



Board Report

April 22, 2026

Participant Service Goals for PY'25

Program	Regional Plan Goals	Carry-In Clients	New in PY'25 (7/1/25-3/31/26)	Total	Goal %
WIOA Adult	535	47	273	320	60%
WIOA Dislocated Worker	102	3	32	35	34%
WIOA Out of School Youth	121	8	33	41	34%
WIOA In School Youth	36	9	4	13	36%

For Program Year 2025 (7/1/25 – 6/30/26), Region 8 is working toward meeting their performance goals. Dislocated Worker and Youth enrollments remain a top priority for the next quarter. Our education, training, and job placement services continue to help participants achieve their career goals, as highlighted in the success story below:

At 40 years old, Ashley Leathers made a life-changing decision to return to school and pursue a career in the medical field through the Certified Clinical Medical Assistant (CCMA) program at Wagler Education & Training Center. After stepping away from healthcare to focus on raising her daughters and supporting their education and activities, Ashley found herself ready to rediscover a passion she had put on hold. At the time, she was working at her children’s school earning \$16 an hour, but she knew she wanted more, not just financially, but personally and professionally. “40 and going back to school...am I crazy?” she recalls thinking. “Am I just being selfish?”

Despite those doubts, Ashley pushed forward. Balancing the demands of being a wife and mother with coursework wasn’t easy. While class nights were manageable, it was the late-night studying, often while her household slept, that required the greatest sacrifice and determination. With the support of her husband and mother, Ashley stayed committed. Even more motivating was her desire to set an example for her daughters: that it’s never too late to invest in yourself and pursue your goals.

Ashley credits the supportive environment at Wagler Education & Training Center as a key factor in her success. “Everyone involved is so encouraging,” she shared. “I would absolutely recommend this program to others.”



Today, Ashley is thriving in a new position in the medical field, earning \$22 an hour with opportunities for continued growth and additional certifications. More importantly, she feels a renewed sense of purpose. “Enrolling in this program has allowed me to go to a job that truly defines who I am,” Ashley said. “On my first day, I remember stopping to look in the mirror before I left the house and feeling so exhilarated.” Ashley’s journey is a powerful reminder that it’s never too late to chase your goals, and that programs like CCMA can open doors not only to better careers, but to a stronger sense of identity and fulfillment. “Thank you to Wagler and WorkOne,” Ashley added, “for creating opportunities so moms like me still have a chance to better ourselves.”

Region 8 County Unemployment Rates

County	August	September	October	November	December
Brown	3.2%	3.2%	3.0%	3.0%	2.5%
Daviess	3.2%	2.9%	2.9%	2.8%	2.1%
Greene	3.8%	3.7%	2.9%	3.4%	2.9%
Lawrence	3.7%	3.6%	3.3%	3.3%	2.7%
Martin	3.1%	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%	2.2%
Monroe	4.0%	3.2%	3.0%	2.9%	2.3%
Orange	3.7%	3.5%	3.4%	3.3%	2.6%
Owen	3.7%	3.5%	2.8%	3.2%	2.8%

In December 2025, Indiana’s unemployment rate was 3.5%, comfortably below the national average of 4.4%. This trend was even more pronounced in Region 8, where county rates sat below the state average. Indiana also continues to outpace the nation in workforce engagement; the labor force participation rate reached 63.6% for those aged 16–24 and 84.1% for the 25–54 demographic. Those remaining outside the workforce primarily consist of students, retirees, and individuals managing health issues or family caregiving needs

Regional Success for Youth – Bedford WorkOne

Bobbygene Lucas began his career journey in August 2025. He was working in fast food making \$13.50 an hour, but Bobbygene wanted to expand his opportunities and have a career that was financially stable. He reached out to the Bedford WorkOne office to explore the skilled trades. Bobbygene qualified for the WIOA Youth program, where he worked with Career Advisor Traci Tritle to identify welding as his target career path.

Showing immediate initiative, Bobbygene began training at the Wagler Education and Training Center in September 2025. Although he faced a setback after failing his initial welding exam, he remained committed, working closely with Ms. Tritle to complete refresher training and re-testing. His persistence paid off when he earned his welding credential on March 16, 2026. Today, Bobbygene is a certified welder earning over \$18.00 an hour, contributing his essential skills to the local workforce.

