

GreenWays



JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT | TOOL 4.5

## WORK-BASED EXPERIENCE

### TOOL 4.5

Workforce development programs always face a tricky challenge. Employers often won't hire people who don't have any experience, but training participants can't get experience because employers won't hire them. Resolving this dilemma requires that your program includes some meaningful experience in the workplace, and that program design is not possible without employer hosts. Reach out to your employer partners and discuss this issue with them. Note the potential benefits of work-based experience to employers—such as the opportunity to get to know potential employees—and find out if they feel this would help their business. Ask what kinds of on-the-job opportunities they would consider providing and what they need to feel comfortable committing. Use this tool to begin that process and to organize your planning as you implement work-based experience in your program.

#### WHO SHOULD USE THIS TOOL

Curriculum development staff, job developers

As you plan to integrate work-based experiences into your program, compare the possibilities of different options and map out which action steps are required to implement them. Success requires the commitment of your employer partners, so listen to their interests and concerns. In particular, consider the work-based experiences that work the best for them and listen to their hesitations or needs in hosting your participants.

## TYPES OF WORK-BASED EXPERIENCES

- > **Paid and unpaid Internships:** Employers define a brief job or project that requires the intern to use and improve specific skills under the guidance of a supervisor. Learning goals and achievement goals are set by the employer and the experience is formally incorporated into the training curriculum. When the internships are paid stipends are set and paid by the employer unless funds are available from the training program. Remember that unpaid internships must comply with the Fair Labor Standards Act.
- > **Temporary employment:** Employers “hire” the employee for a set duration to perform duties similar to those in the jobs participants are training for. Often, this occurs through a temporary employment agency. Temporary employment can be more easily incorporated into a training program if work is part-time so that participants can spend roughly half their program time working and half in training and skills classes.
- > **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act On-the-Job Training:** Employers provide short-term, structured training as part of their workers’ job responsibilities. The public workforce system reimburses the employer, generally up to 50 percent of the participant’s wages, for the costs of training and supervision. This can help incentivize businesses to hire new workers who still require some occupational training to succeed in their new job.
- > **Ask employers** for other options such as apprenticeships that work for them for trainees to gain real job experience at their company during training.

## EMPLOYER NEEDS

Even when employers are interested in hosting your participants during training, they may have concerns about what is required to play this role. Ask them what the potential barriers to participation are and how you can address them. Potential topics to discuss include:

- > **Training first:** Your participants may need to learn certain skills before joining the workplace, so you can discuss how to align your curriculum with the work-based experiences.
- > **Assistance for supervisors:** Supervisors on the worksite may not be prepared to mentor your participants or may be worried about the time that it would take to manage them.
- > **Paperwork:** Employers have limited time and don’t want to deal with extra bureaucracy. Do what you can to minimize the paperwork they have to complete when they host your participants.
- > **Liability:** Be clear about legal liability for your participants when they are on a job site. Employers may not be willing to take on your participants if it requires assuming liability.

The [Jobs to Careers Work-Based Learning Toolkit](http://www.jff.org/publications/work-based-learning-toolkit-resources-jobs-careers) provides additional resources to incorporate work-based learning into your programs. <http://www.jff.org/publications/work-based-learning-toolkit-resources-jobs-careers>

TYPE OF WORK-BASED EXPERIENCE	EMPLOYERS INTERESTED	EMPLOYER NEEDS	TIMELINE	STAFF RESPONSIBLE	NEXT STEPS
Internship, OJT, etc.	List employers who are open to hosting	Summarize what the interested employers require from you to host	Target date to begin work-based experience	Lead within your organization	Action items to begin work-based opportunities
<b>Paid Internship</b>					
<b>Unpaid Internship</b>					
<b>Temporary Employment</b>					
<b>WIOA On-the-Job Training</b>					