

CAREER READY **SD**

Business and Industry Guide to Work-based Learning

A Project of:



This document was created with federal dollars available to the SD Department of Education through the American Rescue Plan (ARP).

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Introduction

The WBL Business and Industry Guide is a starting point for helping business partners, and community and economic development leaders engage with their future workforce through powerful and purposeful relationship with local schools. The information contained in this framework is meant to provide guidance to help an organization start, improve, or continue offering high-quality work-based learning opportunities to students in their community. Feel free to adapt, modify, and tailor this information to fit your specific needs.

What is “Work-based Learning” or WBL?

You may have heard this term used when talking with local school administrators, career and technical education teachers, or youth workforce development leaders. So, what exactly does it mean? Work-based Learning (WBL) is important component in preparing students to be college, career, and life ready. WBL provides students the opportunity to connect with local business and industry partners to engage in career-connected learning opportunities that helps to bridge academic, technical and employability skill development. For business and industry, WBL is a way to help school’s prepare tomorrow’s workforce today!

Getting Started

Why support WBL opportunities within a local school? What are the benefits to the company? What are the benefits to the students? Partnering with schools to support WBL activities and career-connected learning opportunities, is a WIN-WIN-WIN situation. A win for the business, a win for the schools, and a win for the students.

Benefits of WBL for Employers

Partnering with schools for WBL connects industry to schools and students. While there are important benefits for the students, business and industry partners also enjoy many benefits. For example:

- **Build necessary skills in future employees.** Help shape the Career and Technical Education curriculum and classroom activities; ensuring alignment in relevant courses.
- **Find future employees.** An internship program can be a year-round recruiting tool because implementing an internship program can provide an ongoing pipeline of future full-time employees.
- **Test-drive the talent.** Internships can allow you to avoid the pitfall of training a new hire, only to find out they’re not a fit for your organization or that the entry-level employee doesn’t like the field.
- **Increase productivity.** An internship program allows you to take advantage of short-term support for your business.
- **Increase employee-retention rate.** The proof for the test-driving concept is in the positive employee-retention figures: According to NACE’s Experiential Education Survey, almost 40% of employers reported a higher five-year retention rate among employees they’d hired via their internship programs.
- **Give back to the community.** Creating an internship program is an excellent way to enhance community support for your local business or industry. Hiring interns not only helps students in your community get started; it enhances the local workforce as a whole.

Benefits of WBL for Students & Schools

- **Paid Internships are associated with \$3,096/year in higher wages after graduation.** College students with a paid internship have higher-paying jobs one year after graduation.
- **College graduates who completed a WBL experience reported increased career satisfaction.** They are also more likely to state their college education was worth the expense.
- **Work-Based Learning experiences lead to greater confidence.** Students with paid internships feel more confident about their career choices and feel more supported by their schools.
- **Students connect their classroom learning to the world of work.** They apply the lessons they learn in the classroom to professional world situations. By doing this, they are more likely to master and retain the material.
- **Work-Based Learning provides hands-on learning experiences.** Students develop and practice their academic and soft skills, including employability skills.
- **Students can observe and connect with professionals doing the work they plan to do someday.** Work-based learning gives students an opportunity to dive a little deeper into learning about a particular field and interact with professionals who have worked in it for years.
- **Get a paying job that may become permanent.** In some WBL opportunities, such as paid internships and apprenticeships, participants work in paid jobs that may even lead to full-time positions at the organization. Whether or not WBL experiences result in permanent employment, they can all lead to long-term career benefits because students gain skills that they can add to their resumes.



The WBL Continuum

In South Dakota schools, work-based learning (WBL) activities fall within three categories: explore, engage, and experience.



Explore

Work-Based Learning begins with the Explore stage. This is where students start to build an understanding of a range of careers and how they can relate to them through their interests and experiences. This stage helps students build soft skills and awareness of career options. The Explore experiences offer great opportunities for you as industry partners to begin to engage with students in a more casual setting with a smaller commitment of business resources.

The Explore stage of the WBL continuum is often the easiest way for an organization to begin partnering with local schools and can require very little time and commitment from your company while still engaging students in meaningful career-connected learning opportunities.

