



Find your Future: Lessons Learned from Coordinating Career Exploration Events for 8th Graders

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**Rising Together Program
Manager**

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**Albuquerque Career Connect:
Building Futures Through Community Partnerships**

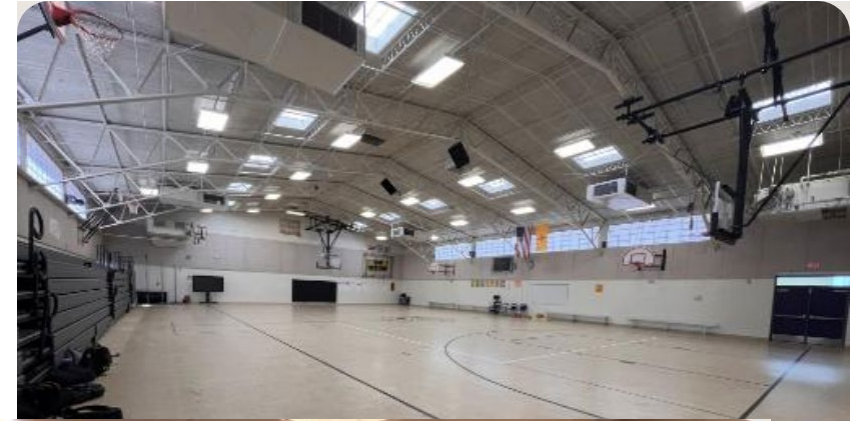
The Power of Partnership

Mission: increase students' knowledge about careers and encourage them to explore future educational opportunities through engaging, personalized experiences



Opening Minds to Possibilities

- Middle schools with the greatest need (math score proficiency)
- 300+ students each semester through hands-on, interactive career exploration events
- Curiosity and motivation beyond traditional classroom learning



What Happens at Our Events



- 4 Rotating Stations
Every student experiences all activities
- 20-3- Minutes
Per station with hands-on engagement
- 25-35 students
Per group for personalized interaction

Our Community Champions

UNITED IS THE WAY

15-25

Employers

Per event sharing career expertise. Employers represent healthcare (UNM Hospital nurses, midwives, radiologists), technology, arts (Albuquerque Little Theatre actors), law enforcement (FBI, APD), and skilled trades.

10-15

Facilitators

Coordinating seamless experiences. Core facilitators from Sandia Labs, United Way, APS Career Connected Learning, Future Focused Education, and state agencies coordinate all event logistics.

100-150

Students

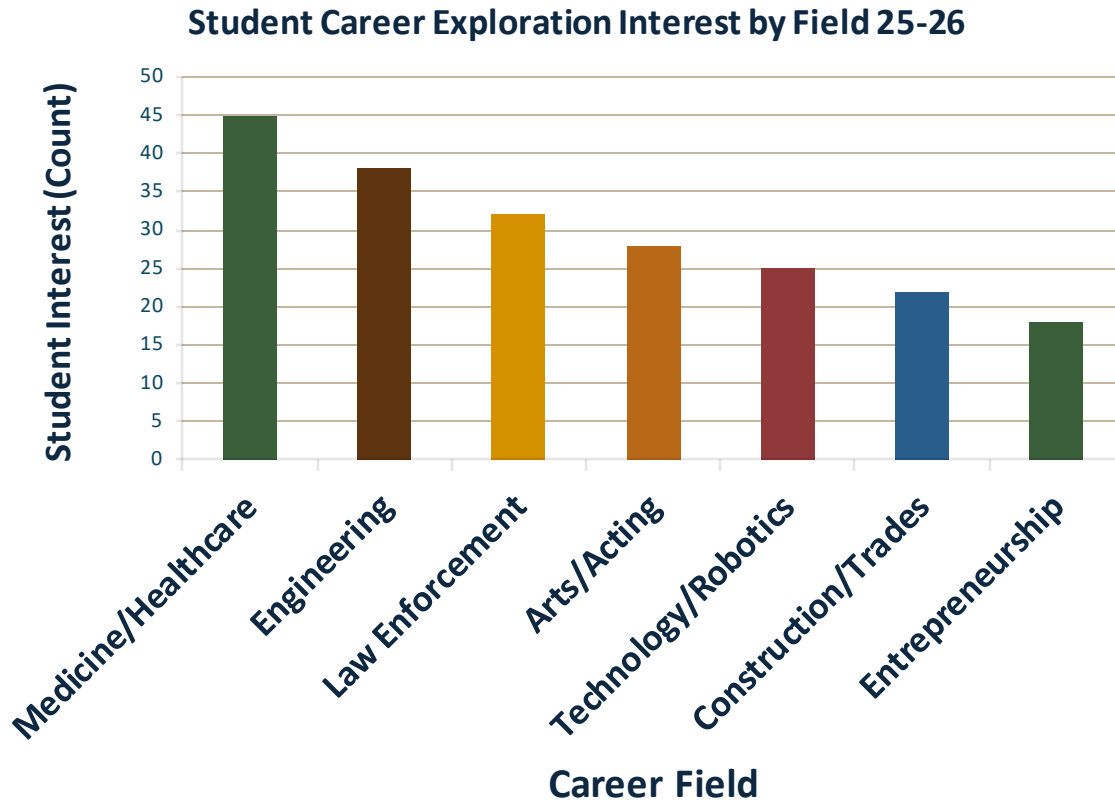
Reached per school. Every volunteer undergoes employer training and background checks to ensure activities are interactive, age-appropriate, and aligned with ACC's mission to inspire students.

