

March 2026

Collaborative Partner News

The Work-based Learning Collaborative includes 30 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!](#)



CALLING ALL EMPLOYERS:

We want to learn about your recent experience recruiting and retaining talent!

Survey open until March 31

Who should take it: Someone familiar with your employee recruitment and retention practices and needs (i.e. HR or management).

What we will do with your data:

Your responses will inform the work of WBLC, partners, and policymakers. We publish aggregate data (never individual data) on the WBLC Data Dashboard (wblmt.org).

What you get out of it: The data will be used to improve workforce supports, work-based learning, and education opportunities so you gain skilled workers.

Find the survey [here](#).

Spread the word! Every time your organization is recognized by a respondent under "how did you hear of this survey", you are entered into a drawing for \$500 (more referrals equals more entries)! We draw for two winners after the survey closes 3/31. Please share with your networks!



Employer
Lunch n' Learns



Empowering Employers of Youth and Young Adults

Learn More

Join us for the April and May sessions!

Uncertainty to Purpose with the Helena Youth Corps

"Going into senior year, I honestly had no idea where I was going," said one [Montana Conservation Corps](#) high-school participant. But after a summer serving on a youth crew, that uncertainty shifted into purpose and possibility, "I met a lot of experts in many different fields. I did fulfilling work and was able to explore new environments and expand my horizons."

For many young people, that uncertainty about the future is all too familiar as they face anxiety around choosing a career path without much guidance or real-world experience. The [Broken Marketplace Study](#), conducted by The Schultz Family Foundation and HarrisX, found that 40% of young people feel the systems meant to prepare them for work are failing them. So how can we help them find direction and confidence?

The success of the Helena Youth Corps shows what's possible when young people are given real opportunities to learn by doing. [Read the entire article here.](#)

New American Indian AHEC Center

Aaniiih Nakoda College (ANC) has been selected as the new host organization for Montana's American Indian Area Health Education Center (AHEC). This marks an important milestone in strengthening health professions education and workforce development opportunities for American Indian communities across the state.

As the selected host site, Aaniiih Nakoda College, located on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, will play a central role in guiding the vision and activities of the American Indian AHEC. This includes strengthening community-based training, fostering partnerships with tribal and regional healthcare stakeholders, and supporting workforce pathways that align with local priorities and community strengths.

Dr. Sean Chandler, President, Aaniiih Nakoda College statement:

"We are honored that Aaniiih Nakoda College has been selected to host Montana's American Indian Area Health Education Center (AHEC). This opportunity reflects our commitment to community, education, and service.

At ANC, we believe in "growing our own" healthcare workforce by supporting students as they prepare to serve their families, communities, and homelands. Through the American Indian AHEC, we will continue expanding pathways into health professions and strengthening community-based training grounded in Indigenous lifeways and culture.

We are grateful to partner with tribal colleges, AHEC leaders, and healthcare organizations across Montana to strengthen healthcare access and build a sustainable workforce for our communities."

[Learn more here.](#)

New Reports on Healthcare Workforce in Montana

[Montana Area Health Education Centers](#) (AHEC), with the support of JG Research and Evaluation, conducted the [Montana Healthcare Workforce Assessment](#). When Montana hospital staff were

asked about their career-connected learning programs, 67% of respondents said they participate in high school medical career programs, 58% provide career presentations at local high schools, and 48% host internships for college or high school students. Respondents also mentioned providing other opportunities such as job shadow and clinical experiences.

The [Montana Healthcare Workforce Assessment](#) shares valuable findings regarding recruitment and retention of healthcare professionals in Montana. The [Post-secondary Education Partner Assessment](#) reports on needs that students may have during their education and on challenges students may face as they enter the workforce. Read the reports to learn the recommended strategies to strengthen Montana's healthcare workforce!



Engage in Career-Connected Learning

State FFA Convention:

Call for Judges on March 31

The FFA Agricultural Sales Contest is a competitive event that allows students to apply classroom knowledge to real-life situations. Students practice employability skills, including sales and marketing skills. The event includes actual sales presentations, a written exam, team sales situation, an individual practical situation focusing on customer relations and customer service.

FFA needs judges for the Agricultural Sales Contest at the State FFA Convention on Tuesday, March 31st, at 3:00 pm at the Great Falls fairgrounds. No experience is required; judges receive information and clear rubrics for the events. If you are interested in judging, please fill out this [form](#). Contact [Kaitlin Trutzel](#) with any questions.

State SkillUSA Leadership & Skills Conference:

Call for Volunteers April 7-10

Join us at the SkillsUSA Montana State Leadership and Skills Conference in Great Falls April 7-10, 2026 to share your expertise and advice with the next generation workers. Students need your experience, wisdom, and stories to become the best leaders they can be. Judging is easy because you already have the skills and expertise needed to do it. Judging competitive events requires a one-day commitment, and you'll be guiding students towards success in college and their future careers.

We are currently seeking volunteer judges and conference support staff to help make this event a success. Volunteers play a vital role in ensuring competitions run smoothly and that students have a meaningful, professional experience. [Sign up here](#). Contact [Roberta Tilleman](#) with any questions.

Skills for the Future: Eastern MT Career Summit on April 14

The Montana Jobs Network and Miles Community College invite employers and educators to participate in the Eastern Montana Career Summit, a one-day career exploration event for students in Eastern Montana. The summit will take place on Tuesday, April 14, from 8:00 AM to 1:30 PM at Miles Community College.

We are excited to partner with schools across Eastern Montana to expand career awareness and support workforce readiness for students at all stages of their educational journey. Breakout

sessions emphasize hands-on learning and real-world examples so students can explore careers in practical and meaningful ways. Please RSVP by Friday, March 27, 2026.

- [View flyer](#)
- [Educator Registration](#)
- [Employer Registration](#)

Contact [Christina Henderson](#) with any questions.

Knowledge Nugget

What is the difference between apprenticeship and an internship?

They both provide entry-level experience in a career, but they are structured differently. Apprenticeships pay you to learn a skill in the work environment to prepare for a specific career. Internships provide an opportunity to apply classroom learning in a workplace and explore careers.



Internships (focus on learning)

Usually 2-6 months

Hands-on experience completing real tasks/projects and applying theoretical knowledge gained in the classroom

Can be paid or unpaid

Not expected to lead to employment, although many employers use internships as a way to recruit and vet future employees

Does not usually include certification

Apprenticeships (earn while you learn)

1-4 years

Includes classroom instruction and structured on-the-job training so apprentices become expertly proficient in an occupation

Paid with wage progression

Expected to lead to full-time position

Includes portable industry-recognized certificate

News You Can Use

[Helena Students Go From Textbooks To Test Tubes At Shodair Genetics Lab](#)

[In These Districts, Students Get an English Credit for On-the-Job Internships](#)

[Cultivating Purpose in Adolescence](#)

Developing a sense of purpose—a self-organizing and forward-looking life aim—is one of the key processes of adolescence.

[New WIOA Waiver Flexibility Opens a Window for Workforce Reform](#)

[A Road Map for Dual Enrollment Work-Based Courses](#)



[Service and Conservation Corps Prepare Young People for Careers](#)

[Opinion: Community colleges are uniquely positioned to train the nation's AI workforce](#)

[Wolf River Youth Apprenticeship Program Gives High School Students a Head Start](#)

[Colorado District Teaches Cutting-Edge Skills Needed for a Changing Workplace](#)

[We Asked Executives What Skills Young Workers Are Missing. Here's What They Said](#)

[Challenges persist for CTE programs, report finds](#)



Questions? Contact:
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Work That Matters

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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