

Making Workforce Connections

Innovative Web Site Offers Valuable Data

By Natalie N. Evans

A new online tool is taking a detailed and local approach to helping thousands of Hoosier job seekers and students identify what occupations are in demand in their area. IndianaSkills.com, from Ready Indiana and the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, is a searchable database of real-time job statistics for every region of the state.

The database includes information for occupations in Indiana requiring at least a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree (associate's degrees, certificates and industry certifications) based on what's requested or required in employer job ads.

"Job seekers can find career opportunities that best match their skills and interests - and are in high demand; many with competitive wages," says Ready Indiana Executive Director Kris Deckard. "This site provides some much-needed direction and spells out what education or short-term training they may need to get the local jobs they desire."

Specifically, job seekers can search their local or preferred region of the state to discover the most in-demand jobs and overview of each. They can also learn the following about those positions:

- Average salary
- Baseline and specialized skills necessary
- Certification/training required
- Indiana training providers (with direct contact links)
- Job status and earnings of recent graduates with these credentials

Offers Indiana Chamber Vice President of Education and Workforce Development Derek Redelman: "Despite the persistence of a high unemployment rate, Indiana's employers remain frustrated that they cannot find skilled workers to fill thousands of available positions. While four-year college degrees continue to be an important goal for many young adults, some of our state's best job opportunities are through one-year certificates and two-year associate's degrees."

Employers have the opportunity to quickly and easily download customized job descriptions, pulling from real-time data. They may also learn more about regional and state occupational trends, the skills and credentials they should be requiring for their open positions, plus the wages being paid to similar employees around the state.

As a companion to the new web site, the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) produced a report, "A Quest for Clarity: Identifying the Market for Short-Term Training Opportunities and Industry Recognized Credentials in Indiana." Among the report's findings:

During 2010-2011, the five occupations in greatest demand in Indiana requiring less than a bachelor's degree were: heavy truck drivers; retail sales persons; registered nurses; sales representatives in wholesale and manufacturing industries; and first-line supervisors.

From 2006-2010, the state's undergraduate certificate programs (taking less than two years to complete at or near full-time basis) with the highest employment rates of recent graduates were: licensed practical/vocational nurse training (88.1% employed within a year, 1,426 total); masonry (88%, 22 employed), information technology (83.3%, 15 employed); dental assistant (81.8%, 320 employed); pharmacy technician/assistant (81.8%, 18 employed); and welding technology/welder (81.1%, 43 employed).

To ensure the data on IndianaSkills.com remains current, it will be updated annually. In the coming year, plans are to expand the site to include supply and demand for occupations and graduates of four-year degrees and above.



Regional job statistics, top 10 lists and much more are available online for job seekers, employers, students and others.

INFORMATION LINK

Resource: Web site data and NCHEMS report at www.IndianaSkills.com

Group Developing Regional Workforce Plan

When companies in north central Indiana assessed their future, they foresaw retirements and an empty worker pipeline for numerous production positions. That realization helped shape the Corporate Partnership for Economic Growth (CPEG), a regional workforce and talent initiative for Elkhart, Fulton, Kosciusko, Marshall and St. Joseph counties.

CPEG has three major goals: to fill existing positions, assess emerging industries and develop a complete workforce plan through 2020. Thomas P. Miller, an Indianapolis-based consulting

firm, was enlisted to develop a survey pinpointing the skills gaps, growth barriers and number of jobs in demand, plus examine talent attraction and retention. The survey is only the first step of the workforce initiative, followed by a quantitative analysis and series of focus groups, offers Shawn Peterson, CPEG president and CEO.

“We have a strong group of workforce and development entities working with us, but our biggest challenge is figuring out how we can leverage those strengths and improve upon them, resulting in regional growth,” Peterson notes.

Survey results should be quantified by early 2013 and will then determine which implementation strategies are suitable for each county across the region.

“Quantifying this data is important, but it is not a solution,” explains Jennifer Laurent, executive director of Marshall County Economic Development. “The solutions will come in the form of our policymakers looking at this data and recognizing the need for advanced training, working with WorkOne and the other partners to focus on the needs of business and the next generation coming out of the schools.”

Specifically, CPEG intends on collaborating with institutions such as Vincennes University and Ivy Tech to develop much-needed training recommendations.

Laurent adds: “The focus will be bringing this data to these providers to say, ‘Here is what’s needed in this region. Can you deliver training and can you deliver capable employees to these 100 businesses that would hire them?’”

That’s crucial considering employers struggle to fill job openings due to growing skills gaps.

“Although companies have open positions, they are not advertising them due to the quantity of applicants that are not qualified,” Laurent declares. “An applicant has to be able to offer something to that company. Many times it’s not a specific skill as much as a willingness to learn, willingness to demonstrate a work ethic and some degree of loyalty – if that company is going to invest in a training period.”

INFORMATION LINK

Resource: Corporate Partnership for Economic Growth at www.cpeg.org

Partnership to Help Close Technical Skills Gap

Skilled technicians are in high demand nationwide and in Indiana, but the talent pool is too small in many cases. Enter a new partnership from Vincennes University and Toyota Motor Manufacturing to train and employ the future workforce.

This education-to-work program – three full days in the Vincennes classroom and two on-site at the Toyota facility at Princeton – offers students a two-year associate’s degree in computer integrated manufacturing. Approximately 20 to 25 spots are available for fall 2013 enrollment. Upon course completion, graduates are in good position to find a skilled technician job, be it continuing on with Toyota or elsewhere.

Students in the five-semester program can earn a starting wage of \$17 per hour. Raises for progressing in the program and employing new skills are also available.

“Vincennes has helped us train our maintenance and technical workforce from the very beginning by offering special curriculum in both mechanical and electrical systems that prepared us for the initial launch of our plant,” says Norm Bafunno, president of Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Indiana. “We are very pleased with this partnership.”



Warsaw, with companies such as Medtronic, features specialized workforce needs with its heavy emphasis on medical devices and orthopedic products.

The College of Technology at Vincennes is nationally recognized for its industrial training and offers cutting-edge programs in advanced CNC manufacturing, computer-integrated manufacturing and robotics, as well as precision manufacturing. Students will also be introduced to problem solving, critical thinking, safety and workplace organization.

“Manufacturers are looking for a person who can do automated programming and that is what we graduate,” states Art Haase, College of Technology dean. “They could go to work for any industry in the state of Indiana, from Toyota to Eli Lilly to Duke Energy. Automated programming is a unique skill throughout all manufacturing.”

Students for Toyota’s Advanced Manufacturing Technician (AMT) program will be selected based on their academic success, math capability, participation in Project Lead the Way and their choice to remain drug-free. Students are also required to maintain a “C” average or above to stay eligible for the AMT program. This is the third such partnership for Toyota, following ones in Kentucky and West Virginia.

Graduates of the AMT program can earn up to \$64,000 at Toyota or continue on to receive a bachelor’s degree in such fields as engineering, technology or business.

“If we want to make an investment in our youth, these are the kinds of degrees they need to (be able to receive in order to) come back to their hometown and secure high-paying jobs,” Haase stresses.



A student aligns a mechanical drive system as part of her hands-on studies at Vincennes University.

INFORMATION LINK

Resource: Toyota-Vincennes Advanced Manufacturing Technician program at www.vinu.edu/Toyota

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