

REGIONAL
SECTOR
PARTNERSHIP
CONVENER
TRAINING
WORKBOOK

Prepared by Collaborative Economics
and the Woolsey Group, LLC

INTRODUCTION

What are Sector Partnerships?

At the regional labor market level, sector partnerships are collaborations of employers within one industry sector or cluster that work closely with government, education and training, economic development, labor and community organizations to focus on the workforce and other competitiveness needs of their industry. These regional partnerships may or may not have support from the state and/or federal level.

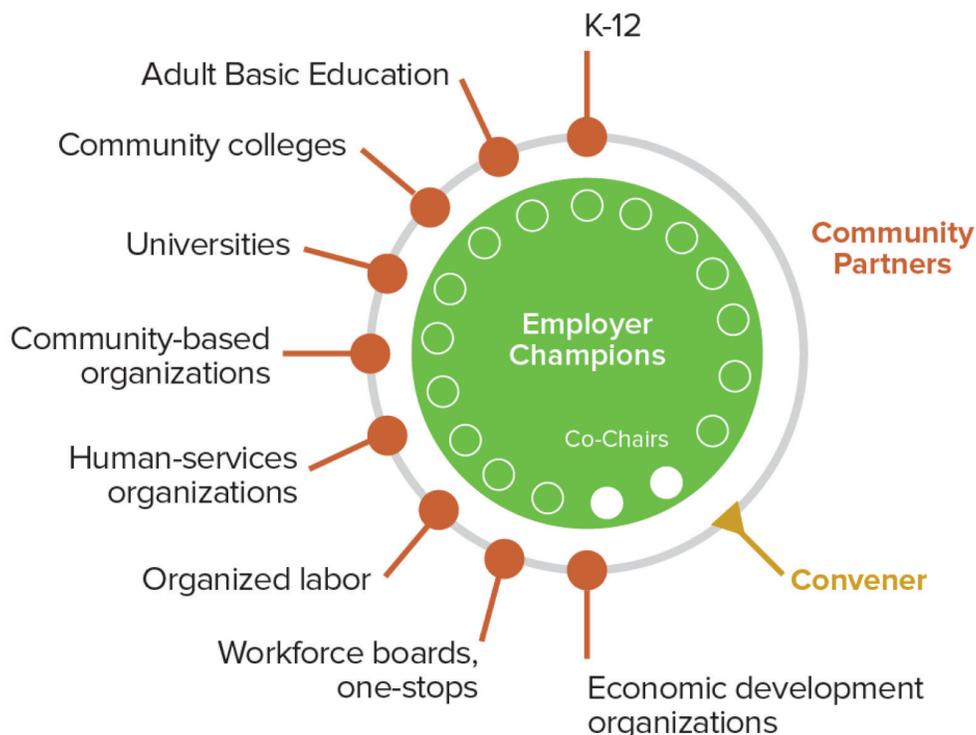
Sector partnerships act as a vehicle to develop and implement industry-driven solutions related to talent, infrastructure, innovation, export promotion, marketing, and other shared competitiveness needs. Sector partnerships result in:

- Immediate actions that strengthen industry competitiveness and improve workforce and education outcomes;
- Longer-term transformation of how public programs work with employers as partners (and not just as customers), and;
- New mobilizations of business leaders as champions to build stronger education and workforce systems and promote economic vitality in their communities.

How to Use This Workbook

The workbook is designed for sector partnership convening teams: the team of core community partners from regional education, workforce development, economic development and other community organizations who work together to launch and provide ongoing support to sector partnerships. This workbook outlines a step-by-step approach to launching and sustaining sector partnerships, including:

- Launching a sector partnership. This section describes how to define the scope of a sector partnership and hold an effective “launch” meeting that brings together industry leaders to define opportunities and requirements for growth and begin to form teams to address shared priorities for action.
- Moving to action. This section describes how to move from ideas to action, developing an industry-driven Action Plan for advancing shared priorities.
- Sustaining the partnership. Moving from “quick wins” to long-term, transformational strategies, this section describes how to sustain the partnership over time while ensuring that it continues to be industry-driven and action-oriented, addressing the changing opportunities and requirements for sector growth and competitiveness.



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A

DEFINING THE SCOPE OF YOUR SECTOR PARTNERSHIP

MAKE THE CASE FOR A NEW APPROACH

Launching a sector partnership often represents a break from tradition. It challenges the status quo, requires a much deeper level of employer engagement, demands a much greater commitment to collaboration, and can deliver remarkable results. But, it does require that you make the case for a new approach, not just a tweak to existing efforts, to prepare people for a very different kind of partnership. Use examples from other places, and the talk through “what works well and not so well” when it comes to sector partnerships. Draw from the sector partnership toolkit.

CREATE A REGIONAL SECTOR STRATEGY TEAM

Those who answer the call for a new approach will become the core of your regional sector strategy team. It is important to include not only partners from workforce development, but also economic development and other segments of the community that could be called on to collaborate with employers. When assembling the team, remember to recruit for “champions” not “representatives”, and for “doers” not “talkers.” Set the tone early that a sector partnership is about what you can contribute to the effort, not what resources you can access or what product you can sell. The result will be a coalition of the willing.

ASSEMBLE A SHARED SET OF FACTS

Decision-making should be data-driven, not anecdote inspired or politically influenced. If you are to work collaboratively, you must have a shared set of facts from which you operate. In the case of sector partnerships, this means a good quantitative profile of the regional economy that enables your team to identify key sectors and clusters, and assess them in terms of job growth, wages, specialization, and other factors. The key here is working through the shared facts together, and then surfacing different perspectives and interpretations from your³ diverse team. But it must be one more thing: you must collectively assess “readiness” factors of a target industry in your region. This is where your anecdotal knowledge does come into play.

STEPS TO TAKE NOW (A.1)

1. Do just enough (but not endless) research on what this model is and is not.
2. Start recruiting a few key players to champion this approach to industry engagement in your region or community.

STEPS TO TAKE NOW (A.2)

1. Build your “community support team” of education, workforce, economic development, and other key stakeholders such as elected officials, organized labor, community-based organizations or others who have a stake in building stronger partnerships with the industry sector you are targeting.
2. You may also have a few private sector leaders who will naturally “get” this approach and who can help make the case to the broader team that this is important. Add them to the team.

STEPS TO TAKE NOW (A.3)

1. Get out the data. Do you have data that describes your regional economy, including current, past, projected employment, average wages and specialty industries in your region (look at location quotients, past and current)?
2. Pull that data together and discuss it as a regional team. Data is meant to be a conversation starter. Make it come alive by discussing what you see in the data as well as what you, collectively, know about industry sectors in your region. Which industries show higher than average numbers? Which are clearly a “driving sector” in your local economy? These are the industries you want to target via a sector partnership.

FOCUS ON WORKING DEFINITIONS

As you determine the scope of your sector partnership, keep in mind the strong benefits of “working definitions”. A common pitfall at this juncture can be paralysis by analysis, where the perfect becomes the enemy of the good. In other words, as you identify the sector or sectors as the focus for your efforts, remember that you are developing a working definition that is always evolving to some degree, especially at the margins. That goes for the specific industry segments that you target, the geographic scope of your sector partnership, and the composition of your sector team.

DEVELOP WORKABLE SOLUTIONS

While you need to be satisfied with working definitions to avoid paralysis, you must also focus on specific obstacles that could compromise your efforts, and develop workable solutions so you can move forward. These will be in situations in which there are no single right answers. The key here is to talk through options, define the best path, and move ahead, while revisiting your assumptions and decisions periodically. Common areas where you may need workable solutions: how to overcome long distances when engaging employers, how big to build your sector partnership, and how to build on existing efforts and avoid turf battles.

STEPS TO TAKE NOW (A.4)

1. Keep the team together, or pull them back together, to discuss geography, scope of target industry and the right size of the partnership. This can be done in less than an hour. See below for more.

