiana's economy and workforce. While COVID-19 has changed this outlook to a certain degree, the need for postsecondary credentials, especially in the areas of high demand, remains an important touchstone. As such, the Indianapolis, Indiana, *New Skills ready network* team endeavors to provide Indianapolis youth and young adults equitable access to career pathways leading to economic mobility and future prosperity through an aligned system. This system will connect partners so learners can transition seamlessly through their academic and professional careers. To better align partners within the system, the team seeks to build data capacity, align local and state programs of study to Indiana's labor market demands, and improve the quality of career pathways implementation at all learner levels.

Setting the Context

As part of this work, the Indianapolis, Indiana, team has been able to connect to and leverage existing infrastructure, programs and partnerships. At the local level this includes two cross-sector initiatives led by EmployIndy – [Indy Achieves](#), a 2018 initiative launched by Mayor Joe Hogsett to close postsecondary achievement gaps in Marion County, and [Talent Bound](#), which engages local businesses in work-based learning efforts. Indy Achieves engages postsecondary institutions Ivy Tech Community College and Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), and Talent Bound partners with IPS and other Marion County school districts.

This increased connectivity also included creating a new role within Ivy Tech and IPS: Ivy Tech hired a career pathways coach, who will be on campus at the IPS high schools to advise and support high school learners enrolled in career pathways. Through Indy Achieves, Talent Bound, the career pathways coach and other initiatives, EmployIndy and the larger Indianapolis community are committed to improving postsecondary outcomes through workforce development efforts. The *New Skills ready network* initiative builds and strengthens the work already underway.

At the state level, the Governor's Workforce Cabinet (GWC) and Commission on Higher Education are integral partners, largely by connecting the initiative to state-level work and investments already underway. In 2019, GWC announced a [Next Level Programs of Study](#) initiative as part of the implementation for Indiana's Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) state plan. GWC aims to improve the consistency and quality of Career Technical Education instruction statewide using these Next Level Programs of Study. The *New Skills ready network* plan integrates into this already underway work, with IPS serving as a de facto pilot as it implements the Next Level Programs of Study.

Approach to Systems Transformation

As a city, Indianapolis' approach to systems transformation in this sector revolves around a goal to build a fully connected ecosystem around education. This goal is supported by an ongoing collaboration of non-profit and locally focused organizations, especially around workforce and economic development. Since the *New Skills ready network* partner organizations have been previously connected through other initiatives, the cross-sector team is able to leverage existing relationships to the benefit of the project. Many site partners have long-standing relationships that are bolstered by the work of the project team and encourage open collaboration.

For partners who did not have previous experience working with one another, these existing networks serve as a support system to generate new relationships quickly. This continued focus on community improvement for all organizations has drawn each partner — including state-level partners — into the fold quickly and with a common goal.

PRIORITY 1
**Identifying
Initial Career
Pathways of
Focus to Pilot
Implementation
of Upcoming
Work**



Over the past year, the project team took significant strides toward advancing their overall five-year vision. One significant milestone was their identification of career pathways of focus for the next year of work to help the team pilot processes and determine a scope of work and implementation strategy for the rest of the career pathways. The five career pathways chosen were Business Administration, Construction Trades, Digital Manufacturing, Engineering, and IT Tech Support & Services.

Achieving this milestone required significant planning and cross-sector collaboration. To begin the selection process, IPS first identified 14 potential career pathways based on a set of criteria including their connection to postsecondary opportunities, alignment with high-demand occupations in the Indianapolis area, and alignment with the GWC Next Level Programs of Study. IPS presented profiles of the 14 potential career pathways to the leadership team. From there, the project leadership team and each partner held discussions about what additional institutional criteria were important, mapping the IPS criteria to existing frameworks for career pathway evaluation at other partner institutions. Using the expanded criteria, the career pathways were then voted on, with consensus built around each of the five selected focus career pathways. The leadership team also created a common framework from the determined criteria for career pathways across K-16, developed common definitions for the criteria, and drafted a rubric to support career pathway evaluation across partners. This common framework and its rubric will guide the strengthening and alignment of the focus career pathways in the next year of the collaborative as well as into the future. The strong spirit of collaboration on the Indianapolis, Indiana, project team and their action-oriented leadership team meetings allowed the process to run smoothly.

The selection of focus career pathways was a critical step for the team, as the majority of the planned activities going forward would be impractical to undertake for all 26 career pathways at IPS. By starting with just five career pathways, the team can ensure that they have the right infrastructure and processes in place to provide consistent quality and equitable outcomes for learners. In addition, the work on the focus career pathways will directly affect the other priority areas of this initiative. For example, the Indianapolis, Indiana, project team is now mapping all work-based learning opportunities and assets and identifying gaps in transition points between partners connected specifically to these career pathways of focus. The team will also use these tools to begin the process of sunsetting programs throughout the next few years of work.

PRIORITY 2
Creating Data Infrastructure to Guide Strategic Planning and Increase Access to Outcomes Data for Learners and Families



Another foundational element to the success of this initiative is the project team's ability to leverage data to guide strategic planning and decisionmaking. In 2020 and early 2021, the team identified the current state of data sharing and system connectivity and outlined opportunities to connect data systems and align data across partners. Prioritizing data infrastructure is important to the Indianapolis, Indiana, leadership team as aligned data can help partners make decisions about what areas to prioritize next and how to close equity gaps.

The Indianapolis, Indiana, team is working to collect and share an array of data, including learner outcomes, equity-focused data and labor market information, across partners. On the learner-outcome level, partners first identified inflection points and specific metrics for an early-warning intervention system. These inflection points and metrics were summarized and prioritized, allowing partners to clearly understand which data points were key to the project team. Postsecondary partners IUPUI and Ivy Tech identified a set of key metrics related to completion and began discussions about aligning completion metrics reports for their institutions. This work included aligning definitions and scope for the key metrics and the levels of disaggregation collected and shared. This alignment will enable a comprehensive view of outcomes for Marion County postsecondary learners; over the next year, the institutions will also seek to align their post-graduation metrics (i.e., First Destination). In addition to the focus on learner outcomes, teams are working on collecting, tracking and sharing data points around equity and identifying learner subpopulations that require specific attention. These data points will be highlighted in future data dashboards shared across partners.

In addition, the Indianapolis, Indiana, team worked to bring more coherence to their labor market information systems. As a first step, each institution was asked to summarize its current approach to labor market analysis. Ascend Indiana, a *New Skills ready network* partner and workforce development organization, then cross-walked each of these summaries to create a meta-analysis of the different approaches. This analysis was factored into the selection of the five focus career pathways and will be vital to determining how to employ labor market data effectively across partners.

While progress has been made establishing infrastructure and identifying metrics to use, challenges still remain in data collection and sharing, especially in attempts to collect disaggregated state-level data. Over the next year, partners will work to secure data-sharing agreements and other protocols to ensure that data can be collected and used to inform the next year of work.

Looking Ahead

The Indianapolis, Indiana, *New Skills ready network* project team has made significant progress in the first year of this initiative, particularly in the identification of their focus career pathways, the establishment of foundational data components that will inform the collection and sharing of data moving forward, and the hiring of a new postsecondary coach to support secondary career pathway learners. In the second year, the team will identify areas of strength and improvement within the five selected career pathways, inventory work-based learning for each selected career pathway at all levels, and better support seamless transitions through increased dual enrollment and aligned advising practices for learners in these career pathways.