



Building and Maintaining Your Support Team

Support partners are the backbone of Next Gen Sector Partnerships. It is important that your partnership has a good mix of leaders representing workforce development, education, economic development, and community-based organizations. But it can take time to get these partners on-board and ready to pitch in in constructive ways.

No matter what stage your partnership is in, it is important to continually develop and improve your support team. Even the most successful partnerships have to periodically take a step back and ensure their support teams have the right people on them and that they are playing appropriate roles to effectively support the partnership.

The talking points below are designed to help get partners on the same page about what Next Gen Sector Partnerships are, what's in it for them, and what the next steps are. Use these talking points when launching a partnership or recruiting new support partners to join the team.

What are you up to?

- I am working with a team of regional partners to form a (or support an existing) “Next Gen” business-led partnership focused on the needs of XX industry in our region.
- Engaging with businesses is a key component of what we do every day (as economic developers, workforce developers, etc). But since we do this independently, we often end up knocking on the same doors of the same businesses. This is leading to two problems:
 - Businesses are getting burned out!
 - We (partners) struggle to get and keep businesses at the table. This makes it difficult to know the real needs of industry and ensure our programs are aligned.

The Next Gen Partnership approach offers an opportunity to find efficiencies in working together and to deepen our relationships with businesses.

What are Next Generation Sector Partnerships?

- Next Generation Sector Partnerships are regional partnerships of business leaders within one industry, who work together with public partners from economic development, workforce development, education and training, and other community organizations, to address the shared workforce and broader competitiveness needs of their industry.



- There are a few key distinguishing features of the Next Gen Sector Partnership model:

Business Centered

Businesses are at the center of the partnership, setting and driving the agenda. Businesses from the same industry collectively identify and champion priorities. Support partners (education, workforce development and economic development organizations) partner with industry to move those priorities forward. Unlike our traditional way of working with businesses, where businesses provide input on our programs and initiatives, sector partnerships *center* on businesses and focus on an agenda that is entirely defined by business leaders themselves. Priorities might include issues like increasing business-to-business networking, addressing skill gap in a particular occupation, bring broadband to an area, or improving local road conditions.

As business-driven partnerships, they are:

- Focused on what business leaders are personally committed to championing and moving forward. They are not centered around the needs of special populations (opportunity youth or vocational rehabilitation) or the agenda of public programs (incumbent worker training or career fairs).
- A way of doing business for the long haul, not just a one time or grant-driven initiative.

Follow the Geographic Footprint of Industry

Regional partnerships are based on the natural geographic footprint of the industry. We know that an industry does not recognize county boundaries; they do business across jurisdictional boundaries and draw their workforce from the labor shed. Therefore, Next Gen Partnerships follow the geographic boundaries of that industry, not necessarily geo-political boundaries, services areas or county lines.

Public Partner Alignment

As community partners in education workforce development and economic development, we already do a lot together, but this is an opportunity to more systemically align our programs and services with one another to collectively meet businesses’ needs. At the end of the day, it’s not about which organization receives the credit—it’s about all pitching in to meet business needs and ensure our communities are thriving.

Long-term Relationships

Sector partnerships are focused on long-term relationships between businesses and public partners. They do not dissolve after a short-term need is met or funding dissolves. By placing businesses in the center of the partnership and focusing on what matters most to them, Next Gen sector partnerships *keep* businesses engaged over time.

- This approach will require us to shift from how we have worked with businesses in the past. Instead of informing a particular program or addressing a specific training need, this is about building long-term partnerships with businesses to address their comprehensive needs.



- This work is being modeled after similar partnerships all over the country that are having a real impact. For instance, in Colorado 21 similar partnerships across the state have resulted in the following for businesses:
 - 82% of partnerships have businesses that have developed new or enhanced ideas for new products and/or markets as a result of their participation in the partnership.
 - 91% of partnerships have businesses that have found support in finding employees with the skills and experiences their business needs as a result of their participation in the partnership.

While at the same time achieving results for how public partners work with and provide services to businesses:

- 71% of partnerships increased student/jobseeker awareness of training/education programs.
- 62% of partnerships experienced increased program alignment across secondary, post-secondary, and/or workforce programming.
- 67% of partnerships enhanced existing or developed new training/education program(s).

What is in it for them?

- Sector Partnerships have a lot to offer (use the talking points relevant to the type partner you are talking with):

<i>Workforce Developers</i>	Sector partnerships yield customized and highly accurate information on the workforce needs of industry. They also provide a vehicle to coordinate among public partners to deliver the needed solutions. This allows us to use our scarce public resources to yield the best impact for industry and jobseekers. They help workforce developers build long-term partnerships with business, yielding more accurate information on what business needs so that jobseekers can get the right training at the right time to succeed in jobs and careers.
<i>Economic Developers</i>	Sector partnerships provide a meaningful venue for working with workforce development and education. We all know how critical and core an educated and accurately skilled workforce is to business vitality. They also serve as a place for focused work with driving industry sectors or clusters. This is a powerful tool for economic developers to truly understand the strengths,



	trends and opportunities of existing companies in a region. That's really important to inform our retention, growth and attraction strategies.
<i>Educators</i>	As educators we are tuned into the needs of businesses through advisory boards and other efforts. But we often hear about the training needs for just one specific occupation. By participating in conversations about industry competitiveness as a whole, we can learn about future training needs of the industry. Sector partnerships also offer a venue for faster learning changing industry needs and can serve as a vehicle to build industry-driven career pathway systems that span multiple education and training institutions.

- The risk of not taking a business-centered and coordinated approach is real.
 - If we continue to approach businesses one at a time without a collective voice, we may bump into one another and burn out our business partners.
 - Chances are high that we will miss some businesses, especially small businesses or those that we've not worked with in the past. In the end, we risk undersupplying and/or oversupplying the labor market. Businesses will not have the talent they need at the right time.

What are the Next Steps?

- The Next Generation Sector Partnership approach provides an opportunity for *X industry* to lead us forward and for business leaders to serve as a common point of accountability for public partners.
- We would like to create (or have created) a single table where we can collectively discuss and prioritize needed supports or strategies for a targeted industry.

If Active Partnership:

- Plug the partner into the next partnership meeting or make a specific request around what role you need them to play. For instance, if you need them to plug into the partnership's advocacy committee and help draw connections with ongoing advocacy work, make the specific request of them.

If Planning a Launch:

- Start by inviting public partners to a planning meeting to prepare to launch:



- o We will be holding a planning meeting for the sector support team of public partners on DATE. At this meeting you will have an opportunity to learn more about the approach and we will decide what industry we should first focus on efforts on. We anticipate that some of the next steps will focus around recruiting business champions, inviting businesses to the table, and hosting a launch meeting to kick off the partnership with public and private partners. Can we count on you to join us? Can you think of other key public partners that we should have at the table?
- Once a launch date has been set, loop in public partners to help them understand their roles:
 - o We are working to recruit business leaders to attend our launch meeting. Do you have ideas on businesses that we should be sure to include? Can you personally ask them to attend?
 - o Our role at the launch meeting is to organize and bring businesses together so that they can form relationships and a partnership. We will be in “listening” mode to hear and better understand the growth opportunities and needed actions. After the launch meeting we will work together to address priorities that businesses identify during the launch meeting. We will quickly get to action as a team of public partners. But, it is important that we follow the lead of industry. Ultimately, we will work hand-in-hand with businesses to move their priorities forward.
- Thank you for your commitment to this effort! I know that we can all achieve more by working together.



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