

# Work-Based Learning Company Self-Assessment Tool

**Work-based learning (WBL)** is defined by the Iowa Department of Education as a progression through career awareness, exploration, preparation, and training, utilizing the partnership between industry and education, to support student learning for future success. By incorporating WBL opportunities for students, an organization will be able to create awareness for the variety of careers offered, showcase their work environment, establish relationships with future talent and keep those connections for future hiring.

**Purpose:** This self-assessment tool will help your organization or company determine the current reality of your WBL efforts and identify gaps and opportunities to lean into and improve on. Sustainable WBL is achieved through three key areas: WBL continuum diversification, education partnerships and staff support, and high-quality and accessible WBL experiences for all students.

**Directions:** Place a checkmark in each box in which your organization is consistently meeting. Reflect as a team which areas need improvement to strengthen early talent career pathways. Then, create an action plan for successful implementation.

## WBL Continuum Diversification

**Goal:** To offer a wide variety of experiences to provide opportunities for students in each step of their career exploration journey.

**Offers a variety of career awareness opportunities through involvement in:**

- BEGINNING  Career fairs  
 Classroom speaking  
 Informational interviews  
↓  
ADVANCED  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Offers a variety of career exploration opportunities such as:**

- BEGINNING  Job shadows  
 Company tours  
 Worksite exploratory events  
 Authentic projects  
 Career-based service learning  
↓  
ADVANCED  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Offers a variety of career preparation opportunities such as involvement with:**

- BEGINNING  Professional skills workshops  
 Career and technical student organizations (such as FBLA, DECA, BPA, FFA, FCCLA, TSA, etc.)  
 Mock interviews  
 School-based enterprises  
↓  
ADVANCED  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Offers a variety of career training and skill-building opportunities such as:**

- BEGINNING  Internships  
 Pre-apprenticeships  
 Apprenticeships  
↓  
ADVANCED  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Education Partnerships and Staff Support

**Goal:** To create and maintain a strong relationship with local schools, as well as gain staff and leader support in WBL efforts.

- BEGINNING**
- Identifies point-of-contact within company or organization for all WBL requests and communication.
  - Connects with local school districts' WBL liaison regularly to learn about what WBL opportunities the school is seeking.
  - Allows school district WBL liaison to experience work environment first-hand.
  - Collaborates with education partners to develop purposeful WBL experiences, identify and reduce barriers, and define best practices for WBL preparation.
  - Leadership is supportive and participates in WBL efforts, when necessary.
  - Training is provided for staff members involved with executing WBL opportunities.
  - A WBL strategic plan is created to continually build on current efforts and is reviewed periodically.
- ADVANCED**
- All team members and leaders understand the added value and impact WBL opportunities have on their organization, students and greater community.

## High-Quality WBL Experiences for All Students

**Goal:** Use data and reflection to offer high-quality, safe, accessible and equitable WBL experiences for students of all ages.

- BEGINNING**
- Offers accessible WBL experiences to all students appropriate for their age, experience, and stage of career exploration, providing accommodations as needed.
  - WBL experiences offer a transparent representation of work environment, culture and career opportunities and advancement available.
  - Expectations are clearly defined and aligned with state and federal codes regarding student learners, in a training agreement and training plan for students, employers, teachers, and parents involved with career training experiences.
  - Ongoing training, student support and mentorship are provided throughout career training experiences.
  - Reflection opportunities for students are provided to help guide career and academic decision-making when necessary.
  - Feedback is requested of each WBL experience from students, mentors, school officials and parents, reviewed and used for WBL improvement.
  - Data is collected periodically to assess industry needs and effectiveness of WBL experiences.
- ADVANCED**
- Data is analyzed and used for WBL improvement.

**Reflection:** Based on your findings above, use these questions to reflect as a team to identify gaps and opportunities in WBL programming offered by your organization to strengthen early talent engagement.

- Where are the gaps in WBL programming within your organization?
- What opportunities are present for WBL advancement?
- Who should be involved in creating a WBL strategy for your organization?

**Action Plan:** Write down what steps you can take this week to make progress. Organize a planning committee and create a strategy and plan for sustainable WBL. Connect with your local schools, start small and build upon opportunities to strengthen talent career pathways.

**Need help?** To get started or for questions on WBL programming, please reach out to Lexi Shafer, [Ishafer@DSMpartnership.com](mailto:Ishafer@DSMpartnership.com), Director of Workforce, Greater Des Moines Partnership.