



Employer Toolkit: Work-based Learning

STEPS TO DEVELOP QUALITY WORK-BASED LEARNING

Congratulations! As your business takes this step to become a part of North Dakota Career and Technical Education (NDCTE) Work-based Learning (WBL) you are bridging the gap between education and workforce. Please review the steps that will help create a strong WBL program.

Step 1: Discuss the plan for WBL within your company. Discuss Goals and Policies that will work for you.

What is the main goal of your company's Work-based Learning program?

1. To gain insight into the future workforce.
2. To train young people who may potentially fill open positions within your organization.
3. To create a talent pipeline in areas of need in your organization- short term and long term.
4. To expose your workforce to new and innovative ideas.
5. To work with educators and align standards with workforce needs.

Step 2: Meet with educational professionals. (WBL Coordinator, Career Advisor, Counselor or contact the ND Department of Career and Technical Education)

WBL Coordinator or designated educator will go through the WBL Guidance and discuss WBL opportunities. (www.cte.nd.gov/sites/www/files/documents/Perkins/WBL_Guidance.pdf)

1. Review the local policy for Work-based Learning.
2. Discuss benefits to businesses, students, and communities.
3. Discuss who will be the WBL Mentor/Supervisor at worksite.
4. Who will be the contact person at the school and at the business?
5. Agree on attendance policy and how attendance will be reported.

Step 3: Collaborate with WBL Coordinator to create a Skill/Competency list for training and assessment.

1. Identify which Industry Standards will be met
2. What can student expect to accomplish each day?
3. What are your expectations for the student?
4. Review Career Ready Practices Rubrics.
5. Develop a flexible schedule for student to get 40 hours of quality work experience.

Writing the Plan: What Will the Student-learner Be Able to Do?

- Determine what each student-learner will be able to do at your company. The goal of WBL is to provide engaging worksite learning experiences for students so they can develop skills and understand the demands of each career. It will also give employers a chance to train future employees and fill gaps in the workforce.

- A work-based learning experience is not the same as a part-time job. The student-learner is expected to assist with tasks as needed, but the majority of time should be spent learning about a career and developing skills. Carefully map out what the student should know how to do by the end of the experience.

Recommendations for choosing a supervisor/mentor:

- Employees who enjoy working with young people.
- Employees who have the ability to teach with patience.
- Employee with management experience or in the desire to gain management experience.
- The mentor may be a department head, project leader, long-time employee or acting supervisor who is knowledgeable about the career student is working towards and understands work and orientation policies.

Paid vs. unpaid

- Employers may choose to pay student-learners, but it is not required.
- Decide ahead of time which model you would like to use, paid or unpaid. Compensation could be in the form of an hourly wage or a stipend.
- Be sure to incorporate a strong training component into your program; ensuring the presence of a training component will justify unpaid student-learnerships.
- Employers may also provide funding for the student to go through training program(s) as a form of payment.
- Some Incentive programs exist to help cover student-learner wages.
 - www.commerce.nd.gov/workforce/workforce-programs/operation-intern

Consider a rotational training plan. This would be a plan for the student-learner to work in several departments within the company with specific learning goals for each department.

Example of Rotational WBL Experience:

- An example of a “rotational” student-learnership: A hospital may provide many work experience opportunities in addition to health care. A student may learn about each department by spending time with Accounting, Public Relations/Marketing, Insurance, Admissions etc.
- Another example of a rotational experience would provide time in X-Ray, ultra-sound, MRI, and/or Lab.
- A “rotational” student-learner can be utilized throughout different areas and departments of the organization.

Benefits of a Rotational WBL Experience:

Students who have not identified a specific area of interest within a field are able to get experience in various departments to choose where to concentrate their career path.

Step 4: Create Your Company Profile

1. Review steps outlined in the [Golden Path Solutions Flyer for Employers](#).
2. List the opportunities your company has available for students.
3. Review the application process.

Step 5: Recruit a Qualified Candidate

1. Review applications, schedule interview and choose the student/students you feel would fit in best at your organization.

2. Meet with WBL Coordinator and student to develop goals for the Work-based Learning experience.
1. Choose a candidate that you would consider hiring at the end of the WBL experience.
 - work plan has been established, create a job description for the position. Job descriptions will be used for the recruiting process.
 - Job descriptions outline the requirements you are looking for in an ideal candidate and help determine what skill sets are needed to fill the responsibilities required by the position.

Step 6: Manage the Student-learner

Getting started on the right foot is important. This will lay a solid foundation for a quality experience. You may use the training plan you have created to develop an orientation for the student-learner.

Orientation:

Proper orientation creates an atmosphere that will lead to a positive WBL experience for both student and employer. You may decide the time needed for orientation.

Here are a few suggestions for creating a solid orientation process.

Orientation preparation:

- Prepare a list of essential items that need to be covered on the first day.
- Present and explain the organizational chart including names and company projects.
- Discuss the company culture and create a guide if necessary.
- Identify and communicate how the student-learner will fit in with your organization.
- Give student-learner a “welcome packet” before the first day.

