PREPARE
Rhode Island

SKILLS FOR
RHODE ISLAND'S
FUTURE

Work-Based Learning Navigator

Bringing career readiness and work-based learning resources to the classroom.

Employer User Guide

Welcome to the PrepareRI Work-Based Learning Navigator

The PrepareRI Work-Based Learning Navigator is a free, online portal that helps bring rich career exploration and work-based learning opportunities into the classroom. Through this platform employers can create an account and begin posting in-person or virtual work-based learning opportunities like job shadowing and internships (we call these resources), and educators search for, request, and track those resources.

On the back-end, staff from Skills for Rhode Island's Future, the agency charged with managing this new platform, will validate and approve resources to make them available. As requests are received from educators, SkillsRI will match educator requests with employer resources that best fit their needs. The SkillsRI team will coordinate all of the logistics to ensure easy and streamlined execution of all activities.

The Navigator was built with two goals in mind:

1. Make year-round, classroom career exploration and work-based learning opportunities more accessible for Rhode Island educators and students.

2. Provide an easy way for employers to engage with students and help shape the future of Rhode Island's workforce.

Why Get Involved?

1. Cultivate meaningful relationships with Rhode Island youth.

2. Build a strong recruiting pipeline for future talent.

3. Offer opportunities for junior team members to get involved and develop critical mentorship skills.

4. Gain insights from youth to inform recruiting and corporate strategies for the future

5. Shape RI's future workforce; meaningfully invest in the community and RI's economy

Career Exploration & Work-Based Learning Opportunities Available on the Navigator

Once registered for an account in the Navigator, employers can select one or more of the resources listed below. Resources are grouped by "tiers" which are differentiated by time commitment, and some resources may require additional capacity or funding to execute. Please note that the time commitments noted below are estimates and will vary based on the scope of each project. Detailed descriptions of each resource, including definitions and examples, can be found in Appendix A of this manual.

Explore

Tier 1 Resources

- Career Panels
- Guest Speakers
- Workplace Tours
- Service Learning Opportunities

One-time engagement; 1-2 hour time commitment

Expose

Tier 2 Resources

- Work Readiness Workshops
- Career Fairs
- Job Shadows

1-2 day engagement; 3+ hour time commitment

Engage

Tier 3 Resources

- Internships
- Advisor for CTE Programs
- Industry-Specific Projects
- Teacher Externships
- Mentorships

Ongoing engagements over a dedicated period of time (varies)

Why Get Involved?

Work-based learning and career exploration help to close the gap between what students learn in school and what they need to navigate high-demand career pathways. Career-preparedness strategies not only equip young people with the skills and experiences needed to thrive in the work place but also help strengthen local businesses and our state's economy by developing a pipeline of talent.
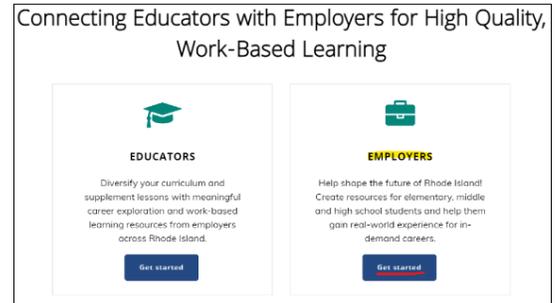
Key Benefits		
Employers	**Students**	**Educators**
• Cultivate meaningful relationships. • Build a strong recruiting pipeline. • Help junior employees develop critical management and mentorship skills. • Gain critical insights from youth. • Help shape RI's future workforce. • Invest in the community and economy in a meaningful way.	• Explore various career pathways. • Gain real-world skills to succeed in the workforce. • Boost resume with meaningful work experience prior to graduation. • Learn to use the tools and technologies being utilized by companies across Rhode Island. • Network with employers and build meaningful connections.	• Provide innovative supplemental learning experiences for students. • Encourage diversity of thought and ideas in the classroom. • Raise graduation and college application rates. • Bridge the gap between traditional education and workforce skills. • Jumpstart career planning with students.

Getting Started with the Navigator

Now that you're ready to get started, follow the steps below to register for an account and begin creating resources for students.

Registration

1. Register for an account by clicking the link on the homepage or click here: https://riwblnavigator.com/.

Connecting Educators with Employers for High Quality, Work-Based Learning

EDUCATORS

Diversify your curriculum and supplement lessons with meaningful career exploration and work-based learning resources from employers across Rhode Island.

Get started

EMPLOYERS

Help shape the future of Rhode Island! Create resources for elementary, middle and high school students and help them gain real-world experience for in-demand careers.

Get started

2. This will take you to the employer sign-up form. Please be sure to use your work e-mail address when signing up for an account, and double check to make sure your company name and address are accurate.

