



Board Report

January 21, 2026

Participant Service Goals for PY'25

Program	Regional Plan Goals	Carry-In Clients	New in PY'25 (7/1/25-12/31/25)	Total	Goal %
WIOA Adult	535	47	160	207	39%
WIOA Dislocated Worker	102	3	18	21	21%
WIOA Out of School Youth	121	8	20	28	23%
WIOA In School Youth	36	9	0	9	25%

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

Charbel Alcantara first approached WorkOne on 9/9/25 seeking a path toward a stable, self-sufficient career. Charbel met with Martin County Career Advisor Katie Jackson to discuss his training opportunities and after completing enrollment and being accepted into a CDL-A program at Wagler Education and Training Center, he faced a significant setback: upon notifying his employer of the training schedule, he was terminated from his position. Despite this barrier, Charbel used this as motivation to fully commit to securing a better future. He began WRG-funded CDL training on 10/6/25. He successfully finished the training program on 10/23/25 and earned his CDL-A license on 10/30/25.



Charbel worked closely with Career Advisor Jackson to navigate the job market. Despite a brief period of discouragement common in career shifts, a timely "pep talk" and consistent coaching from her encouraged Charbel to persevere. This persistence resulted in Charbel securing a full-time position with Simple Transport on 11/17/2025. This new job provides a starting wage of \$21 an hour, representing a \$4.00 per hour increase over his previous earnings and a clear path for long-term growth.

Charbel's journey is a testament to the life-changing impact of workforce development programs. By turning a job loss into an opportunity, he has achieved financial independence and a renewed sense of purpose. Charbel stated the following to Career Advisor Jackson regarding this opportunity: "Thank you so much for helping me. This has changed my life and I am so grateful for this opportunity."

Region 8 County Unemployment Rates

County	May	June	July	August	September
Brown	3.1%	3.2%	3.6%	3.2%	3.2%
Daviess	2.7%	3.0%	3.6%	3.2%	2.9%
Greene	3.4%	3.8%	4.2%	3.8%	3.7%
Lawrence	3.4%	3.7%	4.1%	3.7%	3.6%
Martin	2.9%	3.0%	3.2%	3.1%	3.0%
Monroe	3.2%	3.7%	4.4%	4.0%	3.2%
Orange	3.4%	3.7%	4.2%	3.7%	3.5%
Owen	3.6%	3.8%	4.2%	3.7%	3.5%

As of September 2025, Indiana's unemployment rate was 3.7%, which was lower than the national average of 4.4%. With the exception of Greene, Region 8 counties were lower than the state average for the month of September. In addition, Indiana's seasonally adjusted labor force participation rate in September for individuals aged 16-24 was 63.7%, and for individuals aged 25-54 was 84.6%. This rate indicates the percentage of working-age Hoosiers who are either employed or actively looking for work. Indiana's rates are currently higher than the national average of 62.4% (ages 16-24) and 83.7% (ages 25-54). Those not in the labor force primarily include students, retirees and other non-working populations, such as individuals unable to work due to a disability or illness, or adults responsible for their family's childcare needs.

Regional Success Story – Paoli WorkOne

In October of 2025, Marion County resident Michael B. sought assistance from the Paoli WorkOne office to secure employment. Despite a limited work history and being ineligible for unemployment benefits, he was determined to establish a "fresh start" in Orange County.

A significant component of his journey involved overcoming substantial barriers to re-entry. He had been involved with the criminal justice system and was working with a third-party organization to address these legal concerns. These background issues, combined with other personal hardships, had previously hindered his ability to maintain stable employment.

Recognizing these challenges, Career Advisor Kathy Qualkenbush enrolled Michael in the WIOA program to provide intensive, one-on-one support. While he initially sought restaurant work, Career Advisor Qualkenbush worked to help him identify a more sustainable opportunity at GKN Automotive in Salem, Indiana.

Through a direct referral and dedicated interview preparation, Michael secured a job offer within 24 hours of his initial meeting. He began his full-time role as a CNC operator just four days after enrollment, earning \$20.00 per hour with comprehensive benefits. This successful placement not only provided financial stability but also empowered Michael to permanently relocate and find a path forward.

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 a total of \$900,000 of WRG funding. A total of \$90,000 is budgeted for administrative costs, and the remaining \$810,000 has been allocated for customer tuition.

As of 12/31/25, 104 customers have been enrolled in training. Thus far, 86 students have completed training and 83 (96.5%) have earned their credential. Of the remaining 18 students, a total of 15 are currently attending training, and 3 have dropped out of their class. Region 8 staff are continuing to enroll additional customers in training. As of 1/14/26, a total of \$554,595 (68.5%) 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:



Makayla Rust worked as a Laborer in a local Union and had grown weary of being laid off from employment. Single and living on her own, she learned the valuable lesson of planning ahead and budgeting to make ends meet. Makayla desired an occupation that would provide stable employment and had always dreamed of becoming a truck driver.

Makayla heard that WorkOne could potentially cover funding for short-term training programs and she began exploring options, which led her to Wagler Education and Training Center. Makayla reached out to Wagler and registered for classes. Makayla then met with Daviess County Career Advisor Crystal Venters to determine eligibility for funding. Makayla was enrolled and after completing career research and counseling, she was provided with WRG funds to complete CDL training.

Makayla started CDL classes on 11/3/25 and successfully completed the course. When testing day came, she felt well prepared to take her CDL test and passed on her first try. Makayla obtained employment at Healy's Heavy Equipment in Washington on 12/10/25. She was able to increase her wages from \$23.00 to \$27.00 per hour and is no longer dependent on temporary assignments. She earned a certification that will allow her to maintain stable employment for many years to come.

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). These funds are fully obligated at this time and no additional funding will be available for this grant.



