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FHI 360 WORK-BASED LEARNING MANUAL: A HOW-TO GUIDE FOR WORK-BASED LEARNING

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include program design (e.g., the creation of models, protocols, tools and materials), project management, professional development, school-based coaching, creation of local and national networks, and collective impact and program evaluation. We have worked at the intersection of schools and communities for nearly 40 years, solving critical issues in education, health and youth development through projects in 48 states and with more than 400 school districts. Our staff are experts in education, health services, youth development, gender, school improvement, nutrition, communications, research and evaluation, technology and advocacy.

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3. Workplace Tours

3.1 Overview

What Are Workplace Tours?

Workplace tours are usually early career awareness activities for students. They are more than typical field trips because they incorporate explicit student preparation, student interactions with employer representatives during the tour, and student reflections following the tour. Workplace tours offer students the opportunity to learn about the careers available with a particular employer and observe the work performed by people in those careers. Tours are typically conducted with small groups of students and teachers.

The student's primary role is to observe the workplace, listen to what the host has to say, ask questions, and think about potential career opportunities. Students' experiences with workplace tours can help guide their choices about additional career awareness and exploration activities as well as their higher education plans.

Which Students Participate in Workplace Tours?

Workplace tours can occur during the middle or high school grades to expose students to multiple careers in a range of industries. While the focus at all grade levels is on exposure to the specific workplace and the employer, high school students will benefit from more in-depth discussion about potential careers and the education and skills required for them. The WBL coordinator should discuss specific expectations for the tours with the workplace hosts and assist with developing appropriate agendas and presentations. An example of an employer preparation checklist can be found in the *Resources* section.

At the high school level, workplace tours may connect to a specific curriculum related to workplace skills or an academic subject. Workplace tours can help students connect classroom learning with its application in the working world. For example, a tour of an engineering firm could showcase practical applications of the mathematics involved in building design.

How Are Workplace Tours Structured?

Workplace tours can range in time from an hour or two to a half day, depending on the complexity of the workplace and the time the host employer is willing to devote.

While each tour may be different, a sample agenda could include:

- Introductions, welcome, and overview of the industry and the employer.
- Tour highlighting work in action, organizational culture, different careers, and various components of the workplace. The tour may visit a series of work stations where different employees discuss or demonstrate the work they do. Students may tour in a single group or be broken up into small groups, depending on what works better in the specific workplace.
- Wrap-up session for employees to answer student questions *and* for employers to ask questions of students.

Students' observations of the workplace should be guided and documented by using a student observation form, a sample of which is included in the *Resources* section.

3.2 How to Implement a Workplace Tour

Successful workplace tours require collaboration, communication, and preparation by several stakeholders. The process involves preparing students to be ready to learn and participate in the activity, helping teachers work with students to get the most from the experience, and preparing the hosts to be able to communicate effectively with students, anticipate the types of questions they are likely to ask, and learn about the next generation of potential employees.

The work entailed in organizing a workplace tour can extend over several months. As noted in the *Introduction*, the following steps should be followed when organizing a workplace tour:

1. Identify the stakeholders needed to assist with implementation. Typically, these will be district and school staff and employers and/or representatives of employer associations.
2. Secure agreement from school administrators and teachers to assist in planning workplace tours. Solicit their preferences for scheduling and for the classes and grade levels that will participate.
3. Collect information on students' career interests. This may be done by teachers, counselors, or career advisors.
4. Based on students' interests, identify employers to ask to host workplace tours. Employer recruitment can take time, so an early start is advisable.
5. Prepare students for the tour.
6. Prepare the host employer to offer a tour that will be an enriching experience for both students and employees.
7. Conduct the workplace tour. Document it with photos, as appropriate.
8. Provide structured opportunities for students to reflect.
9. Obtain evaluations from students and representatives of the host employer.
10. Thank the host employer and the school staff who participated. Give recognition to all participating stakeholders.