STEPS TO TAKE NOW (A.5)

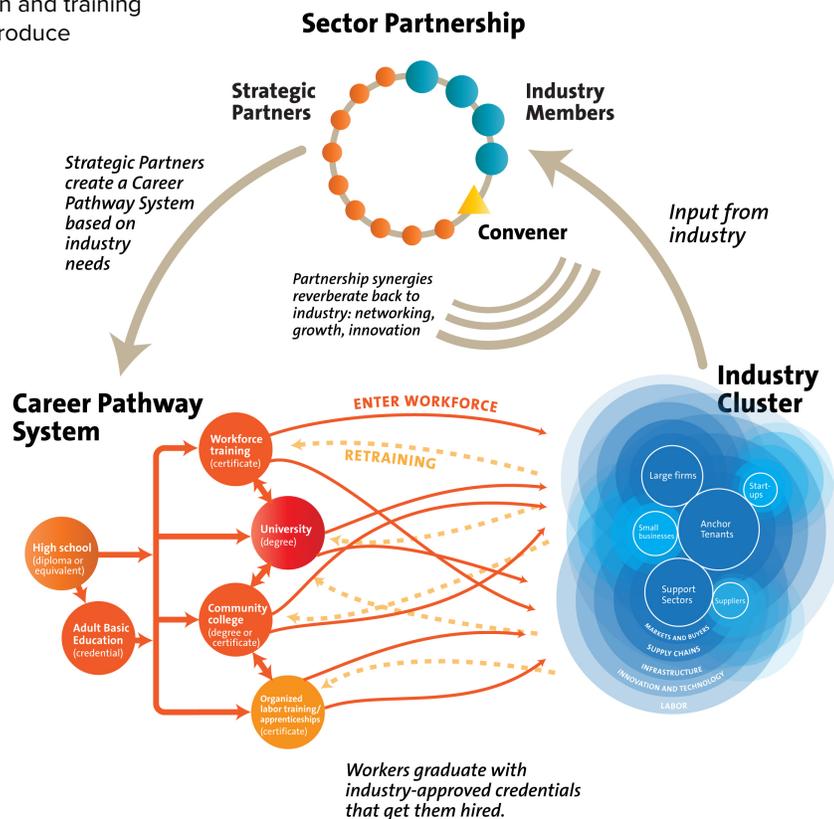
1. Stay focused as a team on the questions in the “Getting the Scope Just Right” text box below. If you start getting in the weeds on definitions (i.e. “does advanced manufacturing include food processing or not?” or “are we focusing on all of the eastern part of the state or just these two counties?”), you may be going down some rabbit holes. Agree on “good enough” answers to those questions.

SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS: WHAT WORKS WELL (AND NOT SO WELL)

Clusters of companies	Individual firms
Employers as partners	Employers as customers
Industry-driven	System- or institution-driven
Regionally-based	Statewide top-down or too local
Existing industry strength or emerging specialty	Wishful thinking
Industry competitiveness/growth	Workforce only
Opportunity-focused	Problem-driven
Employer priorities first	Target populations first
Champion-driven	Representation-oriented
Coalitions of the willing	The futile search for consensus
People and relationships	Organizations and jurisdictions
A disciplined, replicable process	A mysterious, unique occurrence

THE SECTOR-CLUSTER CONNECTION

Sector Partnerships align education and training programs with industry needs to produce readily-employable workers.



GETTING THE SCOPE *JUST RIGHT*

Ask yourself:

Is the Geography right for this partnership? Too big, too small? Just right?

- Too big: A whole state. Half a state. (Hint: put some parameters on your geographic reach like: strong identity for this industry in a particular area, like along a Highway corridor? Is this reach manageable, i.e. will we actually interact and encourage interaction?)
- Too small: A neighborhood (Why not? Because you won't get the depth and breadth you need to really address a target industry's needs)
- Just right: Start with your target industry's natural labor market region with parameters that will actually allow for a collective identity and employer-to-employer interaction. The geographic reach may expand or narrow over time.

Is the Scope of Industry right? Too broad, too narrow? Just right?

- Too broad: "Advanced Industries" defined as any industry that uses some advanced technology (bioscience + aerospace + IT, etc). (Why not? You're taking on the world!)
- Too narrow: Tortilla Manufacturers. Physical Therapy providers. Trucking companies. (Why not? You'll end up with one short-term solution, not a partnership.)
- Just right: Advanced Manufacturing. Food & Beverage Manufacturing. Healthcare providers. Transportation and Logistics. (Why? Breadth and Depth)

What about employer champions? Membership? What is too big, too small? Just right?

- Too big: 150 employer champs at your launch meeting!
- Too small: 2 employer champs at your launch meeting! (if this happens, just have a conversation with them, ask them to help you build an invite list).
- Just right: Aim for 25-30 champs at your launch meeting, be happy if you get 10 or more. Aim for a broader employer membership of much bigger: 30-80 members, and over time expect to reach all or most of companies in your region and target industry, even if they are not active champs or members.

Are we expanding beyond our own jurisdictional boundaries?

- Don't just be a LWIB, economic development agency, college or single organization doing this work.
- Do expect that your support or partner team will be multiple lwibs, economic development agencies, colleges and other organizations.
- Do expect to cross city and county lines (no sector partnership is actually in just one if they're really looking at their natural labor market).

B

PREPARING TO LAUNCH YOUR SECTOR PARTNERSHIP

DESIGNATE A SECTOR STRATEGY CONVENER TEAM

While your regional sector strategy team may be much larger, you will need a smaller core group that takes responsibility for convening employers. This is an essential task that will determine the success of your sector partnership. It requires people who are collaborative, disciplined, and are “finishers.” The convener team must be able to do the job or be able to find the right people to get the job done. They must be able to put aside personal biases and organizational agendas to facilitate and support the deep engagement of employers that will be the key to launching a sector partnership.

FOCUS ON CIVIC ENTREPRENEURS

Engaging employers for a sector partnership involves much more than creating a list and sending an invitation to the company, asking for a representative to attend a meeting. Instead, you are on a mission to find a certain kind of leader, one who not only understands the strategic direction and has decision-making authority at his or her business, but who also has demonstrated the characteristics of a “civic entrepreneur.” A civic entrepreneur is driven by opportunity, entrepreneurial in approach (both risk-taking and persistent), operates collaboratively, and is motivated by the belief that the long-term success of his/her company and prosperity of the community are interdependent.

IDENTIFY AND RECRUIT EMPLOYER CHAIRS

With your focus on civic entrepreneurs, it is now critical that you identify and secure employer chairs. Your goal should be to identify one or more civic entrepreneurs who will agree to, at a minimum, chair the launch meeting for a sector partnership. If you can secure the commitment of employer chairs who are willing to lead the launch phase (say three to six months), that is even better. Ideally, one of your employer chairs should host the meeting at their place of business, with one or more of them working with you to tap their networks to identify other civic entrepreneurs in their industry, sign the invitation letter, and send an encouraging reminder email to invitees. Also, it can work well to secure both an established civic entrepreneur and an emerging leader as co-chairs.

STEPS TO TAKE NOW (B.1)

1. As a team, discuss which organization(s) make the most sense to play the role of lead convener. Who has credibility with companies in the target sector? Who can neutrally facilitate the partnership’s process, leaving their own organizational agendas behind? (For example: Chambers must leave behind goals of increasing membership; colleges must leave behind goals of immediate curriculum advising; workforce investment areas must not immediately focus on how to increase their performance metrics). Who can devote at least some staffing time, or shared staffing time, to this endeavor?
2. As a team, confirm that all other partners will be in a strong support role throughout the partnership’s life, and that they will be in “listening” mode during meetings with employer partners.

STEPS TO TAKE NOW (B.2)

1. As a team, start brainstorming and discussing who the companies and CEOs are in your region/ community. Discuss who each support partner knows personally.

STEPS TO TAKE NOW (B.3)

1. Decide which top three CEOs might be best chairpersons for the partnership. Discuss and decide who will do outreach and recruitment for each.

BUILD THE LIST OF POTENTIAL EMPLOYER CHAMPIONS

Working with your civic entrepreneur employer chair(s), create a list of sector employers and civic entrepreneur leaders from those employers. Your goal is to create a critical mass of civic entrepreneur leaders to ensure that there will be enough champions to step forward to drive a sector partnership. Our experience is that a core of 15-25 works well, but even 5-10 of the right people can catalyze a sector partnership. Once a critical core is identified, then you can build out the list with business leaders who may or may not be civic entrepreneurs yet, but who are from important employers and could be positively influenced by the civic entrepreneur leaders you have identified.

MAKE THE RIGHT ASK AND FOLLOW UP

The best ask is employer-to-employer, civic entrepreneur-to-civic entrepreneur. The ask should be straightforward: it is essential that we as an industry work together on key issues and opportunities, and team up with community partners who want our industry to be successful for the good of our region. And, we want your personal involvement because you are a leader in our industry. Note what is not part of the ask: an invitation focused on identifying workforce needs or another specific pre-determined topic, or an invitation that treats the employer as a customer. This is about convening employers on their terms, without a preconceived notion of what the outcome will be. That means that you and the employers will need to have a tolerance for ambiguity, because until the employers have an opportunity to identify their priorities, it would be premature to pre-judge the outcomes.

STEPS TO TAKE NOW (B.4)

1. Consider bringing your two or three “chair persons” together for a 45-minute discussion (phone can work too) to: further discuss the concept and plan; share and build out the full invite list; discuss the invitation strategy (e.g. invitation letter is signed by them, follow up calls made by convener and chairpersons, etc.).
2. Decide on the date, time and location. Ask chairpersons what date and time will make the most sense for companies, and suggest that the launch meeting be hosted at one of their facilities, which sends a clear message that this is an industry-owned effort.

STEPS TO TAKE NOW (B.5)

1. Get the invitations out with at least 3-4 weeks notice and conduct follow up phone calls to make sure you get the critical mass you want.

