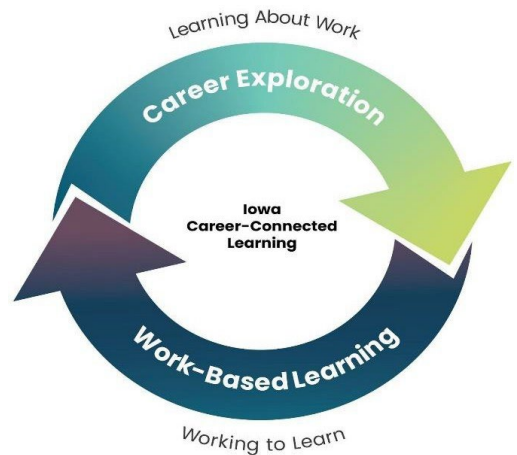


# Job Shadow Toolkit

## Job shadow definition:

Job shadows are a **career exploration** experience that allows students to explore a specific career of interest by observing an experienced employee performing their typical work duties in a real-world work environment. The job shadowing experience is a temporary (2-8 hours), unpaid exposure to the workplace in an occupational area of interest to the student. Students should receive formalized instruction about their career choice, expectations of the job shadow, how to prepare for their visit and follow-up after the experience. Students should participate in a job shadow after prior career awareness and exploration activities have been completed to ensure students are matched with careers that best suit their career interests and personalities.



## Preparation for Job Shadow Experiences

### Make key decisions in planning for job shadows

#### Prior to student participation in the job shadow:

- The student should have completed related coursework to the career pathway.
- The student should have participated in other work-based learning experiences related to the career pathway such as an interactive career event, worksite exploratory event, authentic project or career-based service learning project.

#### Identify the courses that will prepare and support students for the experience

- If the student is in high school, the job shadow experience should be connected to a course to prepare and support students before, during and after the experience.
- If the student is in a college job shadowing course, the course will adequately prepare that student.

#### Identify how the placements will be identified

- If the course supporting the experience is in a particular subject area, the placements will be in the correlating career area.
- If the course supporting the experience is in a general subject area, additional time will need to be placed on compiling student career pathways of interest.

#### Identify and plan logistics for connecting students to the job shadow placements

- Provide the student support during and after the experience

#### Placement Coordination

- The educator/instructor/coordinator should assist with connecting the job shadow placements for each student.
  - Requiring students to find their own job shadow placements creates inequitable access by assuming students have the skills, ability and professional networks necessary to cold call and engage with industry in a meaningful and successful manner.

- The educator/instructor/coordinator will need to identify interested industry placements, connect the information with the student and coordinate communication on the day and time frame for the job shadow.

### **Transportation**

- Follow district or college policies to plan accordingly to ensure transportation is not a barrier to accessing the educational opportunity.

### **Off-site Policies**

- Review and follow all district or college off-site policies and connect students to the steps they need to take prior to the experience.

### **Local Coverage**

- If the student is needing accommodations, ensure this is communicated internally following appropriate ADA and FERPA guidelines and support is provided.

### **Student Time**

- If the student will be missing other classes/courses to participate in the job shadow, assist by communicating the value to colleagues to support the student's participation.
- If the job shadow will take place during a meal hour, make arrangements with your local district/college kitchen/café accordingly to ensure students do not miss a meal in order to participate.

## **Prepare student learners to maximize career learning during the event**

The job shadow provides an extension of prior work-based learning experiences

- The job shadow should occur after the student has participated in other work-based learning experiences and taken coursework to narrow down the career interest area.
- Research projects should be connected to the job shadow experience to assist with student career planning decisions.
  - Research the organization using the organization's website
  - Research the career using online career tools, such as O\*Net OnLine or Future Ready Iowa
  - Prepare students to gather additional in-depth information from the industry professional during the job shadow by providing a copy of informational interview questions to consider.
- Inform students on the additional career research and organization done after the job shadow to complete the career project to meet your course's expectations.
- Use the student and placement information to develop a support plan (if needed) with educational staff to ensure all student needs and accommodations will be supported during the experience.

Prepare students with expectations before, during and after the job shadow

- Prior to the experience – communication/outreach expectations with the industry professional
- During the experience:
  - Professionalism in behavior, communication and attire during the experience
  - Participation expectations with asking questions and participating in hands-on activities on-site
- After the experience – expectation of follow-up assignments/projects to ensure students gather the information needed and complete the project.

## Prepare supporting staff with information to support a successful event

- Identify staff who will be supporting students during the job shadowing experience.
- Connect the student and supporting staff member prior to the experience so both are familiar with each other.
- Communicate the supporting staff member's name and contact information to the industry partner.
- Outline expectations for support during the job shadow.

## Coordinate with the industry partners for a positive experience

### Communicate Logistics

- Parking
  - If applicable, where the district/college staff driver or student driver is to park.
- Building Entry
  - Request information on any special entry requirements to ensure a smooth process on the day of the event.
- Student Safety
  - Prompt a request for industry professionals to discuss safety with human resources to ensure students will be safe during the job shadow.