The following pages provide more detailed descriptions of steps that should be taken to implement a well-organized workplace tour. These steps are presented in the form of a time line, starting months before the actual event. The time line is flexible and can be condensed, but proper student and employer preparation is important.

3.3 Suggested Implementation Time Line

Note: Throughout this manual, the term WBL coordinator (typically, a district or school staff member) is used to refer to the individual responsible for planning and implementing WBL activities. Depending on the activity and context, stakeholders from school sites (counselors, teachers, and administrative staff) may be involved. The WBL coordinator should be sure to use the WBL database, as described in the *Introduction*, to track employer and school contact information as well as the tasks each has agreed to carry out with respect to workplace tours.

The WBL coordinator should refer to the overall WBL plan (see *Introduction*), if there is one, to ensure that the scheduling of a workplace tour with a specific employer or students from a particular school is coordinated with the implementation of other WBL activities planned for that employer or that school. Both the employer and the school staff will appreciate it if the WBL coordinator initiates contact for workplace tours in that larger context.

Note: The WBL coordinator is assumed to be responsible for completing or assigning each task described below, except as noted otherwise.

Before or early in the school year

- Reach out to school administrators and teachers to enlist their participation in scheduling a workplace tour or a series of tours.
- Working with teachers and counselors, collect information on students' career interests and teachers' ideas on careers that relate most closely to the curricula.
- Identify which local employers would be good candidates for hosting tours that align with students' and teachers' interests. Use the WBL database and other sources (e.g., organizations like chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, workforce development boards, state departments of labor or commerce, and the personal networks of district and school staff members) to identify employers to target.
- Map out potential workplace tours and a desirable schedule. Identify desired workplace tours by week or month during the year. Be sure to include a wide a range of employer types so that as many students as possible visit a workplace that aligns with their career aspirations.
- Find out about school policies and procedures for student field trips, including provisions for transportation.

Four months before the workplace tour

Note: These steps can be completed early in the school year for the full calendar of workplace tours or on a rolling basis for tours in the coming months.

- Review the employer outreach information in the *Introduction* to this manual.
- Using the WBL database and other resources, identify employers or occupations in the local area that align with students' interests and school curricula. Identify as many employers as possible so that there are options to pursue if the first-choice employer declines to host a tour. In rural areas with few employers, matching student interests with potential employer hosts may be especially challenging.
- Also using the WBL database, identify employers who had positive experiences as guest speakers (and were well-received by students and teachers) or other WBL activities and might be interested in hosting a tour.
- Begin outreach to targeted employers. Sample communications for employer recruitment can be found in the *Resources* section. To be sure that workplace tours are provided in the industries of greatest interest to students, recruit multiple employers at the same time (if there are multiple employers in the same industry in the area). If there are too many positive responses to manage, find future opportunities to engage the "extra" employers in workplace tours or other WBL activities.
- In recruiting employers to host workplace tours, be as specific as possible about what is requested, what is expected, and what support will be provided by the WBL coordinator and others. Make it as easy as possible for the employer to say "yes."
- Follow up introductory invitations with phone calls, as needed. Use the WBL database to identify past hosts of workplace tours or other employers who may reinforce the invitation with a peer-to-peer communication (see sample in *Resources* section).
- As responses come in, confirm the dates and communicate them to the schools and the hosts.
- Continue employer recruitment, as needed, until all the targeted slots for workplace tours are full.

Three months before the workplace tour

Note: These implementation steps refer to planning a single tour but can be completed concurrently for multiple tours that may be scheduled for around the same time.

