

# Regional Ecosystem for Workforce Development

## Collaborative

Event 1 - Yuma



The **Regional Ecosystem for Workforce Development Collaborative** is the Arizona Department of Education's opportunity to strengthen communication and collaboration among employers and community partners, and to gather their feedback with a concentrated focus on developing a strategic talent pipeline with regional Career Technical Education (CTE) and Adult Education programs. The work of the regional collaboratives is an effort to address the regional CTE Superintendent's and CTE directors' challenges and connect CTE programs, and the post-secondary and adult education programs to align more closely with the regional and statewide industry workforce needs.

To facilitate these workforce goals, the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) will plan and deliver ten collaborative meetings throughout 2025 with every county in Arizona. These meetings will be held in partnership with District Superintendents, CTE Work-Based Learning Directors, CTE Directors, Arizona Adult Education Programs, Community Colleges, Workforce agencies, Economic Development Partners, and Industry Leaders. The meetings include presentations from the venue host, ADE leadership staff, and members from regional economic development organizations. The meetings include roundtable discussions with attendees focused on current partnerships and recommendations to strengthen or to develop talent pipelines and to create Work-Based Learning activities with regional employers with CTE and Adult Education Programs.

Information will be collected from each of the regional roundtable discussions and a follow-up survey will be sent to meeting attendees. This information will be compiled and is included in this report.

## The Regional Ecosystem for Workforce Development Collaborative – Yuma

On February 26, 2025, ADE held the first of 10 events in Yuma County and sponsored by Arizona Western College.

Location:

Arizona Western College

2020 S Ave 8 E, Yuma, AZ 85365

Time: 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM

82 people were invited to the meeting, 70 registered, and 57 people attended. The event was arranged to encourage cross-disciplinary dialogue and to create an environment for innovative ideas and partnerships. Attendees were from the following organizations:

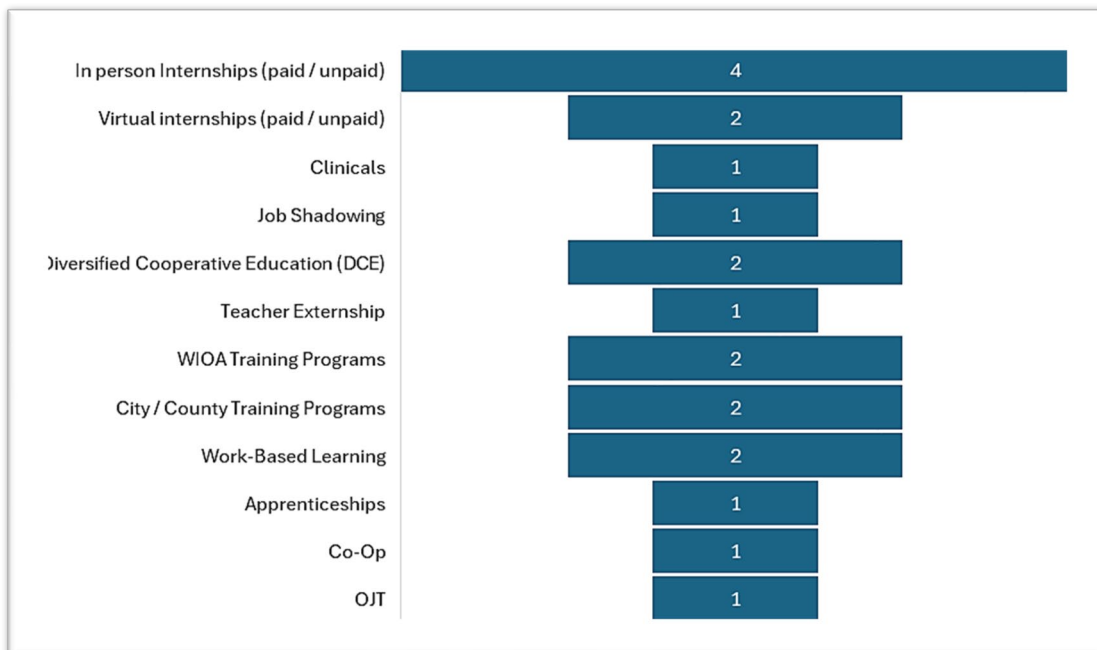
Center for the Future of Arizona	City of San Luis	YPIC / Arizona@Work
Department of Economic Security	Santa Cruz County	Arizona Western College
Kofa HSD	ALPS AZ	ALLO Communications
San Luis HSD	Alside Windows	Associated Materials
Vista HSD	Community Medical Services	Invenergy
STEDY	Greater Yuma Economic Development Corp	Jacobson
Yuma Union High School District	Cibola HSD	Sunset Health
Arizona Department of Education	Antelope USD	Yuma County- IT, Communications, Public Works
Yuma Regional Medical Center	OnVida Health	City of Somerton