Essential Information for welcome packet:

1. Start date and first day agenda
2. Directions and parking information (if needed)
3. Dress code information.
4. Staff information with photos. (optional)
5. Name, email, and phone number for contact person.
6. Frequently asked questions (FAQs) from previous student-learners

Additional tips:

- Schedule start date for a day that is not too busy.
- Be sure that their manager has available time to dedicate to the student-learner on their first day.

Orientation Checklist:

Many students are unfamiliar with business and industry, so everything you do will be a learning experience. Although some may have worked part-time, they may not completely understand the chain of command, the need for confidentiality, or the mission of a business. Orientation should help the student become familiar with all these areas. Explaining the expectations will set the stage for a positive experience.

1. **Explain** the Mission of the Organization:
 - How did it start? Why?
 - What is unique about your product or service?
 - What are the current objectives of the organization and how will the student-learner contribute?

2. Company Organization:
 - Who is the student-learner's supervisor?
 - What department is the student-learner working in? What is that department responsible for?
 - Who should the student-learner contact with questions? Which type of communication would you like the student to use.
3. Work Standards and Procedures:
 - What type of communication is unique to the industry?
 - How are requests processed?
 - What procedures are in place? What safety regulations must be maintained?
 - What forms/documentations need to be completed?
 - What security and confidentiality expectations are in place?
 - Which tasks require a supervisor's approval.
4. Expectations:
 - Is there a dress code? What is appropriate for the student-learner?
 - What are expectations for wearing ID badges?
 - What are expectations for communicating with customers and vendors?
 - What are expectations for mail, telephone systems and email systems?
 - What are expectations for maintaining workstation?
5. Student-learner Responsibilities:
 - What is the student-learner's role?
 - What projects will be assigned?
 - What resources are available?
6. The Basics
 - Where should the student-learner eat lunch?
 - What are building hours and schedule of activities?

Step 7: Monitor the Student-learner's Progress

1. Help your student-learner set goals for completion of various tasks, including daily, weekly, and monthly goals. This will help establish a solid work ethic for the individual.
2. Check in on daily tasks when possible.
3. Evaluate the student-learner's progress and give feedback:
 - It is essential to evaluate the student-learner and give feedback.
 - Educational institutions may require onsite visits or conference calls during the student-learnership to facilitate the evaluation process for grading purposes.
 - Evaluation requirements will be detailed when meeting with the WBL Coordinator or Educational professional.
 - The www.RUReadyND.gov WBL module provides an evaluation tool.

Discuss Exit Interviews and Follow-up with the WBL Coordinator or school professional. Exit interviews provide excellent feedback for the employer, educator, and student-learner. Proving the value of your Work-based Learning Program will require hard evidence that your organization is getting a return on its investment:

- Have the student-learner conduct an exit presentation and provide feedback (if you had them conduct an entry presentation).
- Conduct an exit interview to find out if goals were met and if the experience was beneficial. This provides valuable feedback for future program planning and will assist in building team morale.
- In addition to qualitative measures, several quantitative measures can be developed:

- Common measures may include the number of student-learners that become full-time employees, the number of requests for student-learners within the company, and growing numbers of qualified student-learner applicants.
- It may be beneficial to include department managers, the student-learner's supervisor, and the human resource manager in the exit interview.

Legal Issues: www.cte.nd.gov/sites/www/files/documents/Perkins/HazardousExemptionsWBL.pdf

Benefits to Employers

- Work-based Learning can bridge the gap between education and workforce
- Work-based Learning is an inexpensive recruiting tool and an opportunity to train future employees.
- The opportunity to evaluate prospective employees while they are working for the organization can reduce significant costs in finding new talent.
- Student learners bring current technology and ideas from the classroom to the workplace, thereby increasing an organization's intellectual capital.
- Student learners can be another source for the recruitment of diverse employees into your workforce.
- A Work-based Learning program can supply an easily accessible source of highly motivated experienced individuals who are ready to become business professionals.
- Student learners can provide a management opportunity for mid-level staff.
- Work-based Learning is great marketing tools for an organization if executed properly.
- Work-based learning can reduce costs for recruiting and training new employees.
- Keep talent local.

Benefits for Student Learners

- Work-based Learning is an excellent way to learn about a career and develop skills for success in that career.
- Work-based Learning can satisfy certain college program requirements and may allow the student to earn college credit, enriching the college experience and preparing for entrance into the workforce.
- Work-based Learning is a great way of building a relationship with an employer in an industry of interest. This relationship can open doors to future positions and networking opportunities that can strengthen one's career.
- Student Learners participating in a WBL experience are typically more engaged in their learning and develop a better work ethic and more skills and abilities. These student-learners later become more dedicated employees and involved community members.
- By providing experiential learning while still in school, WBL can give students real-life experience in their future choice of career.
- Students have the opportunity to learn transferrable skills for the future.

Benefits for the Community from Work-based Learning

- Work-based Learning can strengthen the local economy by increasing the number of qualified workers to fill jobs. This increases business productivity.
- Young people are more likely to work locally if they build relationships with businesses, community leaders and educators. WBL reveals job opportunities within the community and helps build connections.
- Work-based Learning is a great way to create a future pipeline of talent within the community.
- WBL is a building block for a thriving community