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PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

The official start of a Participant’s Career Development Experience (CDE) is an exciting moment filled with expectation and curiosity about the experience from both Participants and Hosts. As Participants and Hosts become more familiar with one another and the related tasks, they may be in need of support and resources to ensure a successful experience. It is crucial that throughout the CDE the Managing Organization is checking in on both Participants and Hosts to ensure active engagement and addressing any concerns or questions as they arise.

THE INITIAL CHECK-IN

Taking into account the timeline of a Participant’s CDE, the points of contact from your Organization should check in with both Participants and Hosts shortly after the first day to learn how everything is going so far. It is important to do this initial check-in early in the CDE to demonstrate your availability to support and interest in feedback from Participants and Hosts.

The initial check-in should be open-ended and brief. Later on in the CDE, you will conduct more formal assessments in which you will have the opportunity to ask more targeted questions. This is simply your time to reaffirm your Organization’s commitment of support and openness to feedback from both Participants and Hosts. They might not have much to say, but listen for cues and determine whether you need to probe to get more honest feedback. If there were any specific items mentioned by either party prior to the CDE, now is a good time to follow up on those particular issues. It is also helpful to provide any friendly reminders for Participants and Hosts to be aware of such as recording attendance and hours, assessment needs and a general timeline of the CDE.

RECORD KEEPING

As Participants are completing their CDE, ensure that they are meeting your Organization’s requirements for tracking their attendance and hours. If Participants are supposed to log in and out daily on an online portal, monitor it closely to troubleshoot and ensure that they are meeting this requirement. If Participants are submitting paper records, ensure that these are submitted with appropriate dates and times. Both online and paper records should be verified by the Host.

MAINTAINING A PRODUCTIVE & MEANINGFUL CDE

Your Organization put a lot of work into establishing relationships and setting expectations for the CDE. There are a variety of tools and options for ways in which you can keep Hosts and Participants engaged throughout a CDE that are authentic and lead to the development of essential employability and technical competencies.
HERE ARE SEVERAL IMPORTANT ISSUES TO MONITOR

The points of contact within your Organization (as referred to in the “Organizational Structure” section) will be primarily responsible for monitoring these items. Ensure that these issues are being monitored, particularly if there have been personnel changes at your Organization that may have resulted in points of contact changing. Any changes in communication should have been previously communicated during onboarding so Hosts and Participants can quickly access information and have any questions or needs met as timely as possible.

Depending on the nature of your program, you may be checking in or still seeing your Participants frequently. Take advantage of these moments and find out as much as possible about what they are doing at their CDE placement site and how they are feeling about the experience. Allowing Participants to be as open and honest as possible will allow you to be proactive about any issues or needs that may arise.

SUGGESTIONS FOR RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS

The following are common resources and supports for Participants and Hosts to reaffirm expectations of the CDE and provide assistance to promote positive engagement.

**Essential Employability Competency: Planning and Organizing**
- Participants may need some extra support to organize their assigned tasks and meet deadlines as communicated by the employer. Provide resources that are helpful for Participants but can also be reinforced by the Host.

**Host and Participant Communication**
- As Participants are adjusting to their Host site, it is important to make sure they are adhering to the communication needs and preferences of their Host. Additionally, it is important to make sure that Hosts are providing the necessary information and spaces for communication to occur.

**Managing Multiple Hosts**
- If you have a large number of Participants completing a CDE at the same time across multiple Hosts, consider developing a weekly email that conveys the same information to Participants and Hosts to keep them in the loop of announcements and reminders for the CDE.

**Informational Interviews**
- CDEs are a perfect time for them to network and learn from professionals in their career area of interest. Encourage Participants to advocate for, and the Host to make time for, informational interviews. Provide some initial prompts for reference. Informational interview questions should be reviewed by the Host.

ENSURING ACCURATE TIME REPORTING

Timesheet fraud occurs when an individual is paid for hours that they did not work or time spent on activities not related to work. If Participants are provided hourly compensation for their CDE hours, it is important to review timesheets with them for accuracy and ensure they are being paid for their exact hours worked. Hosts should also be reminded of their responsibility to review timesheets closely and verify they are only approving actual Participant hours worked.
PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

CDE ONLINE
TOOLKIT RESOURCES

1
Template - Recording CDE Hours Completed

2
Host & Participant Check In Meetings

3
Participant CDE Task Examples Organized by Pathway
Endorsement Area
PARTICIPANT ASSESSMENT

TIME FOR REFLECTION

As you are preparing for Participants to be formally assessed by the Host, provide time for Participants to reflect on their CDE and their areas of strength and growth. It is most meaningful if a Participant is able to take ownership of their own assessment rather than simply being told what they are good or bad at. This will allow for an assessment that feels more like a collaborative discussion rather than a potentially punitive process. To facilitate the reflection process, Participants will need tools and resources to learn how to reflect.

