

# Youth Skills Training Program Guide April 2024

This Youth Skills Training (YST) program guide provides information and resources to create a YST program or enhance an existing program.

□

## Contents

YST program overview.....	1
Purpose .....	1
Equity statement .....	1
Components of YST.....	2
Outreach.....	2
Consultation .....	2
Program approval.....	2
Grant administration .....	4
Grant application process.....	4
Grant funding uses .....	4
Requirements of a YST program.....	5
Paid work regulations .....	5
Minnesota program exemption.....	5
Steps to create and implement a YST program .....	6
Considerations .....	6
Tips to create a successful YST program .....	7
YST operation .....	8
Student learners .....	9
Parents or guardians.....	9
Schools .....	9
Employers.....	10
Engagement .....	11
Students .....	11
Parents or guardians.....	11
Schools .....	11
Employers.....	12
Frequently asked questions.....	13

# YST program overview

## Purpose

The Youth Skills Training (YST) Program promotes and supports the development of local partnerships between schools, employers and community organizations. These local partnerships provide students with industry-related classroom instruction, safety training, industry-recognized credentials and paid work experience in high-growth and in-demand occupations in the industries of advanced manufacturing, agriculture, automotive, health care and information technology. Successful YST partnerships demonstrate the ability to achieve these objectives through various means including outreach, education, training and supportive services for students.

YST programs provide students with a meaningful alternative to enrolling directly into a high-cost, debt-incurring, four-year degree program. Employers throughout the state report an increasing number of unfilled positions in high-paying jobs that require a certification or two-year degree. Employers also indicate significant challenges in finding individuals they can train to fill these skilled positions.

**YST programs address workforce challenges by connecting industry with education to provide students with opportunities to learn about and gain hands-on experience in key industries.**

Employers are connected to students who are interested in pursuing a career within the industry. These students have learned basic technical skills for the industry and are ready to

participate in a meaningful paid work experience. These individuals are great candidates to help fill the skills gap for employers struggling to find and retain qualified employees. YST programs serve employers, school districts, students, families, communities, post-secondary institutions, employer associations and nonprofit groups.

## Equity statement

The Department of Labor and Industry promotes public-service-centered work, teamwork, collaboration, and building an inclusive environment with equitable systems. We are committed to building a diverse and inclusive workplace to better serve Minnesotans.

All students attending a YST-approved school are eligible to participate. This may include public, private, home and charter schools. YST programs do not discriminate based on protected class such as: race, religion, disability, national origin, sex, marital status, familial status, age, sexual orientation and gender identity. Student demographics of YST programs should be proportionate to the student demographics of the schools that develop and implement YST programs and of the wider community in which these programs exist.

YST supports school programs in providing intentional outreach to under-represented student populations in terms of school participation and industry employment. Developing outreach and retention strategies for under-represented populations of students is imperative to both expand opportunities within schools for meaningful career

exploration, and within industry to diversify and expand talent pools.

## Components of YST

The four main components of the YST program are outreach, consultation, program approval and grant administration.

### Outreach

YST program staff meet with individuals and groups throughout the state to present information and answer questions. YST provides technical assistance to local partnerships interested in learning more or in creating and implementing a YST program in their community.

Forms of outreach have included conference calls, virtual and in-person presentations, virtual and in-person meetings and webinars to educate and support the development of YST programs throughout the state.

### Consultation

The YST program provides the following resources and assistance to support the creation and development of YST programs:

- technical assistance;
- partnership development;
- industry support;
- review of industry-related classes;
- safety training and certification identification;
- paid work experience development;
- models and examples;
- child labor law information and resources;

- employer approval to host student learners for paid work experiences; and
- YST grant application support and feedback.

### Program approval

The YST program was created to support high-growth, in-demand, living-wage industries where it has traditionally been difficult to place 16- and 17-year-old student learners in a paid work experiences.

***By meeting YST requirements and receiving approval from the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI), student learners are allowed to work in industries that otherwise may be prohibited by child-labor laws.***

### Employer approval

The DLI works with local partnerships to complete the necessary paperwork and requirements for YST employer approval. This process was tested with six local partnerships throughout the state prior to implementation and has been updated several times based on feedback from local partnerships, DLI commissioner input and current COVID-19 recommendations and restrictions. Through this process, YST has approved over 200 employers in the state of Minnesota as of April 2024.

