HOST OUTREACH

HOST ENGAGEMENT

Depending on the context and needs of hosts, there may be multiple angles to recruit hosts to support your career development experience (CDE) program. Initially, consider the hosts with whom you have existing relationships:

- Are there any hosts or even individual employees of a host who have expressed interest in being more involved with participants?
  - Has any of your own staff expressed interest in working more directly with participants for an in-house CDE?
- Which hosts are working well with your participants and providing intentional supports and guidance within the currently operating work-based learningexperiences?

Common motives for hosts to engage with managing organizations to offer a career development experience opportunity include:
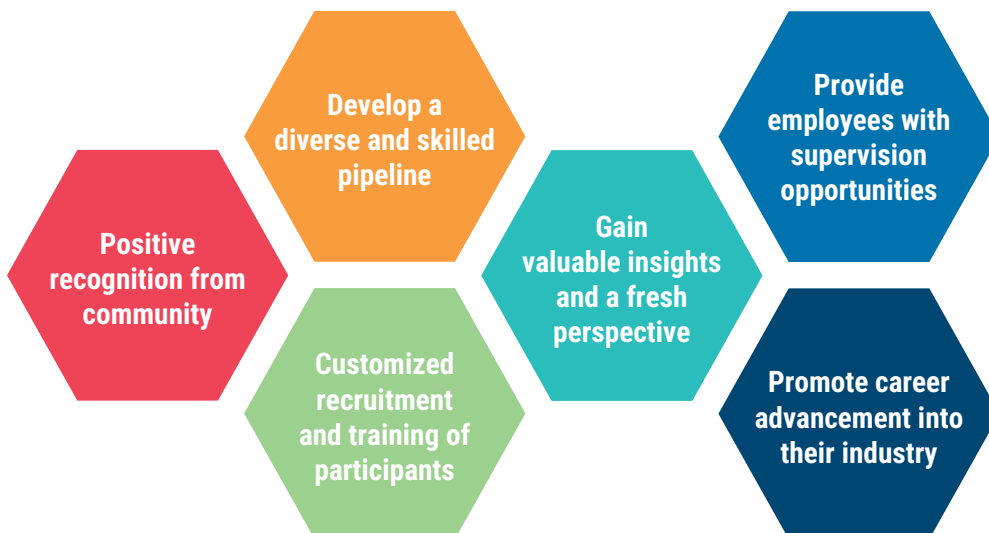
TOOLKIT TERMINOLOGY

Definitions for the terms "participant," "managing organization," and "host" are given in the Introduction.

Positive recognition from community

Develop a diverse and skilled pipeline

Customized recruitment and training of participants

Gain valuable insights and a fresh perspective

Provide employees with supervision opportunities

Promote career advancement into their industry

HOST ENGAGEMENT

CONNECTING WITH HOSTS

Host engagement and the development of CDE partnerships is a continuous process that requires devoted staff time. Every encounter with a host is an opportunity to promote your CDE program and develop a relationship. Successful managing organizations regularly participate in events and conversations with hosts to cultivate ongoing and sustainable partnerships.

Opportunities for host engagement can take many forms. Structured events provide a targeted topic and reason for why individuals are in the room. More unstructured networking type events are useful for having more informal conversations about your managing organization's CDE program and creating the flexibility for you to present specific talking points.

Strategies for host engagement include:

- Peer-to-Peer outreach using existing host partners to advocate on your behalf
- Representatives from your managing organization participating in host and civic organizations
- Engaging hosts in initial activities such as speaking with or hosting a tour for participants
- Attending events where large numbers of hosts are present (job fairs, conferences, etc.)
- Invite hosts to tour space within the managing organization and participate in/observe an activity with participants

COMMUNITY EXAMPLES OF HOST ENGAGEMENT

Staff members of Goodwill Industries have attended job fairs to meet employers and learn about their company. By sending a follow-up call within a week of the event, staff have been able to schedule meetings and establish potential CDE partnerships

As an intermediary for Rockford Public Schools (RPS), Alignment Rockford engages hosts directly through a career pathways sponsorship, connecting organizations, businesses, and individuals to RPS goals and identified areas of community need.

