



# Work Experience Guide

## Work Experience Fact Sheet

*A fact sheet that provides a definition and learning objectives for the activity.*

## WBL Connector Checklist

*A checklist of steps to guide WBL Connectors in creating successful work experiences for all parties.*

## Learner<sup>1</sup> Checklist

*A checklist for learners participating in a work experience that facilitates deeper learning from the work-based learning experience.*

## Teacher/Faculty Tip Sheet

*Tips for teachers/faculty /faculty that encourages ways to connect work experiences to the larger curriculum.*

## Employer Tip Sheet

*Tips for employee volunteers participating in a work experience to support their engagement.*

## Employer Fact Sheet

*Facts about work experiences to help employers decide whether their company or organization can participate.*

## Implementation Tools

### Work Experience Preparation Activity

*A worksheet to support learner research in preparation for a work experience.*

### Work Experience Learner Reflection

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<sup>1</sup> Learners include: K-12, community college and college students; youth and young adults engaged in workforce development programs; and adults participating in career development activities.

*A worksheet and discussion guide that supports learner reflection after the work experience.*

Remote and Virtual Fact Sheets

*Supplemental resources designed to help support remote or virtual activities.*

## Remote Work Experience

In a remote work experience, a learner is engaged as an employee with an employer or organization partner. As with internships, many industries and employers have recently shifted to a model where their employees work from home-based settings. Most of these employers have established protocols, communications systems and supports to ensure that work is productive, employees are engaged and connected to each other. These same protocols apply to learners who are working from home. Follow the tips for remote internships when implementing remote work experiences for learners.



## Work Experience Fact Sheet

### Work Experience

A Work Experience is a Career Preparation activity in which a learner<sup>2</sup> is at a worksite doing real work for pay. The learner is held to the same expectations as all employees and is evaluated by the worksite supervisor based on workplace expectations and performance.

Work experiences range from regular, paid employment in summer and/or year-round jobs to subsidized employment and learning-rich work experience. They include both “found” jobs and those arranged by the school or program. There are also a range of education and training linked work experience program types defined at the state and federal levels.

Work experiences are one activity in the continuum of authentic work-based experiences provided to all learners engaged in career-related programs or course of study in the Earn and Learn community.

### Work Experiences are designed to:

- Promote hands-on, real-world experience in a field of interest.
- Provide productive value for the employer.
- Offer opportunities to develop, practice and demonstrate work-readiness skills.
- Build occupational knowledge.
- Create awareness of the education needed to be successful in the industry.

### Work Experiences are structured to:

- Enable learners to practice and prepare for work, potentially in an area of career interest.
- Help learners develop and demonstrate Work-Readiness Competencies.
- Build knowledge about the education and training needed for a particular job, career path and advancement in the industry.

### Work Experiences are supported by:

- Classroom preparation, including research on the industry and participating businesses.
- Employer orientation and support.
- Opportunities to reflect upon the experience verbally and in writing.

### Work Experiences are connected to:

- Individual career development/training plans.
- Future work-based learning activities.
- The learner’s next steps.

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<sup>2</sup> Learners include: K-12, community college and college students; youth and young adults engaged in workforce development programs; and adults participating in career development activities.

## Work Experience Support Materials

### Checklists, Tip Sheets and Fact Sheets:

- Connector Work Experience Checklist
- Learner Work Experience Checklist
- Teacher/Faculty Work Experience Tip Sheet
- Employer Work Experience Tip Sheet
- Employer Work Experience Fact Sheet

### Implementation Tools:

- Work Experience Research Activity
- Work Experience Learner Reflection
- Remote and Virtual Fact Sheets

### Remote Work Experience Resources:

- Digital Summer Youth Employment Toolkit 2.0  
<https://aspencommunitysolutions.org/report/digital-summer-youth-employment-toolkit-2-0/>
- The Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions released the 2.0 version of our Digital Summer Youth Employment Toolkit December 16, 2020. This resource builds on the initial toolkit from June 2020, and is informed by implementation lessons from 2020's "summer like no other" from communities across the Opportunity Youth Forum (OYF) network and national partners.

#### Tips for Success

#### Work-Based Learning Essential Elements

Effective Work Experiences include structured activity before, during and after the experience. Pay attention to these tips to ensure meaningful experiences that result in enriched learning.

