

## Montana Work-Based Learning Collaborative Publishes Toolkit to Help Businesses Engage Student Workers

The Montana Work-Based Learning Collaborative, a network of public and private partners working to expand and improve on-the-job learning for Montana students, has released its first Work-Based Learning Toolkit for Employers. The toolkit is available for download from the Reach Higher Montana website,

[https://www.reachhighermontana.org/fileadmin/Resources/WBL\\_MT/Guides/WBLMT\\_Toolkit\\_Employer.pdf](https://www.reachhighermontana.org/fileadmin/Resources/WBL_MT/Guides/WBLMT_Toolkit_Employer.pdf)

“Through outreach to employers, we have heard that having tools and resources, like this toolkit, would be helpful for businesses interested in bringing high school students into their workplaces,” said Kelly Cresswell, executive director at Reach Higher Montana. “The toolkit is a great resource for employers to plan and implement work-based learning projects that are both meaningful for students and add value to businesses.”

The toolkit provides outlines, forms, and frameworks for employers in four key areas for work-based learning success:

1. **Meaningful Projects:** Engaging student workers in meaningful work based in real-life challenges allows students to problem solve, and leads to a tangible product or outcome for the business.
2. **Welcoming Community:** For many high school students, a work-based learning position may be their first career experience, and the environment may be unfamiliar. Creating an environment where students feel comfortable and welcomed enables them to do their best work on their assigned projects.
3. **Networking and Mentorship:** Creating networking opportunities for student workers provides an opportunity to explore careers and grow their professional networks. Mentors can help students navigate the work place and support their career development.
4. **Clear Expectations and Feedback:** Providing clear expectations about performance and work place standards, engaging student workers in goal setting, and providing regular, frequent, and constructive feedback all lead to work-based learning success.

Work-based learning experiences allow employers to increase employee engagement, build employee management experience, create more diverse talent pipelines, engage perspectives of youth on important issues impacting businesses, and to increase community awareness of career opportunities offered by local businesses.

Suggested work-based learning projects are included in the toolkit, and offer suggestions specific to Montana’s sixteen career pathways. Ideas include ways to engage youth in job shadows and work-site tours, internships, apprenticeships, and other events or career learning opportunities.

The Montana Work-Based Learning Collaborative plans to create toolkits for educators and students in the coming months. For more information about the Collaborative, visit <https://www.reachhighermontana.org/wblmt>.

**About the Montana Work-Based Learning Collaborative:** The Collaborative is a cross-section of public and private sector organizations with a stake in work-based learning, determined to work together to find better ways to ensure Montana students, educators, and businesses are supported by high-quality, accessible, relevant, and measurable work-based learning opportunities. Reach Higher Montana, a statewide nonprofit organization working at the intersection of education and careers, serves as the intermediary for the Collaborative. Reach Higher Montana provides coordination, bridges, connections, and focuses on long-term and system-wide outcomes.

**Contact:**

Kelly Cresswell

Reach Higher Montana

406.459.9097

[kcresswell@reachhighermontana.org](mailto:kcresswell@reachhighermontana.org)