District 211 and District 214 hosted 35 manufacturers for breakfast presentations by advocate employers and a student guided tour of a high school to showcase the advanced equipment and curriculum used to ensure student preparedness.

FORMING HOST PARTNERSHIPS

PROMOTING THE CDE

Before reaching out to a host about offering a CDE, make sure you have your message prepared to promote and describe your CDE program. Be prepared for host questions and develop a pitch that focuses on your collaboration and joint efforts in this work rather than focusing solely on what the host can do to provide opportunities for participants. It is important that your relationship with hosts starts as a partnership to demonstrate how you will work together continuously in the future.

Consider the following to develop a message for why a host should offer a CDE with your managing organization:

Why does your managing organization value CDEs for participants?
- Passion for the program and how it aligns to your mission
- The effect it has on participant's career trajectory

Why should a host value CDEs for participants?
- Investment in the health and growth of their community
- Training the future workforce to meet their talent needs

What do you expect from hosts?
- Ability to participate in activities of the CDE
- Authentic work-based learning experience for participants

What can hosts expect from you?
- Intentional services and supports
- Willingness to collaborate and receive feedback

FORMING HOST PARTNERSHIPS

RECRUITING HOSTS

Your approach with hosts should take into account whether you already have a strong and/or established relationship or if this is the first time you are engaging with them. Typically, it is best to engage hosts to support lighter-lift experiences initially rather than asking them to provide a CDE as their first experience working with your participants. In some cases, however, hosts might be particularly motivated or capable of offering a CDE right away. An important component of your initial message is clarifying mutual expectations and working with them in a collaborative manner to remove any unnecessary barriers to work-based learning.

Consider how each host relationship falls on the following continuum* to inform your approach:

Potential Relationship	Business Relationship	Trusting Relationship	Advocate Relationship
• Generally aware of your CDE • Aready provides work-based learning opportunities to youth with other organizations • Attends similar events/ has mutual contacts	• Provides CDE opportunities to participants of your managing organization • Understand of occasional challenges with participants • Communicates and provides input to your program as requested	• Consistent CDE host for participants of your managing organization • Communicates questions or needs efficiently and often • Provides a positive experience for participants	• Actively participates in your CDE • Provides constructive feedback and is invested in your program's continuous growth • Speaks on behalf of your program to fellow hosts

Since they have experience with your managing organization and participants, hosts who are farther along on the continuum are able to have a more candid conversation with you in terms of their ability and interest in hosting participants for a CDE. While it is important and tempting to focus on enhancing your relationships with those hosts who are still in the potential or business phases, do not forget about supporting those you have a trusting or advocate relationship with to continue to nurture that partnership. You will have different messaging and approaches depending on your relationship, but all of your hosts need continuous reminders of how you collaborate together to support participants and the community.

PARTICIPANTS AS CDE PROGRAM AMBASSADORS

Consider the ways participants who have completed a CDE can serve as champions to promote the program. Participants can most directly tell stories of the impact and effect a CDE has on an individual, which is compelling for your target audiences. Participants can be an asset for recruiting by engaging directly in conversations with hosts to discuss their experience.

---

* Employer Continuum adapted from Reimagine Retail Chicagoland's Reimagining Employer Engagement toolkit

FORMING HOST PARTNERSHIPS

MAKING THE ASK

Once you have built connections through new or strengthened relationships with hosts, it is time to make the request for them to offer a CDE for your participants. This request might come naturally during a networking conversation, but eventually, there may be a formal process for this request as you determine who the right host contact is for approval to provide CDEs for participants.

Before you make your formal request of them, have the following information prepared:

Host Expectations	Participants	Organizational Role
• Outline of roles and responsibilities • Timeline of the CDE • Activities expected to complete (site visits, assessments, etc)	• Background on the youth your managing organization serves • Qualities and strengths of participants • Typical areas of growth and development	• Supportive services and resources provided for both hosts and participants • Process for feedback and collaboration • The "why" for CDEs as it relates to mission and goals

HOST INFORMATION & ASSESSMENT

COLLECTING HOST INFORMATION

Once a host has confirmed they are interested and willing to host a participant, the next step is to collect information on the host site and assess whether it is the right fit for your participants and CDE program. This is a time to gain a more detailed understanding of a host's capacity to meet expectations and provide the required components of your CDE.

