



## **SURVEY: HOOSIERS CONTINUE TO VALUE EDUCATION BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL WHILE OFTEN NOT KNOWING AVAILABLE RESOURCES TO LIMIT STUDENT LOAN DEBT**

Expert assistance available at no cost to help Hoosiers understand how to pay for college

**INDIANAPOLIS, December 16, 2024** – The value of postsecondary education remains high in Indiana (83%) but understanding of available funds and free help navigating the process has many hesitant to pursue it. The potential burden of student loan debt coupled with recent national challenges in filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) has Hoosiers interested in more help when it comes to information and resources for how to pay for post-high school education.

These are among the findings of a new survey released today by [INvestEd](#), an Indiana nonprofit that provides free, fast, expert guidance on how to best prepare and pay for all forms of education beyond high school.

With recent [projections](#) showing Indiana's labor force reaching a record 3.4 million by the end of 2025, it's more critical than ever for many Hoosiers to choose to pursue education and training beyond high school while limiting the student loan debt often associated with it.

"INvestEd wants Indiana residents to know that we have over four decades of experience with funding of postsecondary ed and are ready to help," said Joe Wood, president and CEO of INvestEd. "We want students to know all the options to pay for education beyond high school and don't want some potential debt to derail Hoosiers from pursuing that valuable education. We're ready to address concerns about the cost of higher education so families can feel confident and informed as they enter this next chapter of their lives."

To access nearly all forms of financial aid, Hoosiers must first file the FAFSA. The FAFSA application window for the upcoming year is now open and the state priority filing deadline is April 15, 2025. State law now mandates high school seniors in Indiana complete the FAFSA and changes made nationally with the form earlier this year caused glitches and headaches for many filers. INvestEd helped thousands of families file the FAFSA last year despite the technology issues, and is busy assisting once again.

"Indiana continues to be one of the leading states, third in the Midwest and eighth in the nation, in awarding need-based financial aid to low-income students," said Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education Chris Lowery. "Despite many issues at the federal level with the new FAFSA rollout this year, Indiana was the only state to increase overall FAFSA completion rates from 2023. This could not have been possible without vast grassroots efforts, many of those efforts led and supported by INvestEd."

Another change at the state level over the past year is automatic enrollment of all eligible students into the state's full tuition scholarship for income-eligible students, the 21st Century Scholars program. While 59% of Hoosiers are aware of the 21st Century Scholars program, six in ten are unaware of the important Frank O'Bannon Grant. Additionally, a third of Hoosiers (33%) with federal student loan debt are not aware of any federal student loan income-based repayment plans available to them.

87% of respondents said it's important Hoosier families have access to free and transparent financial aid literacy and advising resources when preparing to pay for education beyond high school. For this reason, INvestEd provides free guidance to tens of thousands of Hoosiers by phone, over chat, and at more than 900 in-person events annually across the state.

"Education is an investment of time and money, and we have resources to help individuals navigate how to both maximize and conserve those assets," said Wood. "Advancing one's life and career is an option for every Hoosier in Indiana. We want to make sure residents truly know all their options before they move forward with their education path."

Other key findings from the annual survey commissioned by INvestEd include:

- About 3 in 4 Hoosiers (74%) are concerned that student loan debt is stifling economic growth, worker skilling and/or talent retention in Indiana.
- 76% of Hoosiers think Indiana could better meet its future workforce needs if more Hoosiers could access a free, trusted source to help them pay for college and limit student loan debt.
- 80% feel it's important that Hoosier families have access to a non-profit student loan provider when paying for education beyond high school.
- Over 4 in 5 Hoosiers (85%) say it is important that Indiana's colleges and universities offer innovative programs to help students pay for college, acquire marketable skills and find meaningful employment.

#### **About INvestEd:**

For over 40 years INvestEd, Indiana's only state-based nonprofit financial aid advising and student loan organization, has been providing students with solutions to put education beyond high school within reach and with less debt. Friendly, free, expert financial aid help is given to students, families, and counselors. INvestEd assists Hoosiers with the college planning and funding process at over 900 annual events as well as over the phone, in print, and via email. To learn more about us go to [InvestedIndiana.org](https://InvestedIndiana.org).

The statewide survey of 1,714 Indiana residents was commissioned by INvestEd and conducted online by Atomik Research from November 1 to November 14, 2024. The margin of error fell within +/- 2 percentage points.

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