Participant reflection can take on many formats, including

- **Entrance/Exit Slips**
  - If Participants are regularly gathered together throughout the CDE, have them jot down responses to 1-2 questions about the day/experience as they are entering or wrapping up the session

- **Survey Forms in Email**
  - If you send any form of regular communication to Participants, include a survey link with 1-2 questions that Participants can respond to and will be automatically uploaded for your review

- **One-on-One Meetings**
  - If you already meet regularly with Participants or if this is an individual support that they need, find time to intentionally ask 1-2 reflective questions for the Participant to respond to

Specifically, Participants should reflect on the following before their formal Professional Skills Assessment:

- **Making Connections**
  - How does what they are doing at the CDE Host site relate to the expected CDE learning outcomes?
  - How does this experience prepare and inform them in their career pathway of interest?

- **Evaluate**
  - Does the quality of their work match the Host’s standards and expectations?
  - How have they improved their knowledge and skills over time (specifically what did they do to be successful)?

- **Goals**
  - Can they identify their strengths and how they have contributed to the work of their Host?
  - In what areas do they need more support and what steps will they take to advance current knowledge/skills?

As you are having Participants reflect, make sure that you are reviewing their responses if you are not meeting with them in-person and are reaching out if there are any items that need to be followed up on.

REFLECTING FOR DEEPER LEARNING

Typically, we think of reflection as a more limited process of simply sharing thoughts and feelings that have occurred as a result of an experience. To encourage deeper learning through reflection, Participants should start with an understanding of the competency development and performance expectations of the CDE. Using these, Participants can evaluate and recognize where they have exhibited the expected behavior, assess areas of needed improvement, and learn to take constructive feedback.
PARTICIPANT ASSESSMENT

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS ASSESSMENT

As defined in the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act, a Professional Skills Assessment is

A tool-based observational assessment of a Participant’s performance in a Career Development Experience given by an adult supervisor and shared with the Participant that addresses foundational professional skills including, at a minimum, those outlined in the Essential Employability Skills framework. The Professional Skills Assessment tool is to be used primarily as a feedback tool and development strategy and not as the sole basis for a grade or credit determination.

Depending on the length of the CDE, it may only be appropriate to do one professional skills assessment. If the length of the CDE allows (for example, a full semester), it is beneficial to have a baseline, middle, and final assessment with the same questions to evaluate Participant’s growth over time. Regardless of how many professional skills assessments are completed, it is important they speak to the Participant’s competency development and capture feedback on performance from the Host. One of the most valuable aspects of a CDE is the ability for a Participant to receive feedback on their performance through an assessment completed primarily by their host.

Managing Organizations should provide Hosts with guidelines on what is being assessed and parameters for their ratings of Participant performance and development of competencies. It is important to put practices in place to ensure consistency among various Hosts and avoid Participants being assessed more harshly or forgivingly based on their CDE Host site rather than their actual performance. This assessment should be utilized as a performance review for Participants and encourage discussion among Participants, Hosts and your Organization.

FOLLOW-UP

Once a professional skills assessment has been submitted, it is important your Organization follows up with both Participant and Host to discuss responses. This can be through a formal in-person meeting (See “Site Visits” below) or through a phone call/email exchange. Both Participants and Host should be made to feel that the time they spent completing the assessment is recognized and valued. (See “Running into Trouble” at the end of this section for handling issues and concerns that may arise from these conversations).

If timing allows, schedule the opportunity to sit down in-person with the Participant and Host to discuss the professional skills assessment. Be prepared to manage the conversation so it remains collaborative and everyone is talking with rather than at one another. For youth to truly develop essential employability and technical competencies, they must be treated with respect and provided room for their voice to be heard during these conversations.
PARTICIPANT ASSESSMENT

CDE ONLINE
TOOLKIT RESOURCES

1
Participant Reflection Questions

2
Illinois workNet’s Observational Assessment and Worksite Evaluation tools

3
MORE 60 by 25 Community Example Professional Skills Assessment for Education Pathway
SITE VISITS

Site visits help Managing Organizations establish and maintain trusting relationships with Hosts and Participants since they are able to directly see a CDE in action. Depending on the capacity of your Organization, this might not be possible for every Participant, so consider those Hosts and/or Participants who are most in need of an in-person visit.

Site visits provide an opportunity for your Organization to gain a first-hand look at what it is like for a Participant to complete their CDE at a particular Host. As you are considering whether a Host is a good fit to continue placing Participants, this is a great way to gather more information for future experiences. Site visits are especially important if a Participant has expressed concerns about a Host site (staff, working conditions, etc.) so you can assess and address the situation effectively.

Site visits are also a great opportunity for you to establish a more human connection between your Organization and the Host to further build a trusting relationship, even if it is only a brief conversation with your Host point of contact.

