

TAKING BUSINESS TO SCHOOL

**A RESOURCE GUIDE
FOR BUILDING AN EMPLOYER
PARTNER ENGAGEMENT PLAN**

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HOW DO I KNOW THAT I'M READY?

This toolkit is intended to be used by program leaders who have some prior work-based learning (WBL) experience and are interested in expanding the scope and/or quality of their programs through improved employer partner engagement. Program leaders will know they are ready to target their employer partner engagement when:

They have an established scope and sequence for career awareness activities within their school or career and technical education (CTE) program

Student career development is an important element of a high-quality CTE program. Students enrolled in programs with high-quality career development activities are able to identify a personalized career plan related to their strengths, interests and abilities, and are informed about post high school education and training options that will help them achieve their career goals. Strong career readiness programs will have established relationships with local employer partners and offer activities, such as career fairs and opportunities that connect students with “real world” employment.

Many districts, schools and programs employ a software solution to assist staff with implementing career awareness and planning activities. The sponsor of this Toolkit, Xello, provides such solutions as do many other companies in the career development space.

If your school or program does not yet have a systematized way to introduce students to career awareness activities, consider reviewing these resources and working with your administration to develop an implementation plan before utilizing this toolkit:

- Explore free career awareness digital tools, like the [O*Net My Next Move](#) website and the Bureau of Labor Statistics [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#)
- Review free job readiness skills resources, like Accenture's [Skills to Succeed Academy](#)
- Browse ACTE's [student career development resources](#) webpage
- Watch a [webinar that highlights lessons learned from one district that launched a K-12 college and career readiness program](#) (Mansfield Independent School district, Texas)
- Read ACTE's whitepaper on [how career readiness technology tools can help schools more equitably deliver content to students](#)

They have existing relationships with some employer partners in their community

Educators regularly form relationships with external partners to support their work in the classroom. These interactions may come in the form of school volunteers, after-school program sponsors, field trip destinations and more. High-quality CTE programs approach business partnerships strategically; they ensure that partnerships are formed with a diverse range of stakeholders and utilize these partnerships to create programs of study relevant to their local workforce's current and future needs. In turn, these business partners support the program of study in tangible ways, such as offering WBL experiences for students.

If you do not yet have any strong employer partner relationships, consider the following actions before using this toolkit:

- **Connect with your school's Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or parent advisory group:** These groups are often willing to help connect teachers and school staff with local employers to support school projects or events.

- **Find information about your local workforce board:** Access the Department of Labor's [CareerOneStop](#) to help you locate a workforce board in your area.
- **Contact your local chamber of commerce or economic development office:** Like your local workforce board, Chambers of Commerce and economic development organizations are tuned into the workforce needs in your local community. They often host networking events where you can meet with local businesses and provide opportunities for you to join committees within their organizations related to education and workforce development.
- **Utilize an intermediary to assist in your outreach efforts, if available in your school district or community:** Intermediaries (or intermediary networks) support educator employer partnerships by acting as a liaison between the school and business. [Read more about intermediaries](#) (from AIR).

They are aware of the WBL continuum

Generally, WBL activities can be categorized as falling into one of three categories: 1) Career Awareness 2) Career Exploration or 3) Career Preparation. This toolkit is intended for program leaders who are interested in building capacity for career exploration-level activities.

Career awareness activities help students learn about career options, and are typically a one-time event (e.g., an annual career fair). Employer engagement for awareness activities is low, and thus these activities are a great place to start when working with a new employer partner.

Career exploration activities help students continue their awareness journey and include such activities as informational or mock interviews or job shadow experiences. The level of employer engagement is generally limited to a one-time event; however, exploration activities typically involve more preparation or planning for both the educator and employer partner, and often require a larger number of employer partners.

Career preparation experiences provide students an opportunity to apply skills that they have learned in an authentic workplace setting. Some examples include internships and youth-registered apprenticeships. These experiences take place over a longer period of time (up to a year or more in some cases) and require extensive involvement from both the educator and employer partner. With some career preparation activities, students may even earn workplace credentials.

The chart below provides examples of some of the more common types of activities associated with each of these categories, and the respective level of employer engagement required for each:

Career Awareness	Learning About College & Career	Guest speaker	
		Workplace tour	
		Career fair	
		Informal job shadow (with parent/guardian)	
Career Exploration	Learning About College & Career	Informational interview	
		Formal job shadow (with employer partner)	
		Mock interview	
		Mentorship	
		Service learning	
Career Preparation	Learning Through College & Career	Industry-driven project	
		Student-run / School-based enterprise	
		Externship	
		Entrepreneurship	
		Internship	
	Learning For College & Career	On-the-job training / Cooperative work experience	
		Clinical experience	
		Pre-apprenticeship	
		Registered apprenticeship	
		Supervised agricultural experience	

▲ Developed from materials from the [Iowa Work-Based Learning Newsletter \(September, 2018\)](#), [Virginia Department of Education High-Quality Work-Based Learning Guide](#), and the Tulare Kings College and Career Collaborative [resources webpage](#)

Because the level of engagement required for career preparation experiences is high, it is important for programs to start with awareness and activities that require less time and effort when establishing employer partnerships. Once these relationships are established, program staff can begin to scale up to internships and/or other career preparation-level experiences for their students—additional resources are listed below.

Resources for Career Preparation Activities

- **Review the state WBL resources and guides linked in Appendix B of this document:** States and localities often have specific requirements for career preparation-level WBL experiences like internships. Make sure you are aware of any policies and procedures that you must follow in your area.
- **Review apprenticeship resources and requirements:** The Department of Labor oversees registered and youth-registered apprenticeships at the federal level and provides many resources for educators via [Apprenticeship.gov](https://www.apprenticeship.gov).
- **Connect with the [WBL / Youth Apprenticeship \(YA\) Section of ACTE](#):** The WBL/YA Section is a part of the New and Related Services Division of ACTE and includes educators, counselors, WBL coordinators, and administrators. Members in this Section produce monthly virtual webinars and other professional development resources covering best practices in WBL.
- Browse the additional resources links in Appendix C of this document

They have the support of their administrators to increase the number of WBL opportunities offered

Perhaps it goes without saying, but administrator support is crucial for the expansion of any WBL program. Element 4 of ACTE's *Quality CTE Program of Study Framework* states that high-quality "CTE administrators ensure that other program staff have the time, resources and supports to implement each element of a high-quality program of study." This support includes both the business and community partnerships and WBL elements noted in ACTE's *Quality CTE Program of Study Framework*.

