

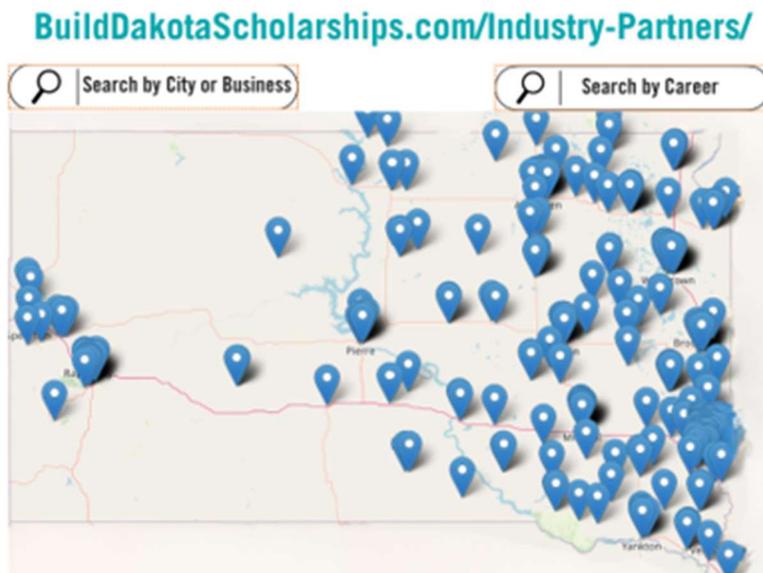
Student Guide

Connecting with Industry Partners

Connecting with an industry partner can help strengthen your Build Dakota Scholarship application and allow you to learn more about careers in your field. Many employers enjoy meeting students who are interested in their industry.

STEP 1: Start with the Industry Partner Map

Visit the Industry Partner Map on the Build Dakota Scholarship website to see companies connected to the program. The map is a great starting point but is not all-inclusive. If you don't see a company, you can still reach out to them. (<https://www.builddakotascholarships.com/industry-partners/>)



Companies I Plan to Contact

Write down a few companies you plan to reach out to (and your follow-up date).

Company	Contact Person	Phone / Email	Follow-Up Date

STEP 2: Use Local Connections

If you're unsure where to start, these organizations can help connect you with employers:

- South Dakota Department of Labor & Regulation
- Your local Chamber of Commerce
- Your high school counselor
- Local economic development organizations

These groups often know employers who are seeking connections with students, offering career exploration opportunities, or planning for future workforce needs and expansion.

STEP 3: Prepare Before Reaching Out

- Visit the company’s website or Facebook page
- Learn what they do and the type of work they perform
- Think about why their company interests you

Keep your Build Dakota scholarship application information nearby so you can reference:

- The program you plan to study
- Your career interests and goals
- Why you’re interested in that industry

Doing a little research ahead of time helps you ask better questions and shows employers you are genuinely interested.

STEP 4: Reach Out by Email or Phone

You might ask if they would be willing to:

- If you have a referral or local connection, mention who suggested you reach out
- Have a short conversation about careers in their industry
- Ask for a brief workplace tour or job shadow
- Visit about Build Dakota partnership opportunities

If the company is unfamiliar with the Build Dakota Scholarship, encourage them to contact:

Rita Nelson – Workforce Relations Coordinator

Rita@BuildDakotaScholarships.com | 605-760-4284

STEP 5: Follow Up

If you don’t hear back, it’s okay to follow up in 2–3 days with a short email or phone call. Following up shows initiative and genuine interest.

TIP: Practice

If you’re nervous about calling a company or asking questions, try practicing with a friend, parent, or teacher first. Practicing what you want to say can help you feel more confident and relaxed when speaking with an employer.

Tip: Do not wait to apply for the Build Dakota Scholarship.

Submit your application early in the application window, even if you have not secured an industry partner yet. Industry partners review applications throughout the application period.

Apply first, then continue connecting with companies. If you secure an industry partner later, simply notify the technical college you plan to attend.

Tip: Stay in Touch

Respond to emails, calls, or messages from employers, technical colleges, and the Build Dakota team. Be sure to check your email and voicemail regularly and include good contact information on your application. Even if you are unsure about your plans, it’s always a good idea to let people know. Staying in touch helps build professional relationships that may lead to opportunities now and in the future.

Questions to Ask a Potential Industry Partner

When you visit with an employer, asking questions helps you learn more about the career and shows you are interested. You don't need to ask all of these—choose a few that feel comfortable.

About the Career

- What does a typical day look like in this career?
- What skills are most important for someone in this field?
- What do you enjoy most about working in this industry?
- What advice would you give someone just starting in this career?

About the Company

- What types of careers are available at your company?
- What qualities do you look for when hiring employees?
- How do employees grow or advance in your company?
- What might a career path for someone trained in [technical program/skill] look like at your company?

About Education & Training

- What training or education is most helpful for someone starting in this field?
- Do employees at your company attend technical colleges or training programs?
- Does your company offer ongoing training or opportunities to develop new skills?

About Opportunities for Students

- Do you offer job shadows, internships, or part-time work for students?
- Does your company offer any scholarships for students or employees?
- Would your company ever consider sponsoring a student through the Build Dakota Scholarship program?
- If I had the chance to work here during summer or school breaks, what might that role look like?

Before You Leave

- Would it be okay if I checked back with you after I apply for the scholarship?
- I have applied for the Build Dakota Scholarship. Is there someone at your company you recommend I speak with about sponsorship?
- Would your company ever consider sponsoring a student like me in this program?

Send a Thank You Message

If someone takes time to visit with you, give you a tour, or answer your questions, it is always a good idea to send a thank you email within 24 hours.

Mention one thing you learned from the conversation and thank them for their time.

For example, you could mention:

- a project the company works on
- equipment or technology they use
- training opportunities they offer
- advice they gave you about the career

Examples: Please revise and make it your own.

Example Email

Subject: Student Exploring Build Dakota Career Opportunities

Hello *[Name]*,

My name is *[Student Name]*, and I am a high school student planning to attend *[Technical College]* to study *[Program]*. I am applying for the Build Dakota Scholarship and learning more about careers related to this program.

I have heard about your company *[specify how familiar, such as ... through our local community]* and while researching businesses in this field. I would appreciate the opportunity to learn more about the work you do and the careers available at your company. If possible, I would enjoy visiting with you or someone on your team for a short conversation, job shadow, or tour.

If you might have 15–20 minutes sometime in the next week, I would greatly appreciate the chance to visit with you. I would also be happy to work around a time that fits your schedule.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate any advice you may be willing to share.

Sincerely,
[Student Name]
[Phone Number]
[Email]

Example Thank You

Subject: Thank You

Hello *[Name]*,

Thank you for taking the time to visit with me about *[Company Name]*. I enjoyed learning more about *[something specific you discussed]*, and it made me even more interested in pursuing *[program]* at *[technical college]*.

If your company participates in the Build Dakota Scholarship program, I would love to learn more about possible sponsorship opportunities. I would appreciate any suggestions on next steps.

Thank you again for your time. I hope to stay in touch as I am interested in exploring this career.

[Student Name]
[Phone Number]
[Email]

Sample Phone Call Script

Hello, my name is *[Name]*. I'm a high school student planning to attend *[Technical College]* to study *[Program]*, and I'm applying for the Build Dakota Scholarship. I'm reaching out to see if someone from your company might be willing to visit with me briefly about careers at your company or possibly allow a short tour.

If they ask for information, you can say: "That would be great. I'd be happy to send a short email with my information. What email address should I send my email?"