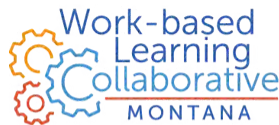


September 2026

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!](#)** K-12 Educators can receive up to 9 OPI renewal units.



WBLC Retreat

Each summer, Work-based Learning Collaborative members gather for a few days to connect, better understand the career-connected ecosystem in Montana, and determine our priorities for the coming year. Salish Kootenai College hosted the 2026 retreat in August. The 25 members who attended heard impactful stories from SKC students and faculty, learned from one another, strategized together, built connections, and enjoyed some relaxing outdoor time with local food and live music.

One of our partners, MAPS Media Institute, reflected on the retreat and the work of the WBLC:

The WBLC summer retreat made our work feel both bigger and more grounded. In a predominantly rural and geographically dispersed state, there is real value in simply being together with people asking similar questions: What do we want, collectively, and what might we be able to build together?

I left with pages of tangible ideas for MAPS. The deeper learning was less about any single process or tool. I kept returning to the idea that storytelling centers us in becoming ourselves, together. And as MAPS has always believed, meaningful work-based learning should prepare young people for more than employment. It should help learners understand themselves, one another, and how they want to contribute to their communities.

During the retreat, one of our teamwork activities quite literally became a mess (coffee spill). As we stood around laughing and looking at what we had made, we named what felt like an exhale: reality is messy. The systems young people move through are messy, too, and no single school, employer, nonprofit, agency, or program can hold everything a young person needs. That is what feels so valuable about the Work-Based Learning Collaborative: it brings together people and organizations willing to approach the mess together, stay in relationship, and keep building more connected supports around young people.



Montana Apprentice Selected for PAYA Youth Council 2026-2027

Mikayla Clements from Harlowton, Montana has been selected as a member of the national nonprofit [Partnership to Advance Youth Apprenticeship \(PAYA\)](#) 2026–27 Youth Council! The 16-member Youth Council will collaborate to strengthen youth apprenticeship across the nation through feedback, leadership, and projects. Representing diverse communities, industries, and experiences, the Council includes youth apprentices and graduates from 11 PAYA Network programs across nine states and Washington, DC.

Over the next year, members will meet virtually and convene in Washington, DC, in June 2027 to share their work with national leaders. [Learn more about the 16 Youth Council members!](#)

When Students Raise Their Hands, Who Answers?

Since spring 2022, the WBLC has gathered responses from over 800 Montana high school students, and one pattern keeps showing up: students want more career-connected learning experiences than they're getting.

Ask Montana high schoolers whether they'd like to try an internship, and roughly nine in ten will say yes. Ask whether they've actually done one, and fewer than a third can say so. The pattern repeats across nearly every kind of career-connected learning experience: 89% would like to job shadow, and just 21% have.

Students are eager, and virtually every educator we surveyed (99%) believes access to these opportunities matters. What's missing is capacity. There are not enough host sites, coordinators within the schools, or transportation options to meet demand in every corner of the state. Those are solvable problems, and they're the ones worth solving together.

WBLC collects data to inform stakeholders. Explore the full dataset on the [WBLC Data Dashboard](#) .

Employer Quick Start Guides

Aren't sure where to begin? The Work-based Learning Collaborative creates resources to share best practices and strategies for high-quality career-connected learning. These quick start guides share the benefits for you as an employer, a checklist so you don't miss important elements, and additional resources:

- [Why partner in work-based learning?](#)
 - [Quick start guide - guest speaker](#)
 - [Quick start guide - participating in career fairs](#)
 - [Quick start guide - hosting a workplace tour](#)
 - [Quick start guide - hosting a job shadow](#)
 - [Quick start guide - hosting high school interns](#)
-



The "Love, Your Mind" Playbook Helps Boost Mental Fitness

There's no one-size-fits-all approach to building a mental fitness routine; there are plenty of ways to take care of your mind. The key is finding what works for you—and sticking with it.

Atlanta United soccer player Miguel Almirón says, "Positive affirmations help me stay balanced on and off the field."

The [Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation](#), in partnership with the Ad Council, has developed the "Love, Your Mind" Playbook to unlock game-changing plays from athletes, experts and partners, designed to help you boost your mental fitness every day. [Learn More.](#)

The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation provides funding for the Work-based Learning Collaborative.

Montana State's Bracken Center helps students find internships, job offers

In the Montana State University Jake Jobs College of Business and Entrepreneurship, close to 70% of students complete a professional internship. This past summer, 70 students completed internships for credit to learn new skills and prepare for future careers.

It's a key goal of the Jake Jobs College of Business and Entrepreneurship for students to have work experience before graduating, which helps them succeed at future employment, Toby Blake, the Bracken Center's director, said. The career-oriented Bracken Center provides individualized support for students seeking internships and employment. [Read the full article.](#)



OTHER RESOURCES

Career Navigation for Youth and Young Adult Certificate

JFF is proud to partner with [UC San Diego Extended Studies](#) to launch the [Career Navigation for Youth and Young Adults Certificate](#). Designed for practitioners at all career stages, this online, asynchronous program builds the practical knowledge and skills needed to support young people in making education and career choices that lead to quality jobs. Participants can earn university credit through UC San Diego Extended Studies and a certificate that showcases the knowledge and skills they've gained. The first course begins on October 12, 2026. [Learn more and apply.](#)

What Helps Gen Z Feel Engaged and Prepared for the Future?

The [2026 Voices of Gen Z Study](#), the fourth annual installment of the Walton Family Foundation and Gallup's signature report, explores what makes school enjoyable and engaging for Gen Z students. The findings show that students' experiences at school are closely connected to how they view their lives and how prepared they feel for the future.

Key Findings:

- 48% of Gen Z K-12 students look forward to going to school every day or most days.
- 49% do not agree that school gives them the opportunity to do what they do best every day, although this has improved from 63% in 2023.
- 40% do not agree that they feel prepared for the future, rising to 50% among students who do not plan to attend college.

Explore the full report to learn how engaging coursework, supportive relationships, a sense of belonging and conversations about the future can help students get more from their education and feel prepared for what comes next.

Bring Move Over Bob Magazine to Your Community

Move Over Bob is a print magazine published three times each school year (September, January, and April) that helps young people, and especially girls, discover careers in the skilled trades, construction, manufacturing, and related industries. Free copies are available to schools, libraries, and qualifying nonprofits and workforce organizations.

News You Can Use

Measuring state progress in connecting education with opportunity

Opportunity Youth Forum Communities Create \$1.2 Billion in Cost Savings Each Year

Who are opportunity youth?

The Work-based Learning Collaborative participates in the Opportunity Youth Forum.

Three Ways to Make Teacher Degree Apprenticeship Programs Work

Degree Apprenticeship: A Remedy for the Health Care Talent Crisis

Top-level nurses can't finish their degrees because of a severe shortage of mentors

Turning Employer Interest into Student Opportunity: What EdSystems' Latest Work-based Learning Data Reveals



Questions? Contact:
Gabrielle Eklund Rowley
WBL Collaborative Director
growley@ReachHigherMontana.org
406-422-6809
or visit wblmt.org.

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.



Sent to: info@reachhighermontana.org

[Unsubscribe](#)

Reach Higher Montana, 7 West 6th Ave. Ste. 516, Helena, MT 59601, United States