

2019 big year for DWD's apprenticeship program  
Director confident it can double number of participants to 25,000

The state's Office of Work-Based Learning & Apprenticeship has hit the ground running in 2019, confident it will reach an important goal by the end of the year.

Created last March via an Executive Order from Gov. Eric Holcomb, the office is tasked with doubling the number of Indiana residents in various types of work-based learning programs, from 12,500 to 25,000 by the end of 2019.

Office leaders, housed within the Indiana Department of Workforce Development, spent much of last fall touring the state to promote its programs to business owners and education providers, and also to learn from existing best practices. Now they're moving forward with getting interested employers and educators connected with the right programs, in order to hit that lofty goal by the end of the year.

"The overall goal is to double the amount of Hoosiers participating in work-based learning programs," said Darrel Zeck, executive director of the office. "We're well on our way to hitting that goal of 25,000, and I think we'll surpass it."

Zeck and senior director Carrie Lively (following a career in education), came aboard in June to launch the office. Since, the office has helped place nearly 5,000 Hoosiers into work-based learning or apprenticeship programs, bringing the total number to 17,461.

Work-based learning programs, most of which offer on-the-job training opportunities while receiving a paycheck, are gaining in prominence nationally as more employers struggle to fill jobs at a time of ultra-low unemployment. Indiana's jobless rate was at 3.6 percent in December and has been below 4 percent since December 2016.

For employers, the aim is to hire quality workers and reduce turnover by implementing an effective work-based learning program for new hires. This on-the-job training is paramount to building a skilled workforce.

Indiana's Office of Work-Based Learning & Apprenticeship offers companies six paths to help attract employees: job shadowing; career and technical education; internship and capstone courses; adult education with on-the-job training; State Earn-and-Learn (SEAL) opportunities; and registered apprenticeships through the U.S. Department of Labor.

"We can show employers that they can start out with a quality job-shadowing program and have some summer internships, whether college or high school," Zeck said. "And once they do that, and they start to see the value of that relationship, then we can start to look at more comprehensive programs, like the State Earn-and-Learn program or registered apprenticeships."

In fact, Zeck sees certified SEALs becoming the more popular and “will likely become the bread and butter of the program.”

SEALs are structured, scalable programs ranging from just eight weeks to two years in length and include industry certifications tailored for any sector. They are designed to meet the skills that employers demand, are geared toward both adult and youth populations, and satisfy Indiana’s new graduation pathway requirements.

This school year’s eighth graders, set to graduate high school in 2023, will be the first class that must meet certain state pathway requirements in order to earn a diploma. The new requirements are: learn and demonstrate employability skills by fulfilling a project-based learning experience; complete a service-based learning experience; or complete a work-based learning experience.

“What happens as a result of that, is the relationship between business and education grows,” Zeck said.

Indiana’s Office of Work-Based Learning & Apprenticeship so far has certified four state earn-and-learn programs, with 122 youth and adult participants, and a dozen more SEALs pending. Those certified—all in the health care and manufacturing sectors, are: Stewart’s Healthcare Consultants in Kokomo; Trilogy Health Services, with more than 100 senior living communities throughout Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky and Michigan; and Madison High School in southeastern Indiana, which has had two programs certified.

Stewart’s Healthcare was the first to become state certified, in June 2018. Both Stewart’s and Trilogy Health Services provide pathways for employees to become certified nursing assistants. Their registered apprenticeship programs are primarily for adults while the SEAL is geared toward high school students—“kind of like a pre-apprenticeship program,” Zeck said.

The youth earn-and-learn CNA program has been developed with high school students in mind. Students are trained through a local career center, and the program can be completed in less than one year. A slightly different version was adopted for adults, and connected to a local WorkOne office to take advantage of the training opportunities there.

In the case of Louisville-based Trilogy, the company registered its adult nurse aid apprenticeship with the U.S. Department of Labor in 2017 and followed up with a SEAL program targeting high school students.

Hoosier Hills Career Center, part of the Monroe County Community School Corp., was the first to sign on, said Todd Schmiedeler, Trilogy’s senior vice president, foundation and workforce development.

“We’ve since started expanding it out to other high schools,” he said. “It’s definitely resonating.”

Plainfield and Princeton high schools are among the others partnering with Trilogy.

Madison High School, meanwhile, offers programs in welding and manufacturing and provides the instructional component while partnering with local businesses, where students can get their on-the-job training experience while earning a wage.

Zeck is confident more employers will come to realize the benefits SEAL has to offer.

“They will see the flexibility in it and the content being so good,” he said. “It’s focused on industry and that specific employer, and what’s needed at their location.”

Following last fall’s tour, when Zeck and Lively visited with business and education leaders across the state, they received more than 200 requests for assistance to help launch a SEAL or other work-based learning curriculum.

They are advancing those requests, with the intent of shifting to sector-based partnerships, where they will join with industry associations to establish programs by industry rather than region. The hope is that the WBL program can grow more quickly that way.

Zeck and Lively also hope the office can grow by partnering with WorkOne centers across the state, to react more quickly to the needs of Hoosiers, Zeck said.

“The employers know exactly what their needs are,” he said, “but we’re constantly looking at how do we make this program even better?”

For more information: contact Brittany Van Hook, Operations Coordinator, at [bvanhook1@dwd.in.gov](mailto:bvanhook1@dwd.in.gov) or visit [www.in.gov/dwd/apprenticeship.htm](http://www.in.gov/dwd/apprenticeship.htm).