- Select students. In partnership with the school (counselors, career advisors, teachers, and administrators), determine which students or classes will participate in the workplace tour, based on the particular employer’s alignment with students’ career interests and classroom curricula.
- Identify adults who will accompany the students. Workplace tours typically have ten students to one adult. Depending on the workplace, tours may involve as many as 35 students. The adults can be employees of host employer, district or school staff members, and/or parents; they will help manage students throughout the tour. Teachers who accompany students on workplace tours will benefit by becoming better able to make connections between academic subjects and their applications in the workplace.
- Identify transportation needs and how they will be addressed (e.g., bus, parents, or others).
- Set a date. Working with the employer host and the school, determine the desired date, making sure to avoid conflicts with school and community calendars. Ask the employer to sign a workplace tour participation form (in the *Resources* section) so that planning can move forward.
- Begin preparation work with the employer host, using a checklist such as the one provided in the *Resources* section.
 - Discuss and reach agreement with the employer host about the number of students, the time and duration of the tour, and the agenda for the tour. (A sample agenda can be found on the first page of this chapter.)
 - If some students have special needs, determine whether they can be accommodated.
 - Inquire about the employer sponsoring transportation and/or lunch, if needed.
 - Determine the appropriate dress code for students and adults participating in the tour.
 - Identify any safety requirements for participation in the tour (e.g., closed-toe shoes or safety goggles).
 - Obtain permission for photos to be taken.
- Work with school staff to determine how they will obtain parent/guardian permission for students to register and participate in the fair and teacher permission to be absent from classes. Examples are provided in the *Resources* section, but the school should use the same forms it uses for field trips and the same process and deadlines for distributing and collecting the forms. The forms may need to be modified to include a release for photographic documentation of the tour or to disclose any safety risks posed by visiting the workplace.
- Make appropriate arrangements if the tour will include lunch time and the employer does not provide a meal (e.g., student brown bag or box lunches from school cafeteria).
- **(Teachers)**¹ Begin to prepare students for the workplace tour. In class, introduce career opportunities, working conditions, workplace behaviors, and dress code specific to employer they will be visiting.

Two months before the workplace tour

- Make transportation arrangements for students based on prior assessment of needs and how they will be met.
- **(Teachers)** Continue preparing students for the workplace tour. Teachers in subjects that relate to the specific workplace students will tour might introduce or review lessons on topics that are used on the job in the employer host’s industry.

One month before the workplace tour

- Have schools distribute required student registration, parent permission, and teacher permission for class absence forms. School staff should determine the deadline for return of permission forms.
- Consult with the employer host to make sure the agenda and all on-site arrangements are in place.
- Document all the details: names of participating students, staff, and other adults; times of departure and arrival; transportation arrangements; agenda for the tour; special safety or security equipment or

¹ The term “teachers” should be taken to include counselors, career advisors, and other educators working directly with students.

procedures; accommodations for students with special needs; and dress code. Share this information with the employer host and with school staff to ensure its accuracy.

Two weeks before the workplace tour

- Ensure that signed registration/permission and class absence forms have been collected and that the appropriate school staff member is following up on any that have yet to be returned.
- Confirm parent- and/or school-provided transportation.
- **(Teachers)** Continue to prepare students by introducing them to the employer hosting the tour and its industry. Discuss the dress code and any lunch or transportation arrangements that involve students' families.

One week before the workplace tour

- Make sure all permission forms have been collected.
- Confirm transportation (and lunch, if applicable) arrangements.
- Confirm all details with employer host. Provide contact information (e.g., cell phone numbers and email addresses) for communications on the day of the tour.
- Obtain name tags for students and adults who will be in the tour group. They may be pre-printed or hand-written.
- Address any questions or concerns of students (or their parents), teachers, or the employer host.
- **(Teachers)** Review workplace behavior expectations with students, including the dress code for the tour. They should also introduce the student observation form (see *Resource* section) so that students will be prepared to document their experiences.

One day before the workplace tour

- Double-check all arrangements.

Day of the workplace tour

- Ensure all students are accounted for on the bus or in parents' vehicles when traveling to and from the tour.
- Ensure students are dressed appropriately.
- Distribute student observation forms to students. Distribute name tags.
- Respond promptly to any questions or concerns that arise during the day.
- Bring the schedule and contact information and manage the time appropriately.
- Use both still and video photography to document the tour, if the host employer and students' parents have given permission to do so.
- Provide evaluation forms to students and employers. Collect student evaluation forms.