Employer Signup

Register for an account to get started and begin adding work-based learning resources for educators and students across Rhode Island.

First Name *

0 of 25 max characters

Last Name *

0 of 25 max characters

Company *

0 of 50 max characters

Company Address *

Street Address

Address Line 2

City

Rhode Island
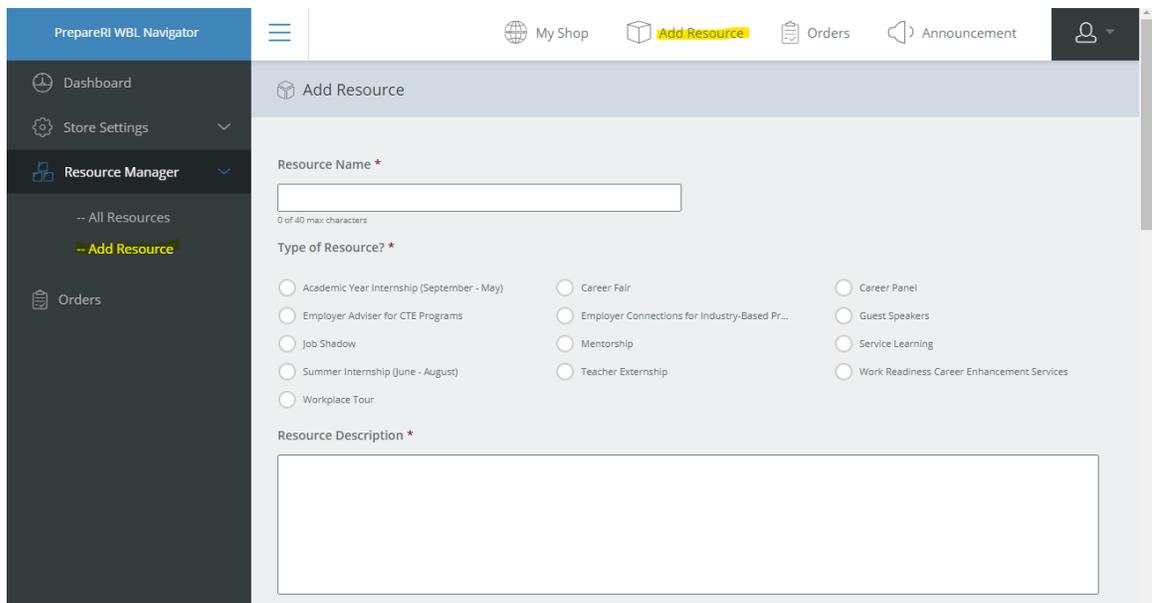State

ZIP Code

Email *

Enter Email

Confirm Email

Phone *

Submit

3. Once your account information is submitted, you will receive an email letting you know that your sign-up form has been received. Behind the scenes, SkillsRI will be validating employer accounts and confirming email addresses.

4. Once validated, you will receive an email prompting you to sign in with a temporary password. For security purposes, it is important you change your password immediately when you log in for the first time. Given that your account may be used by multiple people at your company to create resources, be sure to choose a password that is different from your personal password.

   If for some reason your account is not able to be validated by the SkillsRI team, you will receive an email notification stating that additional information is required. You will be contacted by a SkillsRI staff member to promptly resolve the issue and get your account up and running.

Creating a Resource Once Your Account Is Validated

1. Once your account is set up, and you've changed your password, you should see the employer dashboard.
2. To create a resource, click on the "Resource Manager" on the left navigation bar and then click "Add Resource" or click "Add Resource" on the top right of your dashboard.
3. The "Add Resource" form will pop up. **Please note that you can only add one resource at a time**. For instance, if your company can provide three different resources, you'll need to submit three separate "Add Resource" forms.

The "Add Resource" form will ask you a variety of questions that can help us match you to the right educator based on student needs. Here are a few tips to ensure your resource is approved by SkillsRI staff:

- Make sure the name of your resource matches the service you want to provide, and be as clear and straightforward as possible. For example, if a manufacturing facility is offering a virtual workplace tour, the name of the resource should be: Manufacturing Facility Virtual Tour.
- When selecting a type of resource, hover over the resource to view a description of it and ensure it matches your expectation.
- Provide a brief and clear description of the resource you intend to provide, and make sure you include any critical information that educators will need to determine whether it might be a fit for their students. What's the topic? What will you cover? How will it benefit students?
- Please make sure the content of your resource matches the age group you selected in your form.
- Determine beforehand whether your resource must be delivered in-person, in a virtual format, or both.
- Think through whether your resources might be accessible to English Language Learners or those with special needs (particularly hard-of-hearing/deaf or visually impaired/blind students). This information will help us determine whether your resource can be used by educators who work with these populations.
- Feel free to attach any supplemental documents you think might be helpful (e.g. slide decks, videos, diagrams, any other items that may be useful in explaining available resources.)