Forms and additional information about YST employer approval can be found on the [YST web page](#).

### School approval

YST staff at DLI actively approve area schools for YST partnerships. When a school is YST approved they are then eligible to partner with local YST-approved employers to offer paid work experiences for student learners. Through

the YST program, schools and local industry work together to ensure high quality experiences for students in high-growth, in-demand careers, which is beneficial to all involved.

The YST school approval process ensures that school partners offer the following four components of YST student engagement:

1. Industry exposure
2. Industry-related classes for high school credit
3. Industry-recognized credentials/certifications
4. Industry-related paid work experiences

YST staff from DLI meet with school staff to assess each of these four components. They also discuss the employer approval process, as well as other opportunities for ongoing support offered by YST at the state level.

### Industries

YST operates in the following industries:

- advanced manufacturing,
- agriculture,
- automotive,
- health care and
- information technology.

### Occupations

YST program occupations are based on the following considerations and labor market information provided by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development:

- current demand for the occupation;
- long-term growth and demand for the occupation;

- statewide median wage for the occupation;
- industry-recognized credentials for the occupation; and
- dual training and hands-on learning opportunities for the occupation.

The following list of occupations can serve as a guide for course development or paid work experiences, but is not a comprehensive list of careers within each YST industry:

#### Examples of occupations by industry

<b>Advanced manufacturing</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assembler</li> <li>• CAD specialist</li> <li>• Engineering technician</li> <li>• Machine programmer</li> <li>• Machinist/tool and die maker</li> <li>• Machinist/CNC operator</li> <li>• Maintenance and repair worker</li> <li>• Mechatronics technician</li> <li>• Service technician</li> <li>• Quality technician</li> <li>• Welder</li> </ul>
<b>Agriculture</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agribusiness</li> <li>• Agriculture equipment mechanic</li> <li>• Agronomist</li> <li>• Quality assurance/food safety</li> <li>• Greenhouse manager</li> <li>• Plant scientist</li> <li>• Urban farm manager</li> <li>• Veterinary technician</li> </ul>
<b>Automotive</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Auto body technician</li> <li>• Auto mechanic</li> <li>• Diesel mechanic</li> <li>• Service technician</li> </ul>
<b>Health care</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certified nursing assistant</li> <li>• Health unit coordinator</li> <li>• Lab technician</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Licensed practical nurse</li> <li>• Medical assistant</li> <li>• Registered nurse</li> </ul>
<b>Information technology</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coder</li> <li>• Cyber security</li> <li>• Game design</li> <li>• IT programmer</li> <li>• Network administrator</li> <li>• Software development</li> <li>• Technician</li> <li>• Web developer</li> </ul>

## Grant administration

Minnesota statutes allocate \$1.5 million in annual grant funding for local YST partnerships. A maximum of \$100,000 is awarded to selected YST partnerships to spend over a two-year grant period.

The YST program manages the grant application process, state contracts, monitoring, invoicing and reporting for all grants associated with the program.

**YST program approval is not required to apply for grant funding, and grant funding is not required for YST program approval.**

Although not a requirement for YST program approval, YST grants are an important component to provide local partnerships with funding to create, implement or expand a YST program. A sustainability plan is required as part of the application process.

Grant recipients are required to provide quarterly financial invoices and quarterly reporting to monitor progress and track outcomes. The grant recipients are convened to share ideas, information, resources and

challenges, ask questions and receive technical support based on industry area(s) of focus.

## Grant application process

1. Complete formal grant application available annually (see YST website for timelines).
2. Submit supporting financial documentation to demonstrate fiscal stability and capacity to manage grant funding.
3. Grant committee reviews and scores applications and provides final recommendations to the commissioner of DLI.

## Grant funding uses

YST grant funding can be used to coordinate and implement YST programs and can be used to support middle and elementary industry-exposure opportunities. Specifically, local YST partnerships have used grant money for:

- marketing and advertising programs;
- recruiting schools, employers and students;
- employer training;
- student transportation;
- staff members to coordinate and monitor program outcomes;
- student credentials or certifications;
- curriculum and supplies for industry related classes;
- substitute teachers to cover YST program activities; and
- post-secondary concurrent enrollment options.