CIVIC ENTREPRENEURS ARE THE KEY

FUNDAMENTAL LESSONS

Regions Take Responsibility
(Collaborate to Compete)

Sectors/Clusters Drive Regional Economies
(Build on Strength)

Collaboration Links Economies and Communities
(Feed the Vital Cycle)

Recipe More Important Than the Ingredients
(Every Region Can Succeed)

Civic Entrepreneurs are the Catalyst for Progress
(Focus on People and Relationships)



As you recruit employer champions, look for leaders that demonstrate these three qualities:

1. A passion for their company and an ability to deliver their company, not just act as a representative, unable to commit time or resources.
2. A passion for their industry as a whole, not just their own business, and an understanding of the importance of connecting with other leaders from their sector.
3. A passion for their community and an understanding that the success of their business is tied to the long-term well-being of their community. A strong commitment to place motivates and drives them.

ROLES PLAYED BY CIVIC ENTREPRENEURS

STAGE 1: INITIATION (Motivators, Networkers)

Civic entrepreneurs motivate themselves and others to look at their community differently. They personally demonstrate for others a new level of responsibility for the future direction of their community. They network among their friends and then move beyond their comfort zone to connect with other leaders in the community who are critical to starting a process of change.

STAGE 2: INCUBATION (Teachers, Conveners)

Civic entrepreneurs help educate their community, preparing it for participating effectively in a collaborative process of change. Once a foundation is built, some become conveners of a fair and effective decision-making or incubation process, ensuring that it involves diverse cross-section of the community and operates according to clear rules and with a strong discipline that drives for results.

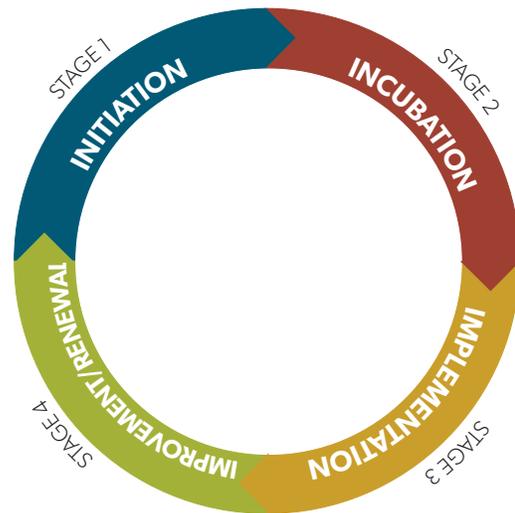
STAGE 3: IMPLEMENTATION (Integrators, Drivers)

As integrators, civic entrepreneurs recruit expertise, locate resources, and otherwise assemble the necessary ingredients for successful implementation of tangible initiatives. As drivers, they ensure that measurable objectives are set and reached, that implementation efforts avoid fragmentation, duplication or rigidity in approach, and that the focus remains on challenging objectives.

STAGE 4: IMPROVEMENT/RENEWAL

(Mentors, Agitators)

As mentors, civic entrepreneurs help establish organizational platforms for the community to continue working together on important issues. As agitators, they fight complacency by constantly reminding people that change is a continuous process.



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Adapted from Doug Henton, John Melville, Kim Welsh, Grassroots Leaders for a New Economy, pp. 75-79

SAMPLE SECTOR PARTNERSHIP LAUNCH INVITATION

Dear _____,

Over the past month, I have been part of a thoughtful group of area business leaders and public partners, working together to strengthen our region's economy. This effort, initiated by the county's economic development board, has taught me a lot about our area's challenges and opportunities, population trends and economic realities, as well as the clusters of businesses that work and—when we get it right—thrive here. One of the sectors we prioritized because of its great potential is the Creative Industries sector, which is why I am especially interested in talking to you.

On January 30, my colleague, Joe Smith, and I are hosting a launch meeting for a new Creative Industries sector partnership. I am really hoping you will join us at that meeting. We will bring together creative industry business owners and leaders to talk about ways to grow and sustain our work in the region – work that includes literary arts and publishing, live music and recording, independent filmmaking, visual arts and crafts, the performing arts, museums, creative technology, and design.

As you know, the creative industries sector is an important driver of our economy. It concentrates in our region at a rate that is 1.6 times greater than the US average. In recent years, our region has also become home to a wide range of creative technology companies and creative technology entrepreneurs. Our sector partnership combines traditional creatives with technology creatives to find areas of common opportunity.

We are modeling our partnership after successful sector partnerships around the state and across the country. Industry-driven sector partnerships can be a place for business leaders to collectively address issues that relate to competitiveness and growth; to find the best ways to work with public and education programs; and to help create solutions to pressing issues.

Our hope is to come away from our first meeting with a set of action items for the creative industries and the formation of teams to pursue these priorities. But none of this can happen without you. The January 30 meeting will be a 2-hour commitment, from 9am-11am at LOCATION. We realize this is a big ask, but we also think this is a big opportunity. We hope you will join us. The meeting will bring together 15-20 leaders in their field, like you, who are strategically and collaboratively minded. I think you will find the work important, thought-provoking, and rewarding. Please let me know if you would like to discuss further and if you can attend. I can be reached at 444-555-1111 or through this email address. I look forward to hearing from you!

Warm regards,

Joe Smith
CEO, Digital Design Works

Jane Johnson
CEO, Spring Valley Arts Magazine



HOLDING THE LAUNCH MEETING

CHOOSE A DISCIPLINED PROCESS (THE HOOK)

There is no one right process to use in the employer launch meeting. However, do spend time on this choice, and choreograph how it will play out. Choose a disciplined process that allows the collective employer voice to emerge. This first meeting is the hook--employers must see a reason to commit to a next step. Based on years of experience with many different processes, we offer a set of design criteria and a preferred approach. Whatever approach you choose, it should be designed to have employers identify opportunities for sector growth, priority requirements for capitalizing on these opportunities, and employer champions for those priorities, who are willing to take a next step after the launch meeting. It is essential that by the end of the meeting, there is a shared product (priority opportunities, requirements, and champions) that is the employers'--and not anyone else's--agenda. To this end, it is best if community partners are good listeners during this meeting, giving employers the opportunity to be heard. Our preferred approach combines these elements in a way that has proven to be effective with civic entrepreneurs.

START WITH OPPORTUNITY

Always lead with opportunity. By starting the launch meeting with a focus on opportunities to grow our industry in this region, employers are immediately put in a frame of mind that is conducive to working together on shared aspirations. In contrast, if the launch meeting starts with a listing of problems or needs, it can trigger the "blame game" or position employers as customers who are being asked to purchase solutions to their problems from the community. It can also trigger non-employer partners to try to answer all their questions ("We have a program for that."). This is not the time for that conversation. What is on their horizon, what are they working towards as a business, what forces are at work that are creating opportunities for growth in this region? Opportunities can come in many forms (and it is okay to provide examples): new and expanding markets, new technologies and products, changes in government policy. Remember: the focus should be on opportunities first, before deciding on actions. A collective view of opportunities becomes the rationale for working together with the community on ways to unleash the potential for business growth and community prosperity.

STEPS TO TAKE NOW (C.1)

1. Identify the actual meeting facilitator. This may be the convener, or one of the conveners, or it may be someone else who you just know is a good meeting facilitator. Work with them to understand the goals of the launch meeting and the timeframe of the meeting (typically 1.5-2 hours long).
2. Go through the guidelines below and develop an agenda. For a simulation of a launch meeting see www.sectorssummit.com (a Colorado website), find the Toolkit and the Convener Training Videos.

MOVE TO REQUIREMENTS FOR ACTION

Identifying opportunities is a necessary but insufficient condition for the successful launch of a sector partnership. After establishing that there is a strong rationale for action through the identification of opportunities, employers should then be asked to focus on the top requirements to capitalize on those opportunities. This discipline focuses them on the most important actions, not just “nice to have” changes or secondary issues. Again, you can provide examples: workforce/talent, infrastructure, innovation, capital access, regulatory process, export assistance, and others. The focus should be on priority actions that they could take in partnership with the community, not on actions that public or community programs should take independently or that someone else should take outside the community (e.g., federal or state government).