If you are unsure of your administration's understanding or support of your WBL program, consider meeting with them at the beginning of the school year to discuss the benefits of increasing participation in your program. Consider rallying support from your district-level CTE leadership as well.

They can easily identify and recruit staff to serve on a steering committee or advisory board

As highlighted in [this blog post from Xello](#), it is easy to identify early adopters of new concepts in the workplace. In the context of WBL, an early adopter might be a content area teacher who incorporates employability skills into their learning objectives, a school counselor who encourages their students to explore internship experiences during summer break, or a CTE teacher who uses industry partners to bring real world projects into their classrooms. If you are able to form an advisory board with a counselor, teacher, employer partner and other collaborators, you are ready to start using this toolkit.

FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

With the reauthorization of the 2006 Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act in 2018—the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V)—WBL has experienced a renewed interest among CTE programs. WBL was a key focus during reauthorization conversations, and for the first time, the law includes the following formal definition of WBL: “sustained interactions with industry or community professionals in real workplace settings, to the extent practicable, or simulated environments at an educational institution that foster in-depth, firsthand engagement with the tasks required in a given career field, that are aligned to curriculum and instruction.”

Congress also emphasized WBL throughout the law, including accountability and planning and uses of funds. Most notably, student participation in WBL is an option for the new program quality indicator introduced in Perkins V. For this indicator, states had to choose during the state plan process at least one of three indicators of program quality: student participation in WBL, student attainment of postsecondary credit during high school, or student attainment of a recognized postsecondary credential during high school. The WBL measure was by far the most popular, chosen by over half of all states. Other states are also planning to add the measure over time as their data capacity increases.

In the states reporting on this measure, significant attention over the past few years has been dedicated to operationalizing the definition of WBL and determining the intensity and duration of WBL that will satisfy the measure. Many states have also been working to increase the quality of WBL experiences as they increase the number of students who are exposed to these experiences.

Policymakers remain keenly interested in WBL across the country. At the federal level, apprenticeships and other WBL experiences are promoted by many Members of Congress. At the state level, [36 states enacted new policies](#) around industry partnerships and WBL in 2021, including numerous policies to expand access to WBL.

One reason that policymakers and educators are so interested in CTE is because of the significant benefits it provides learners, particularly those from historically marginalized groups and members of special populations. Research demonstrates that programs scaffolded by support services such as employability skills training and mentoring or coaching have positive impacts on learners with disabilities, students from economically disadvantaged families and at-risk learners. Paid WBL opportunities can also help learners from disadvantaged backgrounds by enabling them to combine earning an income with gaining skills and credentials.

ACTE's Quality CTE Program of Study Framework includes WBL as one of its 12 high-quality CTE elements. Educators and administrators who are interested in learning more can explore [the framework](#) and use the [self-evaluation instrument](#) to assess their program's current practices.

BUILDING BUY-IN: IDENTIFYING ADVOCATES TO SUPPORT THE VISION

Once your program is established and ready for a stronger and more formalized partnership with business and industry leaders in your community, it's important to build buy-in from those who can serve as advocates. We recommend the following process for assessing your starting point:

Three Levels of Advocacy

	Individual		Organizational		Institutional
One person who cares and acts		An organization that cares and acts		A community that cares and acts	
Limited support based on the individual's resources		Greater levels of support based on the organization's resources		Significant levels of support based on multiple stakeholders' resources	
Transactional and not sustainable		Transactional with limited sustainability		Strategic and sustainable	

▲ Created by Stephen Casa, Workplace Learning Coordinator, Ulster BOCES

Your program is at the individual advocacy level if you are the only one invested in it. We recommend growing a larger number of advocates who understand the benefits of greater employer involvement. As the number of individuals contributing to the support and success of the program expands, your WBL program is more likely to move to the organizational, and then institutional, levels.

Administrators, educators, counselors, business leaders, parents and students are all key audiences who need to understand the program's value and their roles and responsibilities associated with involvement. Spend some time thinking about who you need to approach and how to build the buy-in *before reaching out to them to help advocate, support and grow your program.*

The following are a few considerations and tools to think about as you begin to study and plan your outreach:

Initial outreach considerations

- **Audiences:** Define the various audiences you need to approach to inform and gain support. Who are these audiences and the influencers you might identify to start the conversation and help spread the message once you have them “on board?”
- **Program values:** Identify the important aspects of the program and what it provides, especially related to individual audiences.
- **Address the why:** While a general understanding of the WBL program is important, such as “what” the program looks like and “who” can participate, the “why” may be the most important question to answer. Spend some time thinking about “why” your program is valuable to students and the community it serves..

Potential communication tools

- **Program description:** A brief but informative description of the program can be a useful starting place to help communicate the WBL program. The written description should provide a concise overview of the program suitable for a general audience and offer reference of its value. Keep the description to no more than a single page.
- **Elevator speech:** Similar to the program description, develop an elevator speech that you can use to describe and convey the program to others quickly and succinctly. It can later be specialized according to the specific audience you are addressing. Watch [this video](#) for more information.
- **Q&A:** As you move from the individual to organizational and institutional phases of your work, you will begin to identify routine questions. Consider developing a Q&A to respond to these questions in a uniform manner. Examples of common question topics to consider include the following:
 - **Funding:** Why is the WBL program receiving funding when there are so many other worthy priorities? While this question might be rephrased, inquiries about limited school/district resources come up often in the educational setting.
 - **Student benefit:** How will my daughter/son benefit from this program? This question may also be asked from educators and in other ways (e.g., Why is Jane/John allowed to work in the morning/afternoon rather than be in school?)
 - **Return on investment:** How will my participation benefit me/my company long term?
- **Social media:** Social media is another way that you can communicate about your WBL program with stakeholders, and can be an especially useful way to connect with new employer partners. There are many guides to using social media in a professional capacity, including [ACTE's tips for social media advocacy](#). Before you start using social media to promote your program, make sure that you are informed of any policies that your school or district might have regarding appropriate social media use.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Building Strong Connections Through LinkedIn

TONY TRAPP

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LinkedIn is an invaluable tool for professionals, including educators, looking to expand their network. I use it mostly to “celebrate” professionally and promote my school and students by sharing success stories and our CTE business and industry partnerships.

