ILLINOIS WORK-BASED LEARNING INNOVATION NETWORK (I-WIN)

Helping employers, educators, and students leverage innovative models for scaling high-quality work-based learning opportunities in school districts and community colleges across the State

The Launch

Education Systems Center of Northern Illinois University convened I-WIN in October 2020 in response to the challenges educators faced in designing work-based learning (WBL) opportunities for remote learning during the global COVID-19 pandemic and growing awareness of the racial inequities in our systems and communities. A primary focus of I-WIN is to amplify WBL models that demonstrate potential for connecting students with limited social capital to employers.

> I-WIN is serving more than 50 schools representing 420 or more students in its inaugural year.

The Initiative

Open to communities throughout Illinois, I-WIN participants receive professional development opportunities and regular community of practice sessions to support and inspire their virtual work-based learning practices. Participants:

- Learn how to create sustainable, high-quality WBL models that provide broader and more equitable access, especially for Black and Latinx students.

- Engage in peer-to-peer conversations.
- Receive technical assistance including help in designing student projects and supporting employer onboarding.

Best practices, learnings, and resources gathered during I-WIN communities of practices are made available through the resource hub and will inform future recommendations to State policymakers.

Select I-WIN communities are also piloting implementation of Practera, an online learning platform that supports entirely virtual or hybrid work-based learning experiences. Access to the Practera platform is being provided to participating sites at no cost during the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years, thanks to our partnerships with Practera and cooperative education and experiential learning leader Northeastern University (Boston), with funding by the National Science Foundation.

> To join the Network, contact Heather Penczak, Policy & Program Manager, at hpenczak@niu.edu