ASK FOR CHAMPIONS AROUND PRIORITIES

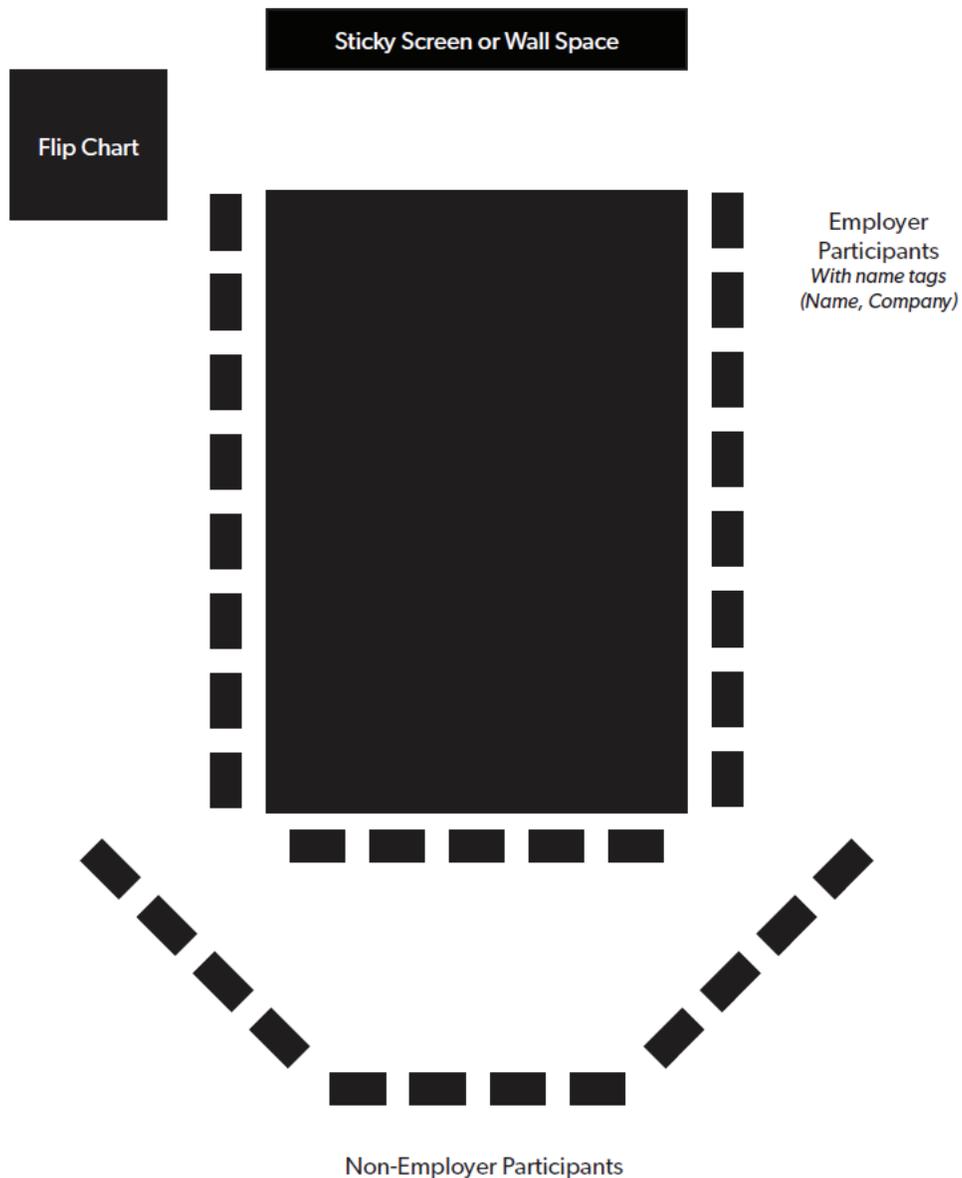
If the priority opportunities and requirements have been effectively identified, then the employers have created a shared rationale for collaboration and set of priority actions to be taken. It is typically at this point when employers start seeing a real vision for change and support. It is at this point therefore where there needs to be a call for champions. This launch meeting was not a paper exercise, but rather a necessary first step towards action. The next step is for individuals to volunteer to flesh out major priorities for action, get more specific about actions and measurable outcomes, and agree to bring back these refinements at a second meeting. This step also is a further reality check on what employers really believe is most important. Make clear that the sector partnership will only proceed with what the employers agree to help champion. No champions, no initiative. Also, make the point here that the convening team will now help identify the appropriate community partners who are willing to work with employers on specific priorities.

AGREE ON A CLEAR NEXT STEP

There are many next steps that are possible and effective, but most importantly the next step should be clear and immediate. In fact, saving a few minutes at the end of the meeting to clarify the best next step is a good idea. A next step will include a meeting summary (i.e., their shared product of priority opportunities, requirements for action, and champions). It should include an in-person or virtual meeting by conference call of champions focused on specific action priorities--something that should happen within 30 days. Line up an employer champion who will host the call or meeting, and help record the results. Then, within 60 days, hold a second sector partnership meeting.

NOTES

SAMPLE MEETING SETUP



ROOM SETUP

- Employer participants should sit at the big table or at the front or at the center somehow
- All non-employer partners should sit around the employers -- this matters.
- The conversation at this meeting is about employers, by them. Public partners are listeners.

MATERIALS

- Colored markers
- ½ sheet and full sheets of paper (colored paper works best)
- Flip charts, easels
- Tape or an adhesive to stick papers on wall to display
- Large sticky notes

SAMPLE AGENDA FOR LAUNCH MEETING

Please use this sample agenda exactly as is, or just for inspiration! Don't be nervous about asking employers to roll up their sleeves! This exercise is pretty refreshing and engaging to them. This can be done in 90 minutes, but giving yourself two hours yields deeper conversation.

5 minutes

WELCOME

- a. Name your facilitator
- b. Thank everyone for being here and having a certain "tolerance for ambiguity"
- c. Round of introductions

5-10 minutes

BRIEFLY DESCRIBE WHAT YOU'RE UP TO

- a. You are launching a sector partnership in this industry, in our region because this industry really matters to our regional economy
- b. Important talking points
 - This only happens with industry engagement!*
 - We can only focus on your industry with your help to drive and champion the agenda, and to implement the strategies developed collectively to support the growth of your industry.*

30-60 minutes **TALKING ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES**

- a. What are the big opportunities for your industry?
- b. Push the conversation to what are the big opportunities "in our region specifically", i.e. what are the big opportunities for this specific industry (sector) here in our region.
- c. Discuss openly, energetically for 10 minutes, then start writing them down.
- d. Your Choice (you will need markers):
 - Write for all to see on flip chart; or*
 - Have participants write their big opportunities on a 1/2 sheet or whole sheet of paper and actually stick them up on a wall (you can use a giant piece of parachute fabric sprayed with adhesive spray and tape to the wall -- it's very useful). As the papers go up on the wall, cluster together the ones that are similar. You'll end up with 4-5 clusters of big opportunities.*

30-60 minutes **TALKING ABOUT REQUIREMENTS** - What is it that we need to collectively tackle to leverage these opportunities? What would matter most? What would warrant our collective action? What can we do?

- a. Discuss openly for 10 minutes, and then start getting them in writing.
- b. Write requirements down! Flip chart these or write on paper and post to the sticky wall. Ask them to come up with 2-3 or more if they can. Cluster the similar requirements together again. You'll end up with 4-5 strategy areas.
- c. 10 minutes- Discussion about the strategy areas

15-30 minutes **THEN MOVE INTO COMMITMENTS** - Use big sticky notes for this and one person at a time

- a. Ask them to stick their names on strategy areas that they can "champion" -- i.e. help drive what happens in that area. They can choose more than one!
- b. Then with a different color sticky note, ask them to list out peers, other companies, names of people that should definitely be involved that aren't here today -- stick those up on the wall. This is about getting them to help with recruitment.
 - You may end up with a strategy area with no names, no commitments. This is telling! It means it's not a priority right now. It may come back later, but right now this is not an area to be championed and prioritized. This is a good thing! This is a way to naturally prioritize and cull the initial workload.*

10 minutes

WRAP-UP, NEXT STEPS & THANK YOU (BE EXCITED!)

Next steps

- Those whose names are on strategy areas should get together, discuss a course of action, and present it back at the next meeting*
- Send invitations to those missing from the table*
- Set a date for next meeting*

D

ORGANIZING THE AFTERMATH

IMMEDIATELY EXPAND THE CIRCLE OF EMPLOYERS

Despite your best efforts, some civic entrepreneurs on your list will not be able to make the launch meeting due to scheduling conflicts. You should reconnect with them, and give them a chance to see the results and join others as a champion. For those who did attend the meeting, ask them to identify at least one more civic entrepreneur like them, so they can be recruited to the effort. In fact, you might ask them when they volunteer as champions at the launch meeting to identify one additional civic entrepreneur they know who would be a good fit and that they will help recruit as a champion.

GIVE SPACE FOR THE EMPLOYER VOICE TO EMERGE AND TURN IDEAS TO ACTION

The priority opportunities and requirements you identified during the “launch” meeting are a starting place for an action plan: a strategy that lays out a clear set of goals, outcomes, and actions to advance the partnership’s shared priorities. To move from ideas to action, organize focused conversations (either in-person or over the phone) with employer champions who volunteered for each priority area. Focus these smaller groups on defining success (e.g. “What are we trying to achieve? How will we know when we’re successful?”) and identifying any immediate opportunities for “quick wins” (e.g. “What can we accomplish in the next 60 days that will help advance this priority? How can we get started?”). Pay attention to which employers start to emerge as leaders in these conversations, showing particular passion or helping to focus the group and bring clarity to the discussion. These are the leaders you may want to ask to be lead champions down the road.

