
I. Background and Purpose

Acting in its capacity as the local Workforce Development Board for Marion County, Indiana, EmployIndy is issuing this Request for Proposals (RFP) to identify and contract with one or more qualified providers to deliver WIOA-compliant In-School Youth services that strengthen postsecondary and workforce readiness for youth and young adults. Through this RFP, EmployIndy announces the release of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I funding to support the implementation of Career Coaching and related services in selected Marion County high schools during the 2026–2027 school year. The number and location of participating schools will be determined based on available funding, as well as the interest and suitability of high schools

Selected providers will work collaboratively with education, employer partners and EmployIndy to deliver coordinated, data driven programming aligned with WIOA's 14 Program Elements. Services are designed to expand access to high quality work-based learning opportunities, address systemic barriers to student success, and support successful transitions to post-secondary education and employment, with an emphasis on:

- Paid and unpaid work-based learning
- Comprehensive career coaching
- Supportive services that reduce participant barriers
- Postsecondary readiness and transition support
- Labor market–aligned career exploration
- Leadership development

The use of WIOA youth funds places specific requirements on this initiative:

- Case management in the State identified case management (client tracking) system
- Requirement to meet federally defined WIOA youth measures;
- WIOA youth eligibility requirements including low income; and
- Adherence to federal, state and local (EmployIndy) laws, regulations and policies.

EmployIndy seeks to strengthen the public workforce system and put individuals who may be experiencing barriers to work. Proposals that prepare youth with 21st century skills and deepen EmployIndy's ability to serve young adult job seekers through innovative methods of outreach and engagement, and facilitate transition to career pathways toward self-sufficiency, are desired outcomes.

This RFP describes the specific services EmployIndy seeks and sets forth application requirements for eligible respondents. This RFP does not commit EmployIndy to accept any proposal submitted, nor is EmployIndy responsible for any costs incurred by the respondent in the preparation of responses to this RFP.

EmployIndy will evaluate all timely submitted proposals and competitively award contracts to respondents whose submissions are most responsive to the need for services described herein. EmployIndy reserves the right to reject any or all items in the proposals, to negotiate with any respondent after the proposals are reviewed, and to award the contract in whole or in part as is deemed to be in the best interest of EmployIndy and the WorkOne Indy system.

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EmployIndy reserves the right to delay, amend, or reissue the RFP at any time.

II. Career Coaching Overview & Governing Authority

By statute, EmployIndy has the responsibility of developing the workforce of Marion County. EmployIndy establishes policy and operating processes for its youth programs as mandated by WIOA. Applicants to this RFP are expected to be familiar with the contents of the WIOA and Federal Regulations guiding the WIOA youth program and must be capable of operating a Career Coaching model within WIOA Federal/State and EmployIndy regulations, policies and guidance.

The federal guidance can be found at the U. S. Department of Labor's site <http://www.doleta.gov>. State policy and guidance can be found at <https://www.in.gov/dwd/compliance-policy/policy/active/>.

The terms and conditions of this RFP and resulting contracts may change based on any Federal or State legislative changes.

Providers must be able to incorporate fourteen (14) service elements required as part of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and as identified in a participant's Individual Service Strategy (see below) to successfully achieve employment.

1. Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies that lead to completion of the requirements for a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent (including a recognized certificate of attendance or similar document for individuals with disabilities) or for a recognized postsecondary credential.
2. Alternative secondary school services, or dropout recovery services, as appropriate.
3. Paid and unpaid work experiences that have as a component academic and occupational education, which may include –
 - Summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year;
 - Pre-apprenticeship programs;
 - Internships and job shadowing; and
 - On-the-job training opportunities.
4. Occupational skills training, which may include priority consideration for training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials that are aligned with in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the local area;
5. Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster;
6. Leadership development opportunities, which may include community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors, as appropriate.

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7. Supportive services;
 8. Adult mentoring face-to-face for the period of participation and a subsequent period, for a total of not less than 12 months;
 9. Follow-up services for not less than 12 months after the completion of participation, as appropriate; youth or young adult has the right to opt out of follow-up services.
 10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling, which may include drug and alcohol abuse counseling and referral, as appropriate;
 11. Financial literacy education;
 12. Entrepreneurial skills training;
 13. Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services; and
 14. Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training.

The selected service provider(s) will develop an Individual Service Strategy (ISS) in the form of a written plan of action, based on an objective assessment, to identify age-appropriate short and long-term goals that may include career pathways, education and employment goals, and supportive service needs. The ISS must directly link activities/services to one or more indicators of performance. EmployIndy considers the ISS a living document that requires an on-going review of the progress of each participant toward goals, with updates as needed.

