



# Conexus 2031:

# Empowering Bold Industry Transformation

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## Letter From Conexus Indiana

It is with great anticipation and a sense of responsibility that we present to you the **Conexus Indiana strategic plan for 2025-2031**, “Conexus 2031: Empowering Bold Industry Transformation.”

This plan represents our shared vision for the future of Indiana’s advanced manufacturing and logistics sectors, and it sets the course for how we will navigate the challenges and opportunities ahead. As we look to the future, we recognize that maintaining the industry’s competitive edge in Indiana requires evolution and adaptation.

The work that we do at Conexus enables two primary paths: workforce development and digital innovation. What is becoming clearer over time is that these are not separate issues but rather two sides of the same coin. To impact productivity, earnings and overall industry growth, we must ensure that our industries are equipped with the latest technologies and that our workforce is prepared to

innovate. One cannot happen without the other.

This strategic plan was developed with one guiding principle: coordination. At Conexus, we believe that the key to overcoming the hurdles before us is working together—across industries, organizations and communities. Our role, under the umbrella of the Central Indiana Corporate Partnership (CICP), is to be the catalyst that brings together diverse voices and expertise, ensuring that Indiana remains a global leader in manufacturing and logistics. CICP and Conexus’ deep connections and history of collaboration provide us with the leverage needed to drive meaningful change over the next six years.

This plan is not just a roadmap; it is a call to action. I encourage you to engage with us, to contribute your insights and to join us in this collective effort. The strength of our state’s manufacturing and logistics sectors lies in our ability to partner together, to share resources and to support one another to maximize the impact of our work.

As you read through this strategic plan, I hope you will feel the same sense of urgency and opportunity that we do. It is ambitious, but it is also necessary if we are to meet the demands of a rapidly changing landscape.

Thank you for your commitment to this mission and for your partnership in making Indiana’s future more prosperous.

Sincerely,

**Bryce Carpenter**

**Chief Operating and Strategy Officer  
Conexus Indiana**



# Conexus 2031

Conexus Indiana was formed in 2007 as the advanced manufacturing and logistics (AML) initiative of the Central Indiana Corporate Partnership (CICP). Under CICP's leadership, Conexus Indiana and its sister initiatives bring together Indiana's top corporations, foundations and academic institutions to collaborate as a business ecosystem, dedicated to Indiana's prosperity and growth. Throughout its history, Conexus Indiana refined its ability to convene, inform and activate industry, public sector and academic partners, taking AML in Indiana to new heights.

# Building on Success: 2019 to Today

2019

**Conexus adds strategic focus on innovation and digital transformation**

2020

**Conexus partners with the IEDC to launch the Manufacturing Readiness Grants program**

2021

**Conexus launches young professional recognition program, Rising 30**

In 2019, as the industry faced the impending fourth industrial revolution – defined by digital technologies that would change how products are made and moved – **Conexus Indiana published a strategic plan that called attention to the evolving needs of industry and its workforce** in what is now commonly referred to as an Industry 4.0 economy. Two major themes emerged from “Powering Industry 4.0, Strategic Plan 2019-2021,” and Conexus Indiana’s work aligned to help industry adopt new technologies to increase productivity and competitiveness while building a workforce ready to succeed in an evolving global economy.

Programs, such as the Manufacturing Readiness Grants and Education Readiness Grants, were launched with incredible success. The Manufacturing Readiness Grants resulted in more than \$57 million in matching funds to support \$813 million in digital adoption projects from 2020 through 2023. The Education Readiness Grants aligned secondary education pathways and education competencies with Industry 4.0 workforce requirements through nearly \$1.5 million in grants to 15 Indiana high schools and career centers.

Throughout the past few years, the State of Indiana sharpened its future economic development growth opportunities with an eye toward semiconductor manufacturing, renewable energy and electric vehicles.

**Conexus Indiana became a trusted adviser in attracting high-tech companies to Indiana** and helping to grow existing businesses. In 2023 alone, Conexus assisted with over 25 companies that chose to move or expand in Indiana and had conversations with 100+ companies that considered or are continuing to evaluate Indiana as a destination for investment.

As Indiana remained focused on the future of its advanced industries, **Conexus Indiana significantly increased its capacity to develop original research** to inform its stakeholders on technology adoption trends, workforce development gaps and infrastructure needs. Research findings were complemented with general awareness campaigns to educate Hoosiers about how to prepare to succeed in Indiana’s economy of the future. Conexus started its public awareness first by understanding what motivates the Gen Z Hoosier, followed by a statewide digital advertising campaign to help drive more Hoosiers to the AML industries.

2021	2022	2022	2023
<b>Conexus launches Gen Z career awareness program, Make IN Move</b>	<b>Conexus partners with the Indiana Commission for Higher Education to launch the Education Readiness Grants program</b>	<b>Conexus launches Student Industries program for School-based Enterprises</b>	<b>Conexus merges councils to form Conexus Indiana Advanced Industries Council</b>

# Vision

Affirm Indiana as the center of innovation and digital transformation for advanced manufacturing and logistics.

# Mission

Accelerate Indiana's advanced manufacturing and logistics industry success by engaging a diverse network of industry, academic, philanthropic and public-sector partners aligned and activated around a unified vision.

# Core Values

**Think Big:** Empower each person to act with confidence.

**Be Collaborative and Inclusive:** We do our best when we do it together with respect and humility.

**Take Responsibility:** Assume accountability for ourselves and others in actions and commitments.

**Never Settle:** Constantly innovate, improve and ask questions. Understand and navigate challenges by learning from each other.

# Vision & Mission



Today, with a consistent track record of success as the driving force in making Indiana a global leader in advanced manufacturing and logistics, **Conexus Indiana embarks on its next transformation**—one that fully embodies the organization’s vision, mission and core values—from 2025 to 2031.

## Importance of AML to the Vitality of Indiana

Advanced manufacturing in Indiana—and its companion sector, logistics—is responsible for 37% of Indiana’s GDP and more than 25% of the workforce, making it Indiana’s largest industry by far. The facts and statistics all paint a similar picture: the prosperity of Hoosiers, their families and our state’s communities depend on the growth and success of the advanced manufacturing and logistics ecosystem.

Making and moving products—from automobiles to life-saving medicines, electronics to medical devices—is the socioeconomic backbone of Indiana, providing not just good wages and benefits, but a sense of identity to more than 840,000 Hoosiers that ideate, create and deliver the products needed and used worldwide every day.

However, Indiana’s leadership position in these industries is earned, not given. Strategic, long-term thinking has benefited advanced manufacturing and logistics in Indiana, but the industry is faced with unprecedented disruptors, such as artificial intelligence, workforce shortages and alternative energy sources to name a few, as we look to 2031.



A man with glasses and a beard, wearing a light-colored polo shirt and dark trousers, stands with his arms crossed in a modern, brightly lit laboratory or office space. The room features large glass windows and doors, revealing equipment and other people working in the background. The overall color scheme is dominated by blue and purple tones.

# Research-backed Strategic Focus

This research-focused approach to strategic planning allowed Conexus and its stakeholders to envision a prosperous 2031 for Indiana AML and to outline a roadmap for success.

Conexus Indiana embarked on a strategic planning process, beginning in May 2023, that engaged the Conexus Indiana board of directors, staff, CICP and its branded initiative leaders and other key stakeholders. The planning process began with ground-breaking and foundational research that the State of Indiana is also leveraging as it maps out the state's economic growth

strategy. In 2022, Indiana Secretary of Commerce Brad Chambers and CICP commissioned TEconomy Partners, LLC, a global leader in research, analysis and strategy for innovation-driven economic development, to produce the TEconomy Indiana 2031 Report, an analysis of the future of Indiana's advanced industry sectors, including advanced manufacturing and logistics.



Officially titled **“Building an Economy of the Future: Indiana’s Strategy for Advancing GRP Growth and Economic Prosperity, Phase II: Strategy and Action Plan,”** the report demonstrates Indiana’s AML growth strategies have been successful and offers detailed guidance for continued growth in an evolving economy.

## Key Findings

The TEconomy 2031 report makes it clear that Conexus Indiana is moving in the right direction. In fact, Conexus’ focus areas, particularly around talent and industry productivity, align well with the action plan presented in the TEconomy report. The report also reinforces the crucial role Indiana’s AML sectors play in Indiana’s economy, showcasing manufacturing’s significance to the state’s GRP and emphasizing that the logistics sector is uniquely positioned to “move the needle” for Indiana. However, the report also identifies significant gaps and highlights opportunities to refine and streamline Conexus Indiana’s work, including:

**Improve talent constraints:** Workforce availability and skills represent crucial concerns for Indiana and are the primary rate-limiting factor for economic growth. The challenge is multi-dimensional and spans issues with overall performance in K-12 education, the percentage of the population seeking to achieve higher education credentials, together with the retention and attraction of personnel with in-demand educational credentials and occupational skills. Indiana’s ability to address each of the other strategic conclusions, in part, depends on mitigating the workforce skills challenge across the state.

