

Best Practices

Your peers in the Job Corps system offered these suggestions, based on their years of experience participating in Groundhog Job Shadow Day. The best practices listed below have contributed to successful Job Corps participation in Groundhog Job Shadow Day.

General

- Think about what your audiences can do for Job Corps beyond Groundhog Job Shadow Day by strategizing about targeted sites, based on who, what, and why you want to reach them.
- Recruit elected officials and community leaders early – they help generate increased participation and positive media coverage. Make sure that Job Corps is mentioned in media coverage the VIPs receive.
- Get the entire center involved! Don't try to organize/run this event alone.
- Make sure Center Directors give resources to the appropriate staff – e.g., Career Transition Services (CTS), Business and Community Liaisons (BCL) – as soon as possible.
- Remember that Groundhog Job Shadow Day is a year-round event. Remind workplace mentors of this and continue to arrange job shadowing opportunities for students all year long.
- Seize this opportunity to educate employers about Job Corps – lay the groundwork for long-term relationships.

Planning and Preparation

- Start planning and making all logistical arrangements far in advance, especially regarding transportation and meals.
 - Partner with local transit companies to arrange transportation vouchers.
 - Plan and test travel routes.
 - Coordinate efforts and logistics, and share leadership roles among centers to maximize opportunities, especially if centers are located in close proximity.
- Hold center-wide assemblies to motivate students to participate.
- Build enthusiasm by engaging students in the planning process and letting them know why job shadowing is important.
 - Have students design a Groundhog Job Shadow Day logo or T-shirt.
 - Establish student committees to help plan participation.
 - Assign specific planning duties to students to promote “ownership.”
 - Involve students in site selection – let them contribute to a “wish list” of workplaces where they would like to shadow, and then involve them in following up with appropriate contact.

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- Have students promote employer participation by attending/speaking at local Chamber of Commerce meetings, Community Relations or Industry Council meetings, Workforce Investment Board meetings, etc.
- Post information in student and staff areas on center far in advance; use clip art provided in the “How to Have a Successful Groundhog Job Shadow Day” booklet to enhance flyers.
- Establish a Groundhog Job Shadow Day bulletin board for ideas and updates.
- Advertise in the local newspaper for interested employers to serve as workplace mentors.
- Get proclamations issued by local elected officials (e.g., get the mayor to declare Job Shadow Day in your town).
- Prepare students/provide orientation – refer to the “How to Have a Successful Groundhog Job Shadow Day” booklet for guidelines.
- Give each student an information sheet with specifics about where he or she is going (i.e., location, company name), the appropriate contact person, and other details at least one day in advance.
- Have students “apply” for shadowing opportunities as they would for a job. Responsibilities could include researching the companies where they will be shadowing and preparing resumes to submit to workplace mentors ahead of time.
- Ensure that students are adequately prepared to answer general questions that employers may have about the Job Corps program.
- Invite prospective workplace mentors to participate in your holiday activities so that they can learn more about the program and meet the students.
- Contact staff and students at local colleges and universities about being mentors.
- Ask staff from Workforce Investment Boards and local One-Stop partners, such as local Dislocated Worker, Vocational Rehabilitation, or Apprenticeship programs, to consider serving as student mentors.
- Hold a pre-Groundhog Job Shadow Day employer luncheon to explain job shadowing and answer questions.
- Have workplace mentors meet with and “interview” students in advance.
- Remind workplace mentors of their commitment at least two days in advance.
- Give assignments to all staff to get them involved in advance and on the big day.
- Invite high school students to shadow Job Corps students on center.
- Make sure students know how to dress appropriately for their workplace shadowing experience.
- Have a back-up plan for students who sign up or those who cannot participate at the last minute.
- Arrange to have a guest speaker from Junior Achievement, America’s Promise, or another Groundhog Job Shadow Day partner organization on center to generate enthusiasm.

Approaches to Participation

- Adjust and be flexible: If February 2nd does not work for you, try an earlier or later date, or expand Groundhog Job Shadow Day into an entire week.
- Consider having Groundhog Job Shadow Day last two days – one day for Job Corps students to shadow mentors off center, and the other day for students from schools in the community to shadow mentors on center.
- Let students shadow center staff, especially at rural centers.
- Allow students who are waiting to be enrolled in a specific trade to shadow students who are already enrolled in that trade.
- Pair female students with female workplace mentors to foster role model relationships.
- Invite a motivational speaker to address students at the start of the day if shadowing is taking place on center.
- Treat shadowing like a reward for students' good work.
- Approach members of your Center Industry Council, Community Relations Council, Vocational Advisory Council, and other external contacts who already play a role on center about being workplace mentors.
- Enlist the assistance of vocational instructors in finding workplace mentors.
- Ask Job Corps staff to enlist spouses and associates as workplace mentors.
- Arrange shadowing opportunities with media and public officials to maximize Job Corps' impact on public awareness.
- Check Web sites such as www.americaspromise.org and www.mentoringusa.org to locate mentoring organizations and additional opportunities near you.

Day of Event

- Make sure all students arrive on time at all shadowing sites.
- Give students disposable cameras to document their day.
- Provide students with Job Corps brochures to hand out to mentors.
- Give students workplace-appropriate Job Corps trinkets to present to workplace mentors.
- Order T-shirts or other Groundhog Job Shadow Day products from the www.jobshadow.org Web site to give to workplace mentors.
- Have students wear Job Corps pins or something appropriate for the workplace that connects them to the program.
- Have Job Corps shadows review resumes of current job applicants as part of shadowing activities.
- Ensure that students have appropriate items for their shadowing experience (e.g., a pen, pad, resume, lunch money).

Follow-Up

- Allow time for reflection and follow-up after Groundhog Job Shadow Day – let students compare notes in a structured setting; capture good ideas for next year.
- Have students write summaries of their experiences, possibly as a group.
- Reward students with treats and special attention at the day’s end.
- Have students draft “thank you” notes and hand deliver them to employers/workplace mentors, if possible; cookies and other treats add a nice touch, especially if they use the Job Corps logo. Try to ensure that students deliver these items within five business days after their shadowing experiences.
- Share photos of Groundhog Job Shadow Day with workplace mentors.
- Get feedback from employers/workplace mentors after the day is over.
- Place an advertisement in the local paper, thanking employers who served as workplace mentors.
- Hold a luncheon on center to thank workplace mentors.
- Produce a video to thank workplace mentors.
- Post photos (digital and prints) on your center Web site (or send them to the National Office so that they can be posted on the Job Corps Web site).
- Capture lessons learned and best practices in a Groundhog Job Shadow Day binder as a reference for future job shadowing activities.