

HOOSIER AI 1000:

Training a New Generation of AI Leaders with IAAQLI Support

Writer: Dennis Jarrett

Thanks to generous funding from the Indianapolis African American Quality of Life Initiative (IAAQLI), a groundbreaking program is bringing cutting-edge artificial intelligence skills to communities across the city. The Hoosier AI 1000 program, led by InnoPower, has certified 50 community leaders as “AI Trailblazers” – Master Trainers who will share their knowledge with hundreds of Indianapolis residents by July 31st.

This initiative represents a powerful step toward closing the digital divide and democratizing access to AI tools. “Prompt engineering is simply the art of talking to AI systems effectively,” said Emil Ekiyor, founder of InnoPower. “It’s like learning how to ask the right questions and give clear instructions to get the best results from tools like ChatGPT.”

Participants in the first cohort emphasized the importance of these new skills in their personal and professional missions. Cassandra Williams, owner of Educational Innovation 360, described her experience as “a privilege.”

“I got to collaborate with other businesses and see who’s using AI

and who’s not,” she said. “Now I can train teachers and students, and help roll out effective practices that meet the needs of the next generation of learners. Kids are already using AI—so let’s get in front of it.”

For Jay Styles, Senior Vice President of Partnerships and Talent Connections at EmployIndy, joining the program was about equity. “The premise—democratizing access to AI—was important to me as a workforce professional,” Styles said. “I wanted to make sure marginalized residents get the same opportunities and information as everyone else.”

The Indianapolis Urban League, a key IAAQLI partner, played a vital role in promoting and supporting

the program. “Through IAAQLI, we’ve made sure our community is exposed to AI,” said Tony Mason, the League’s President and CEO. “This is about closing the digital divide, supporting entrepreneurs, and preparing young people for the future. The skills gained through this program will help our people succeed in today’s economy and beyond.”

Mason added, “One of the five pillars of IAAQLI is education and empowerment. Bringing futuristic skills like AI into our neighborhoods is not just timely—it’s essential. Programs like Hoosier AI 1000 are exactly what we envisioned when we launched this initiative.”

With its first class of AI Trailblazers now certified, the Hoosier AI 1000 program is poised to make a lasting impact on Indianapolis.

