

## How to Collaborate with Businesses/Potential Employers

### Definition

- **What:** Collaborating with potential employers--whether business, nonprofit, or government partners--means working with these stakeholders to develop and sustain viable programs to make young people aware of the career opportunities available to them; help them gain the skills and mindsets needed for employability in these various sectors; and engage them in viable career pathways such as work-based learning, registered apprenticeships, and relevant, informed career-focused postsecondary education.
- **Why:** Collaboration between educational agencies (whether state, district, or school-level) and potential employers is crucial to make sure the education students receive is relevant to the career opportunities available. It is also in the interest of employers, as workforce shortages, particularly for skilled occupations, are a reality in many regions, even as unemployment among young people (ages 18-25) remains high. Some sectors, such as manufacturing, have an aging workforce and are eager to improve the pipeline of qualified younger workers. Finally, local governments have every interest in improving young people's opportunities to develop marketable skills to improve local economies and reduce strain on social service resources.
- **How:**
  - Building partnerships requires an investment of time. Identify a designated leader or department to coordinate efforts at state or district level.
  - Be sure to link programs to viable career pathways through focused postsecondary education as well as opportunities for ongoing employment/promotion.
  - An "intermediary" organization (which may be a public or private agency) can be helpful in navigating technicalities, particularly for work-based learning programs. This agency can provide support and training, both for youth and business partners; may assume responsibility for insurance or benefits in the early stages; and can helpfully assess and provide useful feedback for program improvement.
  - At state level, develop robust policies around CTE and RA (registered apprenticeship) programs. This includes providing cross-agency support, technical assistance, and resource tools and guides for use in various contexts.
  - Include potential employment partners in program design and curriculum development.
  - Work with community colleges and existing local coalitions (e.g., Chamber of Commerce, consortium of small manufacturing firms) where feasible.
  - Conduct outreach to showcase opportunities and benefits, including websites, presentations, and written materials. Different forms of outreach will be useful for different audiences: youth, parents, educators, legislators, and business partners.

- Offer paid work-based learning opportunities at a relatively early stage (programs may include a 4- to 8-week “boot camp” or pre-employment training, with or without a minimal stipend; but when youth begin actually working, they are paid at minimum wage).
- Coordinate ongoing academic learning and content with WBL opportunities.
- Overcome potential barriers to participation by (a) providing positive youth development and support (e.g., soft skills training, transportation, child care); and (b) addressing employers’ concerns and providing staff training as necessary. (See examples below.)

**Exemplars in Practice:**

- **Promising Practices in Work-Based Learning for Youth**, National Skills Coalition, Sept. 2016.  
Highlights four key principles and their application in four exemplar programs. Principles include paid opportunities, robust business partnerships, positive youth development and continuing support, and links to career pathways via future employment and/or postsecondary education. Programs highlighted are MCIP (Manufacturing Careers Internship Program in Illinois; Urban Alliance in Baltimore, Washington, and northern Virginia; Conservation Corps of Long Beach, CA; and the Guilford Apprenticeship Program in North Carolina. Notes role of intermediaries in making programs effective and sustainable. Very helpful.  
[http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/file/10-4-NSC-YouthWorkBasedLearning\\_v4.pdf](http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/file/10-4-NSC-YouthWorkBasedLearning_v4.pdf)
- **Connecting Secondary Career and Technical Education and Registered Apprenticeship: A Profile of Six State Systems**, National Center for Innovation in Career and Technical Education, July 2016.  
Six key practices for effective state-wide coordination and support of CTE/RA programs (summarized on pages 42-46) and their implementation in the diverse approaches of six states (NC, CT, FL, KY, RI, WA). Very helpful for state-level support.  
<https://sites.ed.gov/underservedyouth/files/2017/01/MS5-Connecting-Secondary-Career-and-technical-Education-and-Registered-Apprenticeship-A-profile-of-Six-State-Systems.pdf>
- **Description of Nashville’s Community Achieves program**, awarded the Community Schools’ 2015 Award for Excellence, which grew from one high school in 2009 to include 23 schools and 17,000 students by 2015. With active support from the Chamber of Commerce, the program connects schools to businesses to foster career pathways, addresses personal and family barriers, and has doubled scholarship money available within the district.  
<http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/CS-Awards-for-Excellence-2017-Community-Achieves.pdf>
- **CareerWise Colorado**, a Bloomberg/Chase-sponsored statewide apprenticeship program.  
<https://www.careerwisecolorado.org/> Also see press release/ article at:  
<https://www.jpmorganchase.com/corporate/news/pr/careerwise-colorado-event.htm>

- **CPCC Edutronics**, UNC TV, Sept. 2016.  
Central Piedmont Community College’s partnership with Groninger Manufacturing to offer students hands-on experience and training in the high-tech world of edutronics, addressing the regional workforce skills gap.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZH26HXlwpag&feature=youtu.be>
- **IowaBIG**.  
Entrepreneurial high school where students learn through engagement in real-life projects submitted by community, business, and non-profit partners. <http://www.iowabig.org/>

#### **Training Materials:**

- **Work-based Learning Toolkit**, DOE/RTI.  
Links to multiple resources for various components of effective work-based learning programs; also, relevant federal legislation. Very comprehensive content but little practical assistance. <https://cte.ed.gov/toolkit/index.html>

#### **Research Foundations:**

- **Promising Practices in Work- Based Learning for Youth**, National Skills Coalition, Sept. 2016 (see description and link above).
- **Connecting Secondary Career and Technical Education and Registered Apprenticeship: A Profile of Six State Systems**, National Center for Innovation in Career and Technical Education, July 2016 (see description and link above).