Following are a few tips to create and maintain a meaningful social presence on LinkedIn through your personal profile:

Create Your Profile

- Add a good quality headshot of yourself, preferably one taken by a professional photographer. Smile and look happy!
- Brand your program by using your institution’s logo (with permission) as your background photo
- Develop a headline/tagline that helps people to quickly learn about who you are and what you do that’s important
- Provide details such as your location, description of your current position, and previous work history. These details provide opportunities for connecting with someone



Contact and Connect

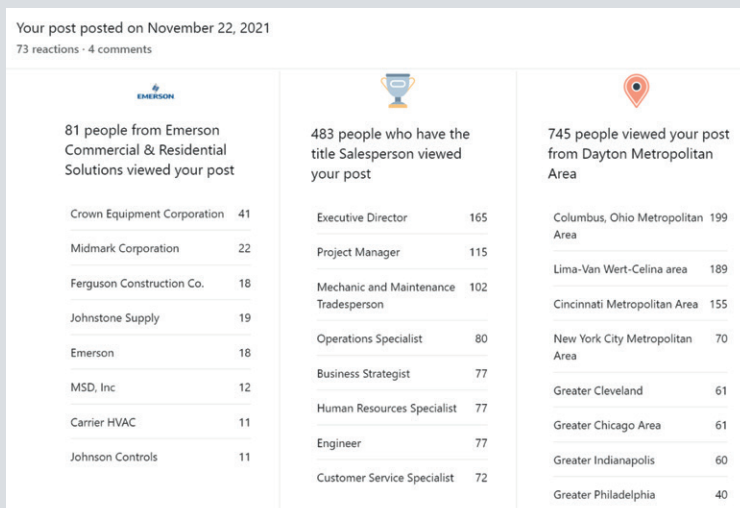
- Start posting and talking about your programs and your partners. During a recent meeting with one of our business partners, the HR representative thanked me for the posts. People do like to see themselves in pictures!
- Request a connection to business partners, funders and others who would benefit from learning about your work
- Allow and receive endorsements for certain skills, by simply hitting an endorse button
- Join Groups to share your interests and allow additional ways to connect with people with similar interests
- Always observe professional etiquette to develop and maintain a professional reputation

Update Content Regularly

- Keep your details up to date so your followers will want to click on, read, and share
- Keep your audience in mind (parents, staff and business/industry partners). You’ll need to tailor your content to match their interests
- Post when you are at business meetings or other events to increase your visibility. I often present at regional and national conferences and get a nice comment after the event that the person follows my posts on LinkedIn.
- Share job postings and position openings from your organization.

Monitor your performance

- After you start posting, don't forget to look to identify how your post is performing. LinkedIn is more than just "likes." The data and analytics provide leads and information on content that is resonating.



Sample of analytics



◀ Sample of an entry posted during an observation of a WBL student when I ran into two former students working maintenance at the same at Midmark, a medical company.

Organize, Build and Expand Your Network

- **Ask people to “Follow, Share, Like and Endorse”** to move beyond the individual advocacy level.
- **Develop a team:** Many hands make light work. Whether in formal or informal roles, invite advocates to join your effort to help further engage and build support. Include educators but also parents and business leaders. Identify the specific roles they might play to advance the work of WBL (e.g., A business leader could identify other employers to approach or parents could reach out to communicate about the benefits of the program to students)
- **Consider periodic check-ins, meetings or a process** to keep your team and supporters notified about what is happening and the progress of the work.

LinkedIn has made a direct impact on our program. One example: a few years back I posted about our Manufacturing and Machining program receiving a grant check in the amount of \$8,000 from the HAAS Foundation to assist our high school students in postsecondary education and tool purchases. A few hours after I made the post I received a message in my LinkedIn profile from Michael Ayers, who is the current President at Applied Mechanical Systems, Inc. Michael stated he had just read about the post to help students and we set up a meeting where I provided a tour of our campus and a few programs that could help his skilled trades workforce needs. As we were touring the campus we continued to talk about the post that I had made a few days prior. He shared that he had recently taken over his father's company after his recent death and wanted to do more to help the next generation of students become better employees. As our tour was close to finishing, he handed me an envelope including a company check for \$8,000 matching the grant donation to support students. Not every LinkedIn connection will be as impactful; it's a great example of the potential of social media.

For additional resources regarding community outreach, visit ACTE's Building Community Support page. <https://www.acteonline.org/media-community-outreach/building-community-support/>

Following are resources that have been compiled to help you and your team as you communicate with four important audiences that every program will encounter:

Resources for Building Buy-In from Employer Partners

Employers are a key audience that will need to be fully on board if your WBL program is to be successful. While WBL may be an investment for a business in the beginning, consider how it can address long-term skills shortages or build a talent pipeline.

- Review a flyer from The American Association of School Administrators and Corporate Voices for Working Families titled [“Common Goals and Unique Strengths: Education and Business Partnerships”](#)
- Read ACTE’s [Taking Business to School whitepapers](#), sponsored by Xello, to learn from districts across the country who have established successful and robust employer partnerships
- Share [ACTE’s WBL flyer highlighting case studies](#) from successful WBL programs around the country
- Share ACTE’s [WBL advocacy one-pager](#)
- Share ACTE’s *What is CTE?* Infographic ([free download](#))
- Share ACTE’s *A Guide to Understanding CTE* https://www.acteonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/CTE%20Guide_%20Final%20Version.pdf
- Watch Ford Next Generation’s [Reverse Job Shadow video](#) to learn how bringing business partners into the classroom can help build buy-in from teachers, students and business partners
- Review other resources such as JFF’s “Why Work-based Learning?” <https://www.jff.org/what-we-do/impact-stories/center-for-apprenticeship-and-work-based-learning/benefits-work-based-learning/>

Resources for Building Buy-In from Counselors

School counselors can serve as important advocates to advance WBL but will need to be informed on the value of WBL to understand how it links to students’ career development and planning for college and career.

The American School Counselor Association has several documents that provide foundational understanding and background about their view of the school counseling profession, especially as it relates to CTE and student success:

- The School Counselor and CTE <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/Standards-Positions/Position-Statements/ASCA-Position-Statements/The-School-Counselor-and-Career-and-Technical-Educ>
- The Role of the School Counselors <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/getmedia/ee8b2e1b-d021-4575-982c-c84402cb2cd2/Role-Statement.pdf>
- ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards and Competencies <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/getmedia/a8d59c2c-51de-4ec3-a565-a3235f3b93c3/SC-Competencies.pdf>
- ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/getmedia/a8d59c2c-51de-4ec3-a565-a3235f3b93c3/SC-Competencies.pdf>

ACTE also provides these school counselor resources that help convey the importance of WBL related to students’ futures:

- Sector Sheets <https://www.acteonline.org/why-cte/economic-impacts/sector-sheets/>
- Student Career Development series, sponsored by Xello, <https://www.acteonline.org/why-cte/student-career-development/>

Resources for Building Buy-In from Students and Parents

Students need to understand the value of the WBL program as it relates to their future and how it can help them gain skills, build their professional networks and secure future employment in their career of choice. Note that it's important to include high performing students as well as students who do not perform well in the traditional academic setting; they often have the most to gain in WBL environments where the learning is more hands on and visual.