4. Once your "Add Resource" form has been submitted, you will receive an email confirming the submission. On the back-end the SkillsRI team will review your resource(s), ensure all fields have been completed, and approve it. Once approved, your resource will be published and will be viewable by educators on the Navigator under "Browse Resources."

   Please note: While educators will be able to browse all approved resources, they will not be able to view the name or contact information of the employers providing the resources. This will ensure your privacy is protected and to streamline all communication related to resource matching through SkillsRI.

   If for some reason your resource cannot be validated, you will receive an email notification noting that additional information is required. You will then be contacted by a SkillsRI staff member to resolve the issue so that you can get your resource approved and published on the Navigator.

5. Once your resource has been matched to an educator request, the SkillsRI team will reach out to you to confirm your interest and availability. Our team will coordinate all of the logistics and make sure you have everything you need to make this a successful experience for your company, the educator and the students. Our goal is to make this process as seamless as possible for our generous employer partners.

Thank you for your continued investment in Rhode Island's youth, our future workforce, and the state's economic development!

Contact Information

If you have general questions about the Navigator and how to use it, please contact the SkillsRI team at Wblnavigator@skillsforri.com. If you need immediate assistance you can also contact the program manager:

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School & External Relationships
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Thanks & Acknowledgments

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PrepareRI

Work-Based Learning Navigator

Appendix

**Employer Resource
Definitions & Examples**

Key Definitions

Resources are categorized in two topic areas - career exploration and work-based learning opportunities:

1. **Career exploration activities** refer to programming that introduces students to a wide variety of work opportunities and how students can pursue the careers of their choice. These programs are typically focused on children in elementary and middle school but are applicable to high school students as well who do not have work-based learning experience and haven't yet been exposed to a work environment.

2. **Work-based learning opportunities (WBL)** provide students with real-life or simulated work experiences that provide students with rigorous opportunities to pursue career and industry-connected learning both during and outside of the traditional school day. WBL experiences can occur through a variety of delivery mechanisms, including **internship programs, apprenticeships, service learning programs, school-based enterprise and industry projects**. High-quality WBL programs should be rigorous, relevant, reflective, interactive and integrated.

The following pages provide more detailed information regarding each resource, organized by tier and topic area. Please note that time commitments for each resource are estimates, and may vary based on the scope of the project.

If you have an idea for a resource or project that you don't see here, please let us know. We are happy to work with you to implement work-based learning opportunities that are innovative and meet the needs of our generous employer partners.

Tier One Career Exploration Resources

Career Panels: (1-2 hours): Career panels are in-school opportunities for students to interact with professionals in a wide variety of roles and industries to learn about how to best prepare for various career pathways. Panels may focus on a specific occupation, such as in marketing or human resources, or an industry such as manufacturing or healthcare. The may also cut across jobs and industries.

Examples:
A classroom is focusing on manufacturing and wants to bring in a panel of 4-5 professionals to speak to students about different career pathways within the industry; a classroom wants to provide a career exploration program and is seeking a panel of employees that represent different occupations, such as marketing, human resources, and finance, and represent numerous industries and employers.

Guest Speakers (1 hour): Guest speakers visit the classroom to meet specific learning outcomes. Presentations are tied to classroom curriculum and help students connect what they are learning in school with the workplace. Speakers are welcome to present on any number of topics which may be focused on career pathways, a specific industry, soft skills development, financial literacy and other relevant topics.

Examples:
A bank is asked to provide an hour-long financial literacy workshop, a marketing professional delivers a workshop on social media do's and don'ts, etc.

Workplace Tours (1-2) hours): Enhance workplace knowledge and build career awareness by illustrating how key academic concepts are applied in the real world. Tours offer students a chance to ask questions and observe work in progress while promoting interactions with professional adults.

Examples:
A classroom takes a virtual tour of a hospital or manufacturing plant.

Tier One Work-Based Learning Resources

Service-Learning Opportunities (1-3 hours): Service-learning projects provide an opportunity to connect community service with academic learning, teaching important content and curriculum objectives while making a meaningful impact on local communities. Facilitating a service learning activity is a great way for employers and students to collectively identify an issue they are passionate about, assess community need and develop real-world solutions. Some examples include a public health campaign to educate the community about safety measures amid COVID, developing a peer-tutoring program for youth struggling with academics, or cleaning up a park. With service-learning projects, all talents are appreciated and creativity is encouraged.

Examples:
An employee(s) from a local hospital work with a group of students to design a COVID-19 public service campaign regarding mask wearing and social distancing; a behavioral healthcare organization helps students design a peer support program for teens struggling with mental health issues.

