

# a guide to { networking with businesses

Once you've determined the type of work-based learning experience a student will need to increase career-readiness skills, it's time to secure a host site in the local community. Networking with businesses is a critical step in developing a work-based learning experience.

Follow the steps below to connect students and businesses.

## 1. Brainstorm potential work sites

Develop a list with the help of colleagues, families, friends and community connections. Consider all the interests and preferences of your students.

## 2. Make connections in your community

Network with organizations such as Rotary International and the Chamber of Commerce. They're often looking for speakers to provide information about community programs.

## 3. Do your homework

Research any business before you approach it. Know what type of business you're contacting, how it's organized, and the variety of tasks and jobs available at this site.

## 4. Make contact with employers

Speak with business owners, managers or a human resources department representative. Be positive, polite and a super-seller.

## 5. Review the benefits to the business, school and student

Talk up how students can enhance their business and communities. Many employers don't realize the value that people with disabilities can add to their business.

## 6. Offer training

As a way of supporting the business, offer training to employees to ensure they're knowledgeable about the program and how to support students in the business.

## 7. Take a tour

Ask if you can tour the business to complete a community work-based learning site assessment. This will help you match students with the environment that meets their individual interests and needs.

## 8. Let the business process and reflect

Give the business time to reflect on what a commitment from them would mean. Often, they need time to think through the opportunity in order to support it.

## 9. Follow up

Follow up with a letter, phone call or visit within two to three days. Answer any questions at that time, and determine next steps.