**Funds cannot be used to pay student wages.**

Additional YST grant application information and instructions are provided on the [YST web page](#).

## Requirements of a YST program

- Local partnership (education and employer)
- Industry exposure opportunities for students of all ages (tours, speakers etc.)
- Industry-related classroom instruction for high school credit
- Opportunities for students to earn industry-related credentials or certifications
- Safe and meaningful paid work experiences for students 16 years of age or older
- Qualified supervision and safety training
- Required by state statute: at least 60% of students receive an industry-recognized credential and at least 80% of eligible students must graduate when eligible to do so.

## Paid work regulations

YST paid work experiences are designed specifically for 16- and 17-year-old student learners. By state law, 16- and 17-year-olds may not work after 11 p.m. on evenings before school days or before 5 a.m. on school days. Outside of these parameters, the student's schedule is to be determined by the student, school and employer.

- Employers must comply with the federal Fair Labor Standards Act and state child labor laws.
- Employers must comply with [Minnesota OSHA requirements](#) and key safety

components to include the following workplace aspects:

- physical plant and environment (accessible to students, noise, lighting, aisles open, ventilation, cleanliness, protective safety gear);
  - equipment and machines (machine guarding, hazardous occupation orders prohibiting use of specific equipment and machines, safe operating conditions); and
  - training (identifying who provides orientation safety training, safety training for operation of specific equipment, identify who is responsible for day-to-day supervision while operating equipment).
- Employers must provide documentation for workers' compensation insurance as well as their experience modification rate.
  - Student learner rate of pay and scheduling of work hours must be clearly established.
  - Student learners must be paid at least minimum wage for all hours worked.

## Minnesota program exemption

Minnesota's child labor laws prohibit the use of certain potentially hazardous equipment by employees younger than 18. A 16- or 17-year-old may use certain potentially hazardous equipment if they are a student learner in a YST training program. To learn more, visit [dli.mn.gov/yst](http://dli.mn.gov/yst).

If a student learner's work involves using hazardous equipment it must be:

- incidental to the student learner's training;
- intermittent and only for short periods of time (up to 20% of a shift and no more than one hour per day); and

- with direct and close supervision.

## Steps to create and implement a YST program

Creating and implementing a YST program does not need to be overwhelming. Take small steps to begin. It only takes one teacher, one industry partner, one class and one student to get started. You do not need to receive YST grant funding to create a YST program and to benefit from the support of YST staff at DLI.

1. Select an approved YST industry based on community needs and availability.
2. Identify high school classes or area technical college courses for student learners to receive industry-related classroom instruction for high school credit.
3. Identify relevant industry-recognized credentials students are eligible to earn through the YST program.
4. Coordinate with YST staff from DLI to attain YST school approval.
5. Form a local partnership between selected industry employers, schools and community organizations. Additional details about this step can be found in the FAQs section on page 13.
6. Ensure all stakeholders involved in the YST program understand child labor laws for the chosen industry. Determine how and when safety instruction will be provided in the school and at the worksite.
7. Engage in the Employer approval process with YST staff.

8. Create a schedule and work process for the YST program – key considerations are:
  - supervision,
  - hours,
  - transportation,
  - training,
  - goals,
  - requirements and
  - wages – students must be paid at least minimum wage for all hours worked.

## Considerations

When creating a YST program consider the following questions.

- Who is the main contact or lead partner?
- What basic skills and knowledge will students need when entering a paid work experience?
- What are the child labor laws that apply to 16- and 17-year-old student learners?
- What type of equipment will be used and what safety training needs to be in place?
- What personal protective equipment (PPE) is required in the selected environment?
- What are insurance considerations for employing 16- and 17-year-old student learners?
- How many students can be placed at each employer site?
- What type of schedule and hours meet the needs of all parties involved?
- What options are available to transport students to and from the work site?
- What will the starting wage be for student employees?
- What is the goal of the program from a student, parent, employer and school perspective?

