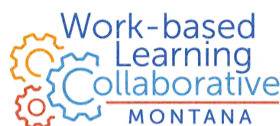


August 2026

## Collaborative Partner News

The Work-based Learning Collaborative includes 35 partner organizations that cover the gamut of work-based learning from the student, employer, and educator perspectives, as well as direct-service, capacity, and policy levels. We are proud to share highlights of our WBLC partners - state agencies, industry associations, colleges, high schools, and nonprofit organizations. Find the list of the WBLC members [here](#)!



## Transfusion: Injecting Youth into the Care Continuum



October 13-14, 2026

Fairmont Hot Springs

Explore innovative strategies to strengthen the healthcare workforce! Don't miss keynote speakers Lisa Walden of Good Company Consulting ([view a sneak peak here](#)) and Hollis Salway of Denver Health who will discuss leveraging generational differences in the workplace and the power of engaging youth and young adults in talent pipelines. **[Register now!](#)** The early bird pricing ends Sept 1!



## Exploring Career-connected Learning

### Coffee Connect: Exploring Career-connected Learning

Join these workshops for higher education staff and faculty to gain actionable strategies to strengthen career-connected learning opportunities for your college students. The last session on Sept 16 dives into coordinating internships (Sept 16). **[Register here.](#)**

## New Rule Defining WBL Experience for Credit Evaluation

Montana Department of Labor and Industry has issued a notice of proposed rule making to update reference to work-based learning experiences and update statutory references. Of particular interest to collaborative members is a new rule defining work-based learning experiences for credit evaluation. Comments are due by Friday, Sept. 4. [Read the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking Mar Notice No. 2026-32.1.](#)

Credential Registry – Rules Hearing MAR No. 2026-32

Public Hearing: Tuesday, September 1, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.

Zoom meeting ID: 850 9240 9567

Zoom meeting passcode: 7217994740

Written comment deadline: Friday, September 4, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. Written comments may be submitted at [dli.mt.gov/rules](https://dli.mt.gov/rules) or to PO Box 1728; Helena, MT 59624



*Kiley Huravitch, left, and Breahna Dean check the pulse of "Lucy," a medical dummy, on July 14 at Carroll College during a Simulation in Motion-Montana demonstration. SONNY TAPIA, Independent Record*

## Montana High Schoolers Explore Behavioral Health Careers at Heads Up Camp in Helena

Nine high school students from across Montana spent five days living in the dorms at [Carroll College](#), touring local healthcare facilities and stepping into a mobile simulation truck, where it was up to them to treat a mannequin patient named Lucy who was pregnant and overdosing.

The students were taking part in the [Heads Up Behavioral Health Camp](#), a free behavioral health career exploration program for rising sophomores, juniors and seniors that ran July 12–16.

Organized jointly by the North Central and South Central Montana [Area Health Education Centers](#), part of the [Montana Hospital Association](#), the camp gives students hands-on exposure to behavioral health careers while giving them a taste of college life. [Organizers are] not pushing

every student toward direct patient care, but showing them the full range of paths behavioral health offers.

The camp layers in Teen Mental Health First Aid curriculum, a national training that teaches students how to connect peers with appropriate mental health and substance abuse resources.

"In Montana, we have behavioral health workforce shortages across the board, across all of our communities, across all of our counties," Tobin said. "We're really hoping to contribute to this kind of 'grow your own' strategy here, and build up the behavioral health workforce in Montana with our own students."

[Read full article](#)

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## **Headwaters Tech Hub Aperture Series Features WBLC Members**

Watch [Montana's 406 JOBS Initiative: Priorities, Progress and Opportunities in the Headwaters Tech Hub Ecosystem](#) with Tammie Hickey, Director, [Montana State Workforce Innovation Board](#). She discusses how the Headwaters Tech Hub ecosystem is activating the priorities of the 406 JOBS framework to build a rugged, resilient talent pipeline for our state's growing companies. Hear about real-world progress, regional sector partnerships, and the expanding training and funding opportunities designed to empower local workers and keep Montana competing on a global stage.

Watch [Empowering Our Workforce through Electro-Optics Training](#) featuring Katherine Booher, Director of Workforce Partnerships at [Accelerate Montana](#). Learn more about how their Electro-Optics Assembly Technician training program was born, and hear about the future of this and other workforce readiness programs for our state's high-tech ecosystem.

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## **Summer Camp Introduces Montana Teens to Medical Field, Amid Healthcare Shortage**

A Billings summer camp introduced Montana high school students from near and far to several healthcare specialties in July through a five-day [MedStart Summer Camp](#), put on by the [Area Health Education Center \(AHEC\)](#). According to the American Hospital Association, there is a projected shortage of 100,000 healthcare workers nationally in 2028.

Nikole Bakko, AHEC outreach coordinator at [RiverStone Health](#), said the camp has taught many students who went on to become medical professionals. "I have several students that have gone into nursing, headed into medical school, things like that... so yes, definitely seeing it come full circle, which is awesome," said Bakko, who has helped coordinate the program for 12 years. "We have a shortage of all healthcare professionals, especially here in Montana, and a high demand in our eastern side of our state."