There will be a tendency at this point for community partners, with the best of intentions, to take over and drive action, not wanting to impose on the employers. While well-intentioned, this is a formula for failure. If community partners exert themselves too much, employers will begin to step back and disengage. At this critical moment, community partners must give space for the employer voice to emerge and solidify their engagement as partners, not customers.

STEPS TO TAKE NOW (D.1)

1. If you haven’t summarized the meeting (clearly, simply), do so now and send out to all participants within one week of the meeting, thanking them for being there. Include those who wanted to make it but couldn’t. If this can be sent out by chairperson(s) or on their behalf, that’s ideal. Ask employers to please share with other employers who they think would like to be involved.

STEPS TO TAKE NOW (D.2)

1. Organize the smaller calls or meetings to flesh out definitions, goals, outcomes and needed actions for each of the priority action areas. Schedule these calls within 30 days of the launch meeting. These meetings or calls should be kept under one hour and should be lightly facilitated and documented. They are for employer partners only, not support partners.
2. Once each action area is fleshed out, put it all together in an easy-to-read action plan that can be sent out to all partners, including support partners. (See sample action plan template below). This action plan does not need to be perfect; it needs to be good enough. It will change over time.

BUILD COALITIONS OF THE WILLING AROUND PRIORITIES

While expanding the employer circle and giving space for the employer voice to emerge, you should also be identifying community partners willing to work with employers on their terms. Not every potential community partner is well suited to this role. Some want to sell employers a product or solution, others push their own agenda, and still others are not willing to do the sustained work necessary to follow-through to action. Fortunately, your goal is to assemble “coalitions of the willing” around the priority areas for action. Don’t waste your time trying to repeatedly convince people or institutions to participate. They may come along later anyway when the sector partnership begins to show some success. In fact, they might even say it was originally their idea! You may also find that some employers originally at the table drop off. When this happens, don’t panic, but keep them informed of your progress. Be mindful that your sector partnership will not be all things to all people, and some will opt out. Others will opt in. Your goal is to keep the priorities and actions focused on what the collective employer group wants to focus on.

STAY AGILE AND OPPORTUNISTIC

Once the sector partnership gets rolling, you will be surprised what opportunities for action will present themselves. The challenge will be to remain agile and opportunistic without losing focus and dissipating your momentum. Try to prioritize opportunities to leverage current priorities over completely new initiatives. Continue to be employer-driven and community-supported, a partnering arrangement that will help maintain discipline in considering new opportunities. Build teams of civic entrepreneurs that can weather changes better than super-champions that provide most of the leadership but would seriously compromise the effort if they for some reason could not continue.

CREATE JUST ENOUGH ORGANIZATION

Form should always follow function. Or, put another way: create only just enough organization for your current stage of implementation. If you over-reach, and spend more time on organization than action, you risk inciting turf wars, resource struggles, and other distractions from the most important tasks at hand. You risk driving away the employer civic entrepreneurs, who will sense the dysfunction and move on. Put more positively: you attend to organization, but do so in a measured, demand-driven way, consulting with your employer partners and being open to continuous improvement.

NOTES

SAMPLE MEETING SUMMARY

Region X Light Manufacturing Sector Strategy

The Region X Light Manufacturing Sector Strategy Team met on December 18, 2012, identifying priority opportunities and requirements to grow the sector in Region X. The Team identified the following priority opportunities to grow the sector:

- Serve growing, diverse markets for recreation equipment, wine industry equipment, machine tools, mining equipment, and others
- Capitalize on existing strengths and growing market for unmanned aircraft systems (UAS)
- Capitalize on new opportunities for re-shoring manufacturing from abroad, expansion of firms headquartered outside region, new entrepreneurial manufacturing firms, and integrated teams of local firms to compete for large procurements.

To capitalize on these promising opportunities to grow the sector in Region X, the Team then identified three priority areas for action, with private sector individuals volunteering to be initial champions in each area;

- *Expand the local pool of qualified manufacturing workers:* Focus on both top-level talent development (e.g., senior avionics engineers, managers) and mid- and entry level workers (e.g., cnc machine tool operators, welders, machinists), creating integrated approach to preparing the local manufacturing workforce (high schools, Region X College, Embry Riddle) and attracting and retaining talent (e.g., job fair). **Initial champions: Karen, Ginger, Norela, Lane, Paul, Robin.**
- *Promote manufacturing entrepreneurship:* Encourage young entrepreneurs with new/creative ideas, helping them access to investment capital. **Initial champions: Robin, Jim, Al, Casey.**
- *Promote Region X as a manufacturing hub:* Research and determine the nature and size of each niche manufacturing segment, develop regional marketing to get the County on the map, and create an ongoing mechanism for manufacturing sector communication and collaboration. **Initial champions: Tom, Robin.**

Next Steps: 1) Priority teams refine action areas, including short term and long term actions with measurable goals that can be taken; 2) Conference call January 21st at 3:00 p.m. to assess priority refinements and determine immediate action; 3) Next meeting February 26th, 3:00 p.m.

THE GREEN ALLIANCE COMMITTEE

In a rural area of western Pennsylvania, the Private Industry Council of Westmoreland-Fayette convenes the Green Alliance Committee, a sector partnership focused on energy efficiency related manufacturing. The partnership began with eight employers. Their immediate shared priority was the immediate training needs of solar, wind, and geothermal component parts manufacturing, as well as a growing commercial and residential retrofitting sector. Over the course of one year, employer members brought other employers to the table, and the number of companies involved grew to more than 40. It is now an active sector partnership including elected officials, economic development entities from four counties, and local community colleges. Its primary areas of focus are:

1. Training new and incumbent workers and
2. The growth of the regional energy-related manufacturing cluster.

Private sector members report that the committee's value is its networking power. It is a forum for sharing, joint policy creation, and practical problem solving related to common issues of competitiveness. Participating companies have entered into shared purchasing agreements that reduce costs for local materials, significantly increasing the market for local suppliers.

- Retrofitting companies have added new positions based on their ability to secure contracts for retrofitting schools and hospitals because of their newly trained workers. A small commercial HVAC company quadrupled its workforce as a result of expanded connections to residential retrofitting needs.
- A manufacturer of vermiculite, a material used to insulate batteries, discovered through the alliance that the material could be used in retrofitting insulation, as well as in green soil for potted plants and gardens.
- A steel fabricator discovered an expanded market in windmill towers, based on new connections with wind power parts suppliers.
- A small woodstove pellet manufacturer connected with oil and gas drilling companies via the alliance and proceeded to research uses of wood pellets as an absorber of waste products, thereby creating an entirely new product line in a significant market. That firm expanded from five employees to almost 30 and now purchases sawdust from sawmills in three counties.
- Another member makes Pyrex glass for solar panels. Via the alliance he added an entirely new production line to meet regional demand, creating 60 new jobs. In its first 18 months, over 150 new jobs were created out of a sector partnership originally focused on short term training issues.



E

TRANSITION TO IMPLEMENTATION

ESTABLISH LEAD EMPLOYER CHAMPIONS

One of the first tangible steps that moves the sector partnership beyond the “sorting out” period that immediately follows the launch meeting is securing the commitment of individuals as “lead employer champions.” Up to this point, there have been groups of employer champions working together around priority areas for action. Some of these employers have likely emerged as natural leaders of these groups, and other employers seem to respond to them. Now is the time to ask them to take responsibility as leads to work with their groups to transform the ideas developed thus far into a written action plan, ready for implementation. Also work with them to identify additional employer champions to recruit onto the team, and to consider forming an executive committee to take responsibility for decisions regarding the broader sector partnership.

BRING IN COMMUNITY PARTNERS WHO ARE CIVIC ENTREPRENEURS

If the employer champions have had sufficient time to “find their voice” and get clarity around outcomes and strategies in key areas for action, then it is time to begin teaming them with community partners that can help refine the strategies identified and build an action plan. Use the same approach used to identify and recruit employers: find the civic entrepreneurs, those who have the creativity and persistence, as well as the collaborative personality and willingness to work with employers as partners (not customers). The biggest pitfall at this point is adding community partners that are pushing their own agenda, selling their own programs, or are unable to follow-through as partners because they do not have decision making authority within their own organizations.

USE THE DISCIPLINE OF ACTION PLANS

It is time to use the discipline of a written action plan to turn the good ideas generated at and after the launch meeting into an integrated set of measurable outcomes, key strategies, and specific actions and partner commitments to deliver results. The action plan can take many forms, but should include outcomes, strategies, actions, commitments (with the names of those taking responsibility for delivering on those commitments), and a timeline. By adopting this discipline, the team will quickly determine what is most important, get greater clarification on specific outcomes and strategies, and strengthen the connections from outcomes through to commitments. The team will either deliver an action plan they can commit to implement or will not be able to agree on a solid written plan, which means that potential area of action is not “ready for prime time” or that the cast of champions is not the right mix to take the ideas forward.

