CRITERIA FOR HIGH-QUALITY CAREER CONNECTED LEARNING - CHECKLIST

The Criteria for High-Quality Career Connected Learning (Criteria) are designed to be used flexibly across the entire Career Connected Learning (CCL) Framework –These Criteria are based on research and field tested among emerging and existing programs in Washington during the Learning Lab. Input from Learning Lab programs as well as analysis of their practices informed the current Criteria.

The *Criteria* provide nine unique principles or standards for assessing quality that apply to most programs.

The *Indicators* are a menu that progresses through developmentally appropriate experiences to develop mastery over time.

The *Examples* of Participation and Quality Metrics provide guideposts or generate ideas on the kinds of measurement, relationships, structure, or design that indicate quality in a criterion. These examples are also useful as part of ongoing quality improvement processes.

Each of the case studies highlights one or two Criteria to demonstrate effect practices across a wide variety of program types. Many of the Indicators and Examples are specific practices or strategies that are used by Learning Lab programs.

While the Criteria are most easily applied by organizations providing direct services to youth, they are also relevant to other types of career connected learning programs. While not every criteria might be relevant, professional development providers can integrate these concepts into curriculum or teacher support, for instance. Employer-sponsored events can consider elements in the criteria as they design experiences for employees and participating youth.

How the Criteria can be used:
- Intentional program design and ongoing quality improvement
- Shared language with partners, stakeholders, and funders
- Can be applied at both program- and systems-level initiatives
- Flexibility depending on where a program sits on the Framework

The Criteria include the following elements:
1. **Equity** addresses disproportionate impact or outcomes among identified groups (e.g., racial, ethnic, religious, gender, or sexual orientation) in a local community.
2. **Person Centered Approach** (also commonly called youth-centered or client-centered approach) puts participant empowerment as an essential element of any successful program to engage them in activities and actions that are relevant to their goals, values, and situation.
3. **Structured Learning Component** is an intentional and ongoing strategy to align and coordinate all elements of the experience to build and reinforce skills, knowledge, and abilities.
4. **Business/Industry- and Community Based Connections** acknowledges the professional relationships that underpin a quality career connected learning experience.
5. **Partnership Agreement** provides clarity and structure to the employer relationships in how to support safety and learning for participants in the context of their business and to clearly align the work experience with career pathways.
6. **Assessment of Effectiveness and Recognition of Skill** provides structure for programs to track their success primarily through the lens of clear, measurable participant skill gains.
7. **Part of Continuum: Not a Stand-Alone Effort** supports community wide partnership as well as participant support to ensure sequenced and progressive skill development along the CCL Framework.
8. **Design Fidelity** allows for flexibility and innovation within unique contexts yet emphasizes clarity and precision in design principles to ensure intended outcomes and consistently high-quality programming.
9. **Sustainability and Implementation at Scale** provides basic principles and strategies for sustaining, growing, or replicating programs over time.

CRITERIA FOR HIGH-QUALITY CAREER CONNECTED LEARNING

CRITERIA ELEMENTS	CRITERIA INDICATORS [i]	RATE HOW YOUR PROGRAM MEETS THE CRITERIA NEVER --------------------SOMETIMES---------------- OFTEN					EXAMPLES OF PARTICIPATION AND QUALITY METRICS CIRCLE/HIGHLIGHT THE EXAMPLES THAT OCCUR IN YOUR PROGRAM
EQUITY	● Experience is equitable in that it serves high-need populations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	**Participation** ● Use of data that can tie demographics with participation and outcomes ● Workforce composition mirrors participant profile ● Community partnerships are appropriate to the population served **Quality** ● Program applies an equity lens to all elements in the criteria ● Organization has a clear approach to equity that is part of its business plan and operations at all levels (e.g., governance, hiring and promotion, etc.) ● Program design, staff models, and volunteer training intentionally include language competency, understanding of cultural values, experiences of discrimination, etc. ● Participants, family and community partners are genuinely involved in program design and evaluation ● Intentional effort is made to help participants "see themselves" in the experience.
	● Program design intentionally addresses barriers to access and participation and removes barriers (e.g., targeted recruitment, case management, wages if appropriate, support services, transportation, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
	● Outcomes for youth of color or other target populations equals or exceeds outcomes for other populations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
	● Community collaborations support and enhance equity in service delivery	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
	● Quality improvement measures are in place to monitor and adjust programs with an equity lens	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
PERSON CENTERED APPROACH	● Instructional and service delivery design applies best practices to target population	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	**Participation** ● There is strong relationship-building between participant and program staff, including volunteers, instructors and employers ● Program incorporates user voice and input into design and activities ● There are mechanisms to measure progress toward participant-set goals. **Quality** ● Program staff are trained in and skilled at applying appropriate methods to engage and support the population (e.g., trauma-informed care, positive youth development, restorative justice, project based learning, etc.)
	● Program design and infrastructure intentionally create and maintain physically and emotionally safe environments	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
	● Participants are actively engaged in their learning and find the content relevant to their lives and interests	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
	● Participant goal setting and achievement is incorporated in the program design	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	