- How will students be evaluated throughout this program?
- Who are the main contact people involved (employer, school, parents and guardians)?
- What are the responsibilities of each person involved in the program?
- What credentials or certifications are meaningful to local employer partners?
- Will students earn high school credit for paid work experience? If so, districts must meet Minnesota Department of Education work-based learning requirements.

## Tips to create a successful YST program

Several essential components have emerged based on successful YST programs.

### **Administrative and executive team support**

The school and employer must believe in the program, educate staff members, promote the program, connect with the community and support with time, money, scheduling, exposure opportunities, speakers, recruitment, etc.

### **Dedicated YST staff**

It is most effective to have a point person with at least some time dedicated to the YST program. The individual does not have to be a licensed Work Based Learning (WBL) teacher for the YST program, but if you are awarding credit for the paid work experience or accessing Perkins or CTE funding, you must follow Minnesota Department of Education requirements.

### **Employer/school partnerships**

Begin to create and establish local employer/school partnerships in your community. Establish an industry council to determine employer needs and to determine

roles in creating a program. Determine with local industry partners what skills and knowledge an entry level candidate should ideally possess. Build curriculum and certifications around these recommendations.

### **Marketing and recruitment plan**

Determine a plan to recruit students, provide industry exposure opportunities, target specific populations, provide feeder classes, use interest and ability assessment data, advertise to the community and create a retention plan.

### **Determine program goals**

Create realistic, achievable, obtainable goals that are well-designed and clearly laid out.

### **Parent and community participation**

Market and advertise the program, creating awareness, providing opportunities and using statistics from the industry that include the amount of training, salary, demand, benefits to working in the industry, etc. Host a community event inviting students, parents and local industry partners.

### **Funding and resources**

Explore grants and other funding sources to create and implement a YST program. How will money be used to create, promote and implement a program designed to offer students the opportunity to gain meaningful skills and obtain paid work experience? The utilization of Perkins, Career and Technical Education (CTE) and YST funding can create robust and sustainable programming.

### **Exposure opportunities**

Provide quality, meaningful, hands-on, real world exposure opportunities to students of all ages through activities that include speakers, field trips, tours, open houses, job shadowing

etc. Consider similar opportunities for parents, teachers, counselors and administration.

### **Quality instruction**

Provide quality, hands-on, real world, industry-related classroom instruction to students. Consult industry partners about curriculum and provide them with opportunities to connect with teachers and school staff members. Be engaged, excited, willing to connect with industry and community members. Provide opportunities for teachers to update their own knowledge and skills including summer teacher externships.

### **Provide industry-recognized credentials**

Partnerships should discuss meaningful credentials and determine how students will obtain them. Incorporate meaningful pathways to certifications and careers within industry.

### **Employability skill development**

Teach students the employability skills necessary to be successful in the industry. Work with industry partners and schools to design and plan ways to practice these skills in the classroom and in the work setting. Monitor and track specific employability skills to identify improvement and skills that need further development.

### **Safe and meaningful work experience**

Create a safe and meaningful paid work experience that provides ongoing mentorship from industry professionals and teaches students technical skills and employability skills. Provide students with examples of the pathways to obtain a variety of positions within the industry.

### **Growth, recruitment and continuous improvement**

Make a plan for growing the program. Increase

the number of students participating, including students who are typically underrepresented in programming and industry. Ideas include inviting diverse professionals to speak to student groups or hosting panel events where current successful YST students can address incoming classes. Plan to increase paid work experience opportunities and add new employer partners. Continuously improve the curriculum and adjust opportunities for relevant certifications.

## **YST operation**

YST brings local employers, schools, students and other stakeholders together. These partnerships have short- and long-term benefits. Key program benefits include:

- industry exposure for all involved;
- discovery/exploration of pathways to high-growth and in-demand career opportunities;
- strong relationships between industry, education and community;
- energy and new ideas about recruiting and training future talent;
- access to future employees that can fill the needs identified by local industry;
- partnering in shaping curriculum to address current trends;
- increasing student technical and employability skills that are desirable for local industry needs;
- providing opportunities for students to earn money while developing a concrete sense of career opportunities before graduation;
- avoiding costly post-secondary education by providing students with alternative pathways to high-growth, in-demand

careers that do not require a four-year degree;

- providing students with the opportunity to stay in community in desirable careers; and
- keeping local industry strong which supports the local economy.