STEPS TO TAKE NOW (E.1)

1. Identify lead employer champions who have shown a strong interest and commitment in a particular priority area. Make the ask, inviting them to lead a team of employer champions and community partners to drive toward action and results. If they seem reluctant to commit at first, ask them to take a lead for a limited period of time (3 to 6 months) to help the Team build strategic focus and accomplish some “quick wins.”

STEPS TO TAKE NOW (E.2)

1. Focus on the parts of your Action Plan where employer champions have clearly defined and agreed on strategies and outcomes. Consider whether there are public partners that could support implementation of these priorities. Seek out partners who are willing to work collaboratively to adapt their programs rather than “selling” solutions. Recruit these partners to be part of a “response team” that identifies an initial set of ideas for how to leverage public programs and capacity to support the sector partnership’s priority. Present these ideas to your lead employers, working with them to refine and adjust the implementation strategy, in collaboration with the “response team.”

STEPS TO TAKE NOW (E.3)

1. If you haven’t already, develop a written action plan for each action team or work group that describes the “what” (the strategies and goals), “how” (specific action items and timelines), and “who” (specific commitments from both employers and community partners to move toward implementation) for each priority area. Begin using your Action Plans at partnership meetings to keep the focus on what’s been accomplished and what needs to happen next to move forward.

FOCUS ON EARLY WINS AS MOMENTUM BUILDERS

While assembling an action plan, make a focused effort to identify “early wins”—tangible, achievable, short term actions that will begin delivering results. The reason to define and execute on these modest steps is not to declare victory and move on, but to use those small wins to build momentum for more ambitious, longer-term actions. What this means is that not all early wins are created equal. Focus on early wins that are first steps of a longer-term strategy versus early wins that are simply activities (e.g., holding meetings, creating a website). A good way to think about early wins: identify a “prototype” of something that you ultimately want to do in a bigger way, or a “required first step” for a larger strategy (e.g., a quick synthesis of top training needs, a mapping of the permitting process) rather than “pilots” or “activities” that are achievable but not strongly connected to the larger strategies and, thus, unlikely to build momentum.

IDENTIFY AND ASSESS ORGANIZATIONAL OPTIONS

During the transition stage, with the development of written action plans, now is the time to identify and weigh the options for choosing or creating an organizational “platform” to support the work of the partnership. There are many options to consider (see table of examples). There is precedent for sector partnership organizational “homes” at workforce investment boards, economic development organizations, community colleges, industry associations, local government, or other community-based organizations. There is also precedent for creating new organizational entities, choosing an existing entity, or developing an agreement among several entities. There are both potential advantages and disadvantages of every approach, and there are no cookie-cutter answers for all situations. A clear-eyed, honest, and thoughtful assessment of these options will help frame the decision.

STEPS TO TAKE NOW (E.4)

1. For each action area, ask “What can be accomplished in the next 60 days? What would it take to get there?” Identify one or two early wins for each priority area and celebrate your success when you achieve them.

STEPS TO TAKE NOW (E.5)

1. Begin to list out organizational options for sustaining your partnership, including workforce, economic development, community colleges/ education, cities or counties, or a new organization. Develop a set of criteria for what kind of organizational home would work for your partnership.

Moving from Ideas to Action: Discussion Questions to Develop an Action Plan

The Strategy

At our last meeting we agreed that our overall goal for this action area is to: _____. Are we in agreement that this goal is pointing us in the right direction?

The Goal

What does success look like in 3 months/12 months/3 years?

Measurable Outcomes

- How would we measure our success in implementing this strategy?
- What specific metrics could we use to make sure we’re making progress?
- Are there measurable outcomes we should be tracking that would help guide and focus this group’s effort?

Implementation Actions

- What specific steps are required to implement this

strategy? What needs to happen first?

- Do the implementation actions add up to a sound plan of action for moving this strategy forward? Are there any steps missing?
- Are there any opportunities for “quick wins” or immediate action items that can be accomplished within the next 2 months?

Commitments and Timeline

- How will we get this done?
- What commitments are required to move the initial action steps forward?
- How can other community partners plug in and help this move forward?
- Who is going to do what? By when?
- What deliverables do we need to have before we reconvene next?

SAMPLE ACTION PLANS

There is no single format to use for your partnership's action plan. These plans should be "working documents," changing over time as strategies are refined and progress is made. Use these sample plans as inspiration but focus on creating a plan that will work for your region with the just right level of detail to inform action.

Excerpt from Northern Colorado Manufacturing Talent Action Plan

Teams of champions (including both employers and education/training partners) have volunteered to implement each of the strategies outlined below.

1. Increase Project-Based Internship Opportunities

Goals: Establish a direct connection from students and educators to industry to provide short-term or project-based internships in a modern workplace. Create temporary capacity for industry in order to accomplish small projects, while also providing students with an opportunity to gain critical skills and experience in a modern workplace and receive credentials for their resumes. Maximize the learning opportunity for students and minimize the burden placed on the company.

Objectives

- Increase the number of internship opportunities and increase student awareness of project-based internships.
- Gain an understanding of how many internships are in existence and if any are unfilled.
- Survey employers on how long it takes new employees to become an effective asset to the company and then strive to decrease that time.

Actions

- Create an online hub for employers to post project-based internship opportunities with the necessary information (scope of project, duration, skills required, etc.).
- Make companies aware of the online resource and train them on the concept of project-based internships, targeting smaller companies that do not already operate large-scale internship programs.
- Make educators and students aware of the online resource and train them on the concept of project-based internships.
- Develop a credential or "badge" for students to put on their resumes to demonstrate that they have completed one or more project-based internships with a NoCO manufacturer, ensuring that the credential is industry-recognized.

2. Expand Internship and Apprenticeship Programs

Goals: Streamline the process of building successful internship programs in Northern Colorado by documenting successful internship models among NoCO manufacturers and creating tools for creating similar programs. Increase the number of manufacturers using apprenticeship programs to strengthen their workforce by documenting strategies for developing and implementing an apprenticeship program, the committee is working to

Objectives

- Increase in the number of available work-based experiences at Northern Colorado manufacturing companies.
- Increase in the number of students participating in work-based experiences as part of manufacturing credentials or degrees at local institutions.
- Longer-term: decreased time to fill for high-demand positions that require workplace experience.

Actions

- Develop an "orientation kit" for companies interested in developing an internship program. Based on the experiences of successful internship models at NoCO manufacturers (including Wolf Robotics and Woodward), document strategies for recruiting interns, matching them with mentors, and developing rotations within the company.
- Develop an "orientation kit" for companies interested in starting an apprenticeship program, using U.S. Department of Labor resources as well as the experiences of manufacturers in the region that have successfully implemented an apprenticeship program.
- Develop templates, protocols, and other tools to share with manufacturers throughout the region on both internship and apprenticeship programs.
- Make educators and students aware of available internship and apprenticeship opportunities.

Excerpt from Lewistown Manufacturing Partnership “Quick Plan”

1. Marketing Lewistown:

- This is about marketing to new or potential residents, not tourists, via website and videos. Highlight lifestyle, community, schools, healthcare, activities, hidden secrets, etc.
- Recruit core planning group to:
 - Inventory what is already out there that can be leveraged, including potential funding and local videographers.
 - Plan and conduct a facilitated focus group: who attends, questions related to what works and what doesn't work about our community, what surprised you, what can we emphasize, what do you wish you'd known, what would be appealing in a video/website, etc.
 - Within 6 months create a new website and short video(s) and get them “out there”.
 - Plan specific target audiences and markets, including recent or soon-to-be grads from Billings, Bozeman, Great Falls, etc.; Lewistown-born who have moved away; entrepreneurs/techpreneurs looking for the Lewistown lifestyle

Task Team: Joe Smith, Frank Jones, Catherine Adams, Jane Philips

2. Awareness:

- This is about building awareness among young people about job opportunities in manufacturing.
- First, National Manufacturing Day is Oct. 2nd: Student and community tours all day. See newspaper. JobCenter will promote to clients and staff.
- Target the Teachers: Engage Joe Smith and Tom Jones to arrange a 3- or 6-hour program for teachers, designed/delivered by manufacturers, for Oct 15-16 PIR days. Consider other PIR days throughout the year too. Make this a regular offering.
- Get on the School Board agenda this Fall to discuss more opportunities, and longer-term, sustained programming: need an actual program track in schools, manufacturers partnering/pairing up with teachers.
- Find out if the new Governors grant to promote college and careers in schools can be used here. Tom S. will find out.
- Robert R. will talk with Jeff (librarian at Fergus) about creating a 1-minute video(s) targeting Juniors and Seniors not going to college (Hey, did you know . . .?). Every classroom is rigged for videos; could be played every morning. Target 6 month timeframe.
- Put posters up (at a minimum) advertising JobCenter's assessments and services; discuss with School board or others about integrating career assessments into Junior and Senior curriculum.
- This Task group will meet in person every month – next meeting target Oct. 21.