## Feedback from the Meeting

To encourage opportunities for improvement, ADE presented four questions. These questions will be the same at each of the 10 events to enable a comparison of responses received across the state. This will also be useful in providing information for other projects. The design of each question was predicated on inquiries ADE receives from community stakeholders, school leaders, and industries. The questions were:

1. What Work-based Learning (WBL)/Apprenticeship opportunities are currently taking place in your organization/community?
2. Based on economic development information, what gaps in your school/college need to be addressed to develop a talented pipeline to meet employment needs?
3. Who else from this community needs to be involved in this discussion?
4. What are the next steps?

**Question Number One:** What WBL/Apprenticeships opportunities are currently taking place in your organization/community? The responses were diversified as the respondents covered the spectrum of WBL experiences. The most mentioned activity was in-person internships (paid and not paid). This indicates that experience working with the internship models is successful or at the least regularly favored by businesses and schools. A deeper dive to understand how these internship programs are organized and managed by the schools and-companies will help with internship program improvement. Responses with other activities and work-based learning techniques were mentioned once or twice during the discussion, as shown below.



**Question Number Two:** Based on economic development info, what are the gaps in your school/college that need to be addressed in order to develop a talent pipeline to meet employment needs? Responses from this question are annotated in three categories:

- Industry / School Connection,
- Partnerships, and
- Program Gaps.

Industry / School Connection refers to program alignment between the CTE and/or community college, adult education programs, and industry/employers. The comments reflect the attendee's perceptions and experiences with CTE programs or CTE students or community colleges.

Partnerships are proposed or perceived gaps in collaboration, communication, or awareness of CTE programs or post-secondary opportunities. Program gaps are perceived or experienced deficiencies, challenges, or feedback on the performance of CTE or community college programs or the makeup of the students in these programs. (See comments below)

#### **Industry / School Connection**

Awareness (employment opportunities)  
Career path literacy (gap)  
Further improve industry and education communications  
Having industry not knowing what we offer  
Job availability aligned with the program  
Making sure to match up programs with employers  
Qualified criteria to support employers  
Specific job training  
Sustainability in workforce pipeline  
US Spaceports & launch/reentry needs education  
WBL opportunities

#### **Program Gaps**

Career exposure  
Need a drone program  
Gaps in education and experience  
knowledge gap  
Haven't connected the education to the needs of the companies  
State technical standards  
Students not ready  
Quality instructors  
School funding to add capacity to carry out WBL programs regionally

#### **Partnerships**

Need a work-based opportunities advisory board meetings/recognize resources  
Employer/industry engagement  
Having industry not knowing what we offer  
Networking  
Parent education  
Training funding to build community capacity  
Working in silos (lack of integration)

**Question Number Three: Who else from this community needs to be involved in this discussion?**

This question asks the attendees about their perspective who additionally would benefit from attending the event. The table below displays the responses.

Table 1	Table 2	Table 3	Table 4	Table 5	Table 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Industry</li><li>• Education</li><li>• Workforce Development Organizations (WIOA Boards)</li><li>• Legislators</li><li>• Legal Council / Attorneys</li><li>• HR Leaders</li><li>• Economic Development</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attorneys</li><li>• CTE Champions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Employers</li><li>• Legislators</li><li>• City Councils</li><li>• Small Businesses</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mexican Consulate</li><li>• Regional Center for Boarder Health</li><li>• Economic Development</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Industry</li><li>• Parents</li><li>• Students</li><li>• Non Government Organizations</li><li>• Policymakers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Education Providers</li><li>• One Stop Centers</li><li>• Employers</li><li>• State / Federal Policy Writers</li><li>• Middle School Parents</li><li>• Industry</li><li>• Local Governments</li></ul>

The discussion regarding under-18-year-old workers was of particular interest. The concerns centered on the liability of the company to allow under 18-year-olds to work in a manufacturing or industrial facility were discussed. The conclusion was that even though there are multiple sources on the ability of this age to work in industrial areas, the group felt it was necessary to collaborate with a lawyer. Another interesting conversation was inviting the Mexican Consulate to take part in these types of conversations. The group felt the Mexico and US businesses were already working together in Yuma County and having their input would be important.

**Question Number Four: What are the next steps?" From the information collected, what should these next steps be?** Below are the responses.

