

Work-Based Learning Employer Tip Sheet

Leading practices for effective program implementation

OVERVIEW

Talent 2025 is committed to providing employers with leading practices to support talent attraction, retention, and development efforts.

When considering our talent pipeline, work-based learning (WBL) opportunities are critical. WBL is an educational strategy that provides students with real-life work experiences where they can apply both academic and technical skills, while developing their employability skills. Employer engagement in WBL provides students with career awareness, exploration, preparation, and training that can range from business tours, classroom speakers, career fairs, job shadows, Co-ops, and internships.

When determining how to integrate WBL programs, it is understood that each employer will implement in a way that makes sense for their specific company and industry sector. A list of leading practices to support the onboarding is below. This document is geared toward supporting youth ages 14-18 in internships or temporary work experiences. However, many of the practices can be applied to other WBL programs as well. The recommendations were curated based on interviews with intermediate school districts and innovative West Michigan employers such as Spectrum Health Industries, ADAC Automotive, and Meijer.

BEFORE THE INTERNSHIP BEGINS:

1. Consult with external program coordinators and various departments within your organization to plan the details of your program implementation.
 - a. Identify key stakeholders, roles, and responsibilities.
 - b. Determine program goals and objectives for the organization and participants.
 - c. Consult with legal to determine which tasks are appropriate for minors.
2. Identify and match mentors.
 - a. Identify employees within your organization to serve as mentors for participants. Specific responsibilities will be outlined based on the program but generally include providing guidance, supervision, training, and professional development support.
 - b. Assess the mentors to ensure they have the desire, personality, time, and capacity to provide a meaningful experience. Whenever possible, run a criminal background check on mentors.
 - c. Match mentors with participants by aligning interest, occupation, work style, and diversity dimensions when appropriate.

- d. Consider creating WBL opportunities for high demand occupations with multiple job openings that are anticipated to grow over the years. Mentors should have experience in these positions as either a current employee or supervisor.
3. Create a toolkit of resources.
- a. Program Application (if one is not provided by program partners)
 - b. FAQs – Create and distribute FAQs for both mentors and participants
 - c. Schedule
 - i. Determine program start date and end date. Identify what days and hours participants will work based on your company’s operating hours and the participants availability. Ensure to allocate travel time understanding that some participants utilize public transportation.
 - ii. For each working day, break the shift into one-hour increments. Create clear learning objectives and specific task lists.
 - iii. Determine which organizational leaders’ youth will meet with beyond the mentor (i.e., executive staff, human resources, other department leaders, community outreach teams).
 - iv. Determine if students will rotate through various departments or remain in one department for the entire assignment.
 - d. Curriculum for the full duration of the program with the ability to flex as needed.
 - i. Outline your specific purpose, goals, and objectives for both your organization and the participants.
 - ii. PowerPoint presentations and facilitation guides for mentors
 - iii. Agendas for orientation and work
 - iv. Professional development – specific leaning objectives, knowledge, skills, and abilities.
 - v. Handouts to support participant learning
 - e. Job descriptions for the various roles.
 - f. Timesheet
 - g. Employee contact sheet
 - h. Tips for mentors on how to work with youth participants
 - i. Memorandum of Understanding
 - j. List of employee expectations
 - k. Survey
 - i. Determine a method to collect ongoing feedback from mentors and participants. (i.e. Survey Monkey or similar platform)
 - ii. Create an initial interest survey that can be used to match mentors to participants.
 - iii. Create a performance survey to distribute on to both mentors and students on a weekly basis requesting feedback on what worked well and opportunities for improvement.
 - iv. Create an exit survey to be distributed at the end of the program. Request key take-aways, lessons learned, and quotes.
4. Communicate:
- a. Socialize the program with various employees and internal stakeholders.
 - b. Communicate with youth to welcome them, determine work schedule, provide program expectations, and answer any questions they may have.

DURING THE INTERNSHIP:

1. Host a first day worksite orientation that provides details of the following:
 - a. Company: Organization overview, vision, mission, values, building/facility tour, and a workplace safety training.
 - b. Staff: Mentor, supervisors, other staff (in person or virtually)
 - c. Program:
 - i. program goals
 - ii. job description
 - iii. daily/weekly schedule including break times
 - iv. time sheets
 - v. payment frequency and schedule
 - vi. possible projects and task lists
 - vii. expectations – including cell phone usage and social media standards, as well as use of company-issued equipment.
 - viii. responsibilities such as dress code, ID badges, timesheets, what to do if sick, daily/weekly schedule, how to communicate with mentor, etc.
 - ix. emergency procedures
2. Provide and review daily/weekly schedule of responsibilities and tasks on an ongoing basis.
3. Reinforce the desired learning outcomes including specific knowledge, technical and employability skills, and abilities.
4. Engage with the participants for informal reflection and to provide performance feedback.
5. Provide lunch for youth whenever possible. Remember that many of the students utilize free lunch programs.

AFTER THE INTERNSHIP:

1. Thank your mentors and student participants.
2. Host an end of program celebration for participants and mentors.
3. Conduct an exit interview or survey to collect feedback from your mentors and participants.
4. Debrief survey results with the appropriate people within your organization. Incorporate the insights learned into the development of future WBL programs.

APPENDIX:

Follow this link to access a collection of [Employer Resources for Work-Based Learning](#).

Resources include sample:

- Tips for Working with Students (KISD)
- Legal Aspects of Youth at Worksites (MAISD)
- Orientation Checklist (Michigan Internship Initiative)
- Internship Memorandum of Understanding
- GRow1000 – 6 Week Schedule Example (Meijer)
- GRow1000 – Participant Feedback Survey (Meijer)
- Career Development Work Program Schedule Example (ADAC)
- Employer Internship Training Guide (Hello West Michigan)
- Intern self-assessment
- Intern evaluation of employers
- Internship exit interview survey (for participants)

Learn more about [Talent 2025](#). Questions can be directed to Whitney White, Director of Employer Engagement w.white@talent2025.org.