One day to one week after the workplace tour

- Send thank-you emails to host employer and a reminder to return the evaluation form if it was not collected the day of the tour; include a few photos and highlights from student comments.
- Review student evaluations to assess what they learned from the tour.
- Collect employer evaluation or contact the employer representative and fill out the evaluation through telephone conversation (whichever is easiest for the employer).
- Review employer evaluations and follow up, as appropriate, regarding concerns or comments. Also, follow up with hosts who expressed interest in other WBL activities.

- Summarize student evaluations and reflections and share them with host employers so that they can understand their contribution to students' learning.
- Provide exposure and positive recognition for host employers in the local newspaper, school newsletter, or other media if the employers gave permission to do so.
- **(Teachers)** Have students write thank-you notes to the employer host. Review them before sending.
- **(Teachers)** Conduct reflection activities in classes and compile written reflections for dissemination to all participating students and their teachers.

3.4 Workplace Tour Resources

Note: These forms can be printed with expanded space for written responses or adapted in other ways.

WBL coordinator:

- Outreach email to employer
- Email from one employer to another
- Participation form

School:

- Parent/guardian permission form
- Teacher permission form for absence from class

Employer:

- Checklist/expectations
- Evaluation

Student:

- Student observation form
- Evaluation

Sample Email to Employers from WBL Coordinator

Good Morning,

My name is John Doe, and I work for the XYZ Public Schools (or name of specific school). Our district (school) is seeking employer partners to host tours of their workplaces so that students can see the work that is performed and learn about careers in the employers' industries.

Workplace tours are part of a larger continuum of work-based learning opportunities designed to help students gain experience and insight into real-world careers. These activities are valuable ways for students to set education and career goals and learn what it takes to prepare for careers.

Typically lasting from a couple of hours to half a day, a workplace tour is a modest investment of time that may make a real difference in the students' future education and career choices. If you are willing to host such a tour, we can work out the details together. Please contact me at (phone number) or (email) if you are interested. I have enclosed a participation form you can use to confirm that you will host a tour.

I am hoping to schedule the workplace tour for (date), but we can explore other options if that date is not feasible. I expect approximately ## #th-grade (subject) students to participate in the tour.

If you are unable to host a tour, but would like to learn more about other opportunities to work with students by being a guest speaker, hosting job shadows, or providing internships, please contact me at your earliest convenience.

Thank you,

John Doe, Title
XYZ Public Schools (or name of specific school)
Contact information

Sample Email for Employers to Forward to Others

Good Morning,

My name is Jane Doe, and I lead the marketing and communications department for (Blue Star Telephone Company). (Blue Star) has been working with students from (XYZ district or school) for (how long?) and would like to encourage you to host a workplace tour for local students. We've found these tours to be rewarding experiences for our employees as well as a good form of early recruitment for (Blue Star).

XYZ school district (or school name) is seeking workplace tour hosts. Visiting your workplace will help broaden student awareness of potential careers in your field. Typically lasting from a couple of hours to half a day, a workplace tour is a modest investment of your time that may influence students' future education and career choices. For more information, please see the attached participation form or contact (WBL coordinator name, email, and phone). (WBL coordinator name) will be happy to work with you to plan a workplace tour that will be convenient for you and your employees and of great benefit to students.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact (WBL coordinator name) or me at any time.

Thank you,

Jane Doe, Title
Organization
Contact information

Workplace Tour Participation Form (WBL coordinator to fill in own name and contact information)

XYZ High School would like to schedule an opportunity for ## #th-grade students to visit and tour your workplace to learn more about potential careers in your industry. Workplace tours are an important component of a multi-year program that helps students learn about career opportunities and set goals for their future education and career preparation. We hope to schedule the tour of your workplace on (date) but would be happy to work with you to find a date that is convenient for both your organization and the school.