Research supports parental and family involvement as an important factor related to student academic performance. Remember to consider underserved families and students and that not every student comes from a traditional two-parent home.

Use the following resources to support your conversations and engagement with students and parents:

- **Include students related to your WBL conversations and initiatives.** ACTE and Advance CTE's publication, *With Learners, Not For Learners: A Toolkit for Elevating Learner Voice in CTE* provides a comprehensive understanding on learner voice and how to engage students
- **Strategize about how best to reach families and communities** by reviewing ACTE's publication, *Engaging Families and Communities to Support Special and Underserved Populations in CTE* <https://www.acteonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/ACTE-Engaging-Families-Communities-Sept2021.pdf>
- **Highlight student success stories.** If you have had a particularly successful student outcome from a WBL experience, ask students to share about their experience with your audiences. A short video or written interview can help illustrate why WBL matters.
 - Georgia's WBL/YAP Student Success Stories <https://gawbl.org/student-spotlight>
 - Future Ready Iowa Success Stories <https://clearinghouse.futurereadyiowa.gov/success-stories/>
- As applicable, **discuss with your school counseling team how WBL is presented** when talking about graduation requirements with students and parents. In [this graduation requirements planning tool from Oklahoma](#), you can see how they have incorporated new [ICAP requirements](#) (which include WBL opportunities) on page two of the document.
- **Conduct an internal assessment** of students and parents to better understand the existing attitudes around CTE and WBL

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Taking Business to School: Creating “Buy-in” for Work-Based Learning

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If we hope to widen the scope of understanding for what we in the Work-Based Learning (WBL) community do, we must learn to create “buy-in.” When first employed in my current position, I identified three groups where “buy-in” was essential: counselors, teachers and industry partners.

If I can create “buy-in” with the counselors, I can effectively reach all students because counselors are the first points of contact related to schedule openings. But, counselors have to see the value of WBL and recommend that students enroll. To generate “buy-in” among counselors, I implemented a few strategies: I catered lunch with a taco and burrito buffet when I met to discuss WBL with them so that they would know that they were important to me. During the meeting, I shared my vision for WBL: how it would serve students, build our community and retain our local talent. Do you want to win over your overworked counselors—find a way to make their job easier. I informed the counselors that all the extra ‘things’ related to the program would be “off their plates.” I gave them business cards with a QR code on the back linked to a digital program application. Whether the student was interested in WBL or just had an open block and wanted help planning their schedule, the QR code collected their information, and I handled all the course registration and acceptance letters. Once students were enrolled, counselors could see how much of a value-add WBL offered. Not only were we building our community’s workforce from the inside out and giving our students opportunities never before available, students’ grades and student attendance were also better.

Secondly, I needed “buy-in” from the CTE teachers. Before my tenure, the WBL program had been mismanaged and the perception was that WBL was poaching the best kids from CTE programs, which diluted their enrollment and made their programs look less dynamic. The teachers were right! There had been no vision for WBL and no intentional effort to develop partnerships and establish talent pipelines between our robust CTE programs and industry in our community. I established a robust connection between an instructional program and an employer where the student became a walking commercial for CTE. The organic marketing drove enrollment and teachers eventually understood that WBL was not competing with the CTE programs in the school/district; rather, WBL was the capstone for CTE. As soon as teachers began realizing a return on that investment, whether through increased industry partners or increased student enrollment, I had my “buy-in”!

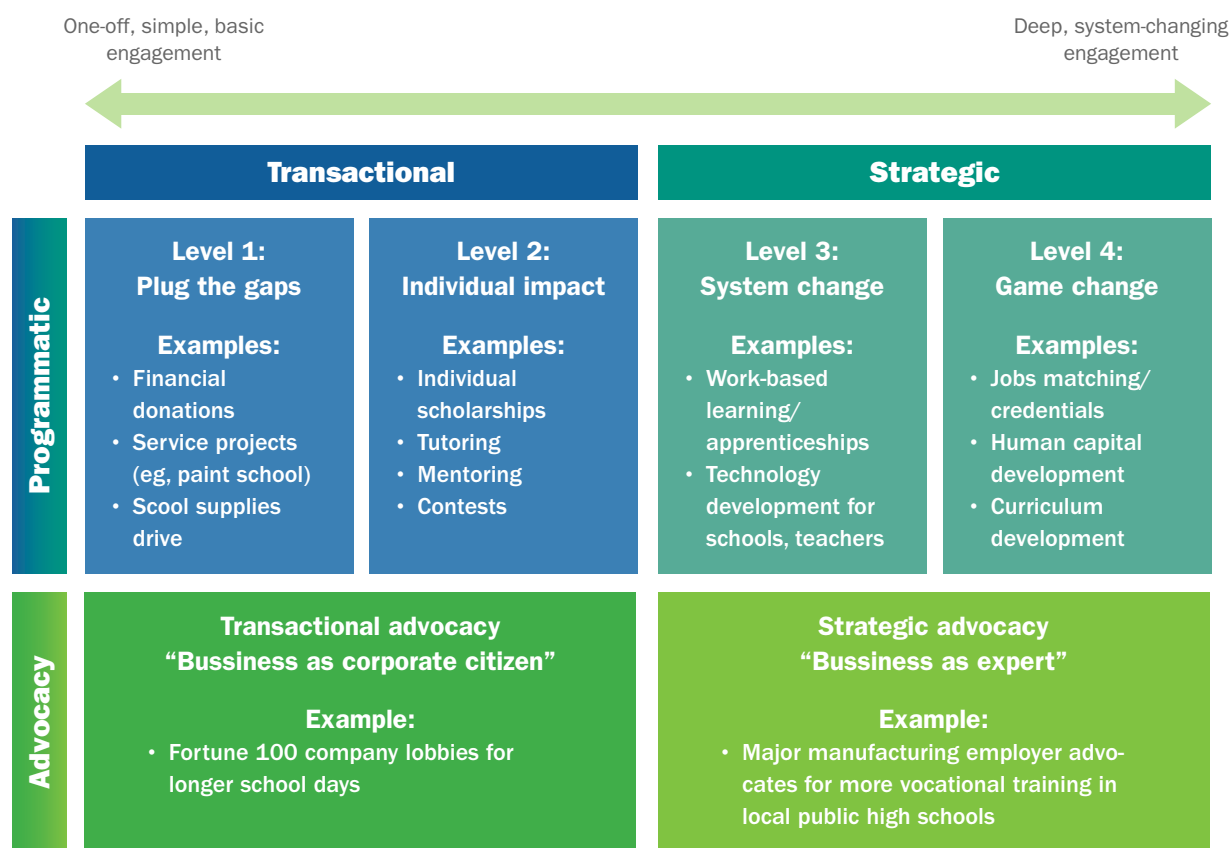
Last but not least, I needed “buy-in” from my local industry and employers. A good WBL program should seek “buy-in” from business partners, not “charity.” I have noticed that eventually, employers all get back to a conversation about the bottom line or competitive advantage. To generate talent pipelines between CTE programs and business and industry, employers must see a benefit for them. Demonstrating success is the key. Pour everything you have into making one partnership work; then, leverage that partnership and the success with other employers. Once proof-of-concept is established, and other companies see their competitors gaining an advantage in access to talent, hiring and employee retention, they become very interested in a partnership. Do you want “buy-in” with industry and employers, demonstrate that you can give them a competitive advantage through access to talented and often-credentialed students two years earlier than all their competitors!