### Collaboratively plan an educationally engaging experience

- Remind industry contact the student will want an in-depth understanding of their career, but employer guidelines with safety, confidentiality, etc. should still be followed at all times.
- Provide the same list of informational interview questions to the industry professional that was provided to the student to ensure the professional has time to prepare any responses (if necessary).
  - Clearly communicate that the student is to ask the questions and the industry partner should not just hand the completed questions to the student (unless this accommodation for the student is necessary).
- If possible, request students engage in a hands-on activity/experience.
  - Is the student able to attend an internal meeting or view a current or past project?
  - If possible, provide an opportunity for the student to participate in an activity to maintain student engagement.
  - If the industry partner is unable to provide a safe hands-on activity for the student, consider follow-up activities in the classroom to provide the connection to the career.
- To enhance the experience, communicate key career components or topics you would like the professional to reference and connect.
  - Share current concepts students are learning and ask that the professional connect how they or similar concepts are used in their work.
  - Share upcoming concepts that the professional could preview or provide an example of to help extend student learning.

## During the Job Shadow Experience

- Keep a record of the job shadows the student is attending along with contact information. In the event something happens, the educator/instructor/coordinator can assist with communication.
- Provide support expectations based on the needs of the student.
- Consider taking pictures or videos, if allowed, to share after the experience and to help with reflection activities and/or knowledge retention.

## After the Job Shadow Experience

### Make note of the experience and collect feedback

- Collect feedback from the professional, students along with your own observations.
- Identify recommendations to improve future experiences.

### Send a thank you note to the professionals

- Encourage student to write a thank you note or a class/course/program thank you.
  - Connects the value of the professional's time and provides an opportunity for students to practice professional skills.

### Connect the interactive career event experience with student ICAP

*Note for college instructors: Although the acronym ICAP is used in K-12, the following examples provide valuable reflections activities applicable in supporting work-based learning for college students.*

Sample reflection activities:

- 3-2-1 Strategy
  - At the end of the experience, have students write or verbally reflect three things they did not know before the experience, two things that surprised them about the experience and one thing that they learned about their own career path from the experience.
- Survey
  - Create a short survey and provide a QR code for students to complete their responses.
- More examples are available on the [Department's Career and Academic Planning webpage](#).

### Consider an extension project to deepen connections of content to career

- Include an opportunity for students to present on the details of the career, their experience and their reflection on how the experience impacts their career steps.
- Coordinate additional work-based learning experiences with the industry partner, such as:
  - Classroom Speakers
  - Worksite Exploratory Event
  - Internship

### Photos/video from event

- If you have pictures from the job shadow experience, share the pictures with the professionals and your district/college.
  - Make sure you have photos releases prior to sharing.
- Publicizing the job shadows demonstrates the value of the experience and the partnership with local industry.

## Additional Preparation and Reflection Example Activities

### Example Student Preparation Activities

Research activity in preparation for the job shadow (possible questions)

1. Professional's Organization Name and Website:
2. Organization's location:
3. Organization's mission statement:
4. What is the organization's primary product or service?

5. What departments exist within the organization?
6. Who are at least two competitors of the organization the professional is employed with?
7. What are three questions you have about the organization, career path and/or professional that you would like to ask?

Career research activity in preparation for the job shadow

1. Name of the career
2. Typical tasks/responsibilities in this career path
3. Work activities associated with this career
4. Skills required for success in this career
5. Education/training required for this career path
6. Worker abilities and interests associated with this career
7. Related careers that interest you
8. Typical earnings in this career path
9. Projected job openings in Iowa for this career

## Example Informational Interview Questions to Ask During the Job Shadow

1. What is your title and main responsibilities in your current position?
2. Why did you decide to work in this industry?
3. What does a typical day at your organization look like?
4. Can you tell me what education and experiences led up to you obtaining your current position?
5. What are the most vital steps someone should take to prepare for a role like yours?
6. What accomplishments do you feel set you apart in this industry?
7. What new skills have you developed since taking this role?
8. What types of decisions do you make in your role?
9. What is your organizational culture like?
10. What is your favorite thing about your current career?
11. What is your least favorite thing about your current career?
12. Is there something you wish you would have known when you were younger that would help you in your current career?
13. What types of projects do you get to work on?
14. What are some of the greatest rewards you have experienced since obtaining your role?
15. Are you able to establish a work/life balance in your field?
16. Are you able to share some of the most difficult challenges you face in your role?
17. If you weren't in this position, what other positions would you be interested in pursuing?
18. Is there anything else you would like to share about your career or organization?

Job shadow reflection activity (possible questions)

1. Student Name
2. Name of the career you learned about:
3. What was interesting about the career you learned about?
4. What was not interesting about the career you learned about?
5. What did you learn about one of the careers?
6. What skills do you need for the career you learned about?
7. Would you consider a career in this field? Why or why not?