GRANT UPDATES

Next Level Jobs: Workforce Ready Grant and Employer Training Grant



Workforce Ready Grant

For Program Year 2025 (7/1/25 - 6/30/26) - Region 8 received an initial allocation of \$900,000 of WRG funding. On 4/4/26, Region 8 was given an additional \$419,000 to support ongoing training in the region. A total of \$131,900 is budgeted for administrative costs, and the remaining \$1,187,100 has been allocated for customer tuition.

As of 3/31/26, 183 customers have been enrolled in training. Thus far, 170 students have completed training and 164 (96.5%) have earned their credential. Of the remaining 13 students, a total of 3 are currently attending training, and 10 have dropped out of their class. Region 8 staff are continuing to enroll additional customers in training.

As of 4/16/2026, a total of \$962,447.50 (81.1%) of the allocated tuition funds have been obligated on existing clients. It is anticipated that all remaining funds will be spent before the 6/30/26 end date of the grant.

Success Story:

Kevin B. was laid off and wanted a career that was enjoyable as well as provided long-term employment. He participated in RESEA and returned to the Bloomington WorkOne office in December of 2025 to discuss his options. Kevin's journey was marked by consistent engagement and a clear plan of action. He completed career research with Career Advisor Kimi Bing to ensure he chose the right training that provided for his needs. On 1/5/26, Kevin began his WRG-funded training at C1 in Indianapolis. Despite the intensity of the course, he remained focused, even managing a necessary extension of his training end date to ensure he was fully prepared for the state examination. Kevin's hard work was realized on 2/12/26 when he officially earned his CDL-A license. On 2/23/26, he began employment utilizing his newly attained credential at Crider and Crider as a full-time CDL driver earning \$28.00 per hour. Kevin's story is a prime example of how localized support through WorkOne and WRG funding can empower individuals to gain high-demand skills and secure a brighter financial future.

Employer Training Grant

Region 8 received \$250,000 of Employer Training Grant funds for Program Year 2025 (7/1/25-6/30/26). A total of \$37,500 is budgeted for administrative costs and the additional \$212,500 will support regional employers. Employer eligibility requirements have changed with this new grant cycle. The major changes are new hire wages (\$19.00 per hour), wage increase expectations (5%) and company specialized training reimbursement (\$1,000 per trainee). To date, the region has successfully disbursed over \$140,000. We remain on schedule to fully utilize the remaining allocation by the 6/30/26 deadline. No further funding will be authorized due to the program's termination.

POWER UP INDIANA

Power Up Indiana is a new program from the State of Indiana and the Office of Commerce that promotes change in employer practices by supporting those who invest in upskilling their existing workforce. It recognizes and rewards companies that train, retain, and advance talent from within—and builds a culture of lifelong learning across the state. Power Up Indiana reimbursement is open to businesses of all sizes, investing in current employees through the select training of the employer in any industry or business sector. To receive reimbursement of funding put toward training, employers must:



- Provide training to a current employee
- Ensure training is completed and determined satisfactory by the business
- Provide the employee a 25% wage increase
- Maintain wage increase for two consecutive quarters

Region 8 has received an initial allocation of \$300,000 for Power Up Indiana with the opportunity to receive additional funding depending on performance. A total of \$45,000 is budgeted for administrative costs and the remaining \$255,000 will be allocated for employer reimbursement. To engage employers, a Power Up Forum was held on 3/4/26 at Bloomington Ivy Tech. Approximately 15 employers and program partners were in attendance. Sara Farmer, owner of Twins Springs Counseling LLC. (pictured left), provided a heartfelt story as to the importance of the grant's support for her agency. To date, \$40,000 in obligations has been made to employers throughout the region.

Apprenticeship Building America (ABA) Grant

In April 2023, the South Central Region 8 Workforce Board received \$547,000 through a DOL sponsored grant acquired by the DWD Office of Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeships. The Apprenticeship Building America (ABA) funding is intended to expand the number of programs and apprentices; diversify the industries that utilize Registered Apprenticeship (RAP); and increase access to, and completion of, RAPs for underrepresented populations and underserved communities. The goal for these participants will be a nationally recognized credential.

