

JULY 2026

LEGACY LEDGER



ana Chamber Executives Association

Indiana Chamber Executives Assoc

WORKFORCE SUCCESS STARTS BEFORE YOU NEED TO HIRE

Building a strong workforce isn't a hiring strategy. It's a business strategy.

UNDERSTANDING DATA CENTERS:

A Growing Part of the Digital Economy

NAVIGATING INDIANA'S NEW EMPLOYMENT VERIFICATION LANDSCAPE

LOCAL INNOVATION STATEWIDE RECOGNITION

LaGrange County Chamber Becomes 7-Time
ICEA Innovation Excellence Award Winner



Fostering Community Connection. Driving Business Success.

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YOUR PARTNER IN BUSINESS & COMMUNITY



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The LaGrange County Chamber exists to champion local businesses, strengthen leadership, and build generational prosperity across our communities. Whether you're a business owner, community leader, entrepreneur, or resident, there's a place for you here.

Legacy Ledger is a member publication and is distributed free of charge to businesses and residents in LaGrange County and surrounding areas. A PDF version of this publication is available at www.lagrangechamber.org.

CELEBRATING OUR NEWEST MEMBERS



SIMPLY ESSENTIALS



JUNGLE JANE'S PLANT SHOP



NEW HOPE CLUBHOUSE



RIGHT TO LIFE OF NORTHEAST INDIANA

WHY GET INVOLVED?

Strong communities don't happen by accident. They are built by people willing to invest, collaborate, and lead.

The Chamber brings together businesses, nonprofits, educators, and residents to shape the future of LaGrange County.

513 W Central Ave., LaGrange, IN



260-463-2443



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Scan for Chamber's Linktree



WORKFORCE SUCCESS STARTS BEFORE YOU NEED TO HIRE

Building a strong workforce isn't a hiring strategy. It's a business strategy.

For many employers, workforce challenges remain one of the most significant barriers to growth. While hiring often becomes the focus when positions open, successful workforce development begins long before a job posting is created.

Across Indiana, employers continue to navigate labor shortages, changing workforce expectations, and increased competition for talent. As a result, workforce strategy is becoming less of a human resources function and more of a core business strategy. Companies that proactively build talent pipelines, invest in employee retention, and engage with future workers are often better positioned for long-term success.

One of the most important shifts occurring in today's workforce environment is the recognition that skills can often be taught, while qualities such as reliability, adaptability, and a willingness to learn are increasingly valuable. Employers who focus on developing talent rather than simply finding the "perfect candidate" may discover new opportunities to strengthen their workforce.

Retention also continues to be a critical component of workforce success. Employee turnover impacts productivity, workplace culture, and operational efficiency. Organizations that prioritize employee engagement, professional development, and competitive workplace practices often experience greater stability and stronger long-term performance.

Here in LaGrange County, workforce development remains a key priority. Through the Chamber's Next Level Workforce initiative, local businesses are connecting with students, educators, and job seekers to build a stronger talent pipeline for the future.



Programs such as internships, job shadowing opportunities, career exploration events, and school-business partnerships help expose students to career pathways while giving employers opportunities to engage with future talent.

As workforce needs continue to evolve, businesses that embrace collaboration, workforce planning, and talent development will be best positioned to thrive. Whether through partnerships with local schools, investment in employee training, or participation in workforce initiatives, every employer has an opportunity to help shape the future workforce of LaGrange County.

Building a strong workforce is not a one-time effort. It is an ongoing investment in people, partnerships, and community prosperity.

UNDERSTANDING DATA CENTERS: A GROWING PART OF THE DIGITAL ECONOMY



Whether you're checking email, processing an online payment, streaming a video, or using artificial intelligence tools, data centers are working behind the scenes to make it happen. As demand for digital services continues to grow, data centers have become an increasingly important part of the nation's infrastructure.

A data center is a facility that houses computer servers and networking equipment used to store, process, and distribute digital information. They support everything from cloud computing and online banking to healthcare systems, manufacturing operations, and emerging AI technologies.

As communities across Indiana and the Midwest discuss potential data center development, several key topics often emerge, including energy use, water consumption, infrastructure needs, economic impact, and workforce opportunities. Data centers require reliable power and specialized infrastructure, and many projects involve upgrades to electrical systems and utility networks to support future growth.

Water usage is another frequently discussed topic. Modern facilities utilize a variety of cooling methods, including air cooling, liquid cooling, and closed-loop systems designed to improve efficiency and reduce water consumption. In regions with cooler climates, facilities may also take advantage of outside air for

cooling during portions of the year.

From an economic perspective, supporters point to construction activity, infrastructure investment, technology growth, and job creation opportunities associated with data center projects. Industry studies cited by economic development organizations suggest that data center investments can create both direct and indirect economic impacts throughout a region.

At the same time, communities often raise questions regarding long-term land use, utility demand, environmental considerations, and the overall balance between growth and community priorities. These discussions are taking place in communities across Indiana and throughout the country as local leaders evaluate opportunities and challenges associated with digital infrastructure development.