Information on hosts should include the following at minimum:

- Address and phone number of host site (especially if host has multiple sites)
- Brief description of the host's work and mission
- Standard business hours as well as specific hours for participants as applicable (determine as well if there is any flexibility in the work hours)
- Dress code
- Office environment (casual, conservative, extremely busy, quiet, etc.)
- Primary contact information (if not known at the time, needs to be collected during onboarding)
- Typical tasks a participant can expect to engage in
- The level of supervision a participant can expect
- Any specific requirements before participant starts (background checks, health screenings, etc.)
- Any previous experience working with your managing organization

Additional helpful items to know include

- Credentials/experience needed to be eligible for employment with host
- Skills they are most interested in coaching and developing in participants
- Successes/challenges they may have had with other CDE programs

To gather this information, some managing organizations will distribute and collect a paper form, while others have created online forms that can be uploaded automatically to a database management system. The information collected from a host is vital for managing organizations to understand the job site and experience. Participants can also review this information before starting their CDE to gain an understanding of what to expect and prepare for (learn more in the "Onboarding: Demonstrating Readiness" section of this toolkit).
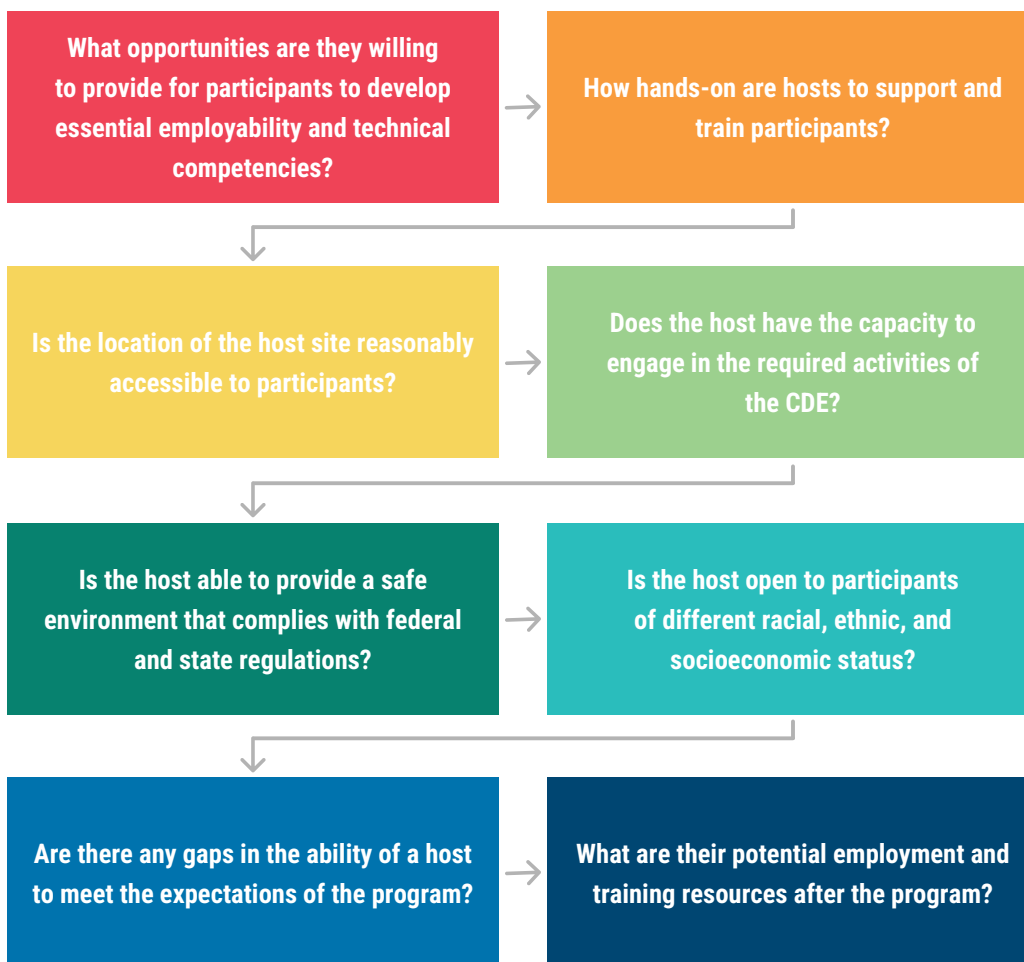
ROLE OF THE PRIMARY CONTACT