**Boost industry productivity:** Indiana’s industry productivity and productivity growth rate is lagging (as defined by output per unit of labor). Given population constraints, which limit workforce availability, Indiana is unlikely to boost GDP through the traditional pathway of putting more people to work. Rather, it needs to improve productivity, and in today’s environment, this largely means investing in Industry 4.0 technologies, processes and their widespread deployment.

**Fill economy and crosscutting gaps:** Indiana has some gaps, or areas of weakness, in its business sector makeup that need to be addressed through business recruitment and new business development and expansion. Many represent gaps in technologies and technology services that have a crosscutting impact on the operations and supply chains of other sectors in the Indiana economy.

Additional research, including the Advanced Manufacturing and Logistics Strategy Exploration Report commissioned from Fourth Economy, reinforced these findings. The report outlines three recommended future focus areas for the AML sector: workforce development (increase workforce participation rates, reduce brain drain, reimagine K-12 education, etc.); technology optimization and adoption (increase productivity, increase digital adoption and support economic growth); and innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystems (increase hardtech entrepreneurship, enhance R&D, amplify innovation districts, etc.).

An additional report, the National Technology Adoption Benchmarking in Advanced Manufacturing and Logistics report commissioned from TEconomy Partners, was instrumental in examining the complex dimensions of productivity, digitization and technology adoption, and talent deployment within Indiana’s AML industries. The report benchmarks Indiana against seven competitor states through a series of economic and proxy measures for technology adoption. Analyses throughout the report emphasize the need to enhance productivity, digitization and talent acquisition within Indiana’s industrial landscape.

Indiana has created an environment where companies want to do business; a place that's an undisputed leader in making and moving the products that global citizens rely on. To affirm Indiana's position as the center for innovation and digital transformation for AML, Conexus Indiana will measure its success against the following key metrics:



# 2031 Metrics for **Success in Indiana**

## Closing the gap in AML industry productivity vs. the national average

AML productivity in Indiana exhibited a downward trend compared to the national average from 2007-2020. Indiana began to close this gap in productivity in 2021. Since 2020, productivity increased 9.6% per year compared to the U.S. average annual growth rate of 7.0%. To fully close the gap, Indiana’s AML productivity growth needs to consistently outpace the national average over the plan period.

**Indiana’s AML Industry Productivity as % of U.S.**

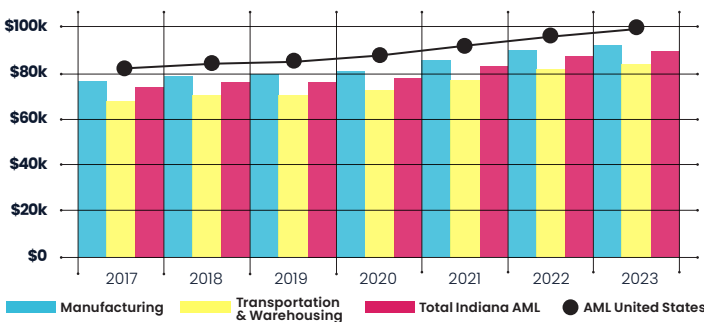


Source: Conexus Indiana’s analysis of Lightcast Data – Release 2024.4.

## Outpacing national average earnings growth in AML

While average earnings for manufacturing and logistics are growing and near the national average when adjusted for cost of living, Indiana ranks fourth for adjusted average earnings for manufacturing and seventh for adjusted average earnings for logistics among the eight benchmark states defined in the TEconomy report. To ensure sustainable prosperity and quality of life, and that Indiana’s AML industries are competitive with other states, wages and supplements must continue to grow at a rate that is faster than the national average.

**Average AML Earnings (Wages+Supplements) Per Job**

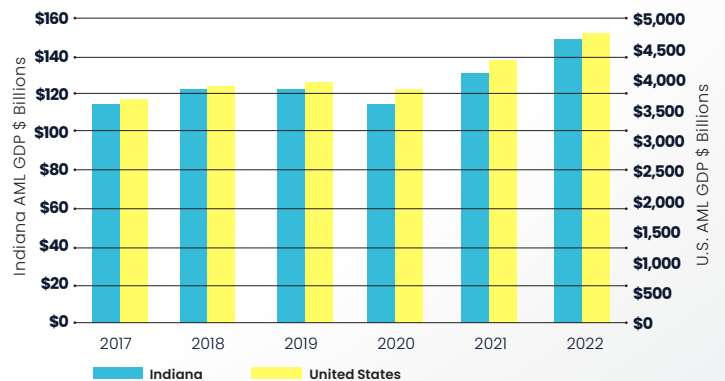


Source: Conexus Indiana’s analysis of Lightcast Data – Release 2024.4.

## Growing AML’s contribution to state GDP while increasing Indiana’s “share of industry” nationally

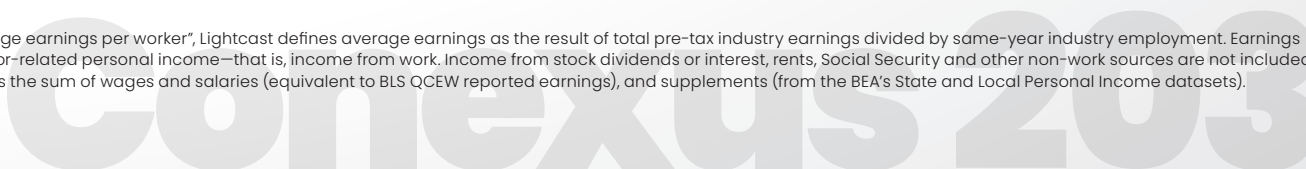
From 2017-2022, the 5-year compound annual growth rate (CAGR) for AML’s contribution to state GDP (“AML GDP”) was 5.4%, slightly higher than the comparable national metric. This differential translates to additional share of national AML GDP, or “share of industry,” (a single basis point is approximately \$350M to Indiana’s economy). To affirm Indiana’s leadership in AML, we need to achieve continued growth in AML’s contribution to state GDP while increasing our share of national AML GDP, which requires us to grow at a rate at least equivalent to the national average.

**AML GDP Contribution 2017-2022**



Source: Conexus Indiana’s analysis of Lightcast Data – Release 2024.4.

<sup>1</sup> Also called “average earnings per worker”, Lightcast defines average earnings as the result of total pre-tax industry earnings divided by same-year industry employment. Earnings are defined as labor-related personal income—that is, income from work. Income from stock dividends or interest, rents, Social Security and other non-work sources are not included. Industry earnings is the sum of wages and salaries (equivalent to BLS QCEW reported earnings), and supplements (from the BEA’s State and Local Personal Income datasets).





# Leaning into the **Vision**

Conexus will foster an environment where manufacturers of all sizes are incentivized to invest in transformational process and product innovation.

# Conexus' Role from 2025-2031

## All Eyes on Innovation and Digital Transformation

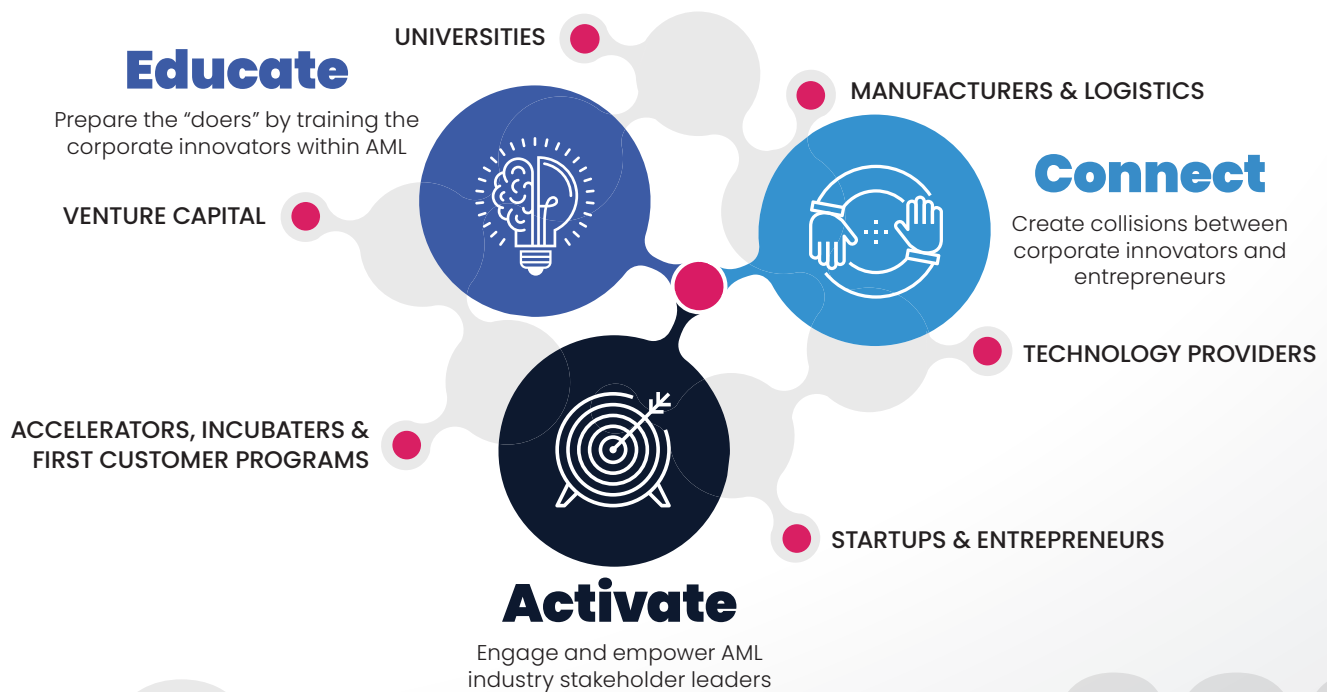
As reinforced by TEconomy 2031, a key driver for improving productivity within the state's existing industries is to scale digital adoption, something Conexus Indiana has been focused on since 2019 and will continue to focus on through 2031.

