

Facebook Q&A: An Evening with the Mayor

Topic: Jobs

Answers from: Keith A. Gillenwater, CEcD, MPA, President/CEO of Grow Wabash County

Comments: *We need more jobs that pay more than \$9 or \$10 an hour.*

We need more factories with decent pay and offer insurance.

- I wholeheartedly agree that we need high quality job opportunities in the community. A common misconception, however, is that all of these jobs are filled and the only ones available are entry level, lower wage jobs. Wabash County has a number of higher wage jobs that are currently unfilled and have been difficult to fill for some time. According to Burning Glass Technologies, a third-party employment data service we have access to, for the six-month period between 8/1/18 – 1/31/19, 538 job postings were made specifically for Wabash County employment opportunities on Indiana Career Connect, Monster, and dozens of other popular job posting websites. These opportunities ranged from front-line production supervisors to CDL drivers to nurses, with many points in-between. These positions are predominantly not low-wage opportunities. Rather, they may require some level of credentialing or educational attainment that not all workers possess.
- We work to encourage folks to upskill themselves, and we have assisted with this through providing workforce education opportunities over the last few years. We applied for and received a \$250,000 workforce grant on behalf of a consortium consisting of Wabash, Huntington, and Kosciusko Counties, wherein we expended in total over \$406,000 between 2017-2018 to upskill predominantly low-income workers. We graduated 120 individuals, with 59 of them being from Wabash County. These classes resulted in industry-recognized certifications in Precision CNC Machining, Welding, and Industrial Maintenance. We will continue to work to provide these opportunities for workers to learn additional skills that will demand a higher wage.
- Finally, Grow Wabash County works to bring higher skill, and therefore higher wage jobs to the community. In 2018, we facilitated over \$43M in new investment into the community, and secured 100 new jobs commitments with an average annual wage of \$65,088, or an hourly wage of \$31.29. Over the last four years, the 300 new job commitments have resulted in a combined \$13.9M worth of new payroll commitments to the community at an average hourly wage of \$22.41/hour. In short, we work to bring skilled, high wage opportunities to the community, and are working to upskill our existing workforce to fill these positions.