

June 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](#)!



Join these workshops for higher education staff and faculty to gain actionable strategies to strengthen career-connected learning opportunities for your college students. The three-part series dives into competency-based learning, advising, and coordinating internships. The first session is on July 8 at 9:30 a.m. [Register here](#).



Transfusion:

*Injecting Youth into
the Care Continuum*



Register now!

October 13–14
Fairmont Hot Springs

- Identify strategies to strengthen the workforce pipeline
- Explore career-connected learning opportunities
- Learn about physical & behavioral health pathway programs
- Network with healthcare providers, educators, & partners

Learn more and register at: cvent.me/MyyVyo



PARTNERSHIP TO ADVANCE YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP



BlueCross BlueShield
of Montana



Billings Clinic



Governors at Work During National Apprenticeship Week

Montana's Governor Greg Gianforte celebrated the National Apprenticeship Week (April 26 through May 2, 2026) with visits to apprenticeship sites across the state, including Play N' Learn Academy in Great Falls, where he highlighted the Montana Early Childhood Apprenticeship program as a model for expanding apprenticeship beyond the trades into childcare and early education. Gianforte also announced [Montana's Registered Apprenticeship Program](#) reached its highest participation level in history in 2025, with 3,464 active apprenticeships across 65 occupations and more than 814 participating employers, a 33% increase over the past decade. This momentum reflects a broader state strategy under Gianforte's 406 JOBS initiative to align education, workforce, and industry. [Read more about the National Governors Association's work on apprenticeship here.](#)



Montana's Top Teen Entrepreneurs Crowned at 2026 Prospects

The [Montana Chamber Foundation](#) proudly announced the 2026 Grand Champion and Top Awards of The Prospects, Montana's premier youth entrepreneurship competition, following a live pitch competition held May 18 at Montana State University's Jake Jabs College of Business & Entrepreneurship.

The culminating event brought together the top five finalists from both the New Business and Existing Business divisions for the opportunity to compete for the coveted Grand Champion title and \$18,000 in cash prizes.

The Grand Champion for the Existing Business category was YAU Studios, Declan Reed, Hellgate High School, Missoula. YAU Studios is a custom clothing business featuring original designs created by Declan himself. He impressed judges with both his creativity and strong business structure, proving that hustle and execution are a winning combination.

The Grand Champion for the New Business category was Enduro Surf, Lachlan Lurgio, also of Hellgate High School, Missoula. Inspired by river surfing and an injury his father sustained while participating in the sport, Lachlan developed a rash guard designed to function as an orthopedic support tool for surfers. He also collaborated with a local physical therapist to create a working prototype.

"This next generation of entrepreneurs isn't waiting for opportunity—they're creating it," said Paul Hopfauf, Chair of the Montana Chamber Foundation. "Each of these students should be incredibly proud of what they've accomplished." [View all winners here.](#)

Job Site Ready Program Prepares Anaconda Students for Construction Careers

Eight Anaconda High School students recently completed [Accelerate Montana's Job Site Ready](#) program, combining 30 hours of online instruction with two days of hands-on construction experience to build a tool shed, which will be donated to their school district.

Participating students expressed excitement over working with tools and each other, and several shared career aspirations—ranging from construction to heavy equipment operation. Led by instructor Alex Fregerio, the program tackles workforce shortages by giving students practical skills and employers confidence in hiring those without prior experience.

The program's mobile setup can bring this training to about a dozen schools across Montana, helping young people gain valuable experience and employers identify future talent. ([KXLF](#))

Montana Launches Teacher Apprenticeship Program

Montana has launched a teacher apprenticeship program that lets future educators earn a paycheck while they train. Approximately 80 teachers signed up for the apprenticeship program. The program, backed by a federal grant through Western Governors' University across 26 districts, aims to ease local teacher shortages. Contact [Montana's Registered Apprenticeship Program](#) to learn more.

Rural Transformation Grants & Apprenticeship

How can the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Rural Health Transformation Grants help expand registered apprenticeships in healthcare? In this webinar, Apprenticeships for America brings together state and intermediary leaders for a practical discussion on how these funds can support rural employers and strengthen healthcare workforce pipelines. Learn how funding is structured, what expenses are eligible, how dollars flow, and how apprenticeship programs can be integrated into broader state health transformation efforts. Glen Disque, Montana State Director of Registered Apprenticeship, shares his insights! [Watch the webinar](#).

Upskilling Playbook: Getting Started with Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship remains one of the most powerful – and underutilized – pathways to building a skilled workforce, yet few employers know where to begin. This strategic guide, written by Annelies Goger of the UpSkill America initiative of the *Aspen Institute*, walks organizations through the key steps to launching a successful program, from assessing organizational readiness to navigating the federal registration process. [Read more here](#).

Reach Higher Montana and the Work-based Learning Collaborative are involved in the [Aspen Institute Opportunity Youth Forum](#) and are part of the Belonging, Meaning, Wellbeing, and Purpose Community of Practice.



EVENTS

Join PAYA National Partner CareerWise this spring and summer to ask questions about the youth apprenticeship topics below. Each remaining office hour will include a 15-minute presentation with 45 minutes for open discussion. **Register for [the last two sessions here](#).**

[The 5 Tenets of the Apprenticeship Ready Schools Framework](#)
Wednesday, July 15, 2026 at 3:00 pm ET

This session presents a framework to help K-12 partners align their infrastructure with apprenticeship requirements.

Knowledge Nugget

Youth Apprenticeships Build a Bridge from School to Work and Adulthood

Youth apprenticeships can be a promising pathway for young people entering the workforce. "Youth apprenticeships" is often considered synonymous with internships, job shadowing or ordinary work-based learning. It isn't.



Youth apprenticeships aim at something richer and more coherent. They tie work to learning, progression, mentoring and recognized value beyond an immediate job placement. They're less about letting students peek into adulthood than about letting them practice it.

PAYA's youth apprenticeship framework includes paid work with skilled mentors, classroom-based instruction, assessment of whether students are learning the skills the job requires, and a portable credential plus college credit. This isn't a casual exposure to a job. It's a structured pathway through work.

Done well, apprenticeships aren't anti-college; they allow students to earn while they learn, test their interests in real settings, build professional habits and keep multiple options open all at once.

Taylor White, director of the Postsecondary Pathways for Youth program at New America's Center on Education and Labor says, "For many students, youth apprenticeship is the first time school feels connected to their vision for a future — not to mention a clear pathway to get there. That sense of direction can be just as valuable as the paycheck." [Read more.](#)

News You Can Use

[Do career 'pathways' work? Delaware offers early clues](#)

Report tracks 6,000 students after high school graduation. One of the Delaware report's central findings: Workplace experience may be the most valuable component of a pathways program.



[Pivots Without Pathways: Career Navigation in a Fragmented Labor Market](#)

As job requirements and career paths become less linear, workers and learners must make more frequent, complex decisions— often with limited guidance and under conditions of uncertainty.

[The Perennial Labor Stat That Proves Millennials and Gen-Z Are Wrong About College](#)

[Belonging Matters: The Impact of Loneliness & Social Connections](#)

Family and friends are important for our well-being. This article explores data on loneliness and social connections and reviews available evidence on the link between social connections and well-being.

[Fresh squeezed talent: Jasiah's youth apprentice program experience](#)

[OPINION: As graduation looms, students need pathways that are practical, affordable and connected to opportunity](#)



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Work That Matters

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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