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	• Intentional program structure can identify when youth disengage and utilizes strategies to re-connect them to appropriate services.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• Multiple service delivery methods are used to engage all participants and can flexibly respond to participant needs
	• Activities are developmentally appropriate to age and skill levels of participants	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
STRUCTURED LEARNING COMPONENT	• Participant engages in structured learning activities intentionally designed to enhance knowledge, skills, and abilities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	**Participation** • Structure (location, curriculum, methods of learning, delivery options, skills taught) of learning component is clearly outlined
	• Soft skill development and social-emotional learning are developed through intentional programming and coaching	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• # and types of outcomes (skills, credentials) attained • Shared planning time and tools for employers and instructors
	• Learning activities align work experiences with classroom learning/curriculum	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	**Quality**
	• Learning competencies are clear and validated by industry	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• Learning experience is relevant to participant career interests and learning styles and appropriate to developmental stage
	• Learning component has clearly articulated outcomes (skills, credentials) associated with successful completion and access to employment opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• Participants can articulate relationship between the work experience/career interests and learning outcomes/educational requirements • Career pathway map is developed outlining alignment of work experience skills, learning component credentials/outcomes, and career pathway options
	• Learning experience is embedded or clearly linked to secondary or postsecondary programs of study	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• Instructors or mentors are trained in the curriculum and are skilled in teaching and coaching techniques appropriate to the population
BUSINESS/INDUSTRY AND COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATION (CBO) CONNECTIONS	• Employers are involved in the program design	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	**Participation** • # professionals engaged and experiences offered
	• Participant interacts directly with sector-specific professionals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• Clear structures for ongoing employer planning in program design or modification • # of participants in WBL experiences or jobs • Supervisor is identified and highly engaged with participant
	• Employer provides engagement, support, and supervision of participants, including on-the-job	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• # and types of community support services leveraged

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	mentoring and real-time feedback on performance						**Quality**
	• Participant performs job in actual worksite with relevant performance expectations based on employer's workforce needs (if developmentally appropriate)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• Nature of participant/employer interaction is appropriate for program purpose, participant learning needs, and developmental stage • There are systems in place to support employers, mentors or volunteers, including training, communication and recognition
	• There are clear structures built into the program design for career navigation to learn about in-demand occupations, skills, credentials, and wages	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• Participant can identify one or more mentors within the workplace • Tools or support in place to support employers (e.g., working with youth, legal/liability guidelines)
	• Expertise and resources of CBO partners is used to engage participants and add to the participant's success through access to resources, education and/or supports.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• Employer can clearly articulate how participant(s) is/are filling a workplace need
PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT	• Detailed description of terms and expectations of work experience, including duration, compensation, safety requirements, and participant expectations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	**Participation** • Creation of an agreement that specifies: • # of participants or sessions served (and expectations)
	• Detailed description of employer expectations and roles, including financial investments, supports provided, and staffing requirements	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• Dedicated staff at employer site/hours of commitment • Educational/intermediary/CBO orgs involved (and roles) • Agreements include roles for parents/support network
	• Employers receive orientation, training, and ongoing support appropriate to their role	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• There is are dedicated points of contact to streamline communication and problem-solving
	• Clear articulation of projected learning outcomes, including hard and soft skill attainment, and how/where this learning will occur (e.g., at work site, in structured learning component, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	**Quality** • Agreement reflects expectations for and/or helps ensure: • Shared commitment, vision, and accountability
	• Agreements for participants includes job descriptions and other expectations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• Participant learning and joint planning time • Identification of career pathway aligned with work experience • Participant can articulate their responsibilities and contributions within the workplace
	• Agreements for support network such as parents that articulate their roles in supporting the participant	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• Supervisor meets regularly with participant