- YUHSD and WIOA representation on GYEDC Board
- Stop working in silos
- Continually have meetings like this to discuss ways to overcome liability barriers to WBL
- Review other states programs
- Students to attend these meetings
- Grow our own talent locally
- Present at the economic development office on virtual internships to other businesses
- Case studies from business perspective->companies have made it work and how did they make it work (bring them into the conversation)
- Education communicates with Greg (GYEDC)
- Continuous exploration of interest and needs (where do needs match interest)
- Stronger advisory committees

- Collaboration locally
- Communications, workshops
- Bridging education and industry partners
- Advisory councils
- Continue working together and closing gaps
- Informing the community of the programs
- Under 18 internship concerns
- Identify the needs of the industry, and keep communicating
- AI implementation as a tool

### **The Survey**

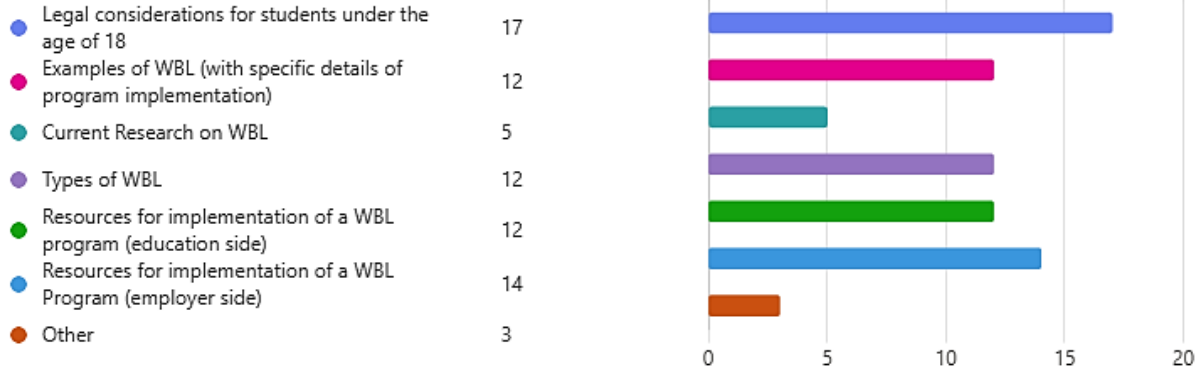
As stated, the purpose of the meeting was to gather information from the region on CTE and Adult Education Programs. In addition to the roundtable discussion and presentations, ADE distributed a survey to all attendees. The survey was designed to capture more feedback on the programs and ideas and use the comments to start developing an actionable plan. Another objective was to discover who the attendees would prefer to continue the conversation to address barriers and enhancements to CTE and Adult Education programs and Work-Based Learning in response to the following seven questions.

1. Based on what you have learned how likely are you going to start (or change) a work-based learning opportunity?
2. What do you need to know more about to participate in a successful WBL program (select up to three)?
3. What are the main benefits for partnering with CTE programs?
4. Which partnerships would you like to expand or learn more about (select all that apply)?
5. Who should lead this conversation going forward? (Select Two).
6. What industry-education partnerships or initiatives are currently operating in your area?
7. How valuable was the event to you or your organization?

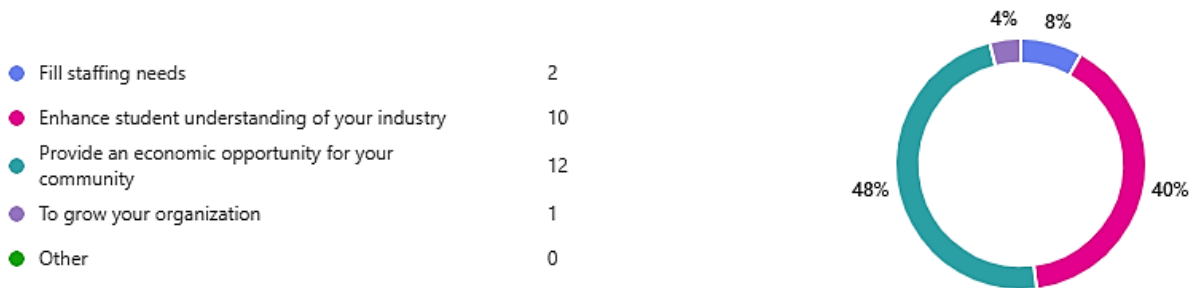
Of the 57 people who attended the event, 30 (53%) responded to the survey.

**Question Number One:** Based on what you have learned how likely you are going to start (or change) a work-based learning opportunity? The results were based on a 1-to-5 criteria, with one representing least likely and five representing most likely. The rating 4.32 shows that most of the participants agree that they are going to start or continue with work-based learning programs or opportunities.