## Student learners

A “student learner” is 16 or 17 years old, a student of an accredited school and a part-time employee. The student learner obtains employment training with a YST-approved employer. Completion of a YST training agreement between the student, parent/guardian, school and employer is required prior to the student’s first day of employment. Students develop a solid understanding of the pathways that lead to specific careers within the selected industry.

## Responsibilities

As YST program participants, student learners:

- comply with guidelines established by the school and the employer;
- commit to the education, safety training and work components of the program;
- assume the dual role of employee and student at the worksite;
- understand safety and child labor laws in the chosen industry; and
- maintain satisfactory performance in both the school and work environments.

## Opportunities

Through a YST program, student learners:

- learn and develop essential workplace skills required to become successful employees;

- develop important knowledge and technical skills in an industry setting;
- earn income and gain work experience;
- develop trusted relationships with professionals within a desired industry;
- increase confidence and elevate career aspirations;
- have the potential to gain college credits and industry-recognized credentials; and
- discover a variety of jobs within the industry.

## Parents or guardians

It is important for a student learner’s parents or guardians to support and monitor their student’s involvement in a YST program. Specifically, they should:

- provide consent for the student to participate in a paid work experience via a YST training agreement;
- encourage the student to perform at a high level in both academic and work-related tasks; and
- get involved and learn about the YST program and pathways to meaningful careers.

## Schools

Schools are the link between YST student learners and employers. As part of a YST program, schools:

- create meaningful opportunities for students to learn about industry;
- provide industry-related instruction and safety training;

- provide opportunities for students to earn industry-recognized credentials/certifications;
- increase opportunities for students to succeed in high-growth, in-demand careers;
- educate students about pathways to skilled careers;
- provide meaningful student support to YST student learners; and
- receive industry feedback about curriculum, technical skills and employment skills required for success.

### Responsibilities

As YST program leaders, schools must:

- identify a person to serve as program lead;
- connect with DLI to become an approved YST school site;
- establish connections with industry partners;
- provide industry exposure opportunities to students of all ages;
- involve parents and community members;
- identify industry-related high school or area technical college classes;
- create opportunities for students to earn industry-related credentials or certifications;
- work with industry partners to create paid work experiences for student learners;
- be knowledgeable about and help facilitate the YST employer approval process;
- handle coordination of paid work experiences and the selection of students to participate;
- complete a YST training agreement with the employer, school, student and parent or guardian;

- provide students with safety training and educate them about child labor laws;
- evaluate the program and track outcomes; and
- coordinate with DLI and other appropriate agencies.

### Employers

YST employers provide safe, healthy and meaningful paid work experiences that have a lasting impact.

### Responsibilities

As YST program participants, employers must:

- understand and comply with all child labor laws;
- contact their insurance provider to obtain approval for 16- and 17-year-old student learners to participate in paid work experiences;
- successfully complete YST employer approval process with guidance from DLI;
- determine the safety training and supervision required for students;
- work with the school to create a student work plan;
- collaborate with school partners to provide input about industry-related curriculum;
- work with the school to determine meaningful industry credentials and certifications;
- provide student learners with the opportunity to experience and learn about the industry;
- educate students about pathways to various careers within the industry;
- provide training for the employees who will work with student learners; and
- pay students at least minimum wage for all hours worked.

## Opportunities

Through a YST program, employers:

- create meaningful partnerships with school districts;
- provide input about curriculum and important employment skills necessary for industry;
- build a pipeline of diverse talent to meet current and future workforce needs;
- develop direct relationships with students interested in the industry;
- create opportunities for current employees to develop mentoring and leadership roles; and
- increase productivity and team morale.

## Engagement

Strong marketing and engagement are critical to creating YST industry and education partnerships and in recruiting students. There are various ways that all stakeholders can participate to improve YST programs.

