



Request for Proposals Ready Schools Initiative

Purpose:

For Indiana Uplands to fulfill its potential, stakeholders across the region must strategically and purposefully pursue a shared vision of success. Our schools, employers, and communities must come together to ensure we are prepared to achieve, advance, and excel. Prosperity, quality of life, and the capacity to sustain both will require that this region continues to be *Ready and Aligned*.

The Ready Schools Initiative is a framework to support school districts in aligning their K-12 programs to community and regional workforce needs. The goal of this initiative is to enable schools to engage stakeholders in meaningful dialogue about what success means within their communities and to develop a plan to obtain that success. The result of this process is a systemic K-12 approach designed to support students in achieving academic and career goals aligned with the wealth of opportunities in the Indiana Uplands region. To date, there have been three cohorts of Ready Schools, totaling 15 districts across the Uplands. These districts have committed to a transformative journey that has shown great promise for ALL students.

Regional Opportunity Initiatives (ROI) would like to invite districts, within the 11-county region of Indiana Uplands that have not previously received Ready Schools funding, to apply to become a Cohort 4 Ready Schools District. If selected, districts will receive funding and coaching through a 10-month development process, as well as funding for implementation.

Background and Rationale:

The statistics for educational attainment in the Indiana Uplands region are sobering. Indiana Uplands data (2022) for adults aged 25 years or older confirms that we have a long way to go if we are to achieve the goal of 60% post-secondary attainment, the benchmark set by Indiana and Lumina Foundation. At present, 35.79% of Uplands population 25 years or older has completed an associate's, bachelor's, or higher degree. By county, attainment percentages range from 17% to 58%. While this data does not reflect attainment of certificates or other proof of skills, the Indiana Uplands region is well below the desired target of 60% post-secondary attainment.

ROI's frequent Occupational Needs Assessments (ONA) emphasize the importance of relevant student pathways to meet the workforce needs within our region, to support growth in our key sectors, and to attract talent. The latest ONA shows that only 1:6 students who take one or more CTE or STEM course subsequently becomes employed in a related field. Intentional design to start earlier in a student's K-12 journey and create a tangible bridge to a meaningful career ladder is essential.

Employers within the region's three key sectors of life sciences, defense, and advanced manufacturing foresee accelerated growth in the region, but report that the quality and

availability of workforce is a limiting factor. The numbers below highlight the significant opportunity we have as a region to both grow and retain talent.

- The Biomedical or Life Sciences sector regional cluster grew by 27.7 percent from 2012 to 2020 and employment concentration is 678 percent greater or roughly seven times that of the average US region.
- The National Security and Defense sector combined federal and private growth is 68% percent greater than the national average and the change of employment was 13.5% from 2012 to 2020, as compared to 2.1% in the US.
- The trajectory of job growth in the Uplands advanced manufacturing sector cluster is increasing at a steep rate. Automotive manufacturing jobs increased by 93.5% here as compared to 14% nationally; food-based manufacturing by 21.3%. And the employment concentration of furniture is 1,733% greater than the average US community.

Ultimately, a successful Ready Schools Implementation Plan fully responds to the following six core principles:

1. Every student is engaged in a relevant path to success.
2. Students graduate high school ready for post-secondary and career success.
3. Meaningful and ongoing collaboration occurs among schools, industry, and community.
4. Teaching and learning are grounded in relevancy.
5. K-12 schools are aligned around a common vision of student success.
6. Schools embrace the significant role they play in achieving regional prosperity.

Timeline:

Request for Proposals for the development phase of this work will be available on April 21, 2023 and proposals will be due by June 2, 2023. Cohort 4 districts will be supported for one school year as they proceed through the first four phases of the Ready Schools design process and prepare for an implementation proposal. Coaching during the implementation period will be provided by ROI.

Discovery Phase	Synthesis Phase	Ideation Phase	Refinement Phase	Implementation
Aug – Oct (3 months)	Nov – Dec (2 months)	Jan – March (3 months)	April – May (2 months)	2024 & beyond
2023-2024 School Year Development Year				

District Readiness Coordinator:

Each Ready Schools district will identify a District Readiness Coordinator who will facilitate the development process. It is the coordinator's responsibility to assume ownership and leadership of the Ready Schools process, serve as point of contact to all stakeholders, continuously update the schools and community regarding the work, oversee data collection, document grant activities, and work closely with district administration and ROI. It is important for the coordinator to have strong leadership skills, be organized, and visionary in order to move the work forward.