**Question Number Two:** What do you need to know more about to participate in a successful WBL program (select up to three)? The results show that there is a need for information regarding under 18-year-olds working at industry locations. The second most important question selected was about the employer resources for implementing a WBL program. This indicates the need for additional information on what industry partners' commitments are in establishing a WBL opportunity for students. (See chart below)

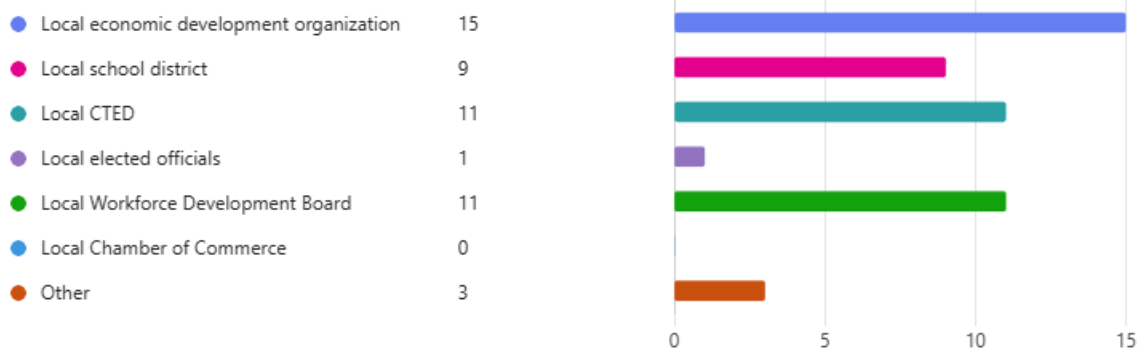


**Question Number Three:** What are the main benefits for partnering with CTE programs? The purpose of this question is to discover from the participant's perspective the benefit of working with a CTE program. The majority responses (48%) said “to provide an economic opportunity for your community.” This indicates the local investment perspective on how the participants value CTE programs. (See the graph below.)



**Question Number Four:** Which partnerships would you like to expand or learn more about? This question had four options: economic development, CTE programs, Community College, and workforce. Attendees were asked to select one answer only. Most of the participants selected CTE programs (31%), second was economic development (29%), then workforce (25%), and finally community College (13%). One attendee selected Other and wrote in apprenticeships.

**Question Number Five:** Who should lead this conversation going forward? This question was designed to acquire the participants’ perspective on who should continue the ecosystem collaboration conversation, oversee the in-depth work to improve student employment opportunities, and aid with the workforce talent pipeline. The respondents identified local economic development organizations as the best choice, with the local CTED / JTED and local workforce development boards a close second, and the local chamber is the least unlikely choice. (See the graph below.)



**Question Number Six: What industry-education partnerships or initiatives are currently operating in your area?** This question asks the attendees to name the current partnerships in their local region. The importance of the information is to identify existing local partnerships that are already working well. There were a few comments that indicated challenges in establishing the partnerships, however, many of the comments indicated that internships are the preferred method of an industry-education partnership. Other comments and current partnership methods are below.

Community Health Care WBL	virtual internships	Stedy, AWC and Regional Center for Border Health, Inc	Public Works Career Fair (CFA/Public Works Dept)	Virtual Internships (CFA)
Internships	On-the-Job Training	Our CTED provides WBL opportunities for all levels on the continuum	Gowan and Onvida - NAU (Logistics and Supply Chain Management)	apprenticeships
Work-based learning development by providing opportunities to YUHSD Students	CTE (HS), IET (College), AZ@WK	City and county opportunities for students Government opportunities corporate business Clinical sites	We work with AZ @ works internship program.	Healthcare partnerships for student clinicals
Law & Public safety, specifically Fire. Municipalities hiring CTE Seniors for Student worker positions in various departments.	There are multiple virtual internship opportunities as well as local jobs with the city and county as well as private businesses involved.	Yuma County currently works directly with Arizona at Work in collaborating with Internships with students who have completed local CTE trainings. We are part of the Public Works Division and have had successful outcomes for interns that have led to employment in the past few years.		

**Question Number Seven:** How valuable was the event to you or your organization? This question sought to determine the value of the meeting. Was the meeting meaningful to the attendees or did they feel it was an effective use of their time? Respondents were to answer the question using 1-to-5 scale, with one being not valuable and 5 being most valuable.

80% of the respondents selected 5, indicating the meeting was most valuable. The lowest response was from one attendee who rated the event a 2, and two attendees rated the event a 3. The total rating was 4.64 out of 5.

### **Conclusions**

Local schools and businesses have shared interest and shared responsibility to the community they serve. Both entities are affected by outcomes of schooling which provide students a learning experience that supports their ability to make a measurable contribution to and receive meaningful benefits from the society they will join and lead in the future. The good news is that business, economic development and local workforce leaders perceive a shared responsibility for and show eagerness to support the work of educating students.