Please complete the following information and return it via email by (response date) or call the work-based learning (WBL) coordinator if you have questions or wish to discuss a potential tour before making a commitment. We will confirm receipt and contact you to develop an agenda for the tour that will both showcase the career opportunities offered by your organization and industry and provide an engaging career awareness experience for the students.

Company/organization:	
Industry/business type:	
Address:	
Main contact name:	
Phone:	Email:
Dates that work for you:	
Comments:	
Signature:	
Work-based learning coordinator name, phone, and email:	

Your support of work-based learning opportunities like this tour is an important complement to classroom learning and can make a real difference in the lives of our students. Thank you!

Student Registration and Parent/Guardian Permission Form for Workplace Tour (Top part to be completed by WBL coordinator)

Both the student and the parent or guardian should review the expectations outlined in this form. A signature on this form not only signifies permission but also a commitment to fulfill the expectations. **This form must be signed and returned to (whom, where) by (due date) or the student will not be able to participate in the tour.**

Student name:	Parent/guardian name:
Date of tour:	Employer host and location:
Start and finish time for tour:	Adult(s) who will accompany students:
Meeting place and time for departure and return:	Transportation arrangements:
School contact name, phone, and email:	Work-based learning coordinator name, phone, and email:
<p>Expectations for students:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participate in classroom lessons to prepare for tour. 2. Obtain signatures and assignments from teachers for all classes that will be missed. 3. Arrive on time for the tour. 4. Adhere to the dress code discussed in class. 5. Demonstrate appropriate workplace behavior. 6. Listen to tour hosts and ask questions. 7. Record observations on the student observation form. 8. Participate in post-tour reflection activities. 9. Write a thank-you note to the workplace tour host. 10. Complete an evaluation of the tour. 11. Complete all assignments from any missed classes. 	
<p>Expectations for parents or guardians (Please check each box to indicate your understanding and acceptance of each):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Support student’s participation and fulfillment of the above expectations. <input type="checkbox"/> Give permission for student to participate, understanding that the (name of district) bears no responsibility for health, accident, or transportation insurance while the student is away from school to attend the workplace tour. <input type="checkbox"/> Give permission for the student to be photographed during the tour. <input type="checkbox"/> (If needed) Provide transportation to and from the workplace tour. <input type="checkbox"/> (If needed) Allow student to drive to and from workplace tour. 	
Student name:	Parent or guardian name:

Teacher Permission Form for Class Absence (Only include periods that students will miss)

You are excused from (part of day or full day) of school to participate in a workplace tour at (name of employer). There are certain procedures that must be followed for this to happen. All teachers whose classes you will miss must be informed, and you must obtain all assignments for the day of the tour. It is up to your individual teachers to decide when the assignments you miss will be due.

This form must be completed with all teacher signatures and turned in to (whom) by the established deadline in order for you to be excused from classes and permitted to go on the workplace tour.

Student name:	Date of workplace tour:
Period 1 teacher signature:	Assignment:
Period 2 teacher signature:	Assignment:
Period 3 teacher signature:	Assignment:
Period 4 teacher signature:	Assignment:
Period 5 teacher signature:	Assignment:
Period 6 teacher signature:	Assignment:
Period 7 teacher signature:	Assignment:

Employer Workplace Tour Checklist/Expectations (Top part to be completed by the WBL coordinator.)

To help you prepare, we have created the following checklist for planning the tour of your workplace. Please contact (name, email, and phone) with any questions. Thank you for agreeing to host a tour for students from (school name).

Date:	Arrival time:
Location:	Duration of tour:
Work-based learning (WBL) coordinator name, phone, and email address:	
School contact name, phone, and email address:	
Number and grade of students:	

