



How Business Leaders Can Collaborate Effectively with Public Partners

While Next Gen Sector Partnerships are business-driven, they are also community supported. Collaboration between the public and private sectors holds the promise of leveraging more resources and creating more breakthroughs than if either party acted alone. However, the process of business champions working effectively with public partners can be challenging. Here are some tips for developing a stronger working relationship:

1. **Better Understand Their World.** They have financial, organizational, and political realities that business does not have. They may have little experience working with business or may have had a negative interaction with businesses in the past that shapes their perspective and willingness to collaborate. These are realities, not value judgements. Ask questions about their world and share with them the realities of your world, building the mutual understanding necessary to work well together on common goals.
2. **Stay in the Driver's Seat.** The most effective public partners are used to jumping in and getting things done. They typically invite business to the table for input, then take over implementation. Just as Next Gen business champions are learning new rules for engagement, so too are public partners. They need to understand that business must remain as the driver of the Partnership, staying engaged after the initial meetings. Business champions must resist the temptation to overly defer to public partners, instead appreciating their distinctive contributions, while also keeping everyone focused on industry priorities.
3. **Help Them Be the Best They Can Be.** It is critical to be clear on industry priorities, then look for common ground with public partners that can serve as a platform for collaboration. While it is critical to recognize their realities (financial, organizational, political), it is just as important to identify new, creative ways to move forward together. Industry champions can often provide an unique ingredient, a strong voice, or political cover in ways that enable public partners to do more than would otherwise be possible.
4. **Build for the Long Term by Rewarding Risk-Taking and Innovation.** Business can help shift the incentives for public partners. Industry partnerships can choose to work with public partners that demonstrate through their actions that they are willing to take risks and pursue innovation in service of industry priorities. They can reward positive



behaviors by providing tangible benefits that help public partners increase their financial, organizational, and political ability to do more.

Exercise: Helping Public Partners Be the Best They Can Be

1. Select an industry sector priority from your existing Next Gen Sector Partnership. Or use this generic one: building the talent pipeline.
2. Identify the realities facing public partners in helping you address this priority. What constraints do they face—financial, organizational, political—that you know of? If you are not sure about some constraints, what questions would you ask them to understand better?
3. Identify actions business champions could take to help public partners be better partners. How could you provide a unique ingredient, a strong voice, political cover, or something else to help them be the best they can be?



Terms of Use for Next Generation Logo and Toolkit

All content in the Next Gen toolkit is free for use, with attribution. We created this toolkit because of growing demand for practical tools and guidance from practitioners and business leaders across the country looking to build authentic, business-driven partnerships. We don't make money off our materials. We share them freely in order to grow the field of Next Generation Sector Partnerships. So, seriously. Use our stuff. Here are rules we ask you to follow in return:

- Give full attribution via the intact Next Gen name and logo on all materials used and shared. The Next Gen Sector Partnership name and title and/or logo must also only be used for official Next Gen materials and shall not be used on materials created by other entities.
- Join the Next Gen Community of Practice to connect and share with other practitioners across the country. Sign up for our mailing list and send us a note at info@nextgensectorpartnerships.com to let us know you've found the Toolkit valuable. We'd appreciate knowing how you've used it.
- Consider contributing financially to the Institute of Networked Communities, the organization behind the Next Gen Community of Practice. Your donation supports the continued development of Next Gen tools and resources.

The Next Gen Sector Partnership Community of Practice is an initiative of the Institute for Networked Communities (INC), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. INC's mission is to build stronger, more inclusive economies by activating public-private networks around a shared commitment to place. All rights to the Next Gen Sector Partnership toolkit content are reserved by INC.