- ✓ Conduct Effective Planning
- ✓ Prepare for Success
- ✓ Identify Learning Objectives.
- ✓ Create Authentic and Engaging Experiences
- ✓ Connect to Careers
- ✓ Support Learner Growth
- ✓ Ensure Activities are Safe and Legal
- ✓ Provide Ongoing Support
- ✓ Provide for Reflection, Presentation and Feedback
- ✓ Connect to the Learner Next Step
- ✓ Assess and Document the Experience

Sustaining and growing Work Experiences and all other work-based learning activities depend on maintaining positive relationships with the participating employers. These employers should be treated as valued customers and partners with frequent check-ins to address their needs and support their participation.

## Work- Based Learning Connector Work Experience Checklist

Quick tips for Work-Based Learning Connectors<sup>3</sup> to ensure a successful work experience.

### Before the Work Experience

- Define the work experience program structure (timeframe, expectations, host expectations, and staff support, for example).
- Identify all interested teachers/faculty and help them plan for the work experience activity.
- Prepare teachers/faculty and encourage them to support and leverage the work experience. Share and review the Teacher/Faculty Tip Sheet with them.
- Work with teachers/faculty to create a list of interested and qualified learners<sup>4</sup>.
- Select and refer appropriate candidates for interviews, matched to employer/supervisor specifications.
- Provide supervisor with the Employer Work Experience Tip Sheet and What Every Worksite Supervisor Should Know.
- Determine the worksite supervisor's preferred form and frequency of contact.
- Distribute and collect appropriate forms.
- Identify learning objectives and complete the WBL Plan
- Address any transportation or safety gear needs.

### During the Work Experience

- If possible, meet with learners and worksite supervisors at their workplaces and observe workplace activities. Make sure these visits are pre-arranged with the host and don't disrupt workflow.
- Regularly assess learner progress and impact of the experience.

### After the Work Experience

- Have the worksite supervisor complete the WSS Evaluation and review with the learner.
- Document the work experience in ELENA. Get feedback from employers and teachers/faculty and summarize the results using the WBL Activity Evaluation.
- Help learners update their Resume' and career development plan and think about any next steps they would like to take to further their career goals.
- Work with teachers/faculty to coordinate "go deeper" activities to connect the work experience to the classroom and their career goals.
- Take pictures from the work experience and provide them to the company for use on their website or newsletter. Ensure you have signed releases for all photos.
- Publicize the work experience and the business that participated by placing a story in the local newspaper or posting on the school or agency webpage.
- Consider other potential public relations benefits and opportunities.

### Sample Work Experience Timeline

**Beginning of the school/program year or cycle:** Identify interested teachers/faculty and brainstorm business partners who could participate.

**Two months in advance:** Invite business partners to list opportunities and post in ELENA.

**One month in advance:** Screen learners to employer specifications and arrange for interviews with the employer.

**One week in advance:** Confirm selection and make sure the learner has proper documentation.

**During work experience:** Visit worksite, if possible, and observe workplace activities. Provide support and address any issues that may arise.

**After work experience:** Send thank-you notes to employers and supervisors and ensure learner reflection activities take place.

<sup>3</sup> This includes Earn & Learn work-based learning connectors and others who facilitate, arrange and support work-based learning activities for learners.

<sup>4</sup> Learners include: K-12, community college and college students; youth and young adults engaged in workforce development programs; and adults participating in career development activities.

## Learner<sup>5</sup> Work Experience Checklist

A work experience gives you the opportunity to have a real job doing productive work with an employer. Through this experience, you will develop and have the chance to demonstrate professional and occupational skills by addressing a core business function.

You'll also be able to ask questions, practice professional behavior, learn and demonstrate new skills, and become more comfortable communicating with adults.

### Have you done all you can to prepare?

- Fill out and turn in any required forms.
- Meet with your teacher/faculty to discuss what you want to get out of the work experience. These are your learning objectives.
- Do some research on the host company and the job. Check out their website and learn as much as you can about the company's history, what they do and how it impacts your community.
- Research the dress code at the workplace and do your best to mirror it.
- Make sure you have transportation taken care of to and from the place of business.

### Have you thought about what you can do to make the work experience a big success?

- Dress appropriately and arrive on time.
- Make sure you understand your job assignment and tasks, and don't be afraid to ask questions.
- Learn what you need to do to fill out and turn in your timesheet.
- Follow through with the goals you set for yourself.
- Work on your communication skills, including active listening. Always be respectful.
- Observe and reflect how people act in the workplace. Put your electronics away until the end of your shift each day.
- Ask your supervisor if he or she would be willing to provide you with a reference after the job is over. Thank them for the experience.

