

1. Introduction

The case for WBLO's

In early 2018, a team of consultants interviewed close to 20 students at Elizabethtown High School. Among students who indicated plans to leave the area after graduation, many said that a good job and career opportunity would make them want to stay. In addition, across the Lincoln Trail region's 8 counties, only about 55% of students who go to college persist and complete within 4 years. Students who don't complete are saddled with debt and a lack of opportunity. We know that we have good jobs here in our region. We have work to do to rebrand those jobs by exposing students to them through meaningful, hands on experience; and these opportunities are not limited to only students who are 18+.

The benefits of work-based learning opportunities aren't just for students; they span the entire workforce system. Employers shape the emerging workforce by creating a pool of qualified workers – helping to reduce training and recruitment costs. For students, these opportunities connect classroom learning to real life application. WBLO's multiply students post-graduation options; helping them to consider an array of career paths. All of this contributes to a vibrant and stable local economy and serves to connect multiple members of our community.

2. What is a work-based learning opportunity?

What are the different types of WBLO's?

The state of Kentucky has outline 7 different types of work based learning opportunities. They are:

Service Learning - A teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility and strengthen communities.

Mentoring: One Component of work-based learning. A mentor is a volunteer from the business/industrial community that helps students become aware of career opportunities and work ethics in a one-to-one relationship that goes beyond the formal obligations of a teaching or supervisory role.

Shadowing: Learning through observation and is a way to form partnerships between employers and the local schools. Shadowing is an opportunity for a student to spend a limited amount of time with an individual in a chose occupation in order to become familiar with the duties associated with that occupation, the physical setting of the occupation, and the compatibility of the occupation with his or her own career goals.

Entrepreneurship education allows students to develop a deeper understanding of economic principles and to apply classroom learning by organizing and operating a business enterprise.

School-Based Enterprise is a simulated or actual business conducted within a school. It is designed to replicate a specific business or segment of an industry and assist students in acquiring work experience related to their chosen career cluster

Internship for high school students who have completed extensive school-based preparation relating to an identified area of career and academic interest. Internships are usually one-time experiences which should lead to course credit and/or pay.

Cooperative Education a paid educational program consisting of in-school instruction combined with program related on-the-job work experience in a business or industrial establishment. These are planned experiences supervised by the school and the employer to ensure that each phase contributes to the student's Individual Learning Plan and Career Pathway.

Registered Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship The Tech Ready Apprentices for Careers in Kentucky (TRACK) pre-apprenticeship program is a partnership between the Kentucky Department of Education's Office of Career and Technical Education and the Kentucky Labor Cabinet to provide secondary students with career pathway opportunities into registered apprenticeship programs. This is a business and industry driven program to create a pipeline for students to enter postsecondary apprenticeship training.

3. Assessing Readiness

My company is interested in offering work-based learning opportunities. Where do I start?

First, start by thinking about what experiences and knowledge you may have to offer participants and which participants may benefit from being connected with your company. A few questions to guide your thinking:

Will a learning opportunity at your company translate into a broader career opportunity?

The most valuable opportunities are those that train students for the job opportunities we have available in the region. Recent data shows only three of eight Lincoln Trail counties train enough juniors and seniors in career pathways leading to employment in high demand industry sectors. Our region needs those trainees to adequately fill forecasted job openings. Through this work we seek to raise that number so that all 8 counties are meeting regional demand.

Do you have staff capacity to support successful implementation?

In March of 2018, representatives from all 8 Lincoln Trail county school districts met and shared best practices around WBLO implementation and sustainability. The overall consensus was that the most successful WBLO's were those with expressed commitment and coordination between the school/social service and the employer.

Do you understand the legal aspects of implementing WBLO's?

A factor that contributes to successful implementation of state and federal laws and requirements related to work-based learning. An employer-employee relationship may or may not exist, depending on the type of work-based learning experience that is taking place. The current WBL manual is being revised to make information easy to access and understand for both administrators and employers. In the meantime, the Office of Career and Technical Education at the Kentucky Department of Education is an excellent resource in supporting your understanding.

Additionally, the state of Kentucky has provided a series of criteria to assess if your company may be a good fit. The six criteria relating to trainees and student-trainees are as follows:

1. The training, even though it includes actual operation of the facilities of the employer, is similar to that which would be given in a vocational school.
2. The training is for the benefit of the trainees or students.
3. The trainees or students do not displace regular employees, but work under their close observation.
4. The employer who provides the training derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the students or trainees, and on occasion, his operation may actually be impeded.
5. The trainees or students are not necessarily entitled to a job at the conclusion of the training period.
6. The employer and the trainees or students understand that the trainees or students are not entitled to wages for the time spent in training.

4. Implementation

How do I connect with qualified WBLO candidates?

Participate Chances are that the school district in which your business is located often hosts career fairs, and other opportunities to connect with and interview students. Each school also has an advisory team which are open to employer participation. In Elizabethtown, this has been an effective way for employers to connect, and stay connected, with their local talent pipeline.

Go on a Site Visit The best way to gain a deeper understanding of the types of skills and experience WBLO candidates would bring to the job is to visit a local school or training program. By doing so, you will have the opportunity to meet the coordinators you may work with as well as some of the candidates interested in a position at your company.

**Forthcoming, is a list of key contacts around the state at the schools to connect with regarding WBLO's - anticipated date of release Jan 2019.*

Contact List

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