Engage

The Engage stage of WBL builds upon the knowledge acquired during the Explore stage and involves activities that usually take place outside the classroom learning environment. These experiences concentrate on developing the career readiness skills of students while raising awareness of various career options and establishing strong connections between local and regional businesses and schools.

Engage experiences offer the opportunity for an organization to engage with students in more in-depth learning opportunities. While this phase of the WBL continuum may require more resources and commitment from an organization, the return on investment can be quite high. Students participating in the Engage phase, are now beginning to make decisions regarding their post-secondary plans and more closely considering the options available to them when they enter the world of work after high school.

Experience

The Experience stage represents the culmination of the Work-Based Learning process. This stage of WBL emphasizes the development of academic, technical, and employability skills, as well as cultivating positive professional relationships. Experiences in this stage often feature opportunities for students to observe all aspects of a company's operation and the variety of occupations within that business or industry.

These experiences offer the opportunity for you as a business to offer the highest level of engagement with students. Students participating in this phase will likely be looking for an organization to partner with for a sustained hands-on experience like an internship or youth apprenticeship. These activities will require the highest level of commitment from an organization and a strong partnership with local schools; however, businesses that engage with schools to sponsor/host these activities are likely to see the greatest benefits.



Example WBL Activities

The following is a list of example activities and experiences businesses can partner with schools to help provide career-connected learning opportunities to students. In addition to these activities, businesses should partner with local schools to create additional unique and meaningful career-connected learning experiences for their students based on the needs and capacity of each stakeholder.

Exploration Activities	
GUEST SPEAKER	Career Guest Speakers provide an opportunity for a classroom or group of students to hear directly from a business representative or career professional, allowing students to gain realistic perspectives on expectations in a job and/or career field and the workplace requirements.
FIELD TRIPS	Career-based field trips provide excellent opportunities for a group of students to observe business operations and careers found within a business.
INDUSTRY TOURS AND VIRTUAL PANELS	Often available virtually, industry tours provide excellent opportunities for a group of students to observe industry functions and careers found within an industry.
GENERAL CAREER EXPLORATION	Supporting students as they explore and learn about various careers and occupations that may be a part of your organizational structure.
Engagement Activities	
CAREER FAIRS	Hosting a booth or activity to share with students during a school-wide event that encourages students to learn more about specific careers, skills and knowledge needed, and various career roles and responsibilities.
CAREER CAFES	During a Career Café event, students can learn about different career paths, ask questions, and gain insights into the skills and experiences needed to succeed in the field. It's a great way for students to network with professionals and discover potential career options
CAREER CAMPS	Available mainly through post-secondary institutions, students can learn about careers through firsthand exploration and experience. Professionals lead day-long events where they discuss and share insights about their respective fields.
INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW	Business partners act as mentors, answering student questions regarding their business or their occupation. These may take place in person, by phone, online, or in a small group setting.
JOB SHADOW	A supervised observational experience provided to students in an approved business or industry setting. Businesses may combine this experience with the informational interview activity.

SIMULATIONS	Simulations allow students to experience opening a business, manufacturing products, and demonstrating career readiness skills in a non-threatening, safe environment in the classroom. Students can “preview” different occupations which can be completed via live-action activities or virtual reality.
CTSO COMPETITION JUDGE	Judging student presentations or competitions and providing feedback regarding student mastery of targeted competencies.
Experience Activities	
CAPSTONE MENTOR	Mentoring students as they complete the requirements for a junior or senior level Capstone Experience.
INTERNSHIP HOST	Partner with local school districts to host a student intern during their junior or senior year of high school. This experience involves the student spending an extended period amount of time participating in real or simulated hands-on experiences at an approved training site. This experience can be either paid or unpaid.
APPRENTICESHIP SPONSOR	Partnering with the SD Dept. of Labor and local school districts to sponsor a high school student through an approved youth apprenticeship program.

To learn more about each of these phases or find more information about WBL activities and resources, please visit [Career Ready SD](#).

Visit the [Department of Education’s CTE: Capstone page](#) for help in connecting with schools in your region that may be interested in partnering with your organization.