Design Team & Education-Workforce Advisory Team:

Each district in the cohort will identify a design team to help facilitate the K-12 alignment process. The team will consist of a District Readiness Coordinator, key school leaders, and teachers. In addition, each district will be expected to establish an Education & Workforce Advisory Team that will help inform the district throughout the alignment process. This may be a newly formed group or an existing group within a community that meets the key criteria for an Education & Workforce Advisory Team. The ROI coach will be involved with all aspects of the development process, including the exploratory travel and regularly scheduled design and advisory team meetings/planning sessions.

Support and Resources:

ROI will work closely with the school districts as they progress through the development and implementation phases. Each district will be assigned an ROI Ready Schools Coach to help guide and support the process. Time will be spent exploring innovative models and a series of workshops will be offered to support the cohort throughout the development period. The purpose of exploration and the workshops will be to provide exploratory learning and deeper dive application in the areas of career pathways, career awareness models, K-12 innovative approaches, or relevant curriculum. Exploration and workshops will be tailored to the needs of the school districts and what they hear as a result of the Discovery Phase.

Funding:

School districts will be eligible for up to \$100,000 for the first year of development planning.

- Up to \$85,000 for a full-time District Readiness Coordinator position and other indirect staff costs.
- Up to \$15,000 for travel expenses, exploration, materials, substitutes or stipends for team release time.

Districts will be eligible for up to \$300,000 of implementation funding following the development phase. Funding will be available for plans that clearly address the six core principles and fit within ROI's funding parameters.

Ready Schools Application Form

Schools must apply using ROI's grant portal: <https://roigrants.communityforce.com/>

District Name:

Primary District Contact:

Position:

District Contact Email:

Phone:

Elementary School(s):

Middle School(s):

High School(s):

Other (e.g., Adult Education, CTE/Career Center, Alternative School):

1. Please provide a district level snapshot of relevant data and/or information that would help ROI understand your community and student population. Information and data can include, but is not limited to, the following:
 - Enrollment, free & reduced lunch percentages, diversity demographics, post-secondary attendance rates, district average ACT/SAT, district ILEARN scores, current college and career readiness resources, pathway availability and enrollment, 21st Century Scholars data, etc.
 - An explanation of how this information might inform and guide your planning throughout the development period of the grant.
2. Describe the current K-12 education and workforce strategies already in place within the district and make a case for how the *Ready Schools Design Process* will add value and relevancy. Please include any information on how local industry and employer partners are currently engaged within the district to help align education plans with regional workforce goals or needs.
3. Describe current school and/or district initiatives and how they will align with the work of Ready Schools.
4. Describe the district's strengths and anticipated challenges with respect to addressing K-12 education and workforce alignment.

5. Describe your school district's leadership capacity for change and innovation.

6. How will your district support the District Readiness Coordinator in making necessary time to fully engage relevant educators and other stakeholders in the design process?

7. Has your team identified possible candidates for the position of District Readiness Coordinator? If so, please include their names and relevant qualifying experience. If not, what is the district's plan for finding the best candidate for this position?

Link to apply:

<https://roigrants.communityforce.com/>

Ready Schools Virtual Information Session:

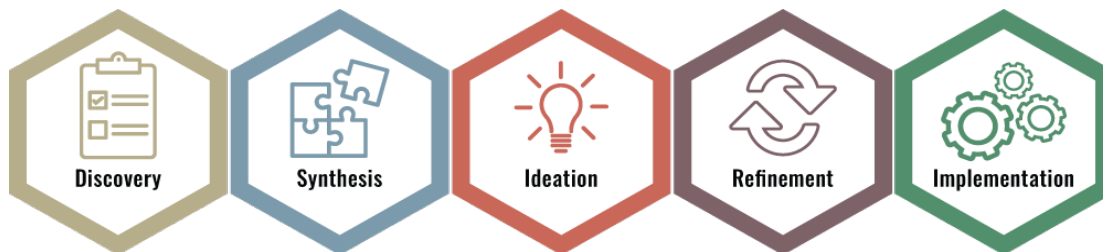
Wednesday, May 3rd, 3:00pm EST

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88502138736?pwd=NTc5MDZEBE1JaHFZdWpYSDhwOGNJUT09>

Questions? Contact:

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Ready Schools

A REGIONAL OPPORTUNITY INITIATIVES PROGRAM