SETTING GOALS

With buy-in established from key stakeholders, the next step for a program interested in implementing a change is goal setting. This process requires that the group build consensus around priorities. While it can be challenging work, this effort can lead to big wins. For example, with intentional goal setting, [St. Paul Public Schools in Minnesota](#) was able to develop a K-12 college and career readiness program for their district that ensures that all of its students have a Personal Learning Plan by the time they enter the ninth grade.

However, to be successful a goal does not have to be at the district-level. Small goals can help a program make incremental progress towards system change.

As discussed previously, you might be interested in moving from an individual level towards an organizational level of advocacy for WBL. You and your stakeholders might also consider what types of business partnerships you hope to achieve. Consider the figure below, which presents different modes of education and employer engagement:



▲ Figure 1. Different Modes of Business Engagement. Graph from Olga Berlinsky, Aligned Pathways: Fostering Strategic Business Engagement in Education. (Harvard Kennedy School, June 2014) [Original source](#)

As you prepare to convene your advisory committee and start the goal-setting process, one tool that many find useful is [SMART goal setting](#). SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-based.

Here is a sample SMART goal for a WBL program:

I want to offer a new mock interview experience for 50 students enrolled in a CTE class over a period of one week to help them prepare for their workplace readiness assessment by April 30.

	Feature	Evidence	Description
S	Specific	<i>I want to offer a new mock interview experience</i>	The type of WBL experience is defined
M	Measurable	<i>For 50 students enrolled in a CTE class</i>	The number of students is measurable
A	Achievable	<i>Over a period of one week</i>	The total number of interviews is spread out over a week, making the goal more achievable (10 per day)
R	Relevant	<i>To help them prepare for their workplace readiness assessment</i>	The activity is relevant to the competencies assessed on an upcoming assessment
T	Time-based	<i>By April 30</i>	There is a defined date by which the mock interview experience must be offered

You can use the chart below to write a sample goal for your WBL program and determine if it meets the SMART criteria:

My goal for my WBL program is to...		
S	Specific	
M	Measurable	
A	Achievable	
R	Relevant	
T	Time-based	

It is also appropriate to think about how you set goals in other areas of your professional practice. For example, you are likely familiar with goal setting as it relates to your evaluation cycle. Use any tools or strategies that work for you as you consider how to set goals to improve your WBL program.

Once you have identified your preferred goal-setting strategy, consider the following questions:

- Who in my school currently participates in WBL? Is this population representative of the larger school population? Why or why not?
- What barriers might exist that prevent students from participating in WBL? How might we address them?
- How are any current WBL experiences connected to CTE or other academic courses?
- Are the current WBL experiences connected to or reflective of the workforce needs in my community?

ENSURING A HIGH-QUALITY AND RESPONSIVE PROGRAM

High-quality WBL programs have common elements that support success, such as promising WBL examples from other institutions and state and local requirements and standards that ensure program quality, participation and effectiveness. In addition to analyzing these common elements and setting goals, plan to measure and collect corresponding data that illustrate program effectiveness. While certain data collection may already be required, additional benchmarks should be considered to help tell the full story of your program. Remember that each particular audience will view success through their own lens.




Federal and state laws and, more recently, the national dialogue, have emphasized the importance of inclusion, access, equity and diversity. Consider how your program is supporting all student populations and craft goals that connect to the issues of expanding program reach if you currently are not able to serve all students. Even if your program only serves a small percentage of students through WBL, data can help communicate the need for program expansion in the future.

Prior to collecting data and launching any new WBL initiatives, consider the following questions to help devise rubrics and metrics:

- Can we collect/do we have access to the data needed?
- Is there a systematic process that ensures data will be easy to collect?
- What requirements and limits are there related to sharing data (e.g., WIOA, Perkins, FERPA, state and local laws)?
- How will the data be collected and who will be responsible for the data storage?
- To what extent are my employer partners able to collect and share data of students in the workplace?

Think about the best way to share data, ensuring transparency across all audiences, and using charts and graphs to communicate relevant information in a user-friendly and easy-to-read format. You might propose producing a visually impactful glossy flyer or online annual report for your business leaders and others whose investment and time in the program are especially important. Or, weave in WBL into other reports issued by your school/institution, school district or other governing body.

Following are examples of the types of data and information that might be useful for various audiences.

 Audience	 Area of Interest	 Data to Consider
Employers	Difficult to fill occupations within their companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of students transitioning to employment • How “skills gap” areas are impacted
Parents and Students	Outlook related to student futures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry-based credentials earned • Impact related to high school graduation and postsecondary transition rates • Transition to part-time and full-time employment
Teachers and Administrators	Government accountability measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disaggregation of student populations data (e.g., racial, sex, students with disabilities)
Counselors	Better understanding of CTE related to careers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of industry sectors included in the WBL program • Alignment of programs to local, regional and national labor market information

Resources to support your work related to high-quality WBL programming and data collection:

- High-quality CTE benchmarks—Consider the criteria included in the Business and Community Partnerships and Work-based Learning elements of ACTE’s [High-Quality CTE Program of Study](#)
- Learn about the state role in WBL data by reviewing the Department of Education’s Collecting Work-based Learning Data Toolkit <https://cte.ed.gov/toolkit/collecting.html>
- Some state and local educational agencies provide rubrics that programs can use to assess their effectiveness. Here is one example from Rhode Island: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59a81489579fb39e3ef2232f/t/5f875e5e-a687e63c1e9283e9/1602707038670/RIDE+WBL+Rubric_v9_Final.pdf
- Education Development Center has produced a *Work-based Learning Data Collection Toolkit for Educators and Researchers* https://www.edc.org/sites/default/files/uploads/Workbased_Learning_Data_Collection_Toolkit_EDC_2022.pdf
- Review the Data Quality Campaign/Learning Heroes/National PTA *Data Collection Toolkit Disaggregated Data: Not Just a Box Checking Exercise* <https://dataqualitycampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/DQC-Disagg-Data-10082019.pdf>
- WBL reports—While these reports were not produced by local programs, the same principles can be applied for a similar (and shorter) report
- Nevada Department of Education *Work-based Learning and Industry Recognized Credential Earner Report 2018-2020* https://doe.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/ndedoenvgov/content/Boards_Commissions_Councils/State_Board_of_Education/2020/December/WBL_Report_2018_2020_ADA.pdf
- MassHire Cape & Islands Workforce Board Annual Report <https://issuu.com/alisoncarondesign/docs/annualreport21>

SAMPLE WBL PROJECT PLAN

This section of the toolkit is a step-by-step five-phase sample project plan with action items for a new WBL event. The project plan phases follow:

1. **Gather information and assemble your advisory committee**
2. **Convene your advisory committee and develop your outreach plan**
3. **Reach out to employers and plan your event**
4. **Execute your new WBL activity**
5. **Evaluate the success of your activity and plan to move forward**

Before You Get Started

Phase one involves gathering information and identifying members for an advisory committee. We suggest that you include the following stakeholders in developing your employer partner outreach plan. Depending on where you are employed (school vs. district office) and the size of your school or district, your list might look different.

Suggested Advisory Committee Members

- **School counselor:** Invite a school counselor who works with students in the grade you hope to target, or a college and career counselor who works with all students.
- **CTE teacher:** If you are creating or expanding a WBL experience that is tied to a specific course invite that CTE teacher to join your advisory committee.
- **School administrator:** If you have an administrator who oversees your CTE programs invite that person to join your advisory committee.
- **General education teacher:** Consider inviting a general education teacher who you know to be a champion for CTE and/or new school initiatives.
- **Special education teacher:** Consider inviting a special education resource teacher who works closely with your CTE programs.
- **Diversity, equity and inclusion specialist:** This individual might have a different title in your school or district.
- **Transition coordinator:** This individual works with students with disabilities to ensure they have a transition plan as they look towards high school graduation and can bring valuable information to the team regarding how to best support students with disabilities in the workplace.
- **Employer partner:** Invite a current employer partner who you have worked with successfully on other WBL activities.
- **Parent or community liaison:** As mentioned earlier, parents are crucial to getting student buy-in for WBL. Look to your PTA or other parent organizations in your school for recommendations.

Brainstorm who you will invite and add additional individuals you would like to include in the spreadsheet below:

Role	Name/Email	Planning Period
School Counselor		
CTE Teacher		
Administrator		
General Education Teacher		
Special Education Teacher		
DEI Specialist		
Transition Coordinator		
Employer Partner		
Parent/Community Liaison		

The RASCI Method

The RASCI method defines individuals involved in a project plan as Responsible, Accountable, Supportive, Consulted, or Informed. These roles are further defined in the chart below:

R	Responsible	Responsible for completing a task assigned or for the completion of the project
A	Accountable	Has ultimate control over the project and related resources
S	Supportive	Provides assistance to the Responsible team members
C	Consulted	Gives advice to the Responsible team members
I	Informed	Needs to be kept in the loop at all stages of the project

In each project phase, you will find a RASCI table. The RASCI table is filled out for you in phase one as an example, but is left blank in the subsequent phases. Use this blank table to define the roles and responsibilities of your advisory committee members that are necessary to complete that phase of the project plan.

Alternatively, you can use this method to assign roles and responsibilities for specific tasks, as seen in the example below:

Tasks	Status									
		WBL Coordinator	School Counselor	CTE Teacher	Administrator	General Education Teacher	DEI Coordinator	Transition Coordinator	Employer partner	Parent/Community Liaison
Invite & convene advisory committee		R			A					
Schedule monthly advisory committee meetings		R	I	I	A	I	I	I	I	I
Survey student interest in WBL		R	R	R	A	S	S	S	I	S

Of course, there are many methods for managing a project and you will need to find and use the one that works best for you.

Free Digital Project Management Tools

- [Airtable](#) (free for up to 5 users per team)
- [Trello](#) (up to 10 boards free)
- [How to use Google tools for project management](#)
- [How to use Microsoft OneNote and Outlook for project management](#)

Project Phase 1: Gather information and assemble your advisory committee

The RASCI chart is filled in below with an example of how you might assign roles for Phase 1:

R	Work-based learning coordinator or supervising teacher
A	School administrator
S	District-level or state-level WBL / CTE staff or technical assistance provider
C	School or college and Career counselor
I	Other school staff, especially CTE staff whose students would participate in WBL

1. Locate, download and review any state and/or local WBL guides or toolkits
2. Research your local workforce board, chamber of commerce and economic development office, and take note of relevant points of contact and upcoming events
3. Create a list of existing WBL and CCR activities currently happening in your school / program
4. Develop an elevator pitch or mission statement for your WBL program
5. Use the advisory committee planning sheet to brainstorm your committee members
6. Send a letter to your committee members inviting them to participate
7. Set a date, create and share an agenda for your first advisory committee meeting
8. Consider the type(s) of WBL experience you are interested in offering / expanding

Optional: Conduct an internal assessment of the attitudes and understanding around WBL in your school. Share this survey with students, parents, teachers (CTE and non-CTE) and administrators.

Optional: Develop a brochure, webpage or other communication tool to share with potential stakeholders

Additional questions to consider during Step 1:

- Who is my target student audience? (ex. ninth grade students, students enrolled in a specific CTE program)
- How will I connect this new WBL event to existing WBL events and/or experiences?
- How can I align this new WBL event with existing courses and/or graduation requirements?