While scaling digital adoption and retaining a highly educated workforce both remain non-negotiable elements of increasing industry productivity, adding more technology won't solve everything. In the coming years, Indiana will face unprecedented labor market challenges, including limited workforce availability, Baby Boomer retirements and stagnating population growth. It is essential to foster and promote a culture of innovation within our AML industries to truly adjust the trajectory of Indiana's economy.

It is not clear, however, that a dynamic innovation-driven culture exists within our population of AML firms today. According to a 2022 survey conducted by Conexus and the Indiana University Kelley School of Business Center for Excellence in Manufacturing, which analyzed how the industry is approaching innovation, Indiana AML companies appear to be predominantly focused on process improvement-related innovation as opposed to transformational innovation, such as new product development and new market entry. Additionally, we found that approximately 1 in 10 companies had no approach to innovation at all.

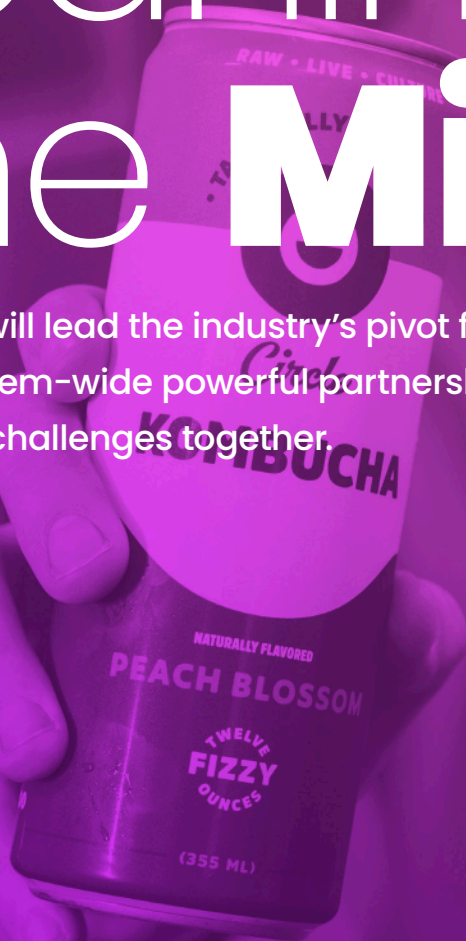
To turn the tide and affirm Indiana as the leader in AML innovation, Conexus will create an environment where manufacturers of all sizes are incentivized to invest in transformational process and product innovation. This transition can only be achieved with a supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem where startups, scale-ups and established corporates are engaged and collaborating to enter new markets and launch new products.

## Building a Dynamic Innovation Ecosystem



# Leaning into the **Mission**

Conexus will lead the industry's pivot from individually segmented programs to ecosystem-wide powerful partnerships that address the sector's most dynamic challenges together.



# Conexus' Role from 2025-2031

## An Industry Connector & Coalition Builder

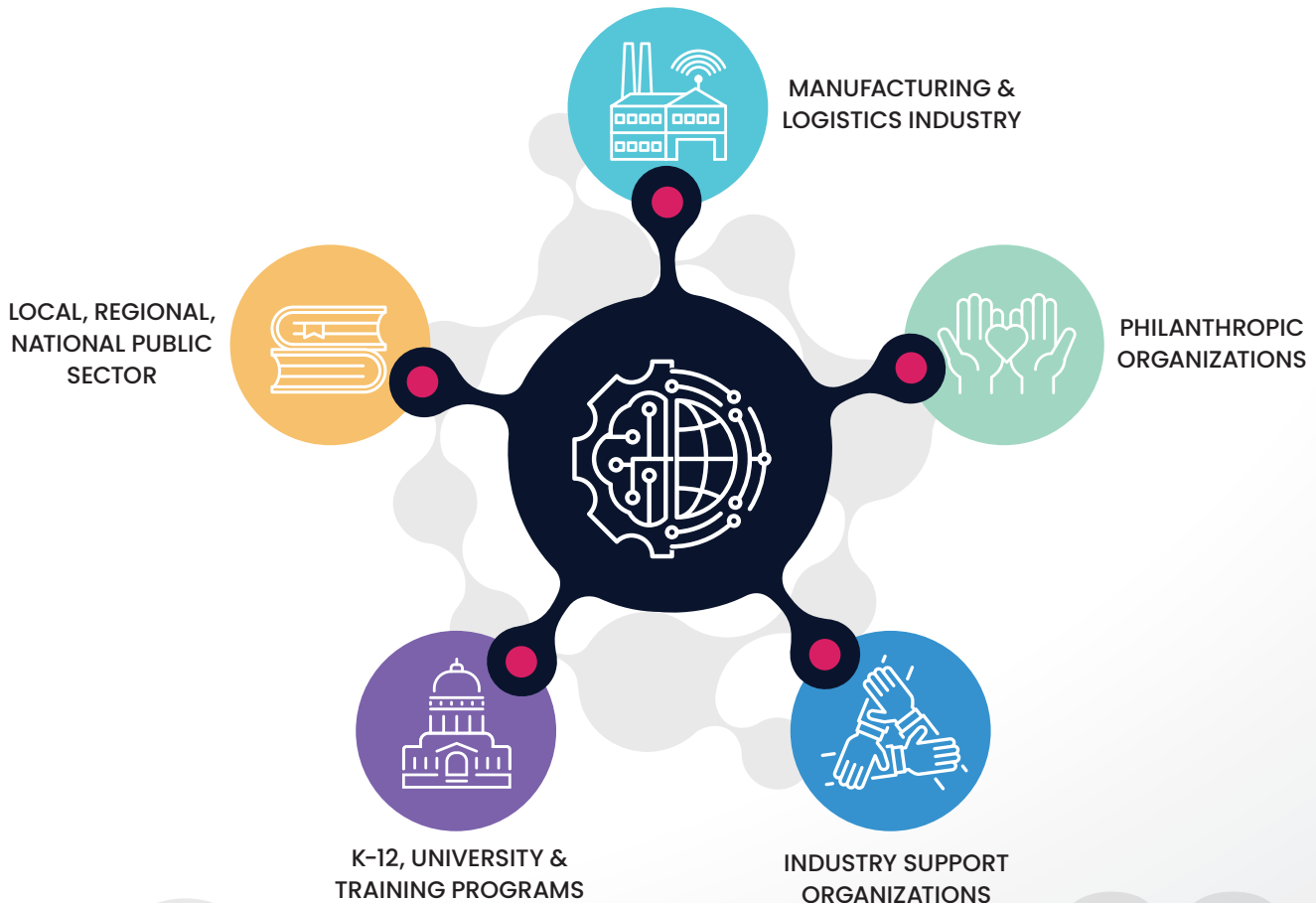
It's long been Conexus Indiana's mission to serve as a statewide industry connector, convener and coalition builder. Only collaborative partnerships, executed at scale, can address the monumental opportunities faced by Indiana's advanced manufacturing and logistics industries.


Conexus Indiana envisions an AML ecosystem where individual stakeholders think beyond their respective networks and programs and move toward shared goals collectively. Because Conexus has built significant trust and credibility with pivotal industry stakeholders and has

aligned its work to the momentum of the state and its external partners, Conexus will lead the industry's pivot from individually segmented programs to ecosystem-wide powerful partnerships that address the sector's most dynamic challenges together.