Schools We Served

- Seven middle schools in 2025-2026:
Taylor, Jackson, Kennedy, Wilson,
Washington, Jimmy Carter and Harrison,
with plans to expand to more Middle
Schools in 2026-2027
- Customized event planning based on
student interests, facility layouts, and
school culture



What Employers, Students and Teachers Tell Us



- Students found activities beneficial
- Each school has unique personality and challenges
- Employers witnessed students showing real interest in professions
- Feedback drives improvement: added Spanish materials, increased soft skills activities, refined group sizes based on direct input

Lessons Learned – Student Feedback about career

“I learned how to brand myself.”
– 8th grader from Wilson

“I wanted to be a nurse but now I want
to be a police officer”
– 8th grader from Washington

“I would love more activities and
learning about opportunities”
– 8th grader from Kennedy

“Budget is so boring, idk how you adults
do it”
– 8th grader from Hayes

“Learning how we had to talk was
confusing”
– 8th grader from Jimmy Carter

Lessons Learned – Teacher Perspective

Feedback about career exploration programs

“Hands-on activities really helped them understand more and got them excited to explore other areas”

– Community Coordinator

“Good exposure to career paths”

– Career Counselor

“Great station structures!! Well organized”

– School Coordinator

I was monitoring the entrepreneur activity (Shark Tank game) and I believe the students really immersed themselves in the project”