The service provider(s) will integrate career assessment tools and strategies to deliver job readiness training to students, including developing job readiness portfolios and curriculum to deliver employability (soft) skills, labor market information, resumes, applications, cover letters, job search and interview skills.

III. Funding Structure

EmployIndy will contract up to \$400,000 for one or more awards under this solicitation over a period of 12 months. EmployIndy reserves the right to expand or reduce the size of its Career Coaching initiative based on funding, performance, and other factors.

Funding availability may vary based on federal WIOA allocations, the availability of non-WIOA funding and other variables. The following is EmployIndy's estimated funding level for the first year of the contract(s) resulting from this RFP. The actual funding levels to the selected service provider(s) will be specified in contract(s) that are executed as a result of this RFP. For subsequent years, funding availability will be subject to federal WIOA allocations, and other available funding and federal and state policies and guidance.

- Maximum award: \$400,000

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- Award levels will be determined based on:
 - Proposed service scope and intensity
 - Target population and geography
 - Organizational capacity and past performance
 - Alignment with Indiana Career Coaching priorities

Funds may be used for staffing, participant supports, training costs, work experiences, participant incentives for placement, and other allowable direct service expenses. Administrative costs must be reasonable and clearly justified.

IV. Contract Term

The initial contract term will be one year from July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027, with an option to extend for up to two successive years through June 30, 2029.

Continuation or renewal beyond this term is contingent upon funding availability, performance outcomes, and compliance.

V. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include:

- Nonprofit, community-based organizations
- Organizations with demonstrated experience serving In-School Youth and Young Adults
- Providers located in or serving high-need Marion County ZIP codes
- Organizations capable of meeting WIOA-aligned youth service requirements
- Organizations with current partnerships built within the K-12 system will be given priority

Applicants must demonstrate cultural competency, trauma-informed practice, and commitment to equity-centered service delivery.

VI. Scope of Services and Expectations

Selected providers will be required to:

- Serve In-School Youth ages 16–19 with documented barriers.
- Travel between selected schools to recruit and work with school leadership to determine eligible students most in need.
- Enroll ALL participants in WIOA and use the State’s case management (currently Indiana Career Connect) system to keep track of participants
- Co-enroll ALL participants in Project Indy
- Connect participants to [Talent Bound](#) career connected learning activities
- Employ or assign dedicated staff (e.g., Career Coaches)

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- Develop Individual Service Strategies (ISS) for all participants
 - Participate in monthly meetings with EmployIndy point of contact (P.O.C.)
 - Collaborate with EmployIndy staff, employer partners, and other providers
 - Deliver or coordinate access to all [14 WIOA Youth Service Elements](#) as listed above in Section II with an emphasis on how your proposed model integrates the following **priority** elements:
 - **Work-Based Learning (Element 3) – Primary Investment Area**
 - Programs should provide:
 - Paid or unpaid internships
 - Summer youth employment
 - Job shadowing and pre-apprenticeships
 - School-based enterprises and career exploration
 - Employer coordination and onboarding
 - Transportation support related to participation
 - Centralized or shared WBL tracking and documentation
 - **Comprehensive Guidance & Counseling (Element 7)**
 - Career Coaches funded through this RFP must provide:
 - Individualized Service Strategies (ISS)
 - Academic & career planning
 - Seal-aligned pathway advising
 - Post-secondary transition navigation
 - **Leadership Development (Element 6)**
 - Activities may include:
 - Employability bootcamps
 - Workplace behavior & professionalism training
 - Financial literacy
 - Employer-led leadership development sessions
 - Team-based learning projects
 - **Supportive Services (Element 10)**
 - Allowable supports include:
 - Transportation stipends
 - Work attire, tools, or equipment
 - Industry-recognized testing/certification fees
 - Multilingual supports and accessibility-related needs
 - **Labor Market Information (Element 2)**
 - Required activities include:
 - Sector-based career exploration cohorts
 - Industry tours and employer engagement events
 - Labor-market aligned pathway awareness
 - **Postsecondary Preparation & Transition (Elements 9, 11, 12, 13)**
 - Supports may include:

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- FAFSA completion and financial aid advising
 - Dual credit and credential guidance
 - Postsecondary bridge coaching
 - College/career transition plans

VII. WIOA Performance Goals & Eligible WIOA Applicants

WIOA Youth Participant Performance Measures

*Please note the following numbers reflect PY25 negotiated rates and will/may be changed once DWD releases performance targets for PY26.