This shift from individual programs to constructive and powerful coalitions requires that Conexus and its partners critically evaluate their efforts to identify opportunities for collaboration and to retire duplicative programming. Looking to the future, Conexus will implement programming to fill gaps. This strategic plan places Conexus alongside essential ecosystem partners to maximize the impact of its work.

## Building Powerful Partnerships for AML





# Moving the State Forward



For Indiana's 2031 Vision to become a reality, Conexus Indiana and the broader Indiana AML ecosystem need to **focus its collective energy in these four areas:**

## Develop **Connections, Networks and Ecosystems**

Collaborate as an industry in unprecedented ways and grow the sectors that are critical to the health of Indiana's economy.

## Maximize **Talent**

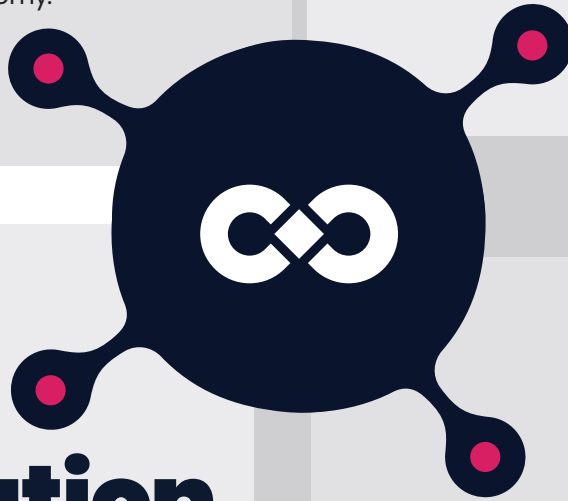
Optimize potential for the existing AML workforce and build the talent we need to meet the demands of an evolving industry.


## Drive **Innovation**

Scale digital adoption and build a world-class innovation ecosystem to pioneer new products and compete in a global market.

## Deliver **Thought Leadership**

Seek to understand critical trends, challenges and opportunities, and share the innovative work of Indiana AML with the world.





# Develop **Connections, Networks and Ecosystems**

**Partners are essential to the success of this work. Organizations like these will be pivotal to developing connections, networks and ecosystems:**

**The Evansville Regional Economic Partnership and other regional and local economic development organizations**

**The Office of Energy Development and other public-sector entities**

**Fort Wayne Metals, Cummins Inc., Eli Lilly and Co. and other Advanced Industries Council partners and board member companies**

We must collaborate as an industry in unprecedented ways and grow the sectors that are critical to the health of Indiana’s economy. **Conexus Indiana will drive collaboration across the AML community through unprecedented partnerships and coalitions while engaging its stakeholders and the AML industry at large in its work.** Conexus Indiana will help grow AML’s strategic industries critical to the resilience of Indiana’s economy.

## The Big Ideas

**Reimagining Industry Partnerships:** Since its founding, partnerships have been the backbone of Conexus’ work. To scale the impact of the organization, Conexus will look beyond its traditional partnership model and forge deep relationships with experts at every level who are engaged in meeting the challenges facing AML in Indiana and across the country. Opportunities for impact lie at the federal level through unprecedented investment into accelerating technology development and domestic competitiveness, within Indiana as the State invests hundreds of millions of dollars to help local communities remain competitive in a global market, and through Indiana’s colleges and universities that are making strategic investments to meet the skills needs of tomorrow by evolving how they teach and train Indiana’s next generation of AML leaders.

Conexus deepen its partnerships with federal, state, regional and local organizations. Partnering with peer organizations will allow Conexus to leverage regional expertise, resources, networks specific to strategic sectors and provide critical requisite funding to expand our efforts. By aligning efforts with these entities, Conexus can gain valuable insights into the unique challenges and opportunities facing Indiana’s ecosystem leaders. Through collaborative initiatives, such as knowledge-sharing forums and joint research projects, Conexus can develop targeted strategies to address industry needs and foster innovation and resilience. These partnerships will drive data sharing, develop best practices, amplify local and regional expertise and drive collective impact through multi-state and federal engagements. All of these partnerships will be formalized and structured to drive accountability and affirm shared priorities.

**Resilient Supply Chains:** Conexus will work with CICP’s branded initiatives to identify opportunities to strengthen local supply chains to drive resilience for our critical industries. For example, in 2022, Conexus worked with medical device manufacturers and White House Supply Chain Task Force leaders to solve international supply chain challenges. This work will be replicated and completed at scale to continue to identify opportunities to make critical improvements to the supply chain.



# Develop **Connections, Networks and Ecosystems**

## **Building Upon Successful Work**

### **Conexus Indiana Advanced Industries Council:**

The Conexus Indiana Advanced Industries Council (CIAIC) is the preeminent way that industry, academic, public sector and philanthropic leaders can share perspectives, learn from subject matter experts and collaborate to execute complex solutions to industry challenges and opportunities. Council members are hand-raisers looking to work beyond self-interest to grow the advanced manufacturing and logistics industry in Indiana and ensure that these critical sectors continue to provide meaningful careers to over 840,000 Hoosiers. Stemming back to its inception in 2011, the Conexus industry council structure has an unparalleled track record for bringing leaders together for collective impact and ensuring that industry is focused on working together to achieve positive outcomes for Indiana.

In 2023, the CIAIC evolved into a community of over 180 partners from industry, public sector and academia, threading through every aspect of Conexus' work. Simultaneously, the CIAIC executive committee identified four key pillars of focus for the future: Economic Development, Infrastructure, Emerging Technologies and Career Pathways. As Conexus continues to develop the council through 2031, an intentional focus on these pillars will foster closer collaboration between industry partners and state entities. Additionally, the council will continue to expand its partnerships, deepening its reach into all 12 workforce regions, and will convene at industry locations

throughout the state, ensuring diverse voices are included in knowledge sharing and best practices. The team also will prioritize partnerships with companies focused on R&D and innovation, workforce retention and upskilling.

**Dynamic programming and events:** Conexus Indiana executes a wide variety of programming and events across its workstreams to ensure its industry partners have a myriad of ways to engage in support of the AML economy. Looking to 2031, Conexus will continue to scale and diversify its programming such as the CIAIC quarterly meetings and tours, Rising 30, the Governor's Luncheon and the many programs outlined in this plan.

**Strategic sector expansion:** Building an economy of the future remains an important opportunity for Indiana and its critical industries. Due to the importance of AML and its economic impact, Conexus Indiana works closely with the Indiana Economic Development Corporation and regional and local economic development experts to ensure Indiana remains the top destination to build, grow and locate a business. Samsung SDI, Meta, etc. show that Indiana can compete and win at recruiting global companies. Yet Indiana has always been an automotive, life sciences and overall manufacturing powerhouse that bore, grew and continues to support world-leading companies known to all. Conexus Indiana will continue to support the attraction of key companies to the state as well as ensure that companies built and grown by Hoosiers have the resources needed to thrive.

**Engage Tech Economy:** As industry increases technology adoption, there is a growing need for outside expertise for application engineering, project implementation, software integration and workforce training. A robust ecosystem of technology providers cultivated within Indiana could contribute significantly to Indiana's economy by servicing Indiana companies' demand as well as capturing revenues from out-of-state customers. In partnership with TechPoint, Conexus will incorporate tech integrators and manufacturing-related tech startups in the work more broadly, for example recruiting them to serve on our Board of Directors, in working groups and through our public education work in content development, case studies, technology adoption white papers and more.

## CASE STUDY

## Elevating State Best Practices to Inform National Priorities

As an industry, we develop networks, connections and ecosystems because we can accomplish more together than we can apart. **Open dialogue and alignment** with local, regional and national decision makers and thought leaders **leads to collective action and drives results** for Indiana AML.

**The Challenge:** While there is much conversation in this state about the future of advanced manufacturing and logistics, especially as it relates to workforce and technology adoption, it is abundantly clear that the challenges, and opportunities, these industries face are not unique to Indiana.

For example, many manufacturing-intensive states—like Indiana—are primarily comprised of small- to medium-sized operations (SMEs) that face significant hurdles to technology adoption and access to the skilled workforce required to innovate. Many states are taking steps to address this challenge, among others, with state-specific solutions. While these solutions, like Indiana’s Manufacturing Readiness Grants program, are making a big difference, it is becoming clear that state solutions must be coupled with collaborative efforts at the federal level to ensure the resources and opportunities exist to transition AML into the Industry 4.0 era.

**The Solution:** In 2024, through the Conexus Indiana Advanced Industries Council, the Conexus team joined an effort led by Elisabeth Reynolds, PhD, industrial transformation advisor, MIT professor and former White House policymaker, bringing state leaders together to identify and advance best practices to drive Industry 4.0 adoption within AML SMEs.