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			• Partner satisfaction with roles/contributions of all partnering organizations
ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTIVENESS AND RECOGNITION OF SKILLS	• Participants' skills, learning outcomes, and subjective experiences in the WBL program are assessed as an integral part throughout the experience (not just at exit) • Participants' success, as demonstrated through the assessments and any credential attainment, are officially recognized (academic or industry specific) • Processes for assessment and reflection lead to opportunities for improvement, continuous learning, and integration with larger learning goals, including career and training advancement • Program has regular, structured processes for program evaluation and quality improvement • Employers and participants complete assessment of their experience in the WBL program	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	**Participation** • Assessment process has collaborative roles for employer, instructor, and participant • Employer assessments: satisfaction with experience and with participant performance; $ invested, staff time invested, workplace needs/skills gaps met, and unmet needs • Participant assessment: satisfaction; as appropriate, credentials, certifications, wage or responsibility increases based on demonstration of skill **Quality** • Program and quality improvement processes include qualitative measures such as quality instruction, youth voice, staff reflection and planning for improvement • Program measures success by participant outcomes as well as activities – learning achieved, hard and soft skills gained, time spent at worksite, time spent in learning activities, supervision received, wages earned, experience acquired, jobs in field of study, job or program retention, etc. • Outcomes are leveled and appropriate to developmental stage/age and needs • Participant reflections on assessment include: overall satisfaction with program, understanding of relevant career options, and reflections on work environment and supervision/mentoring • Employers participate in participant evaluation of learning
PART OF A CONTINUUM: NOT A STAND-ALONE EFFORT	• Part of a comprehensive continuum of experiences; experience can be tied to other efforts (e.g., as part of the school/community or along the continuum framework)	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	**Participation** • Participants and employers have opportunities for engagement with a variety of WBL experiences over a period of time to build progressive skills and interests

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	• Adults working with youth (instructors, supervisors, case managers, mentors, etc.) are coordinated in their support and planning, and there is appropriate communication across parties	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• Systems or community level approaches include shared vision, strong administrative and coordination capacity and cross-sector collaboration • There are experiences available across the continuum to fully engage youth at all age groups in CCL experiences • Integration of CTE and general education to leverage expertise and resources for all students
	• Participant activities support both college/advanced training and career readiness, not one or the other	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	**Quality**
	• There is specific support for transition points (e.g., middle school to high school CTE program, transition to advanced training, college navigation)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• Program is embedded in sequenced and coordinated set of activities, not ad hoc • Program staff assist participants in understanding and accessing the next step in their career development
DESIGN FIDELITY	• Fundamental design principles and components are clear and constant, and can be provided within different contexts; adaptations align with principles	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	**Participation** • All partners are clear on intended purpose and outcomes of program design • All staff can articulate program framework or design principles and understand their roles in its success • There is clarity of resources needed to implement to the intended design (human, facilities, financial, etc.)
	• There is a shared framework that is clear on vision, approach and competencies that unifies all staff working on the project	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	**Quality**
	• There are processes and supporting tools for embedding WBL in project design and delivery	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• Program planning includes clarity on how fidelity is achieved, e.g., through explicit sequence of steps or tools • Program documentation articulates design and clarity for implementation • There are regular forums for partners to engage in quality and fidelity planning, including reflection on current practice • Thought and planning is dedicated to complex implementation challenges (requiring behavior or culture change or will be implemented in a complex environment) • Decisions are made that explicitly reflect design principles or frameworks

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SUSTAINABILITY AND IMPLEMENTATION AT SCALE	• Experience can be sustained over time after the initial investments are expended	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	**Participation** • Leadership at high levels visibly supports sustainability. • Partnership demands are realistic and manageable and contribute to the sustainability of the program • There is a clear, realistic sustainability plan that includes clear roles and responsibilities and includes elements such as identifying resources, nurturing buy-in/support with strategic partners, communication and organizational capacity • Key relationships are institutionalized/ not relying on personal relationships **Quality** • Core program purpose and what it seeks to accomplish is clear • There is an assessment of what works and why and clarity on what specific strategies should be sustained or scaled to meet the desired outcomes • Clear theory of change or logic model articulates inputs to outcomes and evaluation is clear on if and why the program is effective, as well as which elements of the program are effective • Program branding makes it identifiable and desirable to funders; funders can distinguish the added value of this program compared to others in the field
	• True costs are identified and cost/benefit appropriate to program design and intent	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
	• There is clarity on the best method for scaling (replication, expansion, distribution, training others, etc.) and intended outcome of going to scale	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
	• There is an infrastructure in place to weather transitions, accommodate growth and maintain key processes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	

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[i] The Indicators are intended to be used progressively. Youth and employer experiences will increase with intensity appropriate to the program's location on the Career Connected Learning Continuum Framework: Career Awareness; Career Exploration; Career Preparation; Career Skills Training and Education. Activities should be developmentally appropriate.