As technology continues to evolve, data centers are expected to play an increasingly important role in supporting the digital tools and services used by businesses, residents, and organizations every day. Understanding how these facilities operate can help communities engage in informed conversations about the future of economic development, infrastructure, and innovation.



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LOCAL INNOVATION, STATEWIDE RECOGNITION

LAGRANGE COUNTY CHAMBER BECOMES 7-TIME ICEA INNOVATION EXCELLENCE AWARD WINNER

The LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce is proud to share that it was recognized at the Indiana Chamber Executives Association (ICEA) Annual Conference, earning multiple Innovation Excellence Awards for its work in advancing workforce development, tourism, advocacy, and inclusive employment across the community.

The Indiana Chamber Executives Association (ICEA) is a professional organization that brings together chamber leaders from across Indiana to share best practices, strengthen chamber operations, and recognize innovation in community and economic development. Each year, ICEA hosts an annual conference highlighting chambers of commerce for outstanding programs and impactful initiatives. The 2026 ICEA Annual Conference was held June 10–12 at the Blue Chip Casino Hotel & Spa in Michigan City, Indiana.

The Chamber is also proud to be recognized as a 7-time ICEA Innovation Excellence Award-winning chamber, reflecting a continued commitment to innovation, collaboration, and measurable community impact.

These awards highlight not just individual programs, but a broader commitment to building systems that strengthen LaGrange County's long-term economic future.



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Award-Winning Initiatives

Work-Based Learning Ecosystem Leadership

From classroom to career, this initiative transformed fragmented school-based efforts into a countywide, coordinated work-based learning system.

By convening educators, administrators, and employers, the Chamber helped create a sustainable structure connecting students directly with internships, job shadows, and real-world career pathways.

Key outcomes include:

- 100% participation from school corporations in WBL alignment efforts
- Creation of a student-driven employer engagement network
- Expanded access to internships and employer partnerships across the county
- A sustainable framework positioning the Chamber as a workforce “backbone organization”

Tourism Week Campaign

Designed in partnership with the LaGrange County CVB, this campaign reimaged National Tourism Week into a month-long community experience.

Through storytelling, immersive tours, and the “Tourist Tammy” video series, residents were invited to rediscover local destinations and embrace tourism as a key economic driver.

Key outcomes include:

- 27,600+ video views and 17,100+ additional reach from campaign content
- Increased resident participation in local attractions and experiences
- Strengthened community pride and awareness of tourism’s economic impact
- New tools for ongoing engagement, including digital passes and experiential tours

Legislative Priorities & Advocacy Framework

To address historically low civic engagement, the Chamber redefined advocacy into a member-driven, data-informed system built on listening first. Rather than a traditional top-down approach, this framework captures real business input and transforms it into actionable policy priorities.

Key outcomes include:

- 300% increase in member engagement in advocacy input
- Creation of a unified, clearly defined business voice for LaGrange County
- Stronger relationships with elected officials at all levels
- A sustainable annual cycle for listening, defining, communicating, and reporting

Inclusive Employment Leadership

In partnership with the Arc of LaGrange County, this initiative shifted inclusive employment from awareness to an actionable workforce strategy.

By reframing language and simplifying employer engagement, the program helps businesses see inclusive hiring as a practical solution to workforce needs.

Key outcomes include:

- 40% increase in structured employer engagement
- Clear referral pipeline connecting businesses with Arc services
- Employer-facing tools and FAQs simplifying participation
- Expanded understanding of inclusive employment as a business advantage

Why It Matters

These awards reflect a shared belief that when education, business, and community partners work together intentionally, real systems change happens.

From workforce pipelines to tourism engagement and policy development, the Chamber continues to focus on building scalable, sustainable solutions that strengthen LaGrange County today and into the future.

The LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce was honored by ICEA and remains proud of the partnerships that made this work possible, as well as its recognition as a 7-time Innovation Excellence Award-winning chamber.



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Beyond The Front Door

What's your business really known for?

Leadership – FSB works hard to play a leadership role in our community in many ways. Our teammates give their time and talents to community organizations in a very unselfish way without being asked to. Additionally, when our community is faced with unique challenges, other leaders know that FSB will always step up to help our community stay successful.

What's something behind the scenes that people would never expect?

Providing great service to local individuals and businesses is at the heart of our mission. We know if we do a great job meeting the needs of our community, our odds of being successful go up dramatically. This is what we have done for more than 100 years. As a result, our company has become one of the strongest community banks in America, and we want to use our strong position to help our community achieve as much as possible. The people we serve are our neighbors and friends, and banks headquartered outside of our community don't share that same level of responsibility.

What's a tradition or quirk unique to your business?

Our company is owned by more than 700 people. Most of those people either live in the communities we serve or have other strong ties to our local market. When local people and businesses do business with FSB, the value of that business activity stays here. As a result, our shareholders have been big supporters of community organizations by giving millions of dollars in charitable contributions to entities that improve the quality of life in our community. This is another great way FSB and its owners have been able to use our strength to be a benefit to the communities we serve.