The individual marked as the primary contact at the host is typically the person working directly with the participant(s). As you are gathering this information, have a conversation with the host about the expectations for this person in their day-to-day interactions and supports provided for participants. It is possible that a host may provide a primary contact who is solely the person responsible for recording a participant's attendance at the host site, but it is important that a host considers who would be a good fit to provide daily tasks and guidance for participants. This information may not be known at this time, but should be confirmed during onboarding.

HOST INFORMATION AND ASSESSMENT

ASSESSING POTENTIAL HOSTS

Once you have completed your initial outreach and collected the host information, your managing organization should assess whether the host is a good fit for your program and participants. If there are any items of concern, consider whether these issues might be potentially addressed and resolved with the host, or if it might mean that the host is not the right fit for a CDE with your participants. If you determine that a host is not a good fit for a CDE, consider whether they might have potential to engage in other work-based learning experiences along the continuum.

Consider the following as you are determining whether a host is a good fit:

What opportunities are they willing to provide for participants to develop essential employability and technical competencies?	**How hands-on are hosts to support and train participants?**
Is the location of the host site reasonably accessible to participants?	**Does the host have the capacity to engage in the required activities of the CDE?**
Is the host able to provide a safe environment that complies with federal and state regulations?	**Is the host open to participants of different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic status?**
Are there any gaps in the ability of a host to meet the expectations of the program?	**What are their potential employment and training resources after the program?**

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION AS HOST

Consider the ways that nonprofits and other local youth-serving organizations might provide a CDE. There are a wide variety of available programs that can be incorporated into your CDE offerings. These organizations have typically worked with youth extensively and are great resources for those participants who might need a more supportive, hands-on host site.

HOST NOT READY TO OFFER A CDE?

If a host has been assessed and is missing some key components to providing a quality CDE, consider how you can sustain your partnership and engage them in other opportunities to build towards offering a CDE:

- Site Visits
- Career Fair
- Guest Speaking
- Job Shadow
- Mock Interviews

CDE ONLINE
TOOLKIT RESOURCES ⬈

HOST ENGAGEMENT

ARTICLE | "5 Myths about High School Interns and Why Your Business Should Hire Them"

RESOURCE | Participant Task Examples by Pathway Endorsement Area

RESOURCE | Partnering with Employers from YouthBuild

RESOURCE | Reimagining Employer Engagement: A Toolkit for Providers from Reimagine Retail Chicagoland

RESOURCE | Employer Engagement Toolkit: From Placement to Partners from JFF

TEMPLATE | Host Site Request Email: PDF // Word

FORMING HOST PARTNERSHIPS

EXEMPLAR | Early College STEM Schools "Hire an Intern" Flyer from Chicago Public Schools

EXEMPLAR | Pathway Sponsorship Program from Alignment Rockford

TEMPLATE | Host Site Request Email: PDF // Word

TEMPLATE | Prep to Elevator Pitch from Tennessee Department of Education

RESOURCE | Pathways to Prosperity: What Employers Need to Know from JFF

RESOURCE | Employer Outreach and Marketing from Illinois workNet

HOST INFORMATION & ASSESSMENT

TEMPLATE | Host Profile: PDF // Word

TEMPLATE | Host Site Assessment: PDF // Word

RESOURCE | Worksite Placement Tool from Illinois workNet