

Strategies for Recruiting Employer Partners

Employer engagement is critical to a successful Work-Based Learning Program. In order to provide students with quality learning experiences that align with the Work-Based Learning Continuum, employer partnerships must be established. Remember, all activities along the Work-Based Learning Continuum are dependent on employer engagement. As activities progress from career awareness activities to internship or apprenticeship activities, the level of engagement of the employer drastically increases.

CONTINUUM OF EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT & WORK-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCES



There are several ways to connect with employers. Strategies that have been used to good effect include:

- Use peer-to-peer outreach.
- Use the advisory board or existing partners to recruit employers on your behalf. They speak the same language as their colleagues.
- Participate in employer and civic organizations. Attend — or send a representative to — the chamber of commerce, Rotary, and other meetings where economic and civic issues are discussed. Let the community know what you are doing and how your school can keep students engaged and build the workforce pipeline. Invite the mayor or local politicians to observe your students in action.
- Start small. Invite employers to be speakers or offer tours to get started. This will give them a chance to see that your students are interested, attentive, and eager to learn. If students have a desire to learn, employers are willing to help!
- Make sure it is easy for employers to engage.
 - Be sure that employers understand:
 - what is required
 - where to find you (if they are coming to campus)
 - how to contact you
 - Consider using technology (i.e. Zoom) to allow employers convenient access to your classroom when they may not be able to attend in person. This can also help incorporate partners and experts who are outside of your geographic region.

In addition to the steps and strategies outlined earlier in this module, there are several additional strategies that can be utilized to begin recruiting and forming business and community partnerships. Each of the following video clips outlines successful strategies discussed based on real experience and examples from the field. It is important to note that different strategies work better

in different schools; each school must select the combination of strategies that makes the most sense for their school and community. As you review the videos, think about what your school is currently doing and what strategies make the most sense for your school and community.



Understanding Your Ecosystem

Watch the [clip from the Illinois P-20 Network Spring Meeting \(2020\)](#) in which the concept of “Understanding your Ecosystem” is discussed. As you watch the video, begin thinking about the various components that make up your ecosystem.

Understanding Your Ecosystem

Begin with your colleagues!



A challenge that many people face when looking to establish business and community partnerships is not knowing where to begin. The first step is to talk with your colleagues and see who you already know that can help support the program needs. Leveraging existing networks is oftentimes the easiest lift and can produce great results.

Beyond starting with your colleagues, you can also begin by contacting:

- Chamber of Commerce
- Local government
- Established community connections
- Local businesses
- Parent-Teacher Organization
- Community Champions
- Postsecondary Institutions

Next Steps

Regardless of where your school/district is in the process, the next step is to take action!

1. Understand employers have interest in supporting CTE
2. Inventory your current partnerships
3. Assess your Ecosystem
4. Leverage business and community partnership resources/tools
5. Tell your story and utilize “The ask”
6. Understand it is an ongoing process
7. Continue to assess and improve (we will revisit maintaining and improving partnerships in later modules)