WBL Implementation Planning Checklist

Below is a simplified planning checklist to help an organization understand the steps for preparing to offer WBL opportunities. This checklist should guide the process of creating a broad engagement plan for working with students to support career-connected learning opportunities throughout the entire WBL continuum.

Action Planning Checklist Example

1. Meet with your local school(s) to:
 - Discuss current needs: student interests, post-secondary partners, career planning
 - Meet with school staff you will partner with in supporting students participating in WBL experiences with your business
 - Discuss possible activities and experiences that best suit your company
 - Determine a timeline for next steps

2. Evaluate organizational capacity
 - Analyze current resources and what additional resources will be necessary
 - Identify staff to support WBL experiences
 - Gain any necessary approvals from organizational leaders
 - Determine level of commitment/engagement the organization will have capacity for

3. Create a WBL plan
 - Partner with school district contacts to create a plan for activities and experiences that will be offered
 - Ensure the necessary resources are secured from both the company and the school district before proceeding
 - Identify additional community partners or resources to help support the plan

4. Create necessary materials/documentation and resources
 - Determine the documentation needed for your WBL experiences. Materials and documentation will vary by business. Examples of documentation may include:
 - Applications, interview questions
 - Time sheets, evaluation forms
 - Promotional materials
 - Description of WBL experiences
 - Training materials
 - Coordinate with the school's WBL contact to identify existing resources and templates that may be used
 - Prepare a packet of information your business will use to guide participation by employees and students in any WBL experiences

5. Implement & evaluate WBL experiences and activities
 - Utilizing the resources created, implement the organization's WBL plan
 - Collect feedback from all stakeholders involved in the experiences (students, teachers, school administrators, employees) to determine potential changes to the plan
 - Make adjustments to the plan based on feedback received

Hosting a Student Intern

Is your organization considering partnering with a local school district to host high school interns? This is a unique and meaningful work-based learning opportunity for students to truly engage with your organization and experience what it would be like to work for your company. If your organization is considering implementing a high school internship program, consider the following guidance:

- Review the guidance and resources provided on the Career Ready SD website, created specifically to assist schools, students, and businesses interested in supporting work-based learning opportunities in South Dakota. This site contains links, templates, and resources to help implement high-quality WBL experiences.
- Connect with a local school district. Schools have a detailed framework by the South Dakota Department of Education to help them build and implement an internship program. They will have access to many of the resources your organization may find useful for implementing an internship program.
- Visit the Department of Education's CTE: Capstone page for help in connecting with schools in your region that may be interested in partnering with your organization.
- Connect with the South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation. Through a partnership with the Department of Education, SDDLRL has Career Advisors and Youth Employment Specialists that can provide your company with additional guidance and resources for hosting student interns.
- Visit the Department of Labor and Regulation's online Work-based Learning Toolkit or contact your local DLR Job Service Office for help connecting with a Career Advisor or Youth Employment Specialist.
- Connect with regional Workforce Development Organizations. Many of these organizations may have helped other businesses in your area develop a similar program and may even have additional resources to help support a high school student internship program.

Key Components of a High School Internship

- Must occur at an approved training site (this can include virtual if necessary)
- Co-supervised by a worksite mentor and a school advisor
- Incorporate the learning of new skills and competencies aligned with the student's program of study and post-secondary learning plan

Sponsoring a Youth Apprenticeship

Is your organization considering partnering with a local school district to sponsor a youth registered apprentice? Like internships, this experience offers the highest level of engagement and workforce training students have available to them while still in high school. In addition to partnering with your local school district to offer potential youth apprenticeship experiences, your company will also need to partner with the [South Dakota Department of Labor's Registered Apprenticeship Program](#) Specialists.



Why Sponsor a Youth Apprenticeship Program?

There are currently over 1,000 occupations approved for registered apprenticeships in the US and this number is growing. Youth Apprenticeship programs are also on the rise as today's students are looking for meaningful learning experience that also provide them with transferable skills that can translate to high-wage, in-demand careers.