### When the work experience is over, how will you keep moving your career forward?

- Reflect on the experience. Talk to your classmates and teachers/faculty and discuss your level of interest in pursuing a career in that industry.
- Participate in classroom activities that help you think about the value of the work experience.
- Update your resume and career development plan and think about next steps in moving your career forward.
- Send a follow-up email thanking the employer/supervisor for his or her time.
- Ask your supervisor if you can use him/her as a reference.
- Fill out the evaluation form. Be honest. That will help make future work experiences more meaningful.
- Share your experience with your peers on social media. Perhaps a blog post about the work experience?

### Are you Ready for Game Day?

Have you...

- Filled out the required forms?
- Researched the host company?
- Found out everything you can about the job and what will be expected of you?
- Figured out how to fill out your timesheet?
- Decided what you'll wear?
- Arranged for transportation?
- Met with your teacher/faculty to discuss learning objectives?
- Thought about how you'll share your experience on social media?

<sup>5</sup> Learners include: K-12, community college and college students; youth and young adults engaged in workforce development programs; and adults participating in career development activities.

## Teacher/Faculty Work Experience Tip Sheet

Note: If you're coordinating a work experience, have a look at the WBL Connector Work Experience Checklist.

### Work Experiences are designed to:

- Promote hands-on, real-world experience in a field of interest.
- Provide productive value for the employer.
- Offer opportunities to develop, practice and demonstrate work-readiness skills.
- Build occupational knowledge.
- Create awareness of the education needed to be successful in the industry.

### Before the Work Experience

- Review the Work Experience Fact Sheet and this tip sheet.
- Assess how the work experience can support classroom activities and help meet curriculum goals.
- Identify learning objectives for the job with the learner(s)<sup>6</sup> and record in the WBL Plan. excitement for the work experience.
- Have learners research the job, the host company and the careers it offers.
- Find out if certain dress or safety gear is required and communicate any requirements to the learner(s).
- Distribute and collect any required forms.

### During the Work Experience

- Design and coordinate concurrent learning activities in the classroom, so the work experience is not an isolated activity but is connected to academic learning.
- Check in with learners about how things are going on the job and provide opportunities for groups to share their experiences with each other.
- Provide opportunities for learners to reflect on the experience in the classroom, both verbally and in writing.

### After the Work Experience

- Continue to provide reflection activities for learners and help them make the connection between what they're learning and the workplace.
- Help the learner(s) update his or her Resume' and career development plan and think about any next steps they would like to take to further their career goals.
- Assess and document the impact and value of the work experience and discuss the completed worksite supervisor evaluation with the learner.
- Work with the connector and utilize employer, teacher/faculty and learner feedback to improve future work experiences. (Use the WBL Activity Evaluation)

### Go Deeper

- Make the work experience part of a project and have the learner(s) prepare and deliver a presentation to others at your school about the host company or the job.

### The Classroom Connection: Preparation and Reflection

#### Before the Work Experience

Set the student(s) up for success by having them:

- Research the job, company and industry of the employer.
- Discuss how the work experience can help them meet learning objectives.

#### After the Work Experience

- Spark learner reflection with an activity.
- Ask, "What new things did you learn from this job and what skills did you acquire?"
- See if they want to find out more or further explore different jobs and careers in the employer's industry.

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<sup>6</sup> Learners include: K-12, community college and college students; youth and young adults engaged in workforce development programs; and adults participating in career development activities.



## Employer Work Experience Tip Sheet

Thanks for agreeing to hire one of our learners and provide them with valuable work experience. As you think about how to best prepare for the experience, keep the following success factors in mind.

### Before the Work Experience

- Work with the connector to develop a job description.
- Interview, select and hire the learner<sup>7</sup>.
- Review the informational packet provided to you by the connector or teacher/faculty.
- Provide teacher/faculty or connector with website link(s) about the job, your company and industry to help learners prepare for the work experience.
- Work with the teacher/faculty or connector to help define ways in which the work experience can align with and support the curriculum.

### Did You Know?

While working at your company, learners are learning about your industry and are considering how they might prepare for a career.

Some learners are studying in the context of a career pathway and preparing for a career in your industry.

Students who experience early employment while in High School enjoy higher graduation rates and better employment outcomes later in life.

### During the Work Experience

- Provide a workplace orientation and tour for the learner.
- Review the Work-Readiness Competencies document provided by the connector and reinforce those concepts when possible.
- Consider if there are opportunities for learners to be exposed to a range of jobs in your organization.
- Identify opportunities that will support the learner's academic, occupational and work-readiness skill development and assist them in working toward learning objectives.
- Think about ways you can serve as both a coach and supervisor. Review "What Every Worksite Supervisor Should Know".
- Communicate successes and assignments to the connector that can be used to enhance the value of classroom connections.
- Use the WBL Training Plan and Evaluation to assess the learner's performance at a mid-point and completion of the internship. Discuss it with the learner and the connector.