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 will be budgeted for administrative costs and the remaining \$255,000 will be allocated for employer reimbursement. Businesses who would like more information about how to apply for Power Up funding should contact Gail Mitchell (gmitchell@vinu.edu) or Randy Wells (rwells@vinu.edu).

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). Due to program requirements and other circumstances causing unintentional competition among entities within the region, it was difficult to enroll individuals as anticipated. In August of 2024, DWD requested to move a portion of this grant to another region that needed additional funds. Region 8 agreed to move approximately \$296,000 to assist in this process. To date, Region 8 has funded 36 pre-apprentices and 72 apprentices. Region 8 continues to enroll new apprentices and anticipates fully expending this grant by 5/15/26.

NEW GRANT: 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 several 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 is unable to participate at this time. 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 2026; however, a delay from the Department of Labor has moved the enrollment phase to February.

Business Services Updates

WARN/Non-WARN Notices and Rapid Response Activities

Perdue Farms, LLC (Daviness County) - A WARN notice was issued on 9/3/25, regarding the elimination of the second shift at Perdue Farms, which affected 293 workers. Approximately 85% of the impacted employees spoke Haitian Creole as their primary language, which presented unique challenges to engagement. Region 8 representatives met with Perdue Farms management on 9/4/25 to begin transition planning.

Between September 30 and October 1, 2025, 8 (eight) Rapid Response orientation sessions were held with the support of Heartland interpreter services. These included 6 (six) sessions in Haitian Creole, 1 (one) in English, and 1 (one) in Spanish. Approximately 45 workers attended these sessions and were provided essential information on the following: Unemployment Insurance (UI), Career and Reemployment Services, Training and Education Options and Community Resources.

A dedicated job fair was held in Washington on 10/10/25. Five employers participated, and approximately 140 individuals attended to complete applications and schedule interviews with the assistance of a Haitian Creole interpreter. Impacted workers who provided email addresses received follow-up communications in Haitian Creole offering additional WorkOne services. There has been no response despite multiple attempts by Business Services Staff.



The Business Services team has made continued efforts to provide services to these identified workers. Most of them appear to have relocated, are reemployed with another facility or are attending ESL classes to improve their English language skills. Region 8 leadership will work with our Adult Education partners in an attempt to provide future services as needed.

TF Polar Express, Inc. d/b/a Troyer Foods (Monroe County) - A WARN notice was issued on September 19, 2025, regarding the closure of Troyer Foods, affecting 135 workers. Business Services Staff contacted Troyer Foods following the announcement and offered Rapid Response activities as well as provided information regarding WorkOne Services. The company did not respond to any further communication to coordinate Rapid Response Orientation(s) or provide a list of affected workers for the region to provide additional services.

Business Service Updates (Cont.)

Business Services Activities

- From July 2025 to December 2025, The Region 8 Business Services Team worked with a total of **53 Employers** to provide WIOA Business Services. **345 Distinct Business Services** were provided to those employers.
- During the last quarter (October 2025 – December 2025), the Region 8 Business Services Team and local office staff participated in various activities throughout the region. A few of those included mini job fairs hosted at the Bloomington and Spencer WorkOne for PTS Electronics and Surge Staffing. Staff also attended, made presentations, or participated in various Chamber Events/Meetings in Lawrence, Monroe and Owen Counties.



Highlight: 3E Career Expo – Bedford North Lawrence High School

WorkOne participated in the 3E Career Expo held on 10/2/25 at Bedford North Lawrence High School. The "3E" Expos in Indiana are career and education fairs designed to present high school students with post-secondary options centered around three paths: Enlist, Employ, and Enroll. All students had the chance to explore their future pathways and connect directly with colleges, employers, unions, and military representatives that participated.

Pictured left: Lawrence County Career Advisor Traci Tritle is providing WorkOne service information to a student.



JAG Annual Leadership Development Conference

September 26th 2025 – The Region 8 JAG Annual Leadership Development Conference took place at McCormick Creek State Park. Leaders from each JAG class were invited to attend to help develop fundamental leadership skills through challenges designed to showcase teamwork, learning and growth.





Paoli High School – Santa Workshop Assistance

Three students from the Paoli High School JAG Leadership Team helped at their elementary school in December for the annual Santa's Workshop, which provides students the opportunity to buy gifts for their family members. They assisted students by helping them manage their money, choose appropriate gifts, and analyze their spending. They also kept the shopping area neat, organized, and stocked. Pictured left is JAG student Amber Pennington restocking gift items.

Success Stories

Several Owen Valley JAG students have demonstrated exceptional achievement in postsecondary planning, scholarship attainment, and career readiness this year:

Amelia Norris earned a full-ride scholarship to Indiana State University (ISU). This outstanding accomplishment reflects her dedication, academic commitment, and the effectiveness of the college and career readiness supports provided through the JAG program. Amelia's success removes financial barriers to higher education and positions her for long-term academic and professional success.

Kaitlynn Padgett was selected as a Lilly Endowment Scholarship finalist, one of the most competitive and prestigious scholarship recognitions in the state. While she did not ultimately receive the award, being named a finalist is a significant honor. Kaitlynn entered her panel interview confident and well-prepared thanks to one-on-one mock interview sessions conducted through JAG. Her performance highlights the impact of individualized coaching and intensive interview preparation provided by the program.

Lone Sparks has taken a major step toward career and personal development by enlisting in the Army National Guard. This decision reflects strong character, discipline, and a commitment to service. Through the JAG program, Lone explored career pathways, developed employability skills, and made an informed decision aligned with his long-term goals of leadership, stability, and continued education.

These student accomplishments highlight the effectiveness of the JAG program in supporting multiple postsecondary pathways, including higher education, competitive scholarships, and military service, while preparing students for successful futures beyond high school.