

Career-Based Service Learning Toolkit

An Education and Instructor Resource

Revised November 2025



Contents

- Career-Based Service Learning Toolkit..... 3
- What is Career-Based Service Learning? 4
- What is the Value of Career-Based Service Learning?..... 4
- CTSOs: A Successful Strategy for Implementing Career-Based Service Learning 5
- Building Career-Based Service Learning Experiences for Students 6
- Advocacy 6
- Direct 7
- Indirect 7
- Research Career-Based..... 8
- Connecting Career-Based Service Learning Experiences to Student ICAP..... 9

Career-Based Service Learning Toolkit

Work-based learning experiences provide students the opportunity to learn about careers through academic preparation, partnership between education and industry and academic follow-up. Career-based service learning is recognized in Iowa as a work-based learning experience for students. Career-based service learning provides students with the opportunity to improve their communities while making valuable connections to careers that serve the public.

This toolkit is designed to outline how to move a service learning project into a recognized work-based learning experience through career-based service learning. Career and technical education student organizations (CTSOs), which are connected to career and technical education (CTE) programs, provide the optimal opportunity to integrate projects with a career-based service learning experience.

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What is Career-Based Service Learning?

Career-based service learning is a **career exploration** experience that engages students in project-based learning to improve their communities by addressing community needs and connecting the learning experience to related careers. Career-based service learning encompasses taking a traditional service learning opportunity and connecting the project to appropriate industry partners to enable the student to develop related professional skills. A portion of the career connection includes student interaction with industry professionals and exploration of careers related to the completed service learning project. To provide a quality career-based service learning experience, the instructor should connect additional career learning to an industry partner at the conclusion of the experience to allow students to use their experience to inquire more in-depth about the career.

No special endorsements are required to oversee career-based service learning.

What is the Value of Career-Based Service Learning?

Students who participate in and complete a career-based service learning experience are:

- More engaged in their local communities, more likely to seek ways to improve their community and are more likely to be committed to community service in the future.
- Provided opportunities to develop professional skills required by industry including project management, budgeting, teamwork, collaboration, critical-thinking, problem-solving and communication.
- Able to research a community need, see tangible outcomes and reflect on the experience to gain broader appreciation for the needs of the greater community.
- Able to explore a variety of opportunities across industry sectors that may serve as career or volunteer opportunities in the future, learning their own values and developing self-awareness.
- Prepared to take advantage of additional work-based learning experiences and make appropriate educational decisions based on the career-based learning experience.



CTSOs: A Successful Strategy for Implementing Career-Based Service Learning

CTSOs, as membership associations, provide opportunities for students to connect to community service organizations. Student members learn to apply their classroom instruction to real world scenarios through career-based service learning.

Most CTSOs have a community service-based competitive event (see Using Competitive Event Topics, Guidelines and Rating Sheets as Projects & Assessments), offer a community service recognition program or have national service partners. These community service-based competitive events can be the foundation for a career-based service learning experience. Educators can use the foundational community service based competitive event and add in an industry partner connection to provide a career-based service learning experience (enabling it to be a work-based learning experience).

The following table contains CTSO connections to community service-based competitive events to use as the foundation for the career-based service learning experience. With modification, the linked project frameworks below may help build career-based service learning with the educator making the local connection to an industry partner.

Disclaimer: The Iowa Department of Education does not endorse the third-party relationships of the CTSOs listed below.

CTSO	Resource Link
Business Professionals of America (BPA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• BPA Cares• Lead4Change
DECA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DECA + MDA Partnership• Lead4Change
Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• FCCLA National Programs• Lead4Change
Future Business Leaders of America - Phi Beta Lambda (FBLA-PBL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• FBLA-PBL + Lead4Change• Lead4Change
HOSA-Future Health Professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• HOSA Partners• HOSA Community Service Ideas• Lead4Change
FFA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Chapter Awards• FFA Living to Serve
SkillsUSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SkillsUSA National Week of Service• SkillsUSA Program of Work• Student2Student
Technology Student Association (TSA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• TSA National Service Project

Building Career-Based Service Learning Experiences for Students

If an educator is interested in developing a new career-based service learning opportunity in your community, below are some potential ideas.

Advocacy

Advocacy career-based service learning allows students to experience creating public awareness on an important community issue.