### Students

- Participate in career events at school and in the community.
- Attend events featuring industry speakers.
- Tour local companies.
- Interact with industry professionals.
- Connect with a mentor from industry.
- Participate in job-shadow experiences.
- Attend tours of post-secondary programs.
- Request informational interviews with industry professionals.
- Participate in industry-related coursework at their high school.

- Earn industry-related credentials and college credits when offered.
- Participate in industry-related summer programs or camps to gain experience.
- Participate in YST paid work experience.

### Parents or guardians

- Attend industry tours with students or on your own.
- Attend classroom speakers.
- Participate in job-shadow experiences.
- Attend career fairs and open houses.
- Serve as a classroom speaker for your industry.
- Participate as a member of an advisory council.
- Help to troubleshoot transportation and scheduling for student learners.

### Schools

- Create a brochure about your program.
- Attend your local chamber of commerce meetings. Many local employers are members and you will be able to make contacts as well as distribute your brochure and business card.
- Contact your local economic development board, which has close contact with employers in the area and can explain what fields are in high demand.
- Check your area for a career center. The employment counselor there can connect you to employers, as well as education and scholarship programs.
- Check your school for a co-op program or a school-to-work program. The director will have important contacts they may be willing to share with you.

- Connect with your local area technology center.
- Contact the human resources personnel at local businesses and arrange working lunches to explain your program and how it can benefit them.
- Contact the local newspaper for a focus story about your program and how it can help local businesses.
- Set up a booth during local festivals and events. Community leaders are often present.
- Start a social media account aimed at attracting employers.
- Host a luncheon for local business leaders to explain your program.
- Invite industry members into school to see what is being taught.
- Provide instruction and opportunities for students to earn credentials.
- Work with middle and elementary schools to provide industry exposure opportunities.
- Donate funds for students to obtain credentials and certifications.
- Mentor students interested in your industry.
- Agree to informational interviews with students.
- Provide paid work experience opportunities for students.
- Provide scholarships for students.
- Introduce yourself to school guidance counselors and inquire about any business contacts they may have.

## Employers

- Provide tours of your company.
- Volunteer as classroom speakers for industry-related classes.
- Represent your company at career fairs and open house events.
- Provide a job-shadow experience for students and parents.
- Donate consumable materials, equipment, time and expertise.
- Provide input about curriculum and certification opportunities.
- Offer to help train teachers about current trends in your industry.
- Create summer externships for teachers interested in gaining industry experience.

## Frequently asked questions

**Question: How do I get the right people in the room?**

**Answer:** The key is finding the right person in each organization you are trying to connect with. In schools it may be a pathway coordinator, counselor, CTE teacher, principal or superintendent. In industry, connecting with human resources personnel, owners and trainers is a good way to start. It may also be helpful to include a chamber of commerce, economic development organization or similar group to help coordinate. Call or visit to determine the right person and have a conversation about what you would like to create. Connect with other YST programs throughout the state to network and share ideas.

**Question: What is the best way to communicate what we will cover in school?**

**Answer:** To demonstrate what is being taught in industry-related classes, share class syllabi with industry partners and other partners. Ask for feedback and share what the student is expected to learn in the course, the skills and knowledge they will gain, and any safety instruction they will receive. Also, discuss meaningful industry-related certifications the industry recognizes and supports.

**Question: How do I communicate what the work experience will look like?**

**Answer:** To explain the work experience, start with the basics. You want to partner to provide student learners with paid work experience in a high-growth, in-demand industry. The goal is to provide student learners with exposure to the industry, training and paid work experience that allows them to gain experience and discover pathways that lead to a variety of careers within the industry. Work schedule and hours are determined in collaboration with the student, school and employer.

**Question: What are recommendations of ways to make a program sustainable?**

**Answer:** To make a program sustainable, the partnership needs to think about creative ways to keep the momentum moving and the relationships strong over the long-term. There needs to be a lead person from each of the involved organizations (primarily from the school and the employer; other partners could lead the program's work as well). The work should not be added to a position that already has 100% of the time accounted for in a staff person's given role. Be sure to get administration and other teachers involved in the program. Keep them informed and find ways to partner with them. Develop sustainable funding streams including YST grant funding, Perkins and CTE funding.

