



Project-Based Learning

Project-based learning is a hands-on skill building tool where participants engage in real-world work to develop critical workforce skills. Employers can use project-based learning to

- Meet organizational needs
- Develop relationships that support workforce pipelines
- Serve as professional development opportunities for current employees
- Create and enhance internships and other work-based learning workforce strategies.

Project-based learning can:

- Open your doors to engaging with youth under the age of 18 in meaningful ways.
- Be a way to include meaningful work as part of an internship experience.
- Assist your company in completing time-limited and temporary tasks while providing participants with valuable career learning and skill development.
- Provide the connection to future talent through work that can be accomplished by participants off-site via high school, college or other community-based organizations.

Steps to Get Started

Step 1: Identify Possible Projects

- Identify current or upcoming projects, challenges, or “wish list” tasks that your team(s) or departments don’t have capacity to complete. (Country Maid in West Bend has every department keep a list of “opportunities” for students/participants to accomplish for the company. A win-win for the company and the individuals completing the projects).
 - Look for tasks that are meaningful but not mission-critical.
 - Consider work that requires problem-solving, creativity, research, or building something new.

Possible Project Participant(s):

- High School Student(s) – at your location or at the school for an off-site project.
- College Student(s)
- Potential Employees – individuals applying for jobs, projects can help assess skill level and culture fit.
- Current Employees – to provide professional development opportunities.

Projects can be done by individuals or groups. Projects can be part of an already existing internship program or used to create an internship opportunity.

[Resource: A template is available that you can use or edit to help with identifying possible projects and planning next steps.](#)

Step 2: Prepare Project(s)

- Create a clear project description.

Include:

- A plain-language summary of the project
- Target participant or group for project
- Project goal
- Expected outcomes or deliverables
- Tools, technology, or resources required
- Skills that will be developed
- Tentative timeline or phases of work
- Primary contact person or mentor

Resource: Use an AI prompt to help draft your project plan

Example: Create a plain-language outline for an (timeframe e.g. 8 week) project-based learning experience for a participant age (xx) to (input project description). Include a summary of the project, expected outcomes or deliverables, tools, technologies and resources required, skills that will be developed, a timeline, and phases of work.

Resource: A sample project plan: Customer Service Feedback Review and Improvement Recommendations

Assign a Mentor or Supervisor

- Identify the employee who will serve as the project lead and mentor (responsibilities: provide guidance, answer questions, and check progress.)
- Ensure the mentor understands the expectations and has time to support the participant(s).
- Encourage the mentor to foster learning, not just task completion.



Step 3: Execute

Prepare Materials and Workspace

- Ensure the participant(s) will have access to data, accounts, software, or equipment they may need.
- Create a list of orientation information to share with participants of workplace norms, communication channels, and safety procedures if applicable.
- Clarify constraints (such as confidentiality, timelines, or budget limits).

• Project Kick Off

- Hold an initial meeting to explain the project, learning goals, and expected outcomes.
- Invite participants to ask questions and suggest ideas.
- Review the schedule and confirm communication preferences.

• Facilitate Check-Ins and Feedback Loops

- Schedule regular check-ins (weekly or bi-weekly) to discuss progress and challenges.
- Provide constructive feedback and help students adjust their approach as needed.
- Encourage participants to document their work as they go.

Resource: A sample Weekly Project Check-In Form

• Create Opportunities for Reflection and Connection

- Encourage participants to reflect on what they are learning and how it relates to their career goals.
- Provide chances to meet employees in different roles, attend meetings, or observe workplace processes.

• Final Presentation or Deliverable

- Ask participants to present their work, findings, or prototype to the team or leadership.
- Provide a structured format (e.g., slides, report, demonstration).
- Celebrate their accomplishments and highlight how their work contributes to the organization.

Resource: A sample Final Evaluation Form



Step 4: Evaluate, Improve, Connect

- Gather feedback from the participant, mentor, and team members.
- Identify what worked well and what could be refined for future PBL opportunities.
- Document the project for future use or adaptation.
- Offer references, LinkedIn connections, or future learning opportunities when appropriate.

[Resource: A sample Participant and Mentor Feedback Form](#)

For More Information Contact:

Kathy Leggett

Business Engagement Liaison, Iowa Workforce Development

515-204-1378

kathy.leggett@iwd.iowa.gov