Sample Topic	Sample CBSL Structure	Sample Industry Partner Connection
Healthcare: Marketing Strategy for New Facility or to Retain a Current Facility	Research, develop a proposal and present to your local chamber of commerce, county economic development corporation or healthcare administration professionals nearby. Use their feedback to determine appropriate next steps.	Connect the experience to careers in healthcare through guest speakers, virtual career events or a worksite exploratory event.
Community Issue: Public Awareness Campaign	Research, develop a proposal and present the campaign to the appropriate advocacy groups to make the change. Use their feedback to determine appropriate next steps.	Connect the experience to careers in your community or region through a guest speaker or worksite exploratory event.
Educational Challenge: Strategic Improvement Proposal	Research and develop a solution to improve the educational challenge. Present the solution to key stakeholders and use their feedback to make appropriate next steps.	Connect the experience with related careers through an informational interview with someone in that career or invite someone in that career to be a guest speaker.

Direct

Direct career-based service learning allows students to have a hands-on experience that will directly impact the community.

Sample Topic	Sample CBSL Structure	Sample Industry Partner Connection
Student Club/Organization: Create or Lead a Project in an Existing Club/Organization	As a member of the organization, develop a project that will make a positive impact on the community.	Connect the experience to a related career and invite a professional to be a guest speaker.
Organized Drive: Support a Community Need	All aspects of the drive need to be supported from identifying the community need, organization of the drive, collection and distribution of the donations.	Connect the experience to careers in your community or region through a guest speaker or worksite exploratory event.
Community Engagement: Ongoing Support	Connect with a nearby senior living center to develop an ongoing interaction to connect with these important citizens (music, games, volunteering, etc.). Research and develop an approach that generates consistent interaction to bring joy to their center residents.	Connect the experience to related careers and invite staff working at the center to discuss their careers.

Indirect

Indirect career-based service learning experiences help the community without seeing the direct positive results first-hand.

Sample Topic	Sample CBSL Structure	Sample Industry Partner Connection
Community Garden: Develop and Organize	Plan, organize, prepare and plant the produce in the community garden. Allow the community to pick their own harvest or deliver the harvested produce to a local food pantry.	Connect to related careers in your community and invite a professional to share about career and volunteer opportunities to students.
Design Project: Downtown Revitalization Plan or Community Park Beautification	Research, plan, interview, propose and potentially implement a project idea.	Connect with city hall staff or other related careers to the project and request the professionals as guest speakers or participate in a worksite exploratory event.
Organize a Local Drive: Support a Local Nonprofit	Research, develop a strategy, collect donations, organize donations and drop-off donations with the nonprofit.	Connect with the staff at the nonprofit to learn more about the organization and the careers and volunteer opportunities with the organization.

Research Career-Based

Research career-based service learning allows students to explore issues impacting their community and develop a strategic approach to bring awareness and action to solving the challenges.

Sample Topic	Sample CBSL Structure	Sample Industry Partner Connection
Broadband Expansion: Impact Research Project	Research, interview, hypothesize and develop a solution for your community or state to address the issue.	Connect to an industry professional or virtual event on broadband to connect careers related to broadband.
Bullying Laws: Impact Research Project	Research bullying laws at your educational institution and at the state level, collect data, identify areas needing improvement and present a solution proposal to the appropriate stakeholders.	Connect with your local legislative representative to learn more about careers in policy-making through a guest speaking appearance or informational interview.
Community Impact: Research an important Local Topic	Develop a timeline to research, plan and propose a solution to the appropriate stakeholder.	Connect with a professional in a career related to the project and invite the professional to be a guest speaker or connect with the appropriate virtual event in the related career.



Connecting Career-Based Service Learning Experiences to Student ICAP

Career-based service learning experiences support the goals outlined in the individual career and academic plan (ICAP) to ensure students have high-quality work-based experiences to assist with career development. By connecting the hands-on opportunity to a related career with an industry professional, students are able to have a career-related experience, reflect and make the appropriate decisions with their educational plans. When the career-based service learning experience is embedded as part of the curriculum of a CTE course, all students in the course are provided access to the experience. Educators can implement reflective activities for students to internalize whether the career-based service learning experience is in a career path they are interested in pursuing. The addition of reflection and follow-up activities are essential to a student's ICAP.