Tier Two Career Exploration Resources

Career Fairs (Approximately 4 hours and coordinated with multiple employers): While career fairs are typically offered to students in grades 7-12, content should be relevant to the age of participating students. For younger students this means offering broad information about careers, while fairs attended by high school students should provide more detailed information about specific careers and the education and other requirements for them. Fairs provide students with opportunities to learn about a wide variety of potential career paths, help them identify career interests and learn how to access the education and training required. The employers' primary role is to interact with students and answer questions that will help them focus their future career exploration activities.

Examples: 5 local employers in the finance industry set-up informational booths on-site in a classroom cafeteria for a half-day (or via a virtual platform), discussing various career pathways and answering students' questions; a large virtual multi-employer job fair is held with 20 employers representing diverse industries and promoting in-demand jobs.

Job Shadows (Typically one 8-hour day but may be less or more): Designed to help students explore a field of interest while developing skills and building knowledge, job shadowing provides students with an up-close look at a particular occupation, company and industry. Employers offering job shadowing opportunities help students make the connection between school and the workplace while helping to inform career planning. Job shadows also allow students to practice and demonstrate key work-readiness skills such as communication and appropriate workplace behavior.

Example: A student interested in becoming a lawyer spends the day with an attorney from a local law firm; a student from a science class shadows a nurse at a hospital for a day.

Tier Two Career Work-Based Learning Resources

Work Readiness Career Enhancement Workshops (Typically 2-4 hours although may be less or more)**:** Work readiness workshops are designed to provide students with the essential knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in the workplace. Trainings may focus on the development of soft skills such as communication skills, conflict resolution, professional etiquette and many other topics that cut across professions and industries. Sharing various talents with young people is a great way to help prepare tomorrow's workforce.

Example: An employee volunteers to offer a workshop on professional ethics, communication skills, public speaking or other pertinent topics.

Tier Three Career Exploration Resources

Employer Advisor for CTE Programs (4-5 hours per month) While schools do a great job developing their CTE programs, employer advisors can help teachers build their curriculum and ensure it is aligned with real-time employer needs and industry standards. Employers who are able and willing to offer this resource can be involved at varying degrees, from a review of existing content to design of new curriculum.

Example: A school with a computer science program requests that a technology company review their curriculum to ensure it incorporates the most up-to-date content and is aligned with best practices in the field.

Mentorships (4-5 hours per month) Mentorship in middle and high school has the power to impact the course of students' academic and personal life trajectories. Employees volunteering to serve as mentors can select a time commitment that works best for them with flexible hours. Employers interested in providing mentorship opportunities may provide general career and/or industry information and guidance, assistance with college applications, mock interviews, and teach other important skills such as time management, communication, etc. Mentoring experiences will vary based on the unique needs of students and availability and expertise of employer volunteers.

Example: A weekly mentorship meeting with female students interested in the STEM field, led by a female engineering lead from a local company; a student interested in nursing is matched to a nurse from one of the state's healthcare systems to provide guidance regarding recommended course work, potential colleges, different career pathways and help the student begin building a professional network.

Tier Three Career Work-Based Learning Resources

Academic Year and Summer Internships (time commitment varies best on engagement): Academic year and summer internship programs provide unique opportunities for students in grades 8-12 to embed themselves within a company, be a part of a team and gain real-world experience of what it's like to work with others in a professional setting. Employers benefit by building meaningful connections with students, providing hands-on training and developing a strong recruiting pipeline of future talent.

Example: A student intern is placed in a company's marketing department and is given responsibility for social media posts; a student learns about fashion by doing an internship with a local design firm.

Teacher Externships (time commitment varies based on engagement): Teacher externships are work-based learning and professional development opportunities that provide teachers extended exposure to industry-specific work environments based on the types of careers their students may pursue. Employers that are able to sponsor a teacher externship will work with a teacher(s) for a set number of hours to meet agreed upon learning objectives through a mutually approved scope of work.

Example: A teacher working at a school with an agricultural CTE program spends 4 hours per week on-site at a working farm to develop classroom lessons based on best practices and trends in the field.

Employer/Industry-Specific Projects (5-10 hours a month): Project-based learning, or an employer/ industry-specific project, is an important strategy in which students work on a project over an extended period of time to engage them in solving a real-world problem. They demonstrate their knowledge and skills by creating a product or presentation for a real audience. Through this experience, students develop deep content knowledge as well as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication skills. As a partner for an industry-based project, employers may create a project idea and facilitate its solution, or may help a group of students already working on an identified solution aligned with classroom curriculum.

Example: The healthcare industry wants to ensure that messaging related to COVID-19 safety measures are reaching all segments of the population, and students are asked to develop an education and outreach campaign through various platforms; an employer needs a new logo for its company, and a classroom selects the project and develops a new logo and marketing materials to present to the company for use.