Task Team: Tom Smith, Bob Rogers, Emma Grant, Gordon Butler

F

SUSTAINABLE IMPLEMENTATION

ESTABLISH AN ORGANIZATIONAL HOME

Review options and weigh alternatives and come to a thoughtful decision about an organizational home for the sector partnership. If choosing an existing organization or consortium of organizations, clearly document in writing the “terms of engagement” and responsibility of the host entity or entities. A potential pitfall at this point is the willingness of an organization to take on this responsibility, but without a firm commitment about what that means, only to fall short of expectations later. If creating a new organization (e.g., a new non-profit), that option often takes more time than people imagine, so make sure there is a temporary platform with one or more existing organizations, with explicit time-limited expectations about how the platform will be a bridge to the new organization. While this focus on organization would have been premature before this stage, it is now essential to ensure sustainable implementation of action plans and the sector partnership as a whole.

KEEP EMPLOYERS IN THE DRIVER’S SEAT

The natural temptation at this stage is to “hand off” the work of the partnership to the community partners. Employers are “too busy” and “isn’t this the day job of community partners anyway?” This is a formula for failure, and not because the community partners are lacking in commitment or competence. Actually, community partners cannot be successful without employers remaining strongly engaged, because it puts the community partners back in the same bind as before: trying to guess what employers need and are willing to do. Employers must remain actively engaged, although the nature of their commitment may change over time. Some employer champions, for example, may bring in some of their direct reports to help with implementation, while they play more of a leadership role. Remember: employers can remain in the driver’s seat in many ways, continuing to serve as co-chairs, lead employer champions, providing staff support in implementation, helping secure other resources to support implementation, or by playing other roles.

NOTES

REGULARLY DOCUMENT AND REPORT PROGRESS, AND MAKE ADJUSTMENTS

This documentation and reporting process must be built into the partnership as a formal, ongoing expectation, or the partnership will inevitably fall apart. Simply put, this process should be directly tied to the explicit outcomes and commitments of the partnership’s action plans. It should be regularly reported and it should generate not only a celebration of successes, but a frank and open discussion about barriers to progress and changes that need to be made in the spirit of continuous improvement. Ultimately, if lack of progress continues to be a problem, the partnership needs to decide if the action plan and/ or the implementation team needs a major overhaul or if the partnership needs to move on to other priorities. To be effective and sustainable long term, a sector partnership must be able to accelerate and “double down” on strategies that prove successful and rethink and redistribute resources and effort away from strategies that are not meeting expectations.

ESTABLISH CRITERIA AND A PROCESS TO RESPOND QUICKLY TO OPPORTUNITIES

As a partnership moves into implementation, opportunities for grants and other support will appear, sometimes in large amounts. There is a real risk of becoming a grant-seeking organization, shifting away from employer-determined priorities in order to chase the latest “flavor of the month.” At the same time, there is a risk that the partnership will become rigidified and unable to mobilize to respond to relevant opportunities. There is an alternative: establish a set of criteria for seeking and responding to opportunities that are tied directly to the goals and strategies of action plans and the partnership as a whole. Also, set up a fast-response process to evaluate opportunities and assign a team to pursue relevant opportunities. In this way, the partner can remain focused, yet agile when “natural allies” emerge that can help it advance its goals and accelerate or amplify its outcomes.

EMBRACE ENDINGS AND BEGINNINGS

A partnership should do an annual review of its role and impact, and be an organization that embraces regular “endings and beginnings.” This means recognizing when a particular initiative has run its course and can be ended with a celebration, redeploying if possible the resources and people to other priorities. It means thinking about succession, as individuals for a variety of reasons may need to change roles and levels of commitment. It also means being willing to consider new priorities, developed in the same rigorous way the original priorities were developed. And, it means choosing the right time to completely refresh priorities and rethink all aspects of the partnership.

NOTES

GREEN LIGHTS

THE DOMINANCE OF DOERS

The partnership is gaining more “doers” than “talkers”, with the former really driving priorities and action plans.

THE CULTURE OF COMMITMENT

The partnership is increasingly operating with the expectation that all participants must contribute to, rather than take from, the effort.

THE LEVERAGE OF LEADERSHIP

The partnership’s leaders are expanding their personal commitment, leveraging their networks for new champions, encouraging current champions to deepen their own commitments, and actively addressing the sustainability question.

THE DISTINCTIVE DIFFERENCE

The partnership is getting clearer about its unique role as an intermediary between the sector and the community, distinct from existing industry associations and other partnerships.

THE REALITY OF RESILIENCE

The partnership is showing that it can adapt and move forward as it faces inevitable obstacles in the transition to and early stages of implementation.

THE REAPING OF REWARDS

The partnership is gaining traction, attention and financial support for its ongoing activities and services from multiple public (federal, state, county, program) and private sector (employers, foundations) sources.

RED FLAGS

THE SLIPPERY SLOPE

Business champions are getting increasingly quiet and disengaged, deferring to community partners who are increasingly treating them as customers, which only causes them to become further disengaged.

THE SUPPLY-SIDE SUBSTITUTION

The community partners are increasingly pushing their agenda rather than supporting employer-driven priorities.

THE AMBIGUITY ANCHOR

Business champions and community partners are having trouble getting specific about outcomes and actions, especially “early wins,” unable to articulate them in writing in the form of an action plan, “weighing down” efforts to transition to implementation.

THE GRANT GAME

Partners are becoming more focused on grant-seeking than securing diverse financial and in-kind resources to support implementation of partnership priorities.

THE TURF TRAP

Organizations are wanting to take over all or part of the partnership’s agenda, but are unwilling to commit to specific responsibilities in the form of a written memorandum of understanding.

THE NARROWING NICHE

Partnership agenda is increasingly focused on a single priority (i.e. workforce training) rather than addressing a broader set of sector competitiveness needs, risking disengagement by employers who need more than one “what’s in it for me?” choice to stay in the game.

THE DONE DEAL

Partnership agenda is feeling stale and redundant as a result of not periodically revisiting opportunities and requirements for sector growth.

THE KEYSTONE CONUNDRUM

The partnership is increasingly dependent on a single leader—either an employer chair or convener—who plays an indispensable role. Without that individual, the partnership would lack the industry and community engagement needed to sustain itself. The trick for a sustainable partnership is a set of *important* but not *indispensable* leaders.

FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUR SECTOR PARTNERSHIP

		Ongoing Support and Planning		Growth and Implementation of Partnership Solutions	
		What do others use?	What can you use?	What do others use?	What can you use?
Actual \$ Financial Support		Employer cash contributions Federal grants State grants County or city grants Foundation grants Fee for service		WIA formula funds: Title I core & intensive; Title I On-the-Job-training; Title I training funds; Title II Adult education Other Federal funds State funds City/County funds Foundation grants Corporate giving grants Employer contributions Fee for service	
		Employers' time, meeting space Public Partner Staff time to help coordinate, set up meetings, agendas, minutes, outreach, follow through, strategy development Got multiple partnerships? Share the workload of coordination across public partners.		Employers' time, meeting space, equipment, trainings, expertise, marketing, etc. Public partner staff time; re-purposed staff time to formally lead/coordinate	

ORGANIZATIONAL SHIFTS TO SUSTAIN SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

Examples of how various types of organizations have shifted their mission to support sector partnerships.

WIBs/Workforce	Economic Development	Community Colleges/ Education	New Organizations	Cities or Counties
<p>Blends, braids and leverages internal and external funding streams to increase flexibility</p> <p>Partners closely with economic development and clarify roles/ responsibilities, increasing authority to respond to real business needs</p> <p>Uses the WIB to institute a policy of using sector partnerships as organizing mechanism to serve critical clusters</p> <p>Repurposes business services staff to coordinate individual sector partnerships</p> <p>Other:</p>	<p>Shifts the business model to orient around critical clusters, bringing focus to business operations</p> <p>Dedicates staff persons to each critical cluster</p> <p>Blends, braids and leverages internal and external funding streams to increase flexibility</p> <p>Other:</p>	<p>Offers testing lab, incubator, and research facilities as part of partnership’s service menu (potentially offering fee-for-service testing labs)</p> <p>Keeps any university agenda separate from partnership</p> <p>Creates an arm’s-length Foundation to support partnership</p> <p>Blends, braids and leverages internal and external funding streams to increase flexibility</p> <p>Ensures communication between advisory boards and sector partnership</p> <p>Dedicates staff to supporting and convening partnership</p> <p>Other:</p>	<p>Business supported (via dues-paying membership or fee-for-service)</p> <p>Partners with public program to help staff the partnership</p> <p>Blends, braids and leverages internal and external funding streams to increase flexibility</p> <p>Other:</p>	<p>Uses influence of Mayor’s Office to bring programs together to co-convene</p> <p>Blends and braids multiple public funding sources to support partnership</p> <p>Dedicates staff to supporting and convening partnership</p> <p>Other:</p>

LANE COUNTY TECH COLLABORATIVE

Lane County, Oregon

Lane County Sector Strategy Team

The Lane County Sector Strategy Team is focused on economic and workforce development for Lane County, Oregon. The Team was launched and convened in November 2014 by Lane Workforce Partnership, the local Workforce Board for Lane County Oregon and is made up of regional workforce development, economic development, City and business leaders. The team is led by business champions from the Lane Workforce Partnership Board of Directors. Kristina Payne, lead convener and Executive Director of Lane Workforce Partnership, said that in order to bring community support and workforce development leaders together it was important to frame this effort as “working better together” and to give recognition to everyone’s efforts. “It is good for our community as a whole when people collaborate. It is all about collective impact” said Payne.