This partnership with MIT, as well as leaders from Connecticut, Massachusetts and Michigan, began discussing solutions to AML’s biggest challenges, sharing best practices and research on critical trends within AML. This group also has identified opportunities to engage with leaders at the national level to share a consistent perspective on how to support this critical industry. Much of the content of the challenges and opportunities facing AML is captured in the report from the Special Competitive Studies Project (SCSP), “National Action Plan for United States Leadership in Advanced Manufacturing,” published in June 2024.

**The Outcome:** Since beginning this partnership earlier in the year, Conexus and its partners have shared this message nationally. In March 2024, then President and CEO of Conexus, Fred Cartwright, participated in an MIT roundtable discussion on increasing digital adoption among SMEs with leading state-level manufacturing program executives. That May, Cartwright participated in the U.S. Industrial Policy Roundtable in Washington D.C. focused on advancing collective action on the future of manufacturing. In June, he participated in an event in Detroit, alongside Reynolds and representatives from other states at the SCSP, focused on modernizing the U.S. industrial base and in August, he joined national automotive industry leaders at the Center of Automotive Research’s Manufacturing Briefing Seminar (MBS) in Traverse City to share how Indiana is addressing workforce constraints in manufacturing.

The work accomplished through state programming provides valuable blueprints to drive impact at the national level through deliberate and consistent efforts to engage in regional and national dialogue.



# Maximize Talent

**Partners are essential to the success of this work. Organizations like these will be pivotal to maximizing talent:**

Purdue University and other top academic institutions

The Indiana Department of Education and other workforce development public-sector entities

The Regional Opportunity Initiatives (ROI) and other economic development organizations

We must optimize potential for the existing AML workforce and build the talent we need to meet the demands of an evolving industry. **Conexus Indiana will maximize Indiana’s talent pipeline with a focus on building the workforce of tomorrow to meet the needs of Industry 4.0 and beyond.**

## The Big Ideas

**Catapult “4.0” at Scale:** Catapult Indiana, Conexus Indiana’s manufacturing training program, will evolve to include instruction to prepare students with foundational skills and supporting knowledge in Industry 4.0 technologies to support the growth of digital adoption across Indiana AML. To scale Catapult, where possible Conexus will move classes to industry sites, giving industry leaders the ability to customize the curriculum to their specific needs. With this evolution, Conexus will adopt a role that more closely resembles one of a thought leader and partner, initial program integrator and long-term accountability and improvement agent.

**Sector-Specific Training Partnerships:** Conexus will serve as a trusted partner to key post-secondary institutions and third-party providers that have hyper-pertinent training solutions for Industry 4.0. Conexus will serve as an adviser, recruit industry partnerships and increase industry awareness through case studies, social media posts and additional follow-up efforts after the program launches. Reference the “Maximize Talent” case study sidebar for an example of these partnerships.

**Work-based Learning Support (apprenticeships and internships):** Conexus Indiana collaborates with many partners that focus on and design programmatic solutions around WBL, including Ascend Indiana. As such, Conexus is well positioned to leverage these partnerships to improve awareness and utilization across AML, which will scale to include Conexus serving as the advanced manufacturing industry association for Indiana Career Apprenticeship Pathway, a new, employer-led professional pathway to help high school students and young adults prepare for promising careers. Conexus’ support for WBL also will include statewide programs (e.g. EARN), regional programs, grassroots/community-specific partnerships (e.g., Teenworks summer internships, school-industry WBL partnerships) and thought leadership (reimagining high school w/ IDOE, WBL course classification with OCTE, etc.).

**What success looks like:**

- Increase skilled talent 5,000** by 2027
- 10,000** by 2031
- Meet** the national average for Industry 4.0 enabled workforce by 2027
- Exceed** the national average by 2031.

# Maximize Talent

## Building Upon Successful Work

**Foster Regional and National Movements & Provide Strategic Guidance:** Conexus will leverage its expertise to serve as a strategic adviser and thought leader to foster local, regional and national movements toward addressing workforce challenges. Locally, Conexus will leverage existing and future partnerships in secondary Career and Technical Education (CTE) and connectivity between secondary and post-secondary pathways to actively contribute to in-state and regional workforce development-aligned initiatives. We anticipate advisory board participation with Office of Career and Technical Education (OCTE), Commission for Higher Education (CHE), Department of Workforce Development (DWD) and Department of Education (DOE).

Regionally and nationally, Conexus will work with other states, academic institutions, industry groups and federal leaders to identify “calls to action” related to current and future challenges facing advanced manufacturing and logistics sectors.

**Education Readiness Grants:** Conexus will continue to spearhead Education Readiness Grants (ERG) to help Indiana secondary schools prepare students for careers in the increasingly high-tech advanced manufacturing industry. Awarded grants enable school corporations and/or individual school sites to purchase Industry 4.0 technologies that define the future of advanced manufacturing. By aligning curricula and experiential learning through the adoption of smart technologies, students will be ready to meet the needs of Indiana’s advanced manufacturing and logistics employers. Our current primary collaborator in funding these grants is the OCTE and their funding has already scaled to include the technology career cluster (in addition to AML). We plan to scale the program further through 2031.

**Student Industries:** Conexus Student Industries is a statewide program that strengthens the impact of student-run businesses through four key initiatives: annual support grants, annual student summits, an annual case competition and professional development/ thought leadership for students and instructors alike. To increase the impact of the program, Conexus plans to include opportunities for national exposure and collaboration (national case competitions, etc.), increased resource development for instructors and assistance with new program incubation to help get more Indiana student-run businesses online. Long term, the goal of the program is to attract more students into AML-related education pathways by addressing the lack of access to quality work-based learning experiences and bolstering student employability skills and cross-curricular collaboration and learning.

**Talent Case Studies:** Following the success of the Manufacturing Readiness Grants case studies, Conexus will focus content creation on talent and workforce development. Case studies could include K-12 and post-secondary programs, intermediary success stories, Conexus programming success stories (ERG, Student Industries, etc.) and other relatable topics to encourage industry and education, alike, to tackle its workforce development challenges head-on.



## Achieving Scale in Partnership with Ascend Indiana

To maximize our impact in AML talent, Conexus will partner closely with Ascend Indiana, a branded initiative of CICP focused on talent development, on the following strategies.

**Secondary CTE Industry Partnerships:** As the state continues to push the redesign of high school (ensuring foundational elements of work-based learning), Conexus will ensure industry is engaged and ready when schools expand opportunities for student work-based learning (WBL). Conexus will map the existing pathways and canvas education sites hosting AML-aligned pathways to document established connectivity/partnerships with industry. In partnership with Ascend Indiana, Conexus will identify gaps and develop specific strategies to activate partnerships in regions with severe misalignment/missed opportunities.

### Emerging Leaders/Post-Secondary Engagement:

Conexus' work within Emerging Leaders is squarely focused on post-secondary students and connectivity with AML industry partners. This work will remain concentrated on supply chain management within Indiana institutions and schools of business. In partnership with Ascend Indiana, events will be held at postsecondary sites in tandem with Ascend site visits, further strengthening Ascend's value proposition on school campuses and connecting more students with industry leaders. The program may also expand to include students within schools of engineering and technology.

**Skills Playbook for Industry 4.0:** In partnership with Ascend Indiana, Conexus will develop a skills playbook that will help industry partners recruit and retain employees in an Industry 4.0 environment. Specifically, Conexus will partner with post-secondary and other partners to define/isolate skills and develop playbooks/toolkits that are categorically focused. Through its public awareness activities, Conexus will distribute these toolkits and host-related convenings.

### Increase Tech-enabled Roles through Skills-alignment and Skills-recognition:

The National Technology Adoption Benchmarking in Advanced Manufacturing and Logistics report commissioned from TEconomy Partners shows that many AML firms primarily leverage their existing employees to implement new technology solutions, not relying solely on hiring new expertise. In fact, only 7% of Indiana's AML workforce is in an Industry 4.0-enabling occupation, as compared to the national 10% average share. When companies are hiring new workers, the data shows that Indiana AML firms lag the US and peer states in the number of job postings that mention Industry 4.0-related skills. This suggests that firms may either be targeting incremental rather than transformational tech adoption or may soon find themselves with limited capability to fully absorb and leverage all the benefits that could accrue from their technology investments. Interviews conducted by Conexus for the 60+ case studies on MRG recipients published to date support that firms are under-investing in digital skills – an essential component to successful, continued digital adoption.

Conexus plans to address this challenge directly through 2031 to assist companies as they invest in the human assets required to increase digital adoption and create a culture of innovation. The specific tactics for this work will be defined and developed collaboratively with Ascend Indiana and post-secondary partners.

