

# DirectEmployers Foundation

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## **Frequently Asked Questions: A Guide for Employers**

The board and staff of DirectEmployers Association welcomes employers to partner with us to inspire and prepare the next generation of a more diverse global workforce by bringing a simulated workplace environment directly to students in state-of-the-art, project-based STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) Learning Labs and through local workplace learning programs. We hope that after reviewing the answers to these frequently asked questions, employers will be interested in providing hands-on learning opportunities for Central Indiana youth in grades 8-12 to explore high-wage, high demand STEM careers.

### **1. What are some specific ways that employers can support the mission of DirectEmployers Foundation?**

- a. Underwrite costs associated with developing state-of-the-art STEM Learning Labs in Central Indiana schools and other community spaces
- b. Sponsor a STEM Learning Lab for a specific STEM career pathway
- c. Provide equipment to be used for project-based learning in our STEM Learning Labs
- d. Provide hands-on STEM and general business curriculum for our STEM Learning Labs
- e. Provide mentors to guide students through project-based learning experiences in STEM Learning Labs
- f. Serve as guest speakers during our programs for students
- g. Provide job shadowing and internship opportunities in their workplaces
- h. Provide financial support in the form of scholarships to enable disadvantaged students to participate in our programming
- i. Hire students who have completed our programs

### **2. What's involved in sponsoring a STEM Learning Lab in a school?**

Employers who sponsor a STEM Learning Lab make a commitment for one school year (or a semester, in special circumstances) to establish a hands-on environment in a dedicated area of a school that simulates, to the greatest extent possible, part of the actual employer's workplace. The Learning Lab could replicate an office, a laboratory, or any other workspace used by an employer. Employers are expected to equip the Learning Lab with actual supplies, furniture, and equipment that are used in the employer's actual workspace. In addition, employers are expected to staff the Learning Lab with their employees, serving as full-time on-site

Employers-in-Residence or part-time on-site Student Mentors, at times requested by the school. In most cases, the Learning Lab will be expected to be operational during school hours. Prior to agreeing to sponsor a Learning Lab on a school campus, employers will have a chance to visit the space to help them determine which of their business procedures and processes can best be simulated in that environment.

### **3. What actually happens in a STEM Learning Lab?**

The Direct Employers Foundation staff facilitates a series of meetings among the employer contact person, employer-selected Employers-in-Residence or Student Mentors, school administrators, and teachers from the career pathway related to the Learning Lab established by the employer partner. For example, in a Life Sciences Career Pathway Learning Lab, participating teachers may represent disciplines including chemistry, biology, physics, math, allied health, etc. Then, working as a team, we will create project-based learning modules and lessons, aligned with Indiana Academic Standards, that Employers-in-Residence or Student Mentors will use to guide the learning for the students who are scheduled in their Learning Lab. Teachers will identify the students who will have the privilege to participate in programming in the Learning Lab as a way to supplement their high school curriculum. The content of each learning module and lesson plan will be documented so they can be consistently replicated, with each lesson tied to an Indiana Academic Standard identified by school staff. Each lesson will include some type of hands-on, skills-based assessment implemented by the Employers-in-Residence or Student Mentors to measure student achievement. Employers-in-Residence or Student Mentors will report the results of all student assessments to DirectEmployers Foundation staff, who will then report them to the school. Most students will receive transcribed high school credit in Work-Based Learning for their participation in the Learning Lab.

### **4. Is there a good way for an employer to determine if participating in work-based learning is a good match for our mission and what we can expect?**

Yes. We recommend using *A Toolkit for Employer: Connecting Youth & Business* (<http://www.dol.gov/summerjobs/pdf/Toolkit.pdf>) as a resource to assess if engaging in work-based learning is a good way for your organization to create a diversified workforce by connecting with students who will comprise tomorrow's workforce. This guide is written from a business partner's perspective and provides practical information to help you decide if offering work-based learning is a good fit with the culture of your organization.

### **5. What's involved in providing guest speakers through DirectEmployers Foundation?**

Many of the 8-12-grade teachers with whom we work are hungry for someone from the "real world" of business to speak to their students as a way to reinforce the content of their curriculum. Guest speaking can involve speaking to just one class for up to an hour or to several classes during a day. We also invite employees from our partnering businesses to serve as

guest speakers during our Youth Employment Summer (YES) program. As a part of YES, there are opportunities for business representatives to conduct half-day workshops on a core business topic, serve as a coach to a small group of students who are developing a business plan, and serve as a reviewer when the students present their business plans at the end of the two-week program.

## **6. What opportunities are there for businesses to serve as job shadow hosts or provide paid/unpaid internships?**

**Job Shadows:** One of the best ways to help students select a prospective career path is to provide them with opportunities to see first-hand what happens on a day-to-day basis at an employer's site. As a result, we welcome businesses to serve as job shadow sites, inviting 1-10 students at a time to visit their workplace to interact with actual employees and observe real business practices and processes. Most job shadows are provided for students in grades 8-10 as a way to help them select a career path so they can start taking the right classes in grades 11 and 12 to prepare them for their career interest area.

**Internships:** Students in grades 11 and 12, who have already started in a career pathway by taking relevant upper level classes and participating in a STEM Learning Lab program or other hands-on work-based learning opportunity, may be ready to tackle an employer-based paid or unpaid internship. DirectEmployers Foundation staff works with a student's school and an employer to arrange a student's internship. Internships may occur in the summer, after school hours, or during school hours, depending on the specific needs of the students and his/her school's policies. Prior to embarking on an internship, DirectEmployers Foundation staff will work with a student and the student's school to ensure that the internship will be a good match for the student's interests and abilities. We use two documents from the Indiana Department of Education to guide the planning and implementation of internships:

- a. **Work Based Learning Manual:**  
([http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/standards/cte-work-based-learning/work\\_based\\_learning\\_manual-20140822.pdf](http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/standards/cte-work-based-learning/work_based_learning_manual-20140822.pdf))
- b. **Guidelines and Procedures for Indiana Internship Programs:**  
(<http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/cte/internshipmanual08.pdf>)

**7. How do I learn more about ways to partner with DirectEmployers Foundation to help prepare students for STEM careers?**

Please contact DirectEmployers Foundation Executive Director, Simone Murray, to arrange a meeting. She may be reached at 317-874-9047 or at [simone@directemployers.org](mailto:simone@directemployers.org).