Supportive Documents for Step 1

- [Article on “How to Design an Agenda for an Effective Meeting”](#) from the Harvard Business Review
- [Advisory committee resources](#)
 - [CTE Program Advisory Committee Handbook](#), South Dakota Department of Education, Division of Career and Technical Education—includes sample invitation, thank-you note and agenda
 - [Sample Advisory Committee letters](#), Colorado Department of Career and Technical Education

Project Phase 2: Convene Your Advisory Committee and Develop Your Plan

Assign roles for this phase by filling in the RASCI chart below:

R	
A	
S	
C	
I	

Once you have assembled your committee, you are ready to take these next steps:

1. Utilize your preferred goal-setting strategy to decide on which new WBL event to offer
2. Select a date to execute the new event and build a calendar with benchmark dates to ensure that you will meet your goal event date
3. Develop a roles and responsibilities chart and assign tasks to committee members
4. Establish a regular meeting cadence and send out calendar reminders
5. Refine your elevator pitch, program description and/or other communication tools
6. Decide on an outreach strategy
 - a. Identify outreach method, e.g., phone calls, emails, in-person meetings, etc.
 - b. Clarify team roles in outreach
 - c. Select materials to use for each type of communication method
 - d. Identify target employer partners
 - e. Decide on where and how the details of your communication efforts will be stored and shared with the committee

Optional: Practice your elevator pitch or other in-person communication at an advisory committee meeting

Optional: Develop a social media strategy for your new WBL event

Additional questions to consider during Phase 2:

- What is our team's capacity given our existing workload?
- What time of year makes the most sense for us to host our new WBL event?
- Who else in our school (outside of the advisory committee) needs to be aware of our plan so that it can be successfully executed?
- How will we handle and keep track of student recruitment for and participation in this event? This might involve using your CCR software solution, if available and applicable.
- How many employer partners will we need on board to execute our new WBL event?

Supportive Documents for Phase 2

- Sample RASCI chart for assigning roles and responsibilities
- [Xello roles and responsibilities matrix](#) for WBL
- Sample planning calendar (Appendix A)

Project Phase 3: Outreach to employers and plan your event

Assign roles for this phase by filling in the RASCI chart below:

R	
A	
S	
C	
I	

Initial Outreach Phase

1. Develop a schedule and check-in points for event planning and employer partner outreach efforts to keep track of progress
2. Share your event planning and employer partner outreach efforts with the larger school community via announcements at staff meetings and parent or community meetings
3. Keep track of successful conversations and follow up with thank-you notes and next steps for interested employer partners
 - a. As needed, host meetings with those partners using a formalized agenda
4. Build your employer partner list / database as outlined in Step 2

Optional: Attend a meeting or networking event with your chamber of commerce or economic development office to promote your new outreach plan and upcoming WBL event

Optional: Highlight your outreach efforts and event on your school's website or other social media platforms

Event Planning Phase

Once you have a solid list of employer partners, you are ready to finalize the details of your event.

1. Identify logistics needed for the event: Reserve a location, set up the location space, arrange transportation to and from the event, coordinate student schedules, complete required paperwork, etc.
2. Provide regular updates on the event and keep partners, students, parents, and/or teachers informed of their roles and responsibilities
 - a. Host information session(s) for students and parents to prepare them to participate in the event
 - b. Give employer partners plenty of lead time for any requests for deliverables
 - c. As appropriate, host an orientation or overview of the event for employer partners to answer any questions they might have
3. Develop a contingency plan in case employer partners are unable to participate at the last minute
4. Continue to define and assign roles and responsibilities to advisory committee members as event plans are solidified, including day-of event roles

Optional: Invite members of the school board, chamber of commerce, economic development office, or local press to attend the event

Additional questions to consider during Phase 3:

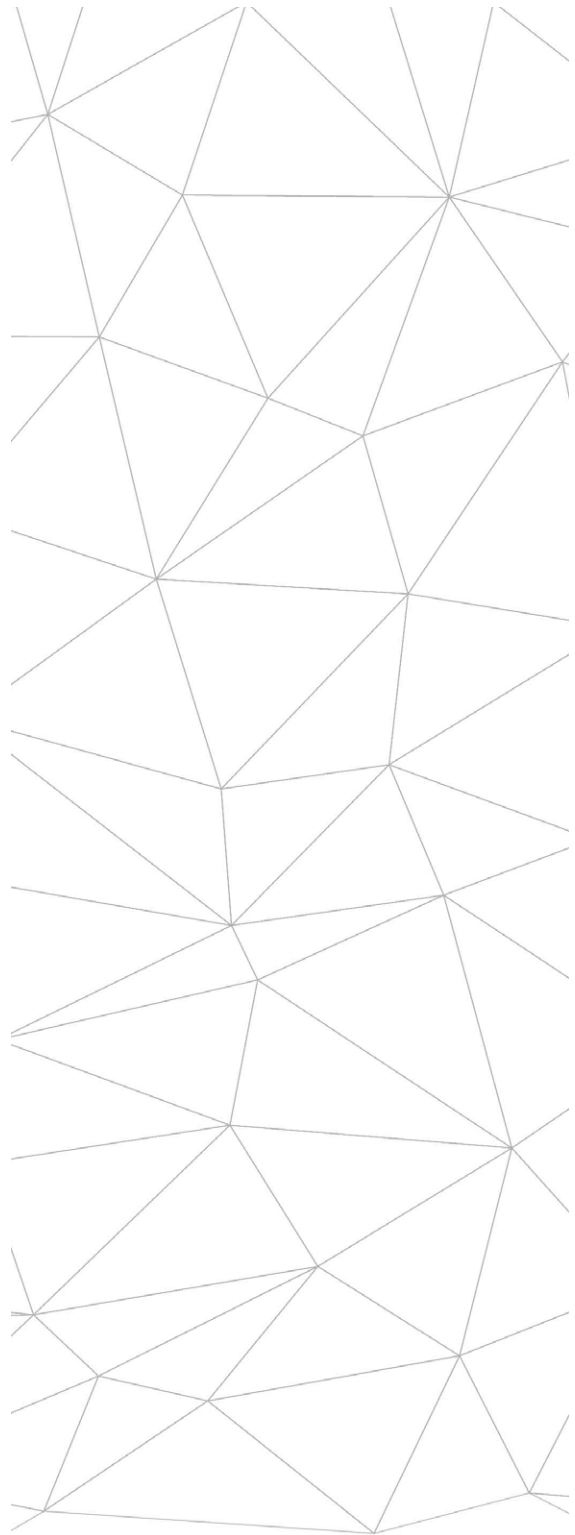
- What follow-up questions are being asked regularly that we could address in our initial outreach communications?
- What are your employer partners' concerns? How can we address those partnership concerns?
- What are your employer partners excited about when considering your partnership?
- What questions do students, parents and other school stakeholders have about their role in this event?
- What strategies do we have in place for communicating with the school community that we could use for this event? What new strategies might we need to develop?

Supportive Documents for Phase 3

- Review NAF's [Advisory Board resources](#)—while some of the items included are specific to NAF Academies, many of the resources on this list can be easily adapted or modified
- Read about [partnership check-in meeting tips](#) (from the Youth Development Executives of Kings County)

Project Phase 4: Execute your new WBL event

The execution phase will vary depending on what type of WBL event you have planned. Roles and responsibilities during the event should be determined during phase 3 of your project plan.