## Ivy Tech and Conexus Indiana Partner to Address Technology Adoption Gap Through Workforce Readiness

The workforce challenges of today and tomorrow are too significant to be solved by the education system or the industry alone. **Powerful partnerships between post-secondary institutions and industry employers, facilitated by Conexus, are essential to address the sector's most dynamic challenges.**

**The Challenge:** Conexus had recently determined from its research and its experience with industry that Indiana's AML firms have been accelerating into the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0) with capital investments, but what remained less clear is whether those same firms were investing in the digital skills of their workforce in tandem.

These findings were reinforced by a 2022 Conexus report from Conexus which found that while half of all advanced manufacturing firms in Indiana plan to adopt new technologies by 2027, finding local talent with the digital skills needed to support this transition presented a significant barrier (just 52% of Indiana firms have a dedicated Industry 4.0 team or leader in place, the same report found).

Simultaneously, Indiana's top workforce engine, Ivy Tech Community College, outlined its newest priorities, including a more intentional approach to align course offerings to industry needs so students have the best chance of succeeding in today's in-demand careers.

**The Solution:** Noticing an opportunity for collaboration, Ivy Tech and Conexus embarked on a new joint project in the spring of 2024—the development of a series of smart manufacturing skills training courses for employers looking to develop the specialized talent needed to achieve their technology adoption goals.

To bring industry to the table to inform the curriculum and to help market the pilot of the program to potential employee partners, Conexus engaged 15 SME manufacturers in key regions of the state (Terre Haute, Lafayette, South Bend/Elkhart and greater Wabash) and collaborated with Ivy Tech to lead site visits and info-gathering sessions.

**The Outcome:** As a result, new Ivy Tech courses such as Supervisory Leadership for Industry 4.0, Programmable Logic Controls Applied Applications and Introduction to Artificial Intelligence launched in late 2024. Skills training courses will be delivered to workers through a variety of modalities by the College's Ivy+ Career Link team and can be crosswalked to academic credit. Many workers will benefit from Ivy Tech's employer-sponsored tuition assistance program, Achieve Your Degree. Conexus' partnership with Ivy Tech Community College has given the organization a new way to impact industry technology adoption—through engagement of the workforce.

# Maximize Talent



# Drive Innovation

**Partners are essential to the success of this work. Organizations like these will be pivotal to driving innovation:**

**Butler University and other top academic institutions**

**Elevate Ventures and other venture capital firms**

**gener8tor and other startup accelerator companies**

**The Wabash Heartland Innovation Network and other innovation networks**

**Glassboard, Catalyst PDG, Rose-Hulman Ventures and other product development firms**

We must scale digital adoption and build a world-class innovation ecosystem to pioneer new products and compete in a global market. **Conexus Indiana will be a catalyst for AML digital adoption at scale and drive meaningful connections and collaborations between startups and corporate customers.**

## The Big Ideas

**Center for Manufacturing Innovation:** Innovation within Indiana's AML takes various forms—through technology adoption to drive new processes, through commercialization of research and development and through new, or realigned, business models focused on emerging industries. Enhancement of these aspects of innovation best positions the regional economy to realize a higher 'innovation capacity.' To support other aspects of innovation beyond technology adoption and to build new, innovation-driven partnerships between startups and corporate customers, Conexus will form the Center for Manufacturing Innovation to perform research on AML-related innovation that is occurring within Indiana and explore and enter formal arrangements with innovation hubs, accelerators, corporate innovation challenges, first-customer programs, innovation researchers and federal funders to facilitate engagement between corporate stakeholders and early-stage companies. The Center—which includes a digital hub for Indiana's manufacturing innovation community—will be designed to provide requisite education and training in smart manufacturing and serve manufacturing innovators across all advanced industry sectors represented by CICP's branded initiatives.

**Innovation Accelerator for AML Engineering Talent:** Indiana's AML companies are eager to partner with startups and entrepreneurs to innovate and tackle big opportunities together. However, engineering and R&D teams at AML companies, particularly the small- to mid-sized firms, are not equipped with the skillset, resources and agile processes necessary to partner with entrepreneurs and startups. Through partnerships with the state's higher educational institutions, startup accelerators and product development firms, Conexus will design and co-

launch an innovation program for engineering talent in Indiana. The program, which will be executed as part of the Center for Manufacturing Innovation, will provide corporate innovators with the skills, methodologies and the mindset needed to assess, pilot and deploy emerging manufacturing and logistics technologies at scale, increasing the success rate of joint innovation and technology adoption projects.

**Tech Adoption Blueprints:** There are many organizations, including Manufacturing USA Institutes, Indiana-based technology providers and academic centers, such as Purdue University, University of Notre Dame and Ivy Tech Community College working on technology adoption blueprints, playbooks and roadmaps to help simplify the adoption process and reduce perceived barriers for SMEs. Conexus will partner with these organizations to create an on-ramp for easy access to blueprints discoverable through the Center for Manufacturing Innovation.

**Innovation Funding Capture Support:** The Manufacturing Readiness Grants program is helping drive digital adoption for SMEs across Indiana by matching a company's Industry 4.0 technology investment up to \$200,000. However, the demand for technology adoption grants consistently outweighs the annual budgets allocated for the program. To help meet the demand and support digital adoption at scale, Conexus will work with a diverse group of partners to capture additional digital adoption funding support for AML in Indiana. This will include, but not be limited to, federal grant opportunities.

# Drive Innovation

## Building Upon Successful Work

**HardTech Innovators Network:** To position Indiana as the hub for innovation in advanced manufacturing and logistics, we must cultivate, connect and activate our state's engineers, makers and innovators. Building on a program piloted in 2023, Conexus will develop a community of hardtech manufacturing innovators and experts by standing up a programmatic structure analogous to the Conexus Indiana Advanced Industries Council. This network will leverage the power of connection and community to grow the hardtech ecosystem in Indiana, and Conexus will serve as a thought leader for the community by providing education, research and shared learning for the network.

**Manufacturing Readiness Grants:** In partnership with the Indiana Economic Development Corporation, Conexus has administered the MRG program since 2020 to provide direct financial assistance to encourage manufacturers to make innovative capital investments in smart manufacturing. Since inception, \$74M in grants have

supported \$1.06B in total project budgets at 607 unique companies in 85 counties. Given additional state funding, Conexus will 1) optimize the program proportionally to the budget to make full and effective use of available funding, 2) document and promote the program's impact to inform the state's budgeting process, and 3) suggest opportunities for how the program could be broadened to support other mechanisms for innovation beyond the structure and mechanics of the traditional MRG program.

Should funding continue to scale, there are opportunities to broaden and enhance the program with the following concepts:

- Fast Track certification for IN-based tech providers
- Support for an AML first customer program for AML-related tech startups
- Integration with innovation programs like Innovation Vouchers, IN Tech Assistance Program, etc.

### Industry 4.0 Forums and Education:

- **Emerging Tech Showcases:** Conexus will connect with organizations including iIndustry Labs, WHIN, Purdue MEP, Purdue IN-MaC, Rose-Hulman Ventures, Ivy Tech and Vincennes University to host Emerging Tech Showcases related to digital adoption and innovation. As we look to 2031, Conexus will explore both statewide, regional and national showcase opportunities and look to reintroduce in-person showcases to allow Indiana AML companies to learn about new technologies and digital adoption processes up close.
- **Technology adoption case studies:** Conexus will expand on its successful technology adoption case studies program, which has resulted in 60 case studies. The program will evolve to feature case study topics that emphasize elements of digital skills, innovation, entrepreneurship, the technology ecosystem and emerging market opportunities. The format will also evolve to include more video case studies.

**AnalytiXIN AML Integration:** Conexus will continue to support AnalytiXIN as an advocate and conduit for engaging the advanced manufacturing and logistics industry. This will include participating in Communities of Practice and pairing university subject matter expertise with AML companies on individual projects.



**What success looks like:**

**100** new partnerships created between startups and corporate customers by 2031.

Support direct investment to **15%** of Indiana manufacturers (1,400 companies) to adopt advanced digital technologies by 2031.

## CASE STUDY

## Partnerships with LEDOs and REDOs Significantly Expand Reach of Manufacturing Readiness Grants Program

A key driver for improving productivity across AML is to scale digital adoption. The level of scale required to close Indiana's productivity gap cannot be solved by one entity alone. **The work requires that Conexus and its partners find opportunities for unprecedented collaboration.**

**The Challenge:** Two years after the successful launch of the Manufacturing Readiness Grants program, which assists manufacturers in making tech-enabled capital investments in Industry 4.0, the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) and Conexus Indiana began to assess the impact of the program and identify areas of opportunity for the future.

While mapping the locations of MRG grant recipients, the team noticed several regions of the state with a high volume of awards and others with a low volume or no awards. This was to be expected, but when Conexus compared the volume of awards to manufacturing intensity in each region, they found several opportunities. In fact, several areas of high manufacturing intensity in Indiana were underrepresented for grant awards.

