

April 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](#)!



Employer
Lunch n' Learns



Empowering Employers of Youth and Young Adults

Learn More

Join us for the April and May sessions!

Montana's Hope & Realization Initiative Wins Award

The [Montana Department of Labor and Industry](#) was honored with the prestigious William J. Harris Equal Opportunity Award for its [Office of Tribal Liaison – Hope and Realization Initiative](#) at the 2026 National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) Winter Policy Forum. This award recognizes a state demonstrating excellence and innovation in the area of equal opportunity.

Montana's Hope & Realization Initiative is a tribally centered effort that strengthens workforce access across the state. Built through the Office of the Tribal Liaison, the initiative deepens government-to-government engagement through Tribal Workforce Roundtables, tribally hosted Job Expos, and youth focused Think Tank Sessions, all designed to identify barriers and expand opportunities for tribal citizens.

These coordinated efforts have improved service delivery, engaged more than 550 tribal job seekers, elevated youth perspectives from all seven reservations, and increased visibility of native success through the Workforce Warriors Initiative. The Workforce Warrior Initiative increases the visibility of tribal successes, educates employers, challenges bias, and normalizes tribal participation in all workforce pathways. Together, they demonstrate a meaningful, culturally grounded model for advancing nondiscrimination and equal opportunity across Montana's

workforce system.



3rd Annual Career Quest and Construction Day Adds Agriculture to Line Up

[Reach Higher Montana](#) is set to host their 3rd annual Career Quest and Construction Day in Harlowton on April 21st. The event offers high school students from 30-plus nearby schools the opportunity to operate equipment and participate in hands-on career activities. This year, several agriculture businesses will join the lineup of career choices. In this [Northern Ag Network podcast](#), Andy Begger and Jodi Heard of Reach Higher Montana break down the background and details of what to expect for the students in South Central Montana. It's a great listen!

From Classroom to Career: Building the Flathead Valley's Manufacturing Workforce

The Daily Inter Lake invited [Montana Manufacturing Extension Center](#) Business Advisor Clint Finlayson to offer his perspectives on meeting the growing need for skilled manufacturing workers in the Flathead Valley. [Clint's guest article](#) discusses new manufacturing education initiatives at high schools and Flathead Valley Community College, and emphasizes the importance of ongoing collaboration among schools, colleges, industry, and statewide partners.

Community Health Corps Montana Launches Its Inaugural Cohort

[Community Health Corps Montana](#) (CHCM) is a statewide AmeriCorps program that places dedicated individuals in full-time service roles with organizations across Montana. CHCM members help build healthier communities by addressing the root causes of health challenges, behavioral health, chronic disease, and social determinants of health through outreach, education, building capacity, and partnership development. Ten AmeriCorps members are serving across Montana, and together they are strengthening Montana's health systems from the ground up.



Engage in Career-Connected Learning

Montana Tribal College Fairs

April 6-16

Every spring, Montana's Tribal College Team and the Montana Post Secondary Educational Opportunities Council (MPSEOC) host college and career fair events throughout Montana. These fairs are targeted towards college transfer students, high school students, parents, and community members, but anyone interested in pursuing post-secondary education is welcome. The fairs feature colleges, universities, technical schools, military branches, career options, many agencies, organizations, and businesses from both in-state and out-of-state. Area students, counselors, parents, and community members attend the fairs for free!

[View the schedule and register](#)

Build a Dynamic Workforce: Join the 2026 Montana Disability Employment Summit

May 13-14 in Helena

The summit aims to provide Montana employers with the tools and insights necessary to build resilient, innovative teams by embracing disability-driven innovation. The Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) hosts this free summit and registration is now open. Visit [2026 Montana Disability Employment Summit](#) to secure your place at this year's conference.

Knowledge Nugget

Belonging and Purpose in the Workplace

Watch the recording of our first [Lunch & Learn session](#) on reducing turnover by intentionally building a sense of belonging and purpose, especially for young employees. The new article, [Why Workplace Loneliness is HR's Newest Safety Mandate](#), outlines the cost workplaces absorb if they don't pay attention to belonging, and provides strategies to build belonging.



Youth Service Tied to Career Readiness, Connection and Resilience

Young people who serve their communities are more likely to report feeling career-ready, connected, and resilient. [A report from Gallup and The Allstate Foundation](#) explores how service is linked to positive outcomes among teens and young adults.

Key findings:

- Career Readiness: Half of young people (52%) say service activities had a somewhat (38%) or very (14%) positive impact on feeling prepared for a future career.
- Connection: Seventy-nine percent of young people say service activities had a somewhat (47%) or very (32%) positive impact on feeling connected to their community.
- Resilience: Youth with service experience are more likely to say they can handle whatever comes their way (66% vs. 52%).



8 out of 10 employers said internships provided the best ROI as a recruiting strategy

NACE Winter 2022 Quick Poll: Spring Recruiting and Career Services

ROI for Internships

According to a recent National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) poll, eight out of ten responding employers said that internships provided the best return on investment as a recruiting strategy, compared to career fairs, on-campus visits, on-campus panels, or other activities. Learn more about internships (<https://www.nacweb.org/internships>)

News You Can Use

[DPHHS Now Accepting Proposals to Launch and Implement the RHTP Center of Excellence Initiative](#)

[\\$233 Million for Rural Health in Montana: What Nonprofits Need to Know About the RHTP](#)

[Metallica Scholars Program Powering Up Trade Talent Pipeline in Wyoming](#)

[Flathead Valley Community College](#) and [Salish Kootenai College](#) also have had Metallica Scholars

[National Internship Program Grows, Placing High Schoolers In Rare Corporate Jobs](#)

[OPINION: Want to get young people excited about learning?](#) Give them hands-on programs, mentors, and skills that lead to good careers

[Why so many high schoolers take college courses — and their warnings for others](#)

[How Rocky Mountain College is virtually training the next generation of pilots](#)



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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