**Question: Is there a minimum number of hours of paid work experience required for a YST program?**

**Answer:** No, there is no minimum or maximum number of hours of paid work experience required for YST programs. However, child labor laws must be followed for students 16 and 17 years of age and include prohibiting students from working before 5 a.m. or after 11 p.m. on school nights.

**Question: Why are skilled trades/construction not one of the industries included for the YST grant and YST program approval?**

**Answer:** Minnesota child labor law does not allow for minors under 18 years of age on construction and building sites. YST programs are designed for 16- and 17-year-old students and requires paid work experience.

## As a teacher or school staff person

**Question: How do I convince a reluctant employer to provide meaningful paid work experience to student learners?**

**Answer:** Start with small asks that may include a partnership to help support their current and future workforce needs. The initial conversations can include inviting them into school to talk with CTE teachers. Discuss ways you can partner to provide students with industry exposure opportunities to learn more about the careers available to them in the industry. Work your way up to paid work experiences and make sure the employer understands what is in it for them including the opportunity to hire students right out of high school which is part of the long-term solution to the shortage of skilled workers. Involve the YST staff at DLI in the conversations to share about other successful programs around the state.

**Question: How often should we meet with employers to provide updates about the program?**

**Answer:** Plan to meet stakeholders in your YST program as often as necessary to get started and keep the momentum going. We recommend meeting monthly to share new ideas and ensure everyone understands the goals of the program and what their roles are in the development of the program. It is a good idea to create an industry council that includes schools, employers, students and parents.

**Question: What is the best way to introduce parents to this program?**

**Answer:** Parents are integral to a program's success. There are many ways to introduce parents to this program, including curriculum nights, class registration events, tours of companies, career events, local newspaper stories and social media postings.

## As an employer

**Question: How much should I pay students?**

**Answer:** Based on statute, student learners must be paid at least minimum wage for all hours worked at the employer site. Some employers choose to pay well above minimum wage requirements, but it is up to the employer to determine the rate of pay.

**Question: How do I find mentors for students for their on-the-job training?**

**Answer:** Mentoring students is an opportunity for employees to demonstrate their knowledge and skills and to make a difference for student learners interested in pursuing a career in their industry. We recommend selecting employees who you believe would be good at communicating what they do to someone who is likely brand new to the work environment. Mentoring can be a new way to discover and recognize leaders within your company.

**Question: What is the best way to supervise a student learner's use of certain equipment?**

**Answer:** Students should receive safety instruction and training prior to using any equipment in the work setting. We recommend standing right next to – and in many cases between – the student and the equipment you are demonstrating. In occupations declared hazardous, direct and close supervision of a qualified and experienced person is to be provided.

## About grants

**Question: Does our partnership need to receive a grant before applying for YST program approval?**

**Answer:** No, you do not need to be a YST grant recipient to apply for YST employer or school approval. The YST grant process and YST approval processes are two independent components of the program.

**Question: What are the expected program outcomes?**

**Answer:** By statute, it is expected at least 80% of the student learners who participate in a YST grant-funded program should receive a high school diploma and at least 60% of the student learners who participate in a grant-funded YST program should receive a recognized credential upon completion of the YST program. Grant funded programs are required to set goals and report on the number of students to participate in all four core components of their YST program quarterly.

**Question: Can grant money be used to purchase equipment and supplies for classrooms?**

**Answer:** Yes, grant money can be used for equipment and supplies if the employer partners agree the purchases are important to the program and are a good use of grant funding. The YST grant funding is designed to create and implement YST programs and is not designed to become an educational funding source. Programs are required to get prior approval from the YST staff at DLI for capital expenditures of \$5,000 or more.

# YST @ DLI

## Youth Skills Training

- Jo Daggett, program manager,  
[Jo.Daggett@state.mn.us](mailto:Jo.Daggett@state.mn.us) or 651-284-5354
- Nimo Samatar, program consultant,  
[Nimo.Samatar@state.mn.us](mailto:Nimo.Samatar@state.mn.us) or  
651-284-5184
- Faye Blough, program specialist,  
[Faye.Blough@state.mn.us](mailto:Faye.Blough@state.mn.us) or 651-284-5341



