



GREATER SPOKANE INCORPORATED (GSI) BUSINESS AFTERSCHOOL

CRITERIA

Business/Industry and Community Based Organization (CBO) Connections

FRAMEWORK

Career Awareness

STAGE

Established

QUICK FACTS

Location: Eastern Washington

Target Population: Middle and high school students

Numbers Served per Year: 20-25 per workshop; 400 per year

Program Duration: Students opt in to one or more worksite experiences of approximately two hours each

Funding Model: Greater Spokane Incorporated (GSI) funding/sponsorships/small grants

Year Started: 2013

Website: www.greaterspokane.org and www.businessafterschool.com.

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Greater Spokane Incorporated (GSI) is the region's business development organization (Spokane Chamber of Commerce). Its Business AfterSchool program is a unique business-led program that offers career connected learning opportunities for students to increase awareness of the region's high-demand industries.

Business AfterSchool offers at least fourteen worksite-based workshops every year in sectors such as engineering, computer science, advanced manufacturing, financial services, health care, and government. Students have opportunities to learn about the different kinds of jobs, salary ranges, educational pathways, and skill requirements to work in that field. On average, there are 20-30 students that attend each workshop. This smaller setting creates intimate experiences for students to make personal connections with professionals in the field. Hands-on learning activities give students a practical feel for careers in that industry through activities like a building design challenge during an engineering workshop or manipulating a surgical robot in a hospital operating room.

GSI plays a key role as connective tissue in the project. It dedicates staffing to cultivate relationships within schools to reach interested students. GSI recruits businesses to host workshops and then manages logistics such as advertising, scheduling, and coordination. Businesses commit to making facilities available, assigning a planning lead or team, and freeing staff time to engage youth during a worksite experience. Families or schools arrange for transportation to Business AfterSchool workshops, which typically occur in the early evening or during the school day for a couple of hours. The Business AfterSchool experience is open first come, first serve to students from the 59 school districts in the region. Parents and educators are welcome to join, which further builds students' informal support networks in career exploration.

UNIQUE FEATURES

Challenge: *Offering satisfying opportunities where students and professionals can engage and connect*

Business AfterSchool Strategy: *Turn design over to businesses to craft a genuine experience in the context of their unique work environment*

For five years, before piloting Business AfterSchool, GSI coordinated career fairs that drew over 1,500 students from across the region. The career fair model addressed an important need at that time to streamline coordination between schools and the business community. In 2013, however, GSI reexamined the potential impact of these large-scale events. Business feedback indicated that only twenty youth connected with a business professional during the event. GSI also identified that the model of bringing businesses to students at scale didn't work well for businesses. Businesses sent

one or two junior employees to staff booths, and the return on investment wasn't significant.

Wanting a deeper engagement for both students and employers, GSI turned to its members to create a solution. GSI issued a Request for Participation (RFP) to employers, beginning with local engineering firms. The RFP asked companies what they could do that would provide a rich experience for both employees and students. GSI offered suggestions but left it up to the businesses to drive the experiences that would be about two hours in duration. Nine local engineering companies quickly responded to the opportunity.

The solution developed by business partners shifted the model from large scale, light touch experiences to a worksite-based experience that provides deeper perspectives on what careers really look like in each industry. Rather than bringing businesses to large groups of students, it flipped the model. The new model brings small groups of students to worksites where they can interact with five or more professionals in the natural context of their day-to-day worksite. Each year, there are 25 businesses involved with Business AfterSchool.

CRITERIA FOR HIGH-QUALITY CAREER CONNECTED LEARNING - PROMISING PRACTICES

Business/Industry and Community Based Organization (CBO) Connections

GSI has been ahead of a national trend among business development organizations in developing career connected learning opportunities for young people. Engaging the future workforce to meet the needs of its members is a priority for the organization. GSI began this work by building trust and relationship with education stakeholders around the shared goal of a thriving community. They established the Higher Education Leadership Group and the K-12 Roundtable to build shared understanding. With 1,200 members, GSI offers exceptional access to engage industry as a partner for career development for students.

GSI leverages its membership, trusting relationships, and infrastructure to recruit businesses to provide Business AfterSchool workshops to students. Businesses are recruited through GSI committees, its website, and word of mouth in the business community. As a mid-sized metropolitan area, Spokane is the ideal size to leverage community relationships, goodwill, and healthy competition among businesses who vie to create innovative experiences for students.

The business-led model is both flexible in how it's implemented and easy to replicate with fidelity. The only requirement is that the event includes a hands-on experience. Companies assign a lead or team to design the detailed agenda and schedule around the days and times that work best for them.

A host business typically begins planning two months in advance to arrange logistics, recruit students, and develop hands-on activities that are fun and meaningful. While the design is up to the industry partner, the GSI program coordinator provides guidance and expertise as needed. Student registration is also managed by the coordinator through an outside website. GSI provides individualized coaching on how to plan a meaningful experience for young people that might include a site tour, exposure to different careers in the field, and education required. GSI helps businesses translate their daily work responsibilities into interesting, hands-on experiences for youth. Many professionals don't work with groups of teens frequently, and they appreciate GSI's tips on engaging teenagers in conversation and insight on what kinds of questions to expect.

GSI also provides materials for students that contextualize the experiences. This includes customized brochures of the industry sector highlighted, including labor market information on a range of jobs. Short, pithy, professional profiles highlight individuals working in the field and include a typical day, her career and educational pathway, skills and equipment needed, and what she loves about her job.