Providers will be responsible for tracking all eligible WIOA participants in the Indiana Career Connect case management system. Career Coaches are the key to entering data into this system and must enter the data in compliance with appropriate EmployIndy and Indiana Department Workforce Development policy and guidance. The Indiana Career Connect system and associated DWD programs will generate official WIOA performance reports. WIOA In-School youth that are enrolled in the Career Coaching Initiative will have five WIOA Youth performance measurements.

Credential Attainment Rate: 68.0%

Percentage of participants who obtain a recognized credential or secondary diploma during participation or within four quarters after exit.

*Please note that secondary diploma credentials only count toward this metric if the participant is also placed in employment or education within 12 months after exit.

Placed in Employment, Education, or Training: 80.0%

Measured in the second quarter after exit.

Retention in Employment, Education, or Training: 82.1%

Percentage of participants in education, training, or unsubsidized employment.

Measured in the fourth quarter after exit.

Earnings after entry into unsubsidized employment:

Median earnings of participants in unsubsidized employment: **\$4,300**

Measured in the second quarter after exit.

Measurable Skills Gain: 69.0%

The percentage of participants in education leads to credential or employment during program year, achieving measurable gains.

Eligible WIOA Applicants

Since WIOA is the program funding stream, applicants must include those who are WIOA eligible. Guidelines for WIOA eligibility with appropriate documentation are contained in the [EmployIndy WIOA Participant Eligibility policy](#).

Bidders should read the EmployIndy policy referenced above and be familiar with the WIOA eligibility requirements and associated documentation requirements.

VIII. Proposal Requirements

To support a fair, consistent, and high-quality review process, respondents must structure proposals using the sections below. Each section includes a brief description of what EmployIndy is seeking. Using the provided [fillable template](#), respondents should provide sufficient detail to demonstrate alignment with the Career Coaching model and expectations without exceeding what is necessary.

1. Proposal Cover Sheet

2. Organizational Overview & Capacity

Describe your organization's mission, experience, staffing capacity, and administrative readiness to effectively serve In-School Youth and manage WIOA funds and reporting requirements.

3. Program Design & Integrated Service Delivery

Describe how your organization will deliver WIOA In-School Youth services as an integrated participant journey from engagement through follow-up, including the role of Career Coaches and use of Individual Service Strategies.

4. Employer Engagement, Training, & Career Pathways

Describe how participants are connected to education, training, work-based learning, and employment opportunities aligned with in-demand careers and long-term advancement.

5. Participant Support, Retention, & Barrier Removal

Describe how your program supports participant persistence, addresses barriers, and promotes retention and advancement before and after job placement.

6. Equity, Trauma-Informed, & Culturally Responsive Practice

Describe how equity, trauma-informed care, and cultural responsiveness are embedded into your organization's operations and service delivery approach.

7. Performance Measurement, Data, & Continuous Improvement

Describe how your organization tracks performance, ensures data quality, and uses data to monitor outcomes and support continuous improvement.

8. Budget Request

Provide a budget and narrative that aligns proposed costs with the service model and funding requested, demonstrating fiscal responsibility and cost effectiveness.

9. WIOA 14 Service Elements Plan

Using the required WIOA Service Elements Delivery Plan template, respondents must describe how all fourteen (14) WIOA Youth Service Elements will be delivered to participants as part of an integrated service strategy. Proposals that clearly and thoroughly describe how the proposed model integrates the priority elements listed in Section VI will be weighted more heavily during the evaluation process.

10. Projected Performance Outcomes

Using the required Projected Performance Outcomes template, respondents must provide proposed numeric performance targets for the contract term.

11. Attachments

Attachments (as applicable): organizational chart; most recent audit and letters of commitment/MOUs for key partners.

IX. Evaluation Criteria

All proposals will be evaluated for responsiveness, completeness, and alignment with EmployIndy's expectations for WorkOne Indy. EmployIndy reserves the right to request presentations from top-ranked applicants and to adjust scores based on clarifying information provided during interviews or presentations.

Proposals will be scored on a 100-point scale using the rubric below. Across all evaluation categories, EmployIndy will assess the extent to which proposed service models incorporate innovative, technology-enabled, and data-informed approaches that expand access, improve customer experience, accelerate compliant movement through WIOA Title I service sequencing, and improve training and employment outcomes. Innovation may include, but is not limited to, digital or hybrid service delivery models, automation, AI-enabled decision-support tools, and the effective use of data to drive continuous improvement.