Regional Leaders from: Cities of Eugene, Springfield, Florence, the Eugene Chamber, RAIN Eugene, the University of Oregon, Lane County, Lane Community College, Travel Lane County, WorkSource Oregon, Business Oregon, The Lane Council of Governments, Local Elected Officials from Eugene and Springfield, and the Eugene Water & Electric Board and the Technology Association of Oregon.

Opportunity in Lane County’s Tech Industry

After careful review of labor market data, the Team identified the technology industry as the first sector to target. Lane County is home to over 400 tech companies which employ nearly 5,000 people, bringing over \$350 million dollars in wages to the area. Software publishing in Lane County is projected to grow by 1,105 jobs by the year 2020 and an additional 1,258 jobs will need to be replaced by that time- in order for Lane County to keep pace with this industry’s demand for skilled workers, the community recognized that it would have to work together to strengthen the local talent pipeline. It is a vital industry for the region and a critical opportunity for community support members to collaborate to promote the growth of an industry which

will bolster the local economy and create more high-wage jobs in the area.

Tackling Real Objectives with Tech Collaborative Response Teams

In February 2015, the Lane County Sector Strategy Team reached out to Tech Company Executives and CEOs and invited them to convene to discuss opportunities for expansion and to identify issues that inhibit the growth and/or stability of the tech industry in the City of Eugene and in the greater County of Lane. The invitation highlighted all of the community support members that are committed to this effort and over 30 local leaders attended the event. The group decided to form six ‘Tech Collaborative Response Teams’ to identify and address a series of objectives.

- Creating Business-Driven Computer Science Curriculum in Local Colleges
- Improving Quality of K-12 Education
- Increased Internet Speed in Downtown Eugene
- Improving Eugene/Springfield Downtown Image and Safety
- Improving Air Travel Options In and Out of the Region
- Branding and Marketing of Lane County

The Response Teams have accomplished many goals related to the group’s employer-driven objectives. “I think a lot of people had the will and it was about getting the people together to find the way” said Todd Edman (CEO of Lunar Logic).¹ In June of 2015, the Lane County Tech Collaborative (which has grown to 80 members) and all of the Response Teams convened again to share success stories amongst members and welcome 12 new tech companies to the group. “The industry leaders now know who is leading this work, how they can plug into it, how they can participate as it moves forward, and they have seen demonstrated success,” said Payne.



1. McDonald, Sherri. “Business & Education: Tech Industry Undertakes Effort to Improve Schools.” The Register-Guard 4 May 2015,

PHOENIX HEALTH CARE SECTOR PARTNERSHIP

The Phoenix Health Care Sector Partnership is an industry-led, community-supported collaboration of more than 150 leaders from diverse health care businesses, educational institutions and community partners. The Partnership is a forum for health care businesses and community partners that actively collaborate in promoting a “healthy economy”—fostering economic development in the health care sector while achieving better health for the citizens of the greater Phoenix region.

The Phoenix Health Care Sector Partnership is an example of broad-based, large-scale, industry-led collaboration. The City of Phoenix’s Community & Economic Development Department (CEDD) was instrumental in the initial convening effort, in partnership with the Phoenix Business and Workforce Development Board, the Maricopa Community Colleges, and other community partners. The regional convening team agreed to target health care as its first sector partnership, given the important role health care plays in the Phoenix economy.

Typically, launch meetings of a new partnership are hosted by a regional employer, but early on the City heard from health care industry members that a neutral convener would be more effective in bringing everyone to the table. The City responded to this feedback by taking on the lead convener role and composing a series of strategic and compelling communication messages to interested partners leading up to the partnership launch. One of the invitation flyers included an invitation from Mayor Greg Stanton which demonstrated how sector partnerships were a top priority on the City’s agenda.

On July 17, 2013, the Phoenix Health Care Sector Partnership was launched with a bang; attracting 80 participants. The sheer volume of people and organizations that were eager for this type forum to work on common goals was evident by the turn out. “At the launch, we were able to see how many people were hungry for this type of partnership. The collaborative spirit was exciting and new! Industry participants were clearly putting aside competition for collaboration,” said Pam Lindley, a lead convener with the City of Phoenix. Within the first few months after the launch meeting, the partnership identified priority areas for action.

These action areas continue to be the focus of the partnership’s efforts:

- **Grow the healthcare workforce needed for the future.** By pinpointing specific healthcare workforce needs, identifying changes necessary in workforce training, and developing strategies to produce needed healthcare workers, the partnership is working toward producing more high-wage jobs, ensuring residents are accessing job opportunities in the health care sector, while strengthening the health system.
- **Drive innovation through care coordination.** Arizona has long been a leader in health innovation. The Greater Phoenix Region can continue to develop innovative solutions to bend the cost curve and make Phoenix a national model for community-based care by fostering collaborations aimed at reducing unnecessary emergency room visits and prioritizing community-based care. Forging partnerships among health providers such as hospitals with community-based organizations will help our community address the needs of its most vulnerable citizens while simultaneously reducing overall healthcare costs. Fostering care coordination through use of technology will strengthen these efforts and further position the Greater Phoenix Area as a leader in health innovation.
- **Strengthen Phoenix as a destination for wellness and quality of life.** Arizona is highly ranked among states for physical activity, and workforce wellness and city-wide physical activity campaigns are fostering a focus on healthy living in the region. Attracting talent to the region often requires highlighting more than just the availability of high-wage jobs. Decisions on where individuals or businesses locate often include “softer” factors such as quality of life. The Greater Phoenix Region and the state are currently engaged in a number of initiatives aimed at improving the health and well-being of its citizens that could be highlighted to attract young talent and businesses to our state.

As the Partnership continued to grow, attracting more health care employers as well as community partners, the City of Phoenix developed a partnership with the Greater Phoenix Chamber of Commerce to transition the convening role of the partnership. “This transition elevates the Partnership,” said Lindley from the City, “It brings the Partnership some additional resources, some additional focus areas and a larger spread of participants.” The Chamber assumed the convening role of the Sector Partnership as part of its recently launched Phoenix Forward initiative, a strategic economic development effort that targets four driving industry sectors in the Phoenix region, including health care. In addition to continuing to convene and support the sector partnership, the Chamber has engaged a group of senior level health care leaders, including CEOs from major health care systems and employers in the Phoenix region, to work in collaboration with the sector partnership to address each of the four areas of priority. This Health Care Leadership Council will provide strategic direction and leadership, while leveraging the broad-based engagement of the sector partnership.

NORTHERN COLORADO MANUFACTURING PARTNERSHIP

Initiated in 2013, the Northern Colorado Manufacturing Partnership was launched after the Colorado Sectors Summit, a statewide convening that brought together regional teams (including education, workforce, and economic development) to discuss “next generation” sector strategies. Coming away from the Summit, the Northern Colorado team was committed to trying a new approach. Working together to build an invitation list and organize a launch meeting, the convening team held a launch meeting that brought together a group of manufacturing CEOs who agreed to work together to collectively advance their industry.

Within the first six months, the Partnership grew to over 50 manufacturing leaders and developed three major priorities for action. They established industry-led teams to (1) build the local supply chain and expand business partnering, (2) change the perception of manufacturing among youth, and (3) improve local education and training for critical occupations required to grow the sector.

Within twelve months as an all-volunteer group, they had developed a regional database of suppliers and held forums to explicitly connect local companies in new business partnerships, enabling those involved to increase sales, revenues, and jobs. They sponsored and executed a series of events at local manufacturing plants to expose youth to precision manufacturing processes and careers. They also worked to understand and address high-priority skills gaps in manufacturing, conducting a series of in-depth “skills panels” with hiring authorities and high-performing employees in a set of six critical occupations. These discussions

triggered new collaborations among education and training partners to respond to industry needs, including the development of a new program that will connect a local community college to the engineering school at Colorado State University.

At 18 months, the Partnership had grown to 150 companies and its scope and complexity had grown such that a more formal organizational form was needed. An independent 501(c)3 was established and a board of manufacturing CEOs and community partners was selected. The Partnership now has the ability to accept and disburse funds, and remains industry-driven and community-supported. It has been profiled nationally by the Department of Labor, and is featured regularly as an example of a successful regional manufacturing partnership across the country.

The key to the Partnership’s success has not only been its steady focus on industry-identified priorities, but strong “ownership” of those priorities by senior manufacturing executives, so much so that they have invested their time, that of others in their companies, and financially as well. After their initial success, they determined when the time was right to establish a more formal organizational platform to sustain and expand their work.