



## SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2025.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Chesterfield

Program Title: Work-Based Learning Employer Recognition Event

Program Category: Customer Service & Community Outreach

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Lisa High

Title: Chesterfield Co Public Schools Deputy Superintendent

Signature: 

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**Executive Summary:**

Chesterfield County Public Schools (CCPS) is dedicated to preparing students for successful futures through its Work-Based Learning (WBL) program, which connects students with meaningful career experiences. Aligning with the Virginia Department of Education's goals, the program ensures students develop an Academic and Career Plan (ACP) and engage in structured WBL experiences. With 536 employer partners, CCPS provides career fairs, mentorships, internships, and apprenticeships, facilitating over 28,036 WBL experiences in the 2023-2024 school year, including 4,081 high-intensity opportunities.

To recognize and strengthen partnerships, CCPS hosts the annual WBL Employer Partner Breakfast, where outstanding employers receive the 5280 Award and are featured on the WBL Wall of Thanks. This initiative has driven program growth, increasing employer engagement from 251 businesses in its first year to 536 in 2023-2024.

The program's success is reflected in the expansion of student participation, strengthened employer relationships, and increased high-intensity experiences that provide real-world skills. Through collaboration and innovation, CCPS continues to enhance career readiness, ensuring students graduate with valuable experience and a pathway to workforce success.

**Problem or need addressed by the program:**

CCPS is addressing a critical need in the educational landscape by offering the WBL program, which plays a vital role in preparing students for the workforce. With a rapidly changing job market, there is an increasing demand for students to graduate not only with academic knowledge but with practical, real-world skills that will help them navigate future careers. The WBL program and partnerships provides students with hands-on experiences, career

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exploration opportunities, and exposure to diverse industries, which are essential for career readiness.

Additionally, there is a legal obligation for public schools in Virginia to align educational programs with state goals set by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). These goals emphasize preparing students for life after graduation, whether they choose to enter the workforce, pursue higher education, or engage in other post-secondary pathways. As such, CCPS must ensure that students are equipped with the skills and experiences necessary to make informed decisions about their futures. The success of the WBL program, reflected in increased student participation and employer engagement, demonstrates a critical need to continue investing in career development opportunities to meet these obligations and support the future workforce.

By expanding partnerships and providing students with structured, career-focused experiences, CCPS addresses this gap, fostering connections between students and employers while cultivating a pipeline of skilled professionals. This initiative not only enhances the workforce but also meets the legal requirements for developing well-rounded, career-ready students in line with VDOE's goals.

**Program Description:**

CCPS is committed to preparing students for successful futures by providing meaningful career exploration and workforce development opportunities. The WBL program is a critical initiative designed to help students understand their post-secondary options and make informed decisions about their future careers. Aligning with the VDOE goals for graduates to be life-ready, the program ensures that students develop an ACP that connects their interests with

courses and multiple Work-Based Learning experiences. These experiences build upon each other to affirm a student's career pathway, helping them achieve their desired professional outcomes.

Through the CCPS WBL program, over 30,000 students have been connected to valuable career experiences with the support of a diverse range of employer partners. Currently, the program boasts 536 employer partners who offer a variety of WBL experiences, including career fairs, guest speaker sessions, workplace tours, job shadowing, internships, clinical experiences, mentorships, and apprenticeships. These employer partners dedicate thousands of hours to assisting students in learning about careers, gaining hands-on experience, and developing essential workplace skills.

Understanding the significance of employer partnerships in shaping students' futures, CCPS launched the WBL Employer Partner Breakfast during the 2021-2022 school year to express gratitude for the time and commitment of local businesses. At this event, CCPS culinary students prepare breakfast for attendees, and employer partners are recognized for their outstanding contributions to student development. The highlight of the event is the presentation of the 5280 Award, which is given to businesses that go above and beyond in providing a set number of WBL experiences to students throughout the school year. These businesses receive a plaque recognizing their contributions.

Additionally, CCPS unveiled the WBL Wall of Thanks, a graphic display listing all current employer partners. The names on the Wall of Thanks are categorized into three different sizes, reflecting the level of engagement:

- **Small font:** Employers providing low-intensity WBL experiences, such as career fairs,

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guest speaking engagements, and workplace tours.