Scoring Rubric

Evaluation Category	Description	Maximum Points
Organizational Overview and Capacity	Assesses the respondent's experience, operational capacity, fiscal and administrative readiness, and ability to serve in-school youth.	15
Program Design & Integrated Service Delivery	Evaluates the clarity, effectiveness, and customer-centered design of the proposed service model, including front-door operations,	15



	service integration, and movement of customers from entry through training and employment.	
Employer Engagement, Training, & Career Pathways	Assesses the respondent's understanding of the current WorkOne Indy model and the quality, feasibility, and impact of proposed improvements to increase customer flow, engagement, and outcomes.	15
Participant Support, Retention, & Barrier Removal	Evaluates alignment with employer demand, effectiveness of employer engagement strategies, and the ability to connect customers to in-demand training and career pathways leading to livable wages.	5
Equity, Trauma-Informed, & Culturally Responsive Practice	Assesses how well the proposal ensures accessible, equitable, and culturally responsive services, including strategies to support individuals with barriers to employment.	10
Performance Measurement, Data, and Continuous Improvement	Evaluates the strength of data systems, use of performance metrics, dashboards, and feedback mechanisms to monitor outcomes and drive continuous improvement.	10
WIOA 14 Service Elements Plan	Assesses the proposed staffing structure, roles, supervision, and capacity to deliver high-quality, timely services, including alignment of staffing levels with expected customer volume.	10
Budget and Budget Narrative	Evaluates the reasonableness, allowability, and alignment of the budget with the proposed service model, including cost-effectiveness and justification of expenses.	5
Project Performance Outcomes	Assesses the ambition, feasibility, and alignment of proposed performance targets with program design, staffing, and funding.	10
XBE Status / Leadership Representation	Certified XBE status and/or diverse leadership or board representation	5
Total Possible Points		100

XII. Timeline

Beginning Monday, March 30, 2026, the RFP will be available to download from the EmployIndy website: www.employindy.org. If you are unable to access or download the RFP, please contact Danielle Pamer at dpamer@employindy.org.

Key dates specific to this notification are scheduled as follows:

RFP Issued	Monday, March 30, 2026
Information Session	Wednesday, April 8, 2026, 1:00p.m.
Deadline to Submit Questions	Friday, April 10, 2026, 5:00p.m.
Response to Questions Posted	Tuesday, April 14, 2026
Proposal Due	Friday, April 24, 2026, 11:59p.m.
Bidders Presentations (if needed)	Thursday, May 7, 2026
Notice of Award (Pending Board Approval) *	Week of June 1, 2026
Effective Date of Contract	July 1, 2026

* Contracts will not be executed until board approval is granted.

An information session will be held on Wednesday, April 8, 2026, at 1:00p.m. via Teams. EmployIndy Career Coaching staff will present the RFP requirements and accept questions during the bidder's conference to offer technical assistance to respondents. The meeting information is below, and the PowerPoint presentation will be posted on the EmployIndy website with this RFP after the meeting.

Meeting Link:

<https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/2408904212119?p=6JN06pjJRMBfqBZexh>

Meeting ID: 240 890 421 211 9

Password: hx2nb7Gk

XIII. Submission Instructions

Respondents are responsible for ensuring that proposals are submitted in full compliance with the submission requirements and deadlines outlined in this section.

Respondents must submit proposals using the fillable PDF templates provided by EmployIndy. Templates will include a cover sheet, the proposal narrative response form, and required attachments, including the budget template and narrative, and projected performance outcomes. Proposals submitted in any other format may be deemed non-responsive.

Required Submission Components

A complete proposal submission must include the following components using the required template provided [here](#):

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- Cover Sheet
 - Proposal Narrative Response
 - Budget Template and Budget Narrative
 - WIOA 14 Service Elements Plan
 - Projected Performance Outcomes
 - Required Attachments (no template)
 - Org Chart
 - Audit
 - Letters of Commitment/MOUs

Submission Method

All questions and proposal submissions must be submitted through EmployIndy's Contract Opportunities webpage:

<https://employindy.org/contract-opportunities>

Submissions sent by email, mail, or any other method will not be accepted.

Respondents must ensure all required templates and attachments are uploaded successfully prior to the submission deadline.

Submission Deadline

Proposals must be submitted no later than Friday, April 24, 2026, by 11:59p.m. Late submissions will not be accepted.

Responsibility for Submission

It is the sole responsibility of the respondent to ensure that all required materials are submitted accurately, completely, and on time. EmployIndy is not responsible for technical difficulties, incomplete uploads, or failure to use the required templates.

Questions Regarding the RFP

All questions regarding this RFP must be submitted through <https://employindy.org/contract-opportunities> in accordance with the timeline outlined in the Proposal Timeline. Responses to questions will be posted publicly and will become part of this RFP.