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New Brookings research analyzes industries that concentrate Central Indiana's good jobs

Newly released research identifies the industries that provide pathways to good jobs in Central Indiana, and strategies to improve upward mobility in the region

Washington, D.C. – The Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program released new research today that examines the presence of “good jobs” that provide stable employment, middle-class wages and benefits across occupations and industries in the Central Indiana region, particularly for the more than 650,000 prime-age workers in the region who do not hold a bachelor’s degree. Importantly, the report looks not only at the good jobs that provide those advantages today, but also at “promising jobs” that provide stepping stones to the region’s middle class over time.

The report, titled ***Advancing opportunity in Central Indiana***, finds that years of economic change have left Central Indiana with more jobs but less opportunity for many workers. Like in other U.S. regions, Central Indiana’s middle class remains smaller today than prior to the Great Recession, despite its robust jobs recovery. Underneath these high-level trends, the report finds a growing dearth of good and promising jobs, especially for workers without a bachelor’s degree. Only 35 percent of these workers held a good or promising job in 2017 in Central Indiana. In contrast, 73 percent of high-skill workers who hold at least a bachelor’s degree held a good or promising job in 2017.

The report explores ways in which leaders from throughout the Central Indiana region can advance economic opportunity by focusing the region’s economic and workforce development efforts on *Opportunity Industries*, those industries that concentrate the region’s good jobs and promising jobs.

Lead author Chad Shearer, senior research associate at the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program, said, “Central Indiana boasts the advanced industries, economic momentum, and civic capacity U.S. regions require to grow the middle class and improve upward mobility. The region’s economic future depends on how its leaders leverage local advantages to advance opportunity for more workers and families.”

The report primarily finds:

Advanced industries disproportionately contain Central Indiana’s good jobs and can help close its opportunity deficit. Specifically, R&D-intensive industries that are most core to the region’s economy, including advanced manufacturing, professional services, life sciences, and logistics, concentrate the region’s good and promising jobs— for both workers with and without a bachelor’s degree— and help fuel its growth through innovation and trade.

Central Indiana has a lead on other regions in advancing opportunity. Though Central Indiana faces a deficit of good jobs, it appears to provide more labor market opportunity than other similar regions. Central Indiana’s share of jobs that qualify as good or promising is greater than peer regions, including Austin, Texas, Nashville, Tenn., and Raleigh, N.C. The region’s opportunity industries also provide opportunities for workers without bachelor degrees to realize greater earnings than they would find in other regions.

Career pathways to good jobs in Central Indiana’s opportunity industries usually involve a major career switch.

Despite the enduring concept of life-long careers and vocations, the report finds that 75 percent of the region’s workers who do not hold a bachelor’s degree will switch between completely different types of occupations to obtain a good job. These switches mark a sometimes significant shift in the knowledge and skills required by their new jobs, reflecting the growing need for education and training programs to prepare people for life-long learning and adaptation.

Central Indiana workers’ chances of obtaining a good job vary by their education, race and gender. The report finds that workers with higher levels of education are more likely to hold a good job, reinforcing the value of higher education in enabling upward mobility. Yet significant disparities exist even for workers with the same education. Among workers with only a high school diploma, 30 percent of black men hold a good or promising job, compared to 54 percent of non-Hispanic men of all other races. Among workers with an associate degree, 40 percent of black women hold a good or promising job, while 72 percent of men who are neither black nor Hispanic do.

David L. Johnson, president and chief executive officer of the Central Indiana Corporate Partnership, which supported the Central Indiana-focused report, said, “Working in partnership with the public sector, Central Indiana’s businesses, universities, and philanthropic institutions can make intentional investments in strategies that will lessen risks associated with the future economy and increase the likelihood of continued and more broadly shared prosperity. We’re already seeing results from programs that our corporate leaders and local initiatives are starting. In particular, One America is a trailblazer toward these efforts with their Pathway to Sustainable Income program, an opportunity for their lowest page employees to earn a living wage [approx. \$18 per hour].”

Overall, the report finds that Central Indiana’s *opportunity industries* are vital to securing a more stable, prosperous future for more of its local residents.

The report’s authors identify four strategies to help advance opportunity in the local economy. Success in these strategies will, in each case, require coordination between the fields of economic development, education and workforce development, and state and local policymakers, including:

- Growing good jobs, particularly by supporting the growth of the region’s tradable and advanced industries that concentrate good and promising jobs.
- Improving job quality, targeting employers who are already committed to job quality and those where the business case is clearest.
- Preparing people for good jobs, with training that takes into account skills that enable workers to adapt in the face of a changing labor market.
- Supporting working families, by addressing barriers through policy, education and services that working families who are struggling to make ends meet are facing.

The report is available here: <https://brook.gs/2GjoD9g>

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