Apprenticeship programs can be a great option for businesses looking to:

- Recruit and develop a highly skilled workforce that helps grow their business
- Improve productivity, profitability, and an employer's bottom line
- Create flexible training options that ensure workers develop the right skills
- Minimize liability costs through appropriate training of workers
- Receive tax credits and employee tuition benefits in participating states
- Increase retention of workers, during and following the apprenticeship

Apprenticeship Resources

[Explore Registered Apprenticeship Factsheet - Apprenticeship.gov](#)
[Training Opportunities for Individuals - Apprenticeship \(sd.gov\)](#)

Additional links to Youth Apprenticeship guidance/resources provided by DLR

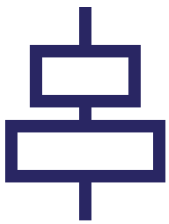
Additional Resources

- [Business and Industry Guest Speaker Guidelines](#)
- [Business and Industry Tours](#)
- [Career and Technical Student Organizations \(CTSOs\) Partnerships](#)
- [Career Ready SD](#)
- [South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation Work-based Learning Toolkit](#)
- [SD CTSO Center](#)
- [StartTodaySD Apprenticeship Program](#)
- [Youth Labor Resources](#)
- [Internships | Youth.gov](#)

Ideas on How a Business Can Partner With Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs)

Through Career and Technical Student Organizations, or CTSOs, students gain professional-world skills that complement what they're learning in the classroom. Student organizations help students align classroom instruction with employability and career skills, using applied learning, leadership development opportunities, and hands-on demonstrations of career-connected work experiences.

As a business, you can engage with CTSOs offered by local schools to expand your reach and promote your company to as many local students as possible. Below are Key Steps for engaging and partnering with local Career and Technical Student Organizations.



1. Identify CTSOs that align with your business

Identify and review the CTSOs available to South Dakota students. SDMyLife provides a list of CTSOs with a summary and link to each of the organization's websites. As you review the available CTSOs, consider all occupations at your company and identify the CTSOs that align with those occupations. These student organizations cover a variety of industries and occupations, allowing you to partner with multiple CTSOs, based on your company's opportunities.



2. Identify Partnership Opportunities with Local Schools

Connect with schools in your region to find out what Career and Technical Student Organizations are offered locally. Each CTSO will have a school district contact that you can meet with to discuss planned CTSO activities/ events and opportunities for your business to partner with the student organization on. Examples of ways to partner may include:

- Judge at state competitions
- Review and provide input on activities/events
- Sponsor activities/events
- Offer career mentorships to student's preparing for events
- Conduct business tours
- Be an industry guest speaker
- Host job shadows and other industry-related WBL experiences
- Provide workforce data about your industry
- Be an available resource for student and faculty industry-related questions



3. Establish a CSTO Engagement Plan

Determine the activities/events your company will support for CTSOs offered by schools in your area. Based on your company's resources (time, staff, financial, etc.), develop a plan to engage with and support local CTSOs. Elements of the plan can include: Your company's availability

- A schedule of CTSO events
- The level of engagement your company will have with the CTSO
- Your company's primary contact for the CTSO partnership
- The school's CTSO contact

The following is a list of approved South Dakota Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs).



- [Educators Rising](#) - Educators Rising provides high school students with authentic opportunities to experience teaching, sustain their interest in the profession and help them cultivate the skills they need to be successful teachers.



- [FBLA](#) - Family, Career and Community Leaders of America brings business and education together in a positive working relationship through innovative leadership and career development programs.



- [FCCLA](#) - Family, Career and Community Leaders of America provides personal growth, leadership development, and career preparation opportunities for students in Family and Consumer Sciences education.



- [FFA](#) - FFA makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education.



- [HOSA Future Health Professionals](#) - HOSA Future Health Professionals enhances the delivery of compassionate, quality health care by providing opportunities for knowledge, skill and leadership development of all health science education students, therefore, helping students meet the needs of the health care community.



- [SkillsUSA](#) - SkillsUSA is a partnership of students, teachers and industry working together to ensure America has a skilled work force. SkillsUSA's helps its members become world-class workers, leaders and responsible American citizens. It provides quality education experiences for students in leadership, teamwork, citizenship and character development.