

Frequently Asked Questions

Supporting Employers to Implement Work-Based Learning in New Mexico

Interested in establishing or expanding a work-based learning program in your workplace? This resource addresses commonly asked questions for employers to help you get started.

For more information and employer resources as part of the New Mexico Work-Based Learning Toolkit, visit www.wbl.ped.nm.gov.

Q: Does New Mexico have age requirements for students to participate in work-based learning (WBL)?

Answer: New Mexico has no single age requirement that is specific to all WBL experiences. However, participation in certain WBL experiences is subject to federal and state labor laws. In general, students must be at least 14 years old to participate in paid WBL experiences under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act.

Many WBL opportunities, especially those involving more hands-on or intensive work, are designed for high school students (ages 16 and older) to ensure alignment with safety regulations and readiness for the workplace.

All WBL placements must comply with applicable federal and state laws, including child labor laws. Your local school partner will work with you to ensure that each placement meets all legal requirements and is appropriate for the student's age, experience level, and learning goals.

Q: What are the liability and insurance requirements?

Answer: For most school-sponsored WBL experiences in New Mexico, the student is covered under the school district's liability insurance while on site for academic purposes. If the position is a paid internship or pre-apprenticeship, the student is typically covered under your existing workers' compensation policy, just like any other employee.

Q: How much of a time commitment is WBL? I'm interested and want to know what I should expect.

Answer: WBL is designed to be a net benefit to your team, not an added burden. While onboarding a student requires an initial time investment, they are there to contribute and perform meaningful work.

What to expect: You will need to designate a site supervisor (i.e., mentor) to check in with the student daily and complete a regular evaluation (usually taking less than 10 minutes) to verify the student's hours and progress. Many employers find that students quickly become valuable contributors.

Q: Do I have to pay the student?

Answer: It depends on the type of experience:

- **Unpaid:** Short-term job shadowing or exploratory activities for school credit are typically unpaid.
- **Paid:** Longer term internships or other experiences in which the student performs the same work as an entry-level employee must comply with the Fair Labor Standards Act and New Mexico minimum wage laws.
- Businesses can also provide experiences through state and federally funded programs. Contact your local [America's Job Center](#) for more information.

Q: What happens if the student is not a good fit?

Answer: WBL is designed to reflect a real-world professional environment. If a student is not meeting expectations or aligning with your workplace standards, your school partner will work with the student to address the concerns, provide additional support, and help improve performance. Employers are not expected to manage these situations alone. If a placement is no longer a good fit, your school partner will help facilitate a smooth and professional transition.

Q: Is there a lot of paperwork?

Answer: No, the goal is to keep things simple and streamlined. Most processes are digital, and your responsibilities are minimal:

- Sign a one-page learning/training agreement
- Verify the student's monthly time log
- Complete a brief evaluation

The school partners handle the rest, including state reporting and academic documentation.