



Establish and nurture relationships with industry partners to create learning environments that are engaging and fun.

### Quick Guide

# How do I connect with industry partners?

As an educator, you want to create meaningful experiences for your students. Profession-based learning (Pro-BL) programs present a unique opportunity to create a win-win relationship in which both students and business partners receive something of value – a handshake rather than a handout.

## CREATE MUTUAL BENEFIT

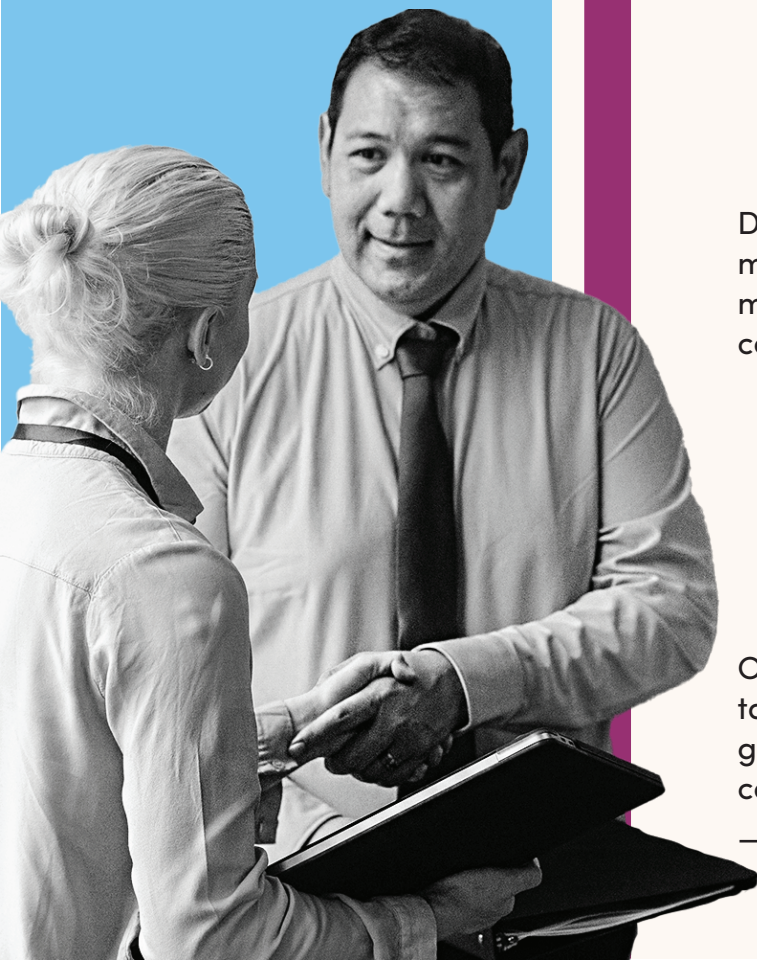
When considering potential partnerships with businesses in your community, here are helpful questions to ask:

- What are their business or industry needs?
- What skills and qualities are they looking for in their future workforce?
- What opportunities can we provide to students that would give them an advantage when entering the workforce?

Do your research and understand an industry partner's motivations for participation. Consider meeting with multiple businesses and organizations throughout your community to learn what you can.

- What are their most pressing issues?
- What concerns them the most about workforce development?
- Do they see this as a public relations opportunity?
- Do they simply want to give back to the community?

Once you have answers to these questions, you can tailor your partnership proposals to align with their goals and demonstrate the mutual benefits of collaboration. Follow up with, “I understand you need \_\_\_\_\_. Here are some ways we could engage.”



## REACHING OUT TO PARTNERS

### Make a warm introduction via email or phone to gauge interest

- If there is interest, set up an in-person meeting at a site most convenient for the potential partner

### Plan opportunities for engagement

- Host a Lunch & Learn
- Host a roundtable
- Invite potential partners to visit classrooms

### Follow-up with a “thank you” and request for commitment to partner

- Based on interest level, provide a “next step” so the potential partner knows to expect follow-up
- Ask for referrals and/or introductions to other potential partners

**When a potential partner is ready to engage**, work with them to identify the best fit for engagement (mentor, curriculum development, projects, etc.)

**“Always ask potential business partners how your students can help them. Be sure they know you are seeking a mutually beneficial partnership.”**

— Dr. Jennifer Stanfill  
Former Director of Choice Programs, Library Services  
Parkway School District

## ONGOING PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT

### Meet industry partners where they are.

Walk with them one small step at a time. It’s okay to start with a simple tour and no initial commitment. This can lead to guest instruction or mentoring, and then deeper engagements like supplying client-connected projects and internships.

### Develop a plan for regular communication

to assess any needs for change, monitor progress toward goals and plan for future engagements. Keep supporters updated and engaged with thank you letters and/or email updates.

### Don’t assume industry partners know how to work with students.

Provide guidance so they understand their roles and responsibilities. Share best practices for communicating and engaging with students to ensure partners know what they need to succeed.

**Make engagement easy.** Many partnerships start on a smaller, informal scale and later expand into larger roles. Offer opportunities to guest speak, mentor students on skills or provide workplace tours. Starting small allows partners to get to know the program. Create pathways for partners to drop in and out of engagement to accommodate their needs.

**Be considerate of time.** Calendars fill up quickly. The more advance notice and tools you can provide a partner, the easier it is for them to engage. If partners are providing projects, begin recruiting projects at least six weeks before the start of a semester. Partners also benefit from tools like sample schedules for workplace tours, templates for mentoring and other resources so that the burden is not on the business to create a curriculum.

Ready to explore more? Let’s connect!  
[experience.work/contact](#)