



Thank you for attending the WVCC Calhoun Gilmer Career Center Networking Event. We truly appreciate your time, engagement, and willingness to share your insights.

The conversations were thoughtful and productive, and the feedback we received was extremely valuable. We encourage you to look them over and share any additional thoughts or items we may have missed.

Common Themes

- ✓ **Value of Industry Advisory Boards (IABs)**
IABs play an important role in helping CTE programs stay aligned with current industry needs. Local businesses, contractors, and industry professionals provide guidance on skills, technological trends, and workforce expectations. Engagement helps instructors adapt instruction and emphasize workplace readiness.
- ✓ **Importance of Local Partnerships**
Strong connections between schools, businesses, and economic development organizations are essential. Local investment and participation are particularly important in smaller counties where workforce pipelines directly impact the local economy.
- ✓ **Barriers to Work-Based Learning (WBL)**
Students face several barriers to participating in WBL opportunities, including transportation, scheduling conflicts with school hours, age restrictions, and lack of paid opportunities. Liability concerns for students under 18 can also limit participation.
- ✓ **Communication Gaps Between Students and Employers**
There is a disconnect between students who believe jobs are not available locally and employers who are actively seeking workers. Better communication and access to job information could help address this gap.
- ✓ **Exposure to Career Opportunities**
Students are more likely to pursue local jobs when they have direct exposure to workplaces through tours, field trips, and site visits. Familiarity with companies and work environments increases interest in local employment.
- ✓ **Workforce Recruitment and Retention Challenges**
Recruiting workers from outside the state can be difficult to sustain, as many eventually return to their home states. Local talent is more likely to remain in the region long-term.

✓ **Structural Barriers to Hiring**

Some employers, particularly federal agencies, face rigid hiring processes that make it difficult to recruit quickly. Housing availability and commuting distances can also affect recruitment.

What We Learned

- ✓ Industry Advisory Boards are a useful tool for aligning education with workforce needs, but time constraints can limit business participation. Flexible engagement methods may help increase involvement.
- ✓ Retired or senior industry professionals can be valuable contributors to advisory boards because they often have more time to participate.
- ✓ Economic development organizations and chambers of commerce can help connect educational programs with businesses that are not currently involved.
- ✓ Paid work-based learning opportunities are more attractive to students and can increase participation.
- ✓ Mentorship programs and structured pathways can help students transition from CTE training into industry certifications and careers.
- ✓ Federal internship opportunities exist and can lead to full-time employment, but the hiring and onboarding process can be complex.
- ✓ A significant number of job opportunities may become available in state agencies due to upcoming retirements.
- ✓ Students often lack awareness of local career opportunities, highlighting the need for better communication and job visibility.
- ✓ Facility tours and industry exposure are effective strategies for attracting students to local careers.
- ✓ Workforce development efforts should focus on developing and retaining local talent, as workers with local ties are more likely to stay long-term.
- ✓ Collaboration between industry, education, and community partners is essential to address workforce needs and support regional economic development.

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