### After the Work Experience

- Provide feedback to the connector to improve future work experiences.
- If you're comfortable doing so, offer to stay in touch via email or LinkedIn.
- Hold a debriefing session internally at the company to review the effectiveness of the work experience program and make suggestions for improvement.
- Consider how you might use the work experience to promote your company's visibility in the community.

### Go Deeper

- Talk to the connector about being a guest speaker in the classroom, participating in a mock interview or hosting learners for job shadows and/or internships.

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<sup>7</sup> Learners include: K-12, community college and college students; youth and young adults engaged in workforce development programs; and adults participating in career development activities.



## Employer Work Experience Fact Sheet

Work experiences offer learners<sup>8</sup> the opportunity to be at a worksite doing real work for pay. The experience can be regular, paid summer or year-round employment, or it may be learning-rich, subsidized employment.

While delivering productive work for pay, learners also work on developing and demonstrating professional and occupational skills, communicating effectively and being a productive part of the team. The learner is held to the same expectations as all employees and is evaluated by the workplace supervisor based on workplace expectations and performance.

**Program Level:** Usually 11<sup>th</sup> grade or higher.  
**Employer/Learner Ratio:** 1:1  
**Duration:** Varies, can be summertime or year-round  
**Frequency:** One time  
**Location:** Worksite  
**Costs:** Wages (often subsidized)  
**Special Considerations:** Supervisor selection. Labor laws and safety considerations. Impacts on personnel policies.

### Why are work experiences important for learners?

- Every young person needs a first job, and for many, participation in a work experience program provides that opportunity.
- Work experiences expose learners to potential careers and jobs and help build work-readiness skills and occupational knowledge.
- They provide a context for learning and foster an understanding of how academic concepts are applied in a real-world setting.
- They illustrate the education and training needed for entry into certain occupations and careers.
- They let learners know about your company's processes and products/services and the role your business plays in the community.

### What are the benefits to my company?

- Learners are engaged a core productive activity in your company.
- Exposes potential future workers to advanced job opportunities and careers with your company, as well as the required skills and education to be successful in your industry.
- Introduces learners to one or more of your employees.
- Helps your employees understand how to better communicate with the next generation of workers.
- Provides leadership development opportunities for your existing workforce

### What do I need to do next?

- Determine who will supervise the learner during the experience and have that person connect with the work-based learning connector or learner to address scheduling, planning and logistics.
- Arrange for a presentation to those employees who will participate in the work experience.
- Distribute the Employer Work Experience Tip Sheet to identified supervisors.
- Consider any impacts on company policy.

### Resources

- Review the Employer Participation Options Fact Sheet to learn more about how to get the most out of your partnership with Earn & Learn.

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## Work Experience Research Activity

Complete the following research assignment as part of your preparation for the upcoming work experience.

Learner <sup>9</sup> name:
Host company:
Company's web address:
Company's physical address:
Company's mission statement:
What is the company's primary business?
What departments exist within the company?
What companies do you think are in competition with the host company?
After researching the company, what are some questions that you will ask your supervisor?
Based on your research, what do you think you will like most about the work experience?
Based on your research, what is your biggest concern about the work experience?
If you could come away from the work experience having learned one thing, what would that be?
Anything else you learned while doing your research that you'd like to share with your teacher/faculty or the class?

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<sup>9</sup> Learners include: K-12, community college and college students; youth and young adults engaged in workforce development programs; and adults participating in career development activities.

## Work Experience Learner<sup>10</sup> Reflection

Now that the work experience is over, take some time reflect on what you learned and how the experience might inform your college and career plans in the future.

Learner Name:

School/Org:

Host Company:

Work Date Range:

What aspects of the work experience were interesting? Which were not? Why?

What did you like about the work experience? What would you change?

Would you consider a career in the host company's field? Why or why not?

What was the most memorable aspect of the work experience? Why?

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<sup>10</sup> Learners include: K-12, community college and college students; youth and young adults engaged in workforce development programs; and adults participating in career development activities.

What did you learn about the host company and its employees? Please explain.

What knowledge and skills are you learning in school that would likely be used at the host company? Please explain.

What knowledge or skills do you need to strengthen to be successful at a workplace like the host company's? Please explain.

Would you recommend that other learners participate in a work experience? Explain.

Anything else you'd like to say about the work experience?

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