

Article originally appeared on the [Mitch Daniels Leadership Foundation](#)

Stephanie Bothun: Unlocking a New Talent Pipeline for Employers Opens Opportunities for Indiana's Young Talent

[Stephanie Bothun](#) serves as the VP of Consulting and Co-Founder of Ascend Indiana. In 2019, as a Class II Mitch Daniels Leadership Foundation Fellow, she presented her MDLF Capstone Project - Modern Youth Apprenticeship. On October 19, she will be named the inaugural 2023 Driving Change Award winner for the development and implementation of the Modern Apprenticeship Program in Central Indiana. [Learn more below.](#)

It's a staggering statistic that more than 75% of Indiana employers cannot find enough qualified candidates to fill positions. Data from a recent report produced by Ascend Indiana and EmployIndy, Indiana's Evolving Labor Market: How the Pandemic has Accelerated Misalignment in Talent Supply and Demand, showed that 76% of high school graduates in Indiana want to go on to college but only 53% make it, amounting to 15,000 students statewide without a path to opportunity. Of those students who do enroll in postsecondary education, not enough pursue degrees in the fields that align with highly demanded, good jobs.

So, what if we started to develop a bold new vision for our young talent by creating a system where education and industry work in partnership to actively develop curriculum and provide robust and aligned training to prepare the workforce of tomorrow. Where employers become co-creators of talent.

This idea materialized during my time in the Mitch Daniels Leadership Fellowship. I was able to talk with Fellows across sectors and around the state to pitch and develop the idea for a program that would live into the vision. I was inspired by the leadership already underway and the investment from other Fellows and Board Members to provide input, encouragement, and resources.

As a result, we've achieved incredible progress. Today, the vision for our system is becoming clearer through the Youth Apprenticeship Community of Practice (COP), a 150-member strong coalition of more than 60 organizations that serve to start and scale youth apprenticeship programs statewide including foundational programs like the Modern Apprenticeship Program (MAP).

In 2020, Ascend Indiana and EmployIndy launched MAP in Indianapolis, which is a three-year work-based learning experience with employers, where students emerge with a high school diploma, college credits, relevant credentials, mentorship, and professional experience. MAP brings together employers, students, and educators to build sustainable employment pipelines that address talent challenges while enabling students to earn a wage, work experience, mentorship, test drive a career, and much more. This program is a WIN-WIN for employers and our community.

To date, MAP has placed 113 students, of which more than 88% identify as students of color, 60% as young women, and a third as coming from low-income backgrounds. The program has students placed at 40 employers and counting, but more than 430 students have already voiced interest. Statewide, we've gone from zero youth apprentices in 2020 to over 500 today.

Programs like MAP are changing lives for our young talent and changing the future of talent strategy for employers. Ascension St. Vincent, one of the nation's leading non-profit Catholic health systems and a MAP employer, had a desire to grow the next generation of healthcare professionals in a post-pandemic era when recruiting talent was challenging. MAP is proving to be transformational.

“All of the high school students go through a rigorous selection process and are interviewed, just as we do with our candidates who are high school graduates,” said Dr. Michelle Mitchell, manager of programs and workforce development for Ascension St. Vincent. “Applicants are scored, and the highest scores are offered a position in MAP. We have a modified work schedule because of their school day, but they are employees who are learning which skills and abilities are essential to becoming successful within our workforce. They can see the potential for a lifelong career in healthcare.”

She is also quick to dispel a misconception that employers are “babysitters.” “One of the challenges in launching MAP was ensuring students have a real-life, hands-on experience as they work within our health system. Our supervisors welcomed opportunities to influence high school students and after the first cohort of high achieving students, our supervisors can’t imagine what it would be like without these apprentices.”

Imagine the power of developing a young person and providing them with a career pathway they may never have envisioned for themselves, all while fueling the next generation of economic growth. Well, now you can.

To learn more about MAP, visit <https://indymodernapprenticeship.com/>

Stephanie Bothun, VP of Consulting and Co-Founder, Ascend Indiana, and 2023 MDLF Driving Change Award winner

About Ascend Indiana

An initiative of the Central Indiana Corporate Partnership (CICP), Ascend Indiana is committed to making Indiana a place of economic opportunity for all. Ascend connects job seekers to good and promising career opportunities through an innovative job matching platform, the Ascend Network; catalyzes partnerships and provides consulting services to meet high-demand workforce needs through Ascend Services; and conducts research through Ascend Insights to enable systems-level change that positively impacts

individuals throughout the state. To learn more, visit ascendindiana.com.

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