

# Blue Apples Business Partner Handbook



Adapted from Iowa Business Partner Toolkit and Iowa Work-Based Learning Guide



# Introduction

This handbook has been created to inform and support our business partners about the importance of, and value in, engaging with students around meaningful work-based learning projects, provide guidance in creating a project and tips for working with students to promote the best possible outcome for all parties.

The Blue Apples STEM BEST Program is aligned with the Future Ready Iowa initiative to prepare individuals for careers and lifelong learning to meet employer needs and to grow family incomes and strengthen communities.

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## What Are the Benefits FOR BUSINESSES?

Address projects & tasks that would otherwise not get attention

Help create a pipeline of talent that is better prepared and motivated

Derive value from work performed by student partners

Potential future employees for part-time, summer or eventual full-time jobs in an authentic context

Educate young adults about the careers available to them in your company and industry

Learn about the knowledge and skills of tomorrow's employees by working with today's students

Expand your views and experiences by working with different demographics

## What Are the Benefits FOR STUDENTS?

Make connections between real-world expectations and the classroom

Interact with positive adult role models

Gain critical thinking and problem-solving skills

Pursue education with a greater sense, purpose, and engagement due to seeing an increased relevance

Find out if a career or industry might be a good fit

Build essential skills; communication and presentation; collaboration, grit, creativity and innovation; flexibility and adaptability; accountability and productivity, self-esteem and confidence

Experience a range of opportunities

## Roles and Responsibilities From the Iowa Work-Based Learning Guide

### BUSINESS PARTNERS

Partners provide instruction, guidance, and feedback on the specific initiative students are expected to work on, as well as information about the general operation of the business. Student teams will communicate regularly with the teacher-coordinator and partner about how the team is progressing on the initiative and what is needed to meet the needs of the partner.

The business partner may also engage with student teams in the classroom instruction, such as speaking opportunities, business/industry field trips, serving as resources/mentors, and community liaison to support and promote Blue Apples.

## STUDENT

Students agree to act in accordance as an effective employee and to fully engage in learning activities both at school and at the worksite, if necessary. Students will exhibit honesty, integrity, punctuality, courtesy, a cooperative attitude, proper health and grooming habits, appropriate attire, and a willingness to learn. Students will work toward the goal of moving the initiative to a definition of done that the partner and team have agreed upon. Students will communicate with their team, business partner and the teacher-coordinator.

## TEACHER-COORDINATOR

The teacher-coordinator helps students develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and work habits to be successful post-high school. The functions and responsibilities of teacher-coordinators include program planning, development, and evaluation; related-class instruction; guidance and advice; program administration and management; community and public relations.

» Program Planning, Development, and Evaluation » Defining the purpose and learning components of the Blue Apples program, including the development of the supplemental curriculum; training and engaging partners/mentors.

» Guidance and Advising » Providing guidance and support to students, student teams and partners as necessary to keep moving the initiative forward and promote student growth.

» Related-Class Instruction » Delivering a component that helps students to develop appropriate worksite skills and behaviors; reinforces aspects of learning that occur; and utilizes the community to enhance learning objectives.

» Program Evaluation » Preparing, administering and analyzing student work. Engaging with the partner to evaluate student performance. Seeking information from partners and others to make program improvements.

» Community and Public Relations » Creating promotional materials; utilizing community resources and the media to publicize Blue Apples events and

accomplishments, and sponsoring activities that inform the community about the program.

## What is the Time Commitment?

Involvement from business partners can happen at the school, at the business site, or it can occur virtually with the business partners connecting via video-conferencing (Zoom, Google Hangouts or Facetime), email or simply by phone.

The time commitment is fully up to the business partner. It can range from highly involved being closely engaged from pitching the initiative, regular meetings, providing mentoring or skills instruction all the way to the final presentation to minimal involvement at any or all stages until the final presentation. Students will need to communicate more frequently at times to make sure the project is proceeding in the right direction to meet the needs of the business partner. At any time during the initiative should the business partner need to make changes to their level of involvement this will be worked out with the teacher-coordinator.

## Project Development: What Makes a High-Quality Initiative?

The work needs to be authentic with real-world tasks. These can be actual tasks your company needs to be worked on or a task that simulates something your company might face. Students need to be able to own the work, be responsible for authentic research to further their knowledge and fill any gaps as they move the initiative forward. They need to be able to create, collaborate, and communicate with their team. They need to be able to deliver a product or service to a real audience.

## IDEAS TO JUMPSTART YOUR INITIATIVE

- Are there projects at the bottom of your to-do list that you never seem to get around to?
- Ideas you just haven't had time or staff to explore.
- Use the group as consultants for an unbiased fresh take on things.
- Process or aspect of your business that you would like to change or do differently.
- Run the initiative as a challenge with multiple groups to find the best solution and synthesize their ideas into one for a final collaborative presentation.

## Project Checklist

This checklist is based upon the Buck Institute for Education Essential Project Design Element Checklist and Prepare Rhode Island's Workforce Guidance.

- Rigorous:** tied to measurable outcomes that allow students to gain measurable skills (professional or technical skills).
- Relevant:** Initiative should mirror those that exist in a real workplace, uses real-world processes, tools, and quality standards.
- Sustained Inquiry:** initiative involves an active, in-depth process over time, in which students generate questions, find and use resources, ask further questions, develop and revise their own answers and product.
- Reflection:** Opportunities for the students to give and receive feedback on their work in order to revise their ideas and products or conduct further inquiry.
- Interactive:** Provide multiple opportunities for students to interact with industry professionals, whether as supervisors, mentors, advisors or collaborators.
- Public Product:** Students must demonstrate or present what they have learned to the business partner or others beyond the classroom.

## Tips for Success

- ★ Address logistical details.
- ★ Communicate with all parties
- ★ Focus on career preparation
- ★ Maximize learning potential
- ★ Promote student reflection

## Best Practices For Working With Students

The school calendar, winter break, snow days, etc will impact the timeline.

Some projects may not be successful or fulfilled. Students can learn a great deal from failure as well.

The partnership will require flexibility and mentorship.

Everyone involved in the initiative will need to agree on a definition of done as it applies to the project.

Each student learns at a different rate and in different ways.

Set and keep realistic yet high expectations for work and behavior.

Be willing to share your skills, knowledge, and expertise.

Give feedback to help students grow and move forward.

Leave room for student interpretation and creativity in the project. Don't have preconceived ideas that pigeon hole the solution.

It is a good idea to be clear and explicit with your expectations. This is a new experience and level of ownership over their learning for the students.

They will be learning real-world expectations are not the same as in the classroom. Bring your concerns to the teacher-coordinator if you are not comfortable discussing them with the student. We want this to be a positive growth experience for all.

Treat students like employees. They are learning professional expectations and behaviors. Show them, tell them and model those behaviors.

## Additional Resources

The Clearinghouse has some examples of projects businesses have opened up to any school in Iowa. <https://clearinghouse.futurereadyiowa.gov/>

Learn more about Future Ready Iowa and opportunities for businesses.

<https://www.futurereadyiowa.gov/about-future-ready-iowa>

<https://www.futurereadyiowa.gov/>

<https://governor.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/documents/FutureReadyIowa-FactSheet.pdf>

Learn more about STEM BEST. <https://iowastem.gov/STEMBEST>

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