What's the inside scoop locals may not know?

It is really hard to pick a single thing we are most thankful to be a part of in the great communities we serve because we support more than 100 community organizations every year. If we had to pick one thing, it would probably be supporting the younger people who are the future of our community. This is why we have been strong supporters of our schools, youth parks, child care initiatives, and other organizations focused on meeting the needs of kids. FSB is very thankful for the awesome schools we have, as well as many other organizations that give to our kids so unselfishly.



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NAVIGATING INDIANA'S NEW EMPLOYMENT VERIFICATION LANDSCAPE

Indiana employers should be aware of the upcoming implementation of the Indiana FAIRNESS Act (Senate Enrolled Act 76), which takes effect on July 1, 2026. The legislation establishes new state-level requirements related to employment eligibility verification and applies to employers of all sizes operating within Indiana.

Under the law, employers may face penalties if they knowingly or intentionally recruit, hire, or continue to employ individuals who are not authorized to work in the United States. The Indiana Attorney General is authorized to investigate alleged violations and pursue enforcement actions when warranted. Potential penalties may include civil fines and, in certain circumstances, restrictions on a company's authority to operate within the state.

The legislation also provides a safe harbor for employers who utilize the federal E-Verify system. Employers who receive a work-authorized confirmation through E-Verify are afforded additional legal protections under the statute. While E-Verify is not explicitly required by the law, it is identified as a key method for demonstrating compliance with employment eligibility verification requirements.

As the effective date approaches, employers may wish to review their current hiring, onboarding, and Form I-9 processes to ensure they align with both federal and state requirements. Organizations that employ workers in Indiana, regardless of where the company is headquartered, should evaluate their procedures and consult legal or human resources professionals regarding any necessary updates.



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Mark Your Calendars

JULY

- 09 Member Luncheon
- 22 Woman2Woman Roundtable
- 28 Table for 10

AUGUST

- 06 Chamber Golf Classic
- 13 Member Luncheon
- 28 Coffee with the County

SEPTEMBER

- 1 Young Professionals Lunch
- 10 Member Luncheon
- 22 Small Business Workshop
- 29 Table for 10



SCAN HERE

for full calendar of events
and registration links

CONNECTION ON THE COURSE

Business happens where relationships are built, and there's no better place to make those connections than at the Chamber Golf Classic. Whether you're reconnecting with longtime colleagues, meeting potential clients, or introducing yourself to fellow Chamber members, the outing provides a fun and relaxed setting to grow your network and strengthen your ties to the local business community.

This event brings together professionals from across LaGrange County for a day filled with conversation, camaraderie, and community. Some of the best business opportunities begin with a simple conversation on the tee box, in the golf cart, or around the lunch table.

Not a golfer? No problem! New this year, we're offering a Lunch Only option. Join us for lunch, networking, and great conversation with Chamber members, sponsors, and community partners without ever picking up a golf club. It's a perfect opportunity to make new connections, catch up with familiar faces, and experience the Chamber Golf Classic in a way that fits your schedule.

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DID YOU KNOW



Member Benefit of the Month

CHAMBERCARE

The Chamber is excited to introduce ChamberCare, a new member benefit designed to help businesses access affordable, high-quality healthcare options for their teams. ChamberCare provides employers with a competitive health plan solution focused on value, flexibility, and personalized support, especially for small businesses navigating rising healthcare costs.

ChamberCare offerings include:

- Major medical coverage for businesses with 2–50 employees
- CVS Caremark pharmacy benefits
- Delta Dental dental and vision coverage
- Access to an Indiana-based SIHO employer services team for local support

This new benefit reflects the Chamber's continued commitment to providing members with practical resources that strengthen their businesses and support their employees. To learn more about ChamberCare and how it may benefit your business, scan the QR code below or contact the Chamber office at 260-463-2443.

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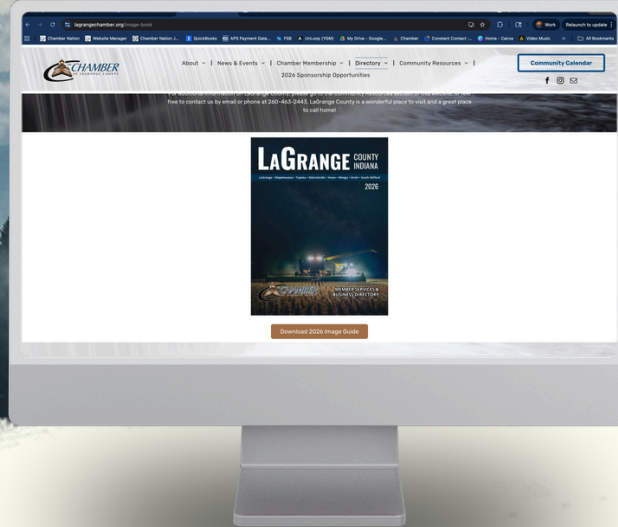
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