**The Solution:** The team found that the most significant factors contributing to a lack of representation in key regions were awareness of the program and access to a local organization to support manufacturers during the application process.

To get the word out and bolster localized support for applicants, Conexus and the IEDC enlisted the help of local and regional economic development organizations across the state that carry deep relationships with manufacturers in their communities.

In late 2022 and through 2023, Conexus partnered with at least 19 local or regional organizations across the state to expand the reach of the program. These partners included large regional partnerships like the Evansville Regional Partnership and the South Bend Elkhart Regional Partnership and county economic development groups like the Greensburg/Decatur County and Wells County Economic Development Corporations.

**The Outcome:** Local and regional partners gave Conexus a platform to share information about the MRG program with approximately 780 additional individuals through in-person and virtual info sessions, presentations about the program and more.

By October 2023, Conexus had awarded grants in 19 counties that had not previously received MRG funds, meaning grants had been distributed in 79 of Indiana's 92 counties since the launch of the program. In 2023 alone, 161 awards were made enabling \$329 million in technology-enabled, private capital investments to accelerate production capabilities and efficiencies across Indiana.

**Partners are essential to the success of this work. Organizations like these will be pivotal to delivering though leadership:**

The Indiana Motor Truck Association and other industry associations

The Center for Automotive Research and other research bodies

The Indiana Department of Transportation and other public-sector entities

# Deliver Thought Leadership



We must seek to understand critical trends, challenges, and opportunities, and share the innovative work of Indiana AML with the world. **Conexus Indiana will originate, develop and communicate critical trends analysis and research aligned to strategic areas, leveraging partnerships to capture and disseminate information.** Conexus will collaborate with Indiana's AML ecosystem to speak with a collective voice as an industry focused on innovation and digital transformation.

## The Big Ideas

**Research to Drive Innovation:** When Conexus first began its Industry 4.0 research journey in early 2020, many AML stakeholders were interested to learn Conexus was spending time and resources on developing an Industry 4.0 strategy. After all, two thirds of Indiana's AML firms were in the early stages of exploring what Industry 4.0 meant for the future of their company and furthermore, only 17% of AML firms saw Industry 4.0 as a positive investment for growth. Fast forward to 2024: it's widely accepted that Industry 4.0 is changing the way products are made and moved across the globe.

As workforce issues have become more prominent than ever before, stakeholders have turned to Conexus for information on advanced industries workforce trends. Conexus has built this credibility through a steady stream of workforce-related reports and resources over the past three years, including the "State of Indiana's Advanced Manufacturing Workforce" (June 2022), "Leakproof: Strengthening Indiana's Advanced Manufacturing and Logistics Workforce Pipeline" (September 2022), "Benchmarking Indiana's Advanced Manufacturing and Logistics Industries Report: Identifying Opportunities for Workforce Development and Transformation" (August 2023) and "Insights Into the Future of Indiana's AML" (interactive dashboard; August 2023).

Conexus has also made significant progress in its partnered research program, leveraging its stakeholder network to inform state agencies on critical strategic topics such as the electrification of the automotive industry, statewide infrastructure readiness for automated vehicle deployments in freight and

opportunities to improve access to the workforce from major job centers. Conexus has delivered this research to its partners at INDOT and IEDC, forging deep, reciprocal relationships.

Much of Conexus' success in thought leadership for AML is a result of, in part, filling the knowledge gap. Today, Indiana's AML firms, public sector partners and media organizations turn to Conexus for insights into digital transformation, innovation and workforce. In 2025-2031, Conexus will continue to build upon this foundation of credibility, trust and partnerships in research.

Future research will focus on uncovering emerging trends to advance Indiana's AML sector. Conexus will execute four projects per year, focusing on topics such as digital transformation, hardtech innovation, AML innovation drivers and outcomes, advanced manufacturing technologies, sustainability and circularity, industrial decarbonization, electrification, autonomous technologies, workforce trends, workforce supply-demand imbalances, economic impact analysis, infrastructure development and transportation trends and program impact reports.

Research projects will be executed through strategic collaboration and partnerships to optimize subject-matter expertise, goal alignment, ecosystem buy-in and resource allocation. For example, workforce trends and supply-demand imbalance studies will be done in conjunction with CICIP and other educational sector partners. Additionally, Conexus will seek to draw on more external research and national strategies to provide foundational information, trends and expertise that can be applied in Indiana.

# Deliver Thought Leadership

Conexus will leverage its research to ensure industry alignment and awareness on critical topics, increase the likelihood that statewide decision making is informed by industry voice and continue to position Conexus as a thought leader for innovation in AML. Open informational sessions and federal and state education efforts will seek to purposefully communicate the outcomes of research projects to maximize impact and awareness. Conexus will work with other states, academic institutions, industry groups and federal leaders to identify “calls to action” related to current and future challenges facing advanced manufacturing and logistics sectors.

## Industry Branding and Share-of-voice Programs:

For the last three years, Conexus has executed a strategic marketing and communications campaign focused on growing its audience. Consistently Conexus has maintained a robust audience growth rate on its social media channels, through its newsletter subscriber lists and on its website. Having built a significant audience over the last several years, looking to 2031, Conexus will shift from telling the “Conexus story” to telling the “industry story as supported by Conexus.”

To amplify the industry message, Conexus will serve as the convenor and primary thought leader to organize and launch a branding campaign for Indiana’s AML industries. Building off the momentum of the Invest in Indiana campaign launched in 2023, Conexus will gather the industry’s top marketing and communication leaders to identify the industry’s biggest branding challenges and opportunities and collaborate to tackle them head-on. Alongside these industry leaders and with the guidance of entities such as the IEDC, Conexus will craft an industry branding campaign that outlines a new collective narrative for the industry.

Most importantly, Conexus will deploy strategies and tactics that will enable the industry to utilize this branding and messaging through its marketing and communications channels, which will help amplify the message and significantly impact the perception of the industries with our target audiences. The share-of-voice campaigns will include a variety of tactics including:

- **Influencer marketing:** Conexus will work with its industry coalition to identify AML influencers at a local and national level to shine a light on the work of Indiana’s AML industry. Conexus will use a proven B2B influencer model which includes volunteer and paid influencers who will share Conexus and Indiana-specific content through blogs, social media sites and more.
- **Industry-generated content:** An essential path to increased share of voice is the creation and promotion of engaging content that helps to showcase the innovative work of the industry and reinforce the branding campaign outlined by the industry coalition. Conexus will expand its content marketing program to significantly increase content generation. One of the ways Conexus will scale its content marketing will be by launching what is often referred to as a “user-generated content” program for Indiana’s AML industry. Conexus will work with industry partners to identify key topics of content that reinforce a positive perception of Indiana AML and work with those partners to produce content to be published on Conexus’ website and leveraged through Conexus’s content marketing, SEO, newsletter and social media strategies.

## What success looks like:

**Execute** at a pace of **four** research projects per year in alignment with strategic areas through 2031.

**By 2028,** increase mentions of innovation and digital transformation in reference to Indiana AML by 40%.

**By 2031,** Increase Indiana AML’s nationwide share of voice to 40% in industry technology and innovation discussion.

## Building Upon Successful Work

**State/National Earned Media:** Increasing the volume of earned media – particularly earned media that positions Indiana’s AML industry as one that is innovating and leading in digital transformation work – will significantly increase the industry’s share of voice, shifting the perception of the industry within the state and across the nation. To shift the narrative of the industry on a large scale, Conexus will first focus on Indiana media coverage before shifting its attention to multi-state regional and national media. Conexus will use its deep well of industry case studies and feature stories to showcase the innovative work happening in all sub-sectors across the state and will leverage its growing partner-base as a tool for storytelling.

**Award and Speaking Opportunities:** Because of Conexus’ brand awareness and positioning as a thought leader since its founding in 2007, its leaders are frequently asked to speak at key events in Indiana and beyond. Building on this organic momentum, Conexus will launch a strategic campaign to identify thought leaders internally, formulate effective presentations that are relevant to key audiences, and pitch them for local and national speaking opportunities. Additionally, Conexus will identify and apply for innovation-driven awards for the organization and Indiana’s AML industry at large. Both tactics will help Indiana’s position and help to better control the narrative of the industry with key target audiences.

**Partner Strategic Communications:** With an increased focus through 2031 in curating and formalizing strategic partnerships, the communication team will launch a series of strategic communications campaigns with its partners (universities, government entities, etc.) which will be customized to the collective work of the partner organizations. By broadcasting the tangible work being accomplished together with our partners, Conexus will help to showcase the collaboration of the industry and, once again, find a new way to showcase the innovative work of the industry and impact the perception of the industry in-state and out-of-state.