RAP and certified Pre-Apprenticeship participants can receive funding for Related Technical Instruction (RTI), On-the-Job Learning (OJL) and Supportive Services (SS). To date, Region 8 has funded 36 pre-apprentices and 77 apprentices. Region 8 continues to enroll new apprentices and anticipates fully expending this grant by 5/15/26.

Pathways 2 Progress (P2P)- Pathway Home 6 Grant

Through membership with Midwest Urban Strategies, Region 8 is a subrecipient of the Department of Labor's (DOL) Pathways Home 6 Grant, being marketed locally as the Pathways 2 Progress initiative. The region will receive approximately \$474,000 for a grant period from 7/1/25 to 12/31/2029. This program provides reentry services to eligible incarcerated individuals prior to release from local jails and will continue comprehensive services following release. This program has shown potential for breaking the cycle of recidivism by linking participants to the workforce system early—while still in jail—and then immediately engaging them upon reentry into the community.

Region 8 plans to enroll 50 participants over the next 2 (two) years. Greene, Lawrence and Orange County jails have agreed to work with the region to assist in this endeavor. Monroe County Jail expressed interest but was unable to participate. Additional facilities could potentially be added in the future depending on program performance. Because this grant includes a program planning and implementation phase, Region 8 anticipated to start enrolling participants in January, but it was delayed to February. As of March 31, Region 8 has enrolled four (4) participants and has continued to identify additional individuals for enrollment in the near future.

Business Services Updates

WARN/Non-WARN Notices and Rapid Response Activities

Novo Nordisk (Monroe County)- Region 8 received notification that Novo Nordisk (formerly known as Catalent) in Bloomington is planning to lay off 400 workers in May 2026. To date, a WARN Notice has not been issued. Business Services has made contact with Bradley Jones, Senior HR Manager, who stated that the facility intends to cooperate with WorkOne to provide information to employees in regards to Rapid Response, WorkOne Services, UI information, Workshops and local office contact information.

Business Services Activities

- From July 2025 to March 2025, the Region 8 Business Services Team worked with a total of **81 Employers** to provide WIOA Business Services. **508 Distinct Business Services** were provided to those employers.
- During the last quarter, the Region 8 Business Services Team and local office staff have participated in various activities throughout the region. A few of those included:



- Radius Stakeholders Luncheon
- Shakamak Career Fair
- Bloomington High School North Career Fair
- Linton Stockton Career Fair (pictured left)

Staff also engaged in partner agency meetings with the following employers: Paragon Force, Owen County State Bank, Crane Credit Union, Simtra, World Wide Automotive Services, Singota, Reynolds Construction and Boston International.

Highlight: Springs Valley Career Fair

On March 31st, the Springs Valley School Corporation held a Student Career Fair which successfully connected students in grades 6-12 with over 25 local organizations and industry leaders. By facilitating direct engagement with professionals from sectors such as healthcare, public safety, skilled trades, and finance, the event provided invaluable hands-on learning and networking opportunities.

Pictured right: Orange County Career Advisor Kathy Qualkenbush is providing WorkOne service information to a student.



2026 JAG Career Development Conference (CDC)

The 2026 Region 8 JAG Career Development Conference was held at Shreve Hall at Ivy Tech Bloomington. This year's CDC showcased our students' critical thinking and leadership skills through competition. Though each of our schools placed first in various categories, Paoli High School won first place overall for their outstanding performance. Congratulations to Paoli JAG Specialist Katie Cook and her students (pictured right).



College, Career and Military Fair – Owen Valley High School

The 2026 Owen Valley High School College, Career, and Military Fair was a highly successful event, planned and sponsored by the JAG program and attended by the entire Owen Valley student body. A total of 53 registered organizations and 112 individual representatives participated, offering their time to host fair tables and conduct mock interviews with students. JAG students played a key role in organizing and executing the event, taking on responsibilities such as greeting guests, assisting representatives, managing registration, and ensuring everything ran smoothly. Representatives from colleges, local businesses, trade programs, and military branches were present to share information and connect with students. Attendees had the opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations, participate in mock interviews, and explore a variety of post-graduation pathways. This event not only showcased the leadership, professionalism, and teamwork of JAG students, but also provided valuable experiences that will support their future success.

