

BEST PRACTICE: STRENGTHEN STATEWIDE WORK-BASED LEARNING INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNICATIONS

Work-based learning (WBL) infrastructure remains in the early stages in most states. Many states have adopted a “work-based learning coordinator” model and tasked those coordinators with communicating among stakeholders about WBL programs and opportunities. This approach to communications, though, relies heavily on the capacity and networks of a single person, rather than leveraging the collective capacity and networks of stakeholders statewide.

Several states also have built websites to help match young people with WBL opportunities. In **Nevada**, [Life Works](#) is a WBL hub for in- and out-of-school youth and young adults statewide where users can find internships, apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and career and technical education (CTE) programs, as well as learn about in-demand occupations and skills. LifeWorks utilizes strategic partnerships among Nevada government agencies, K-12 public education, business and industry leaders, and the Nevada System of Higher Education. **North Carolina’s** [Navigator](#) allows employers to post WBL opportunities and enables educators to search and track those opportunities across the state, while **Rhode Island’s** [Work-Based Learning Navigator](#) allows students to search opportunities that align with their interests and career goals.

Another common approach is the development of an intermediary or public-private partnership, which can play a critical role in connecting schools and businesses and ensuring students can access WBL opportunities. The [North Carolina Business Committee for Education \(NCBCE\)](#) is a business-led, education nonprofit organization that operates out of the Office of the Governor. The organization works to link business leaders and the state’s education decision makers to create connections between the education curriculum and the overall work readiness of citizens across the state. In addition to the NCBCE, North Carolina has a system of local [advisory councils](#), which are public-private partnerships that support the planning and development of CTE programming, including WBL.

Washington state’s [Career Connect Washington \(CCW\)](#) is another example of a statewide initiative and public-private partnership that facilitates WBL opportunities through a system of regional networks, intermediaries, and local coordinators. To date, [CCW has](#) nine regional networks established to serve as “career-connected learning” (CCL) hubs in their regions; 22 intermediaries funded to expand or develop programs; 150+ employers engaged in career explore, prep, and launch programs; and 10,000 enrolled students in Career Launch programs, among other accomplishments.

In **Massachusetts**, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s [Connecting Activities](#) initiative establishes public-private partnerships through 16 local MassHire Workforce Boards to provide WBL experiences for students. The workforce boards also coordinate One Stop Career Centers, YouthWorks programs, labor market research programs, and several other workforce training and educational programs. In **Delaware**, the Delaware Technical Community College (DTCC) DTCC’s [Office of Work-Based Learning](#) serves as an intermediary between education agencies and business and industry partners to facilitate and scale WBL opportunities across the state. Staff from the DTCC work



with school districts, employers, and community-based organizations to expand and build upon regional employer engagement and help to coordinate the supply and demand of WBL opportunities.

Iowa's Intermediary Network comprises 15 regional intermediary networks designed to connect business and education by offering WBL activities to students in their region. In addition, the [STEM BEST](#) program launches school-business partnerships that engage students in relevant, authentic WBL in communities across the state. Since 2014, the [Iowa Governor's STEM Advisory Council](#) has awarded 75 STEM BEST programs, which involve a significant public-private match.