**Make IN Move:** Since its inception in 2021, Make IN Move has served as Indiana AML’s statewide career awareness program for Gen Z Hoosiers. Over the last three years, the program has averaged two to three million impressions on advertisements targeting 18–24-year-olds in Indiana with positive messages and imagery showing the depth of roles available in AML. Research conducted by Conexus in 2023 found that career decisions begin as early as middle school and that negative perceptions of the AML industry are being solidified at an earlier age than originally hypothesized. Building on the success of the program but acknowledging that industry biases are already solidly formed by 18 years of age, Conexus plans to launch Make IN Move 2.0 with a focus on middle and high school students.

**Events & Awards Programs:** Conexus hosts a series of awards and events to shine a light on the innovative work within AML and to recognize the trailblazers who are positively impacting the industry. The awards and events include Conexus’ flagship event Rising 30, an annual program that celebrates 30 young professionals in AML; the Andre B. Lacy Vanguard Award, which honors a lifetime of successful work and philanthropy; and the Conexus Indiana Manufacturing Innovation Award at the TechPoint Mira Awards. Additionally, Conexus works with industry to bring awareness to Manufacturing Day/Month events and activities and provide materials to industry partners to enhance their local and regional events.

## Conexus Serves as a Bridge from INDOT to Industry, Improving Indiana's Infrastructure Planning

The issues facing Indiana's manufacturing and logistics industries are complex. **Powerful partnerships, facilitated by Conexus, between industry thought leaders and decision makers are critical to understanding industry trends, challenges and opportunities.**

**The Challenge:** In an industrial economy, the advanced manufacturing and logistic industries rely heavily on robust infrastructure, including roads and railways. Unfortunately, what one AML business requires of Indiana's infrastructure is not always the same as the next.

To understand the needs of the industry and to be able to prioritize the projects that will have the biggest impact, INDOT relies on channels of two-way communication with industry stakeholders. However, infrastructure considerations are complex and managing relationships with many stakeholder groups requires a lot of INDOT's time and attention.

**The Solution:** Since expanding its partnership with INDOT in 2019, Conexus has served the agency as a bridge to the AML industry—ensuring that it has access to candid industry feedback on proposed projects and corporate partners to champion the work once it's in motion. In turn, INDOT conducts infrastructure planning with industry feedback in mind.

New to the partnership since 2022 is an increased focus on infrastructure-related research and analysis—an equally powerful way Conexus and INDOT work together to continue to improve Indiana's infrastructure for industry.

**The Outcome:** INDOT's broadened understanding of the ever-changing needs of Indiana's AML industries is evident through its industry relationships and its multi-faceted partnership with Conexus Indiana. Since 2022, Conexus and INDOT have worked together to:

- Understand how the technology associated with autonomous transportation is evolving and evaluate the feasibility of automated freight vehicle deployments throughout Indiana.
- Identify the state's locations with the highest cost of congestion and compare the data with INDOT's 5-year mobility and preservation plan to identify funding gaps and recommend a shortlist of target projects.
- Develop a tool to measure economic impact by scoring Indiana's roadways across key metrics, arming INDOT with data to predict the relative return on investment of potential roadway projects.
- Assess how the organization can reduce commute times in key commercial sectors and identify opportunities to increase commuting bands to connect critical commercial zones to residents.
- Identify opportunities to strengthen and optimize the use of the state's intermodal system and benchmark connectivity practices against peer states.

# Deliver **Thought Leadership**



## Letter From Conexus Indiana Board President

I want to share my deep appreciation for the invaluable contributions made to this strategic plan, which is a collective response to the pressing challenges facing our industry today and in the years to come.



Our state, recognized as the most manufacturing-intensive in the nation, is at a critical juncture. The workforce challenges we face are not only persistent but growing. Every conversation with business leaders, regardless of the size of their operations, reinforces a stark reality: no one is immune.

We must recognize that addressing these challenges on our own is not an option. It is only through collective action that we can create a meaningful and lasting impact. As the driving entity for our industries, Conexus Indiana is uniquely positioned to lead this charge, fostering the connections and collaboration that are essential for our success.

We understand that innovation is often met with hesitation. Many organizations are understandably risk-averse, yet the future demands that we embrace new technologies and innovative approaches. Conexus is here to help bridge that gap, providing the support and resources needed to thrive in an Industry 4.0 environment.

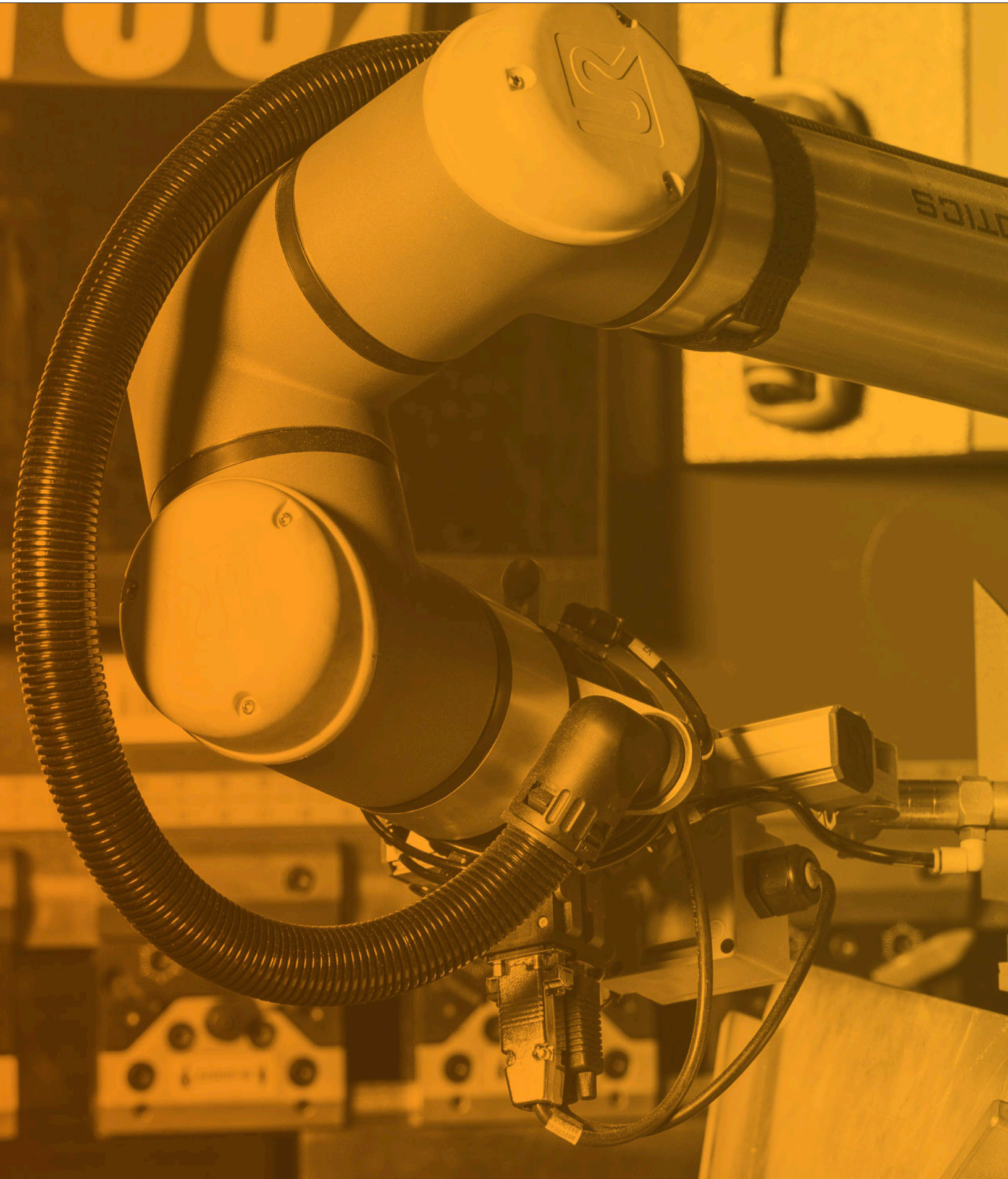
I want to extend a heartfelt call to action. I invite each of you to actively participate in the ongoing conversation. Wherever you go in Indiana, you'll find someone making or moving something, contributing to the vibrant manufacturing and logistics landscape that defines our state. Your unique perspectives are vital to this dialogue, and your involvement is crucial—not just for the collective benefit of Conexus, but for the individual growth and success that comes with being part of this dynamic network.

In closing, let us commit to this journey together. The future is ours to shape, and together, we will position Indiana to thrive for years to come.

Sincerely,

**Scott Brand**

**President and COO, Subaru of Indiana Automotive  
Board of Directors President, Conexus Indiana**





[www.conexusindiana.com](http://www.conexusindiana.com)  
1210 Waterway Blvd., STE 5000  
Indianapolis, IN 46202  
317-638-2107