[Read full article](#)

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## **2026 Pre-ETS STEAM Career Camp Sparks Creativity in Great Falls**

Students attending this year's [Pre-Employment Transition Services \(Pre-ETS\)](#) STEAM Career Camp in Great Falls dove into hands-on problem-solving and teamwork. Participants learned to program robots, culminating in an energetic Battlebots-style tournament where their creations went head-to-head. Several teams wrapped up the week by designing innovative prototypes aimed at removing oil and other contaminants from water—showcasing both technical skill and real-world environmental thinking.



# HOW CAN STUDENTS IN RURAL MONTANA PREPARE FOR TECH-ENABLED CAREERS?



## MHTBA Members Share Career Advice for Rural Montana Students

*By Melissa Paulsen*

On April 14, 2026, the Montana High Tech Business Alliance piloted the [Skills for the Future: Eastern Montana Career Summit](#) at [Miles Community College](#). Students explored how technology is transforming industries from agriculture and healthcare to banking and manufacturing.

MHTBA members and community leaders shared their keen insights on the growing career opportunities across Eastern Montana.

1. Take Advantage of Opportunities Outside the Classroom - Because relationships often open doors before applications do, employers encourage students to start building their professional networks and gain real-world experience while still in school. Job shadowing, part-time work, volunteering, participating in clubs like Future Farmers of America (FFA), and earning free online certifications through LinkedIn Learning, HubSpot Academy, or Google Skillshop can help students build valuable skills, strengthen their resumes, and examine potential career paths.
2. Begin Building 6 In-Demand Skills:
  - Artificial Intelligence Proficiency
  - Communication
  - Data Analytics
  - Digital Literacy
  - Empathetic Leadership
  - Programming (code like C#, JavaScript, or Python)

[Read full article](#)

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## Montana CTE Technical Assistance Office Hours

The [Office of Public Instruction](#) has scheduled several dates to provide focused technical assistance for transitioning to the new Montana Career Pathways, CTE Data, or Perkins Applications Support. Districts can get targeted CTE support on Wednesdays from 10:00am - 2:00pm. You are also

## Understanding Youth Movement from Pre-Apprenticeship to Registered Apprenticeship

*Findings from JFF's Next-Generation Apprenticeship for Next Generation Talent Initiative*

JFF shares outcomes and key learnings from its four-year Department of Labor-funded initiative, Next-Generation Apprenticeship for Next-Generation Talent, to expand access to pre-apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship for young people, ages 16-24.

JFF was proud to partner with nine youth-serving organizations to expand access to pre-apprenticeship and RA to youth ages 16-24, including [Reach Higher Montana](#).

[Read full report.](#)

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## Events



### Smart Manufacturing Roadshow

Wednesday, August 26, 8:00 am - 3:30 pm

Are you intrigued by new manufacturing technologies but aren't sure where to start? This free one-day workshop will introduce small and medium manufacturers to emerging technologies that can help their companies save time, increase capacity, enhance quality, and achieve other operational goals.

[Learn more and RSVP.](#)

### Workforce Peer Connect with MEDA

Friday, August 28, 12:00 pm

Montana Economic Development Association (MEDA) is excited to be relaunching the workforce peer connect in partnership with 406 Jobs. Tammie Hickey, Executive Director of the State Workforce Innovation Board, will be leading the d! Join us to discuss workforce challenges in your area and the programs and resources available to support the communities you serve! Peer Connects are open to all, and take place the last Wednesday of each month.

[Zoom link for the Workforce Peer Connect.](#)

### Headwaters Tech Hub Summit

September 9-11 in Missoula

Connect with leaders from across Montana and beyond who are making an impact on Montana's workforce landscape and will include sessions on workforce development.

**[Learn more and register here.](#)**



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## News You Can Use

**[Montana is #45 on Top States for Business 2026 – CNBC](#)**

**[Opinion: PRINCIPAL VOICE: Our off-track high school students weren't terribly interested in school until we dug into hands-on learning](#)**

**[As college graduates fret over finding jobs, a record shortage of workers is projected](#)**

**[Four Partnerships Selected for Inaugural PAYA Innovation Grants](#)**

The Partnership to Advance Youth Apprenticeship has named the first recipients of its Innovation Grants, four partnerships across Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Idaho. Each \$25,000 grant funds local pilots to help at-risk students stay in their apprenticeships and finish.



**Questions? Contact:**  
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or visit [wblmt.org](http://wblmt.org).

## Work-based learning Work-based learning (WBL) is learning about work, at work and is a key component of career-connected learning.

In addition to building employability skills, WBL experiences help students develop **meaning** from their classroom learning and explore **purposeful** career opportunities. Employers who intentionally cultivate **belonging** in the workplace for young workers can gain access to future workforce talent. The Montana Work-Based Learning Collaborative works to promote belonging, meaning, well-being, and purpose for all young Montanans by building capacity for high-quality WBL experiences.

There are components of work-based learning in the K-12 education system, the postsecondary education system, and the public workforce system – but no single entry point for students or employers to access them. Our work to improve coordination among agencies and WBL partners benefits Montana's emerging workforce and Montana's businesses.



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