– Teacher at Harrison

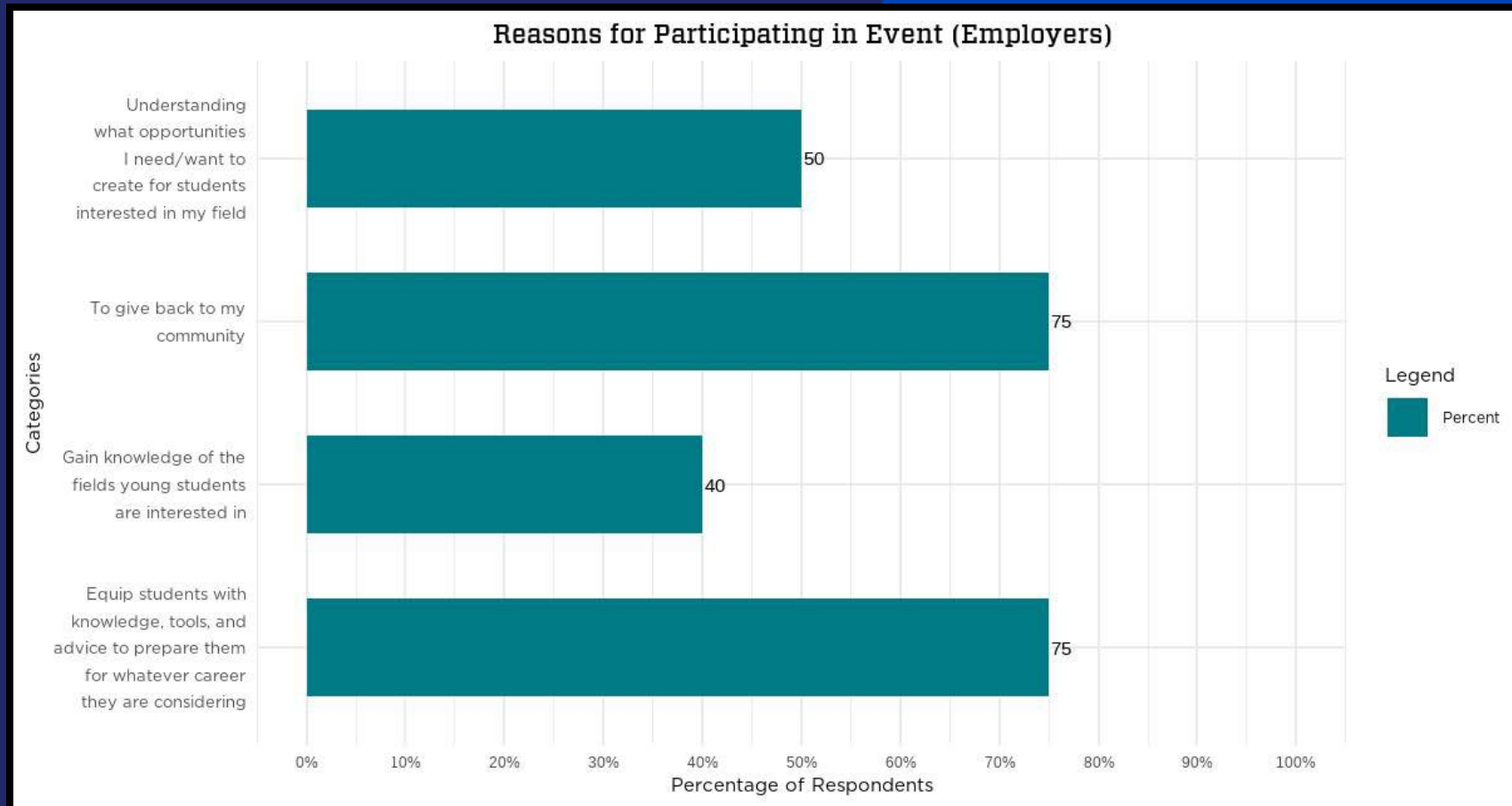
“There were a lot of engaging presenters that shared info about career paths that some students had prior interest in (robotics/programming and nursing)”

– Teacher at Jimmy Carter

Lessons Learned – Employer Perspective

Feedback about career exploration programs

“I signed up because I want to understand what opportunities I need to create for students interested in my field”
– Engineer



“It was a great experience!”
– Employer Sandia Labs

“I like to empower kids and show them that willing is all that it takes”
– Sou Chef

Real Impact on Student Futures

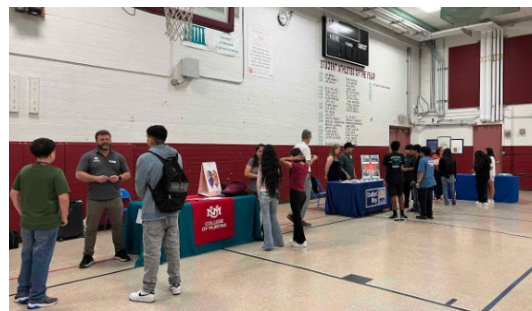
Long-Term Goals

Long-term vision targets graduation rates.



Gain more pathways

Students learn about opportunities, sparking conversations about careers they may not have considered



Equitable Approach

The ACC team ensures students receive equal transformative career exploration experiences



Join Us in Building Futures



- **Share Your Career**

Volunteer as employer presenter for 2-3 hours

- **Become a Facilitator**

Help coordinate activities and support students at stations

- **Connect Others**

Introduce ACC to employers and schools in your network

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UNITED WAY

North Central New Mexico