Expectations:	Check:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Speak or meet with the WBL coordinator to discuss the agenda for the tour, including tips for making it interesting and informative for (#th)-grade students. This typically takes 15-20 minutes. 2. Work with the WBL coordinator to identify enough adults (your employees, school staff, or parents) to accompany the students so that there are no more than ten students per adult. 3. Typically, a tour will begin with a presentation by the host, providing information about the organization, the industry it is in, the kinds of careers it offers, and what it takes to prepare for these careers. 4. The tour may be conducted with the whole group at once, or the students may be split into smaller groups to rotate through several departments or work stations. There may be one host that stays with the group(s) throughout the tour, or employees in each department or work station may talk to the students about their jobs, educational background, and career paths. 5. Workplace tours usually end with an opportunity for questions and answers. 6. Please provide information about any special security procedures, safety practices, or safety equipment that may be required. 7. If you are willing, give the WBL coordinator permission for photographs to be taken and/or information about the tour to be released to the media. 8. If there are special needs students who wish to participate in the tour, determine whether and how they can be accommodated. 9. If you have brochures or other information about your organization that you would like students to see before the tour, the WBL coordinator can arrange for them to be distributed. 10. Students will be prepared with information about your organization and questions to ask. 11. It will be very helpful if you would complete and return the enclosed evaluation of your experience in hosting a workplace tour within a few days after the tour. <p>Thank you very much for agreeing to host a workplace tour. Please contact the WBL coordinator at any time with questions or concerns. It is part of his/her job to make sure everything goes smoothly.</p>	

Workplace Tour Employer Evaluation

Thank you for taking the time to host a workplace tour. Your support of this program provides students the opportunity to make better-informed decisions regarding their futures. Your feedback is valuable to ensuring high-quality experiences for you, other hosts, and our students. Please take a few minutes to complete this form and return it at your earliest convenience to (name) at (email).

Your name:	Phone number:
Title:	Email:
Organization:	Industry:

Please evaluate the tour in each of the following areas.

LOGISTICS				
Communication setting up the tour	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Below Expectations	Not Applicable
Ease of participation	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Below Expectations	Not Applicable
Tour coordination (before and during the tour)	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Below Expectations	Not Applicable
STUDENTS				
Students were prepared with questions	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Below Expectations	Not Applicable
Students behaved appropriately	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Below Expectations	Not Applicable
OVERALL EVALUATION				
Workplace tour experience	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Below Expectations	Not Applicable

Would you be willing to host future tours? YES NO

Would you be willing to participate in other work-based learning activities, such as guest speaker presentations, career fairs, informational interviews, job shadows, or internships? Please note any that are of interest in the comment section below. Someone will contact you to follow up.

Please use the space below to provide additional comments about your experience. Please make note of any ways the coordinator could have helped you or the students be better prepared.

Workplace Tour Student Observation Form

Organization Information	
Name of organization:	Workplace tour date:
Host name:	Host title:
In which industry does the host organization operate?	

Site Information
Describe the worksite in a few sentences.
Describe your host's workspace. (cubicle, office, laboratory, manufacturing floor, etc.)
How were people dressed? Were there differences in how some people dressed and why?
What kinds of careers are available in this organization?

Career Potential
What would I need to get a job in this field? (education/training/background experience)
What would I need to get ahead in this career?
What is the outlook for this career?
What are the potential salary ranges for this career? (entry level and top level)

Observations
What did you observe that was not expected?
How did this experience help shape your future career plans?

Workplace Tour Student Evaluation

Thank you for participating in the workplace tour. Your feedback is important. Please complete the form and return it to your teacher.

Student name:	Workplace tour host organization:
Date of tour:	

Please evaluate the experience in each of the following areas.

WORKPLACE				
Host communicated well	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Below Expectations	Not Applicable
Host answered questions	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Below Expectations	Not Applicable
Tour coordination	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Below Expectations	Not Applicable
Workplace was interesting	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Below Expectations	Not Applicable
INFORMATION				
I found the information useful	Yes		No	
Did the tour help inform you about careers?	Yes	No	Somewhat	Not Applicable
OVERALL EVALUATION				
Workplace tour experience	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Below Expectations	Not Applicable

Would you recommend that other students tour this workplace? Circle one. YES NO

Did the tour help you decide which career (s) you are interested in learning more about or identify careers in which you are not at all interested? Explain why.

Please provide additional comments below.