Project Phase 5: Evaluate the success of your event and plan to move forward

Assign roles for this phase by filling in the RASCI chart below:

R	
A	
S	
C	
I	

1. Send thank-you notes to those who supported the event, including employer partners and school staff
 - a. As appropriate, have students send thank-you notes as well
2. Gather feedback on the event from students, school community members, parents and employer partners
 - a. Ask those with positive feedback to provide testimonials for use in promoting future events
3. Review and analyze the data with the advisory committee
4. Use results of data analysis to set goals for the future
5. Decide on how and where the data and documentation from this event will be stored for future use

Optional: Think about how your school's software solutions (information systems, college and career readiness platform) could help track your data/student involvement.

Optional: Invite employer partners to a debrief meeting to share their thoughts about the event

Optional: Complete a SWOT analysis of your event with your advisory committee

Optional: Highlight the successful outcomes of your event via social media or local media outlets (press releases); share the successful outcomes with your school board.

Additional questions to consider during Phase 5:

- Which students participated in this event? Were there any student groups/populations who were underrepresented or not represented? What can we do to make the event more inclusive moving forward?
- What about the event made our advisory committee feel successful?
- What about the event was challenging for our advisory committee?
- What does the data tell us about how prepared our students are for this type of WBL event?

Supportive Documents for Phase 5

- Sample SWOT analysis (Appendix A)

APPENDIX A: ADDITIONAL PROGRAM PLAN RESOURCES

Sample Planning Calendar—College and Career Fair

<p>August / September</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solicit membership for the staff planning committee • Assign roles 	<p>October</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select date for the event and get approval from your admin team • Draft marketing materials for your event 	<p>November</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize marketing materials (get approval if needed) to send to potential partners • Ask the admin team for a spot on the agenda at your December staff meeting
<p>December</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share plans for the event at your staff meeting • Distribute suggested email or letter to teachers and ask for their help with soliciting partners for the event • Identify spaces and other logistical needs for the event: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where will your tables be set up? • Will breakfast or lunch be provided for participants? • What additional spaces or resources might be needed on the day of the event? 	<p>January</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check on the list of registered participants • Send a reminder email to staff to share and recruit participants 	<p>February</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create documents for students to use during the event • Confirm participation with all registered individuals
<p>March</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize plans for setup with admin and necessary building staff • Share student paperwork with homeroom teachers 	<p>April</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host College and Career Expo (we typically aim for the first week or two in April, depending on when our spring break occurs that year) • Request feedback from students, partners and staff on the event 	<p>May/June</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review feedback from students and partners • Take notes on ideas for the next event • Ensure that copies of all event materials are saved and shared

APPENDIX B: STATE WBL GUIDES AND INFORMATION

Alabama Work-Based Learning Manual	Hawaii Partnerships for Education Work-Based Learning webpage	Michigan Work-Based Learning Guide for Schools and Businesses	North Dakota Work-based Learning Guidance	Utah Work-Based Learning Manual
Alaska Work-Based Learning Guide	Idaho Next Steps Idaho website	Minnesota CTE Work-Based Learning webpage	Ohio Work-Based Learning for Schools and Educators	Vermont Work-Based Learning Manual
Arizona Work-Based Learning Guide	Illinois Work-Based Learning Innovation Network	Mississippi Work-Based Learning Teacher Resource Guide	Oklahoma Work-Based Learning Guide	Virginia Work-Based Learning Guide
Arkansas Work-Based Learning webpage	Indiana Work-Based Learning website	Montana Work-Based Learning Manual	Oregon Career Preparation and Training webpage	Washington Work-Based Learning webpage
California Work Experience Education Guide	Iowa Work-Based Learning website	Nebraska Workplace Experiences for Nebraska website	Pennsylvania Work-Based Learning Toolkit	West Virginia Experiential Learning Guide
Colorado Roadmap to Work-Based Learning	Kansas Work-Based Learning Digital Reference Guide	Nevada Guide to Work-Based Learning	Rhode Island Work-Based Learning Implementation Toolkit	Wisconsin Work-Based Learning webpage
Connecticut Work-Based Learning Manual	Kentucky Work-Based Learning Manual	New Hampshire Work-Based Learning webpage	South Carolina Work-Based Learning Implementation Guidelines	Wyoming Work-Based Learning Guide
Delaware Office of Work-Based Learning webpage	Louisiana Work-Based Learning webpage	New Jersey Work-Based Learning webpage	South Dakota Career Launch SD Work-Based Learning Toolkit	District of Columbia Work-Based Learning Continuum
Florida Work-Based & Experiential Learning webpage	Maryland Work-Based Learning Continuum	New York CTE Technical Assistance Center of NY Work-Based Learning webpage	Tennessee Work-Based Learning Policy Guide	
Georgia Work-Based Learning website	Massachusetts Work-Based Learning Plan Resource Guide	North Carolina A Toolkit & Guide to Work-Based Learning in North Carolina	Texas Work-based Learning webpage	

APPENDIX C: LINKS TO ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Policy Resources

- [Connecting the Classroom to Careers: A Comprehensive Guide to the State's Role in Work-Based Learning](#) (CCSSO, Advance CTE, New Skills for Youth)
- [Work-Based Learning | Advance CTE \(careertech.org\)](#)

WBL Resources, Guides and Toolkits

- [Work-based Learning Framework](#) from Jobs for the Future
- [FAQs re: Work-Based Learning Guidelines for Youth](#) (Department of Labor, recently updated)
- [Work-Based Learning \(WBL\) Tool Kit](#) (Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education—includes activities and state examples for creating a WBL strategy)
- [NAF Guide to Work-Based Learning](#)
- [The National Center for College and Career's ConnectED Studios Work-Based Learning Toolkit](#) (sign in required)—includes a sizeable, curated list of resources on WBL
- [An overview of federal, state and non-profit resources](#)

- [Perkins Collaborative Resource Network WBL information](#)
- [Partnership to Advance Youth Apprenticeship](#)

Resources for Building Education-Employer Partnerships

- Explore Ford Next Generation Learning's [Ford NGLU website](#), which includes several free on-demand webinars on the topic of how to build strong education-employer relationships
- Review and share the [work-based learning glossary from Jobs for the Future](#) with prospective employer partners

Workplace Readiness Skills Resources

- [Skills to Pay the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success](#)—from the Department of Labor, this curriculum was developed by the Office of Disability Employment Policy and is focused on teaching workplace readiness skills to youth, including those youth with disabilities
- [Asia Society's Center for Global Education's Global CTE Toolkit](#) includes projects and resources to build global competence

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