Components of a site visit may include

- Meeting other Host staff and departments who work with the Participant beyond your normal Host contact
- Tour of the space and observing a Participant interact with equipment and materials to perform tasks
- Discussion of accomplishments/challenges and any additional supports your Organization can provide

BEST PRACTICE

Host 1-1 then Group Discussion

If you are going to spend time discussing the professional skills assessment or Participant performance feedback in general during a site visit, the following is a helpful format:

1st
Meet with the Host one-on-one to discuss their feedback and evaluation of the Participant and the CDE

2nd
Have the Participant join the discussion and share their reflection on their own feedback and evaluation of their performance and the CDE

After they have both shared, use this time to find a common understanding and discuss any goals or next steps for them to focus on for the remainder of the CDE.
CDE ONLINE TOOLKIT RESOURCES

1. How-to: Providing Feedback

2. Illinois workNet - Article: "Helping Your Customers Stay Motivated and Engaged"


4. SAE Visit Scheduling Form

5. SAE Visit Checklist

6. Site Visit at Host Site
NAVIGATING CHALLENGES

CDEs typically get off to a great start, but challenges may emerge as Participants and Hosts move beyond the initial excitement and anticipation. Through continuous coaching and support, it is possible to navigate challenges and improve the experience through a better understanding of needs and expectations. This is a typical process for anything new and one that should be considered as Participants begin their CDE and are encouraged throughout to get to a "steady results" point. It should not be taken as a sign of an unsuccessful CDE if a Participant or Host reaches a moment of frustration and discontent with the CDE, but rather an opportunity to learn and improve the experience.

Consider the above image of the Gartner Hype Cycle that is used to show the graphic representation of the maturity and adoption of new technologies as it relates to a Participant’s CDE and may affect their performance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gartner Hype Cycle Stage</th>
<th>CDE Related Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Innovation Trigger</td>
<td>The Participant learns that they are eligible for a CDE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peak of Inflated Expectations</td>
<td>The Participant researches the Host they will be placed at for the CDE and tasks they will perform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trough of Disillusionment</td>
<td>The Participant has started to get used to the CDE tasks and they no longer hold the same appeal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slope of Enlightenment</td>
<td>Through reflection, the Participant becomes aware of their personal growth and development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plateau of Productivity</td>
<td>The Participant realizes how they can contribute in a meaningful way to the Host and the CDE’s impact on their career pathway</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In general, most issues and concerns that arise during a CDE can be worked through quickly and are typically due to some form of miscommunication or assumptions. Other times, a deep divide has been formed between a Participant and their Host and you will need to step in and mediate the situation.

First, hear perspectives from both the Host and the Participant separately so they both feel that they can speak openly and candidly with you about the situation. During this time, feel free to provide insights and suggestions as appropriate, but focus on active listening and taking notes so you can identify where you can start to build a common understanding between Participant and Host.

When an issue or conflict occurs during the CDE, consider the following:

- What is the problem and what do the Participant/Host hope to accomplish?
- Where might your Organization play a role in the cause and/or resolution?
- Could it be a result of something happening outside of the CDE?
- Has any miscommunication occurred or information not been provided?
- How has the Host/Participant contributed to the issue?

If the situation cannot be easily corrected and a formal meeting needs to occur to determine whether a Participant can complete their CDE with the Host, best practice is to meet in-person but a conference call can work if that is the only workable option. (See “Termination of a CDE” below).

**PARTICIPANTS DEALING WITH TRAUMA**

Participants may experience trauma or difficulties such as a death in their family or friends, loss of income, or housing instability over the course of the CDE. Managing Organizations should be equipped to identify and refer Participants to resources and services based on their unique needs. Some Managing Organizations may be able to directly provide some or all of these resources and services, but at minimum, CDE program staff should be trained on and aware of the options for Participant referrals. Establishing trusting relationships with Participants early will ensure that they feel comfortable expressing needs for support to their Managing Organization.
**TERMINATION OF A CDE**

There may come a time when a Participant and a Host are no longer able to work together to complete the CDE. This decision should not be made lightly, but it should also not be prolonged to create further feelings of frustration by the Participant and/or Host. If you created an improvement plan for a Participant, consider whether expectations were met by the Participant and if the Host provided the needed support.

While this is an unfortunate circumstance, it may not necessarily have to lead to dissolution of a Host relationship or a Participant’s ability to complete another CDE. Relationships are a key asset to any CDE program, and your Organization needs to take the proper steps to follow-up with both Participant and Host after a termination.

As you are debriefing the situation once the CDE has been terminated, consider the following:

**For Participants**

Did they show a level of performance and skill development to be qualified for placement elsewhere?

**IF YES**

Consider another Host that would provide the needed supports and environment for them to be successful.

**IF NO**

Consider what training or additional resources they might need to revisit completing the CDE at a later time.

**For Hosts**

Was the CDE terminated due to their inability to provide the expectations as initially communicated?

**IF YES**

Consider engaging them moving forward in lighter touch experiences and building back up to the CDE.

**IF NO**

Consider the type of Participant that would be most successful based on the supports and environment provided.

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**IMPROVEMENT PLANS**

An improvement plan is an agreement among Participant, Host and your Organization to improve performance related issues. This improvement plan might be a formal document or a verbal agreement among parties. It should outline in detail the expectations for improvement and a timeline for assessment check points to monitor growth. Improvement plans should be a collaborative document that both Hosts and Participants determine is agreeable and achievable given the timeline and expectations as outlined.
CDE ONLINE
TOOLKIT RESOURCES

1
Gartner Hype Cycle

2
How-to: Difficult Conversations

3
Sample Participant Improvement Plan