- **Medium font:** Employers offering job shadowing, mentorships, and externships.
- **Large font:** Employers that provide high-intensity WBL experiences, such as internships, clinical placements, and apprenticeships, which require significant time commitments.

During the first year of the event, 251 businesses were recognized on the Wall of Thanks. By the 2023-2024 school year, the number of recognized businesses had grown to 532, reflecting the program's expansion and success.

CCPS attributes the significant growth of the WBL program to the strengthened relationships with employer partners and the increased awareness generated by the Employer Partner Breakfast. As a result of these efforts, the 2023-2024 school year saw a total of 28,036 WBL experiences, with 4,081 classified as high-intensity experiences lasting over 40 hours or more. These opportunities provide students with critical hands-on experience, enhance career readiness, and support the local workforce by cultivating a pipeline of skilled professionals.

The county plays an essential role in implementing and supporting the WBL program by facilitating partnerships, coordinating events, and ensuring that students have equitable access to career development opportunities. CCPS's leadership, along with the dedication of employers and community partners, has been instrumental in the program's ongoing success. Through collaboration, innovation, and commitment to student success, the CCPS WBL program continues to provide invaluable experiences that prepare students for life beyond high school, ultimately contributing to a stronger workforce and a better future for the community.

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**Program Cost:**

The CCPS WBL Employer Partner Breakfast event incurs both operating and capital costs that are essential for its successful implementation. The operating costs primarily involve food and supplies for the breakfast, which includes items such as omelets, bacon, potatoes, pastries, coffee, and paper products. These food-related costs are facilitated by CCPS's food services department, which provides the ingredients and culinary students who help prepare and serve the meal, thus reducing external catering expenses.

Capital costs include the creation of the 5280 plaques, which are awarded to employers in recognition of their contributions. These plaques incur a production cost, including design, materials, and engraving. Additionally, there is a cost for the printing and installation of the WBL Wall of Thanks, which displays the names of employer partners. CCPS leveraged internal services for this aspect, utilizing in-house printing resources and staff for creating both items and installation, which helped reduce external costs.

To replicate this event in another county, the costs would include food and beverage expenses for a large group, the creation and production of awards or plaques, and printing and installation of a visual display (such as a Wall of Thanks). If external vendors were used for printing, catering, or plaque production, the costs would be higher. Other costs might include logistical support for coordinating the event, marketing, and promotion. However, like CCPS, a county could offset many of these expenses by using internal resources such as local food services, school staff, and community partnerships.

**Program Results/Success:**

The WBL program has successfully met its objectives by significantly increasing student participation in WBL experiences and expanding employer partnerships. The tangible outcomes include an increase in high-intensity WBL experiences, demonstrating a deeper level of student engagement in workforce preparation. For instance, internships and apprenticeships have provided students with direct entry points into industries such as healthcare, engineering, and skilled trades, often leading to job placements post-graduation. Additionally, student feedback and employer testimonials highlight the program's effectiveness in equipping students with real-world skills and career insights.

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**Worthiness of Award:**

The CCPS WBL program demonstrates a clear commitment to student success by offering robust career exploration and skill-building opportunities. With over 28,000 WBL experiences in the 2023-2024 school year, including 4,081 high-intensity experiences, the program provides students with invaluable, hands-on exposure to real-world careers. This aligns with the Virginia Department of Education's goal to prepare life-ready graduates with a clear academic and career pathway. The program's growth—marked by an increase in employer partners from 251

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to 532—reflects its broad community support and impact. The annual WBL Employer Partner Breakfast further strengthens this partnership by recognizing businesses for their contributions, fostering deeper connections between students and employers.

Additionally, the program's focus on inclusivity is evident, as it ensures students from diverse backgrounds have access to opportunities that align with their career goals. The success of this initiative is seen not only in its expansion and increased student participation but also in the positive outcomes for students, including job placements and career readiness. CCPS's WBL partnership with our employers effectively addresses workforce development needs while empowering students with skills that will drive their future success, making it highly deserving of the 2025 Achievement Award.

**Supplemental Materials:**

[Link](#) to photos