

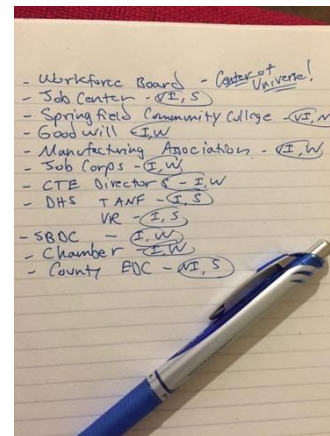
Mapping your Universe of Connections¹

Step 1: Brainstorm the Actors in your Universe

Think about the institutions, organizations and agencies involved (or that will be/should be involved) in your industry-led partnership activities. Brainstorm a list of the principal actors in each of these systems and organizations. E.g. think about trade associations, chambers of commerce, unions, workforce development organizations, education and training institutions, support service providers, investors, others. Where you can't name the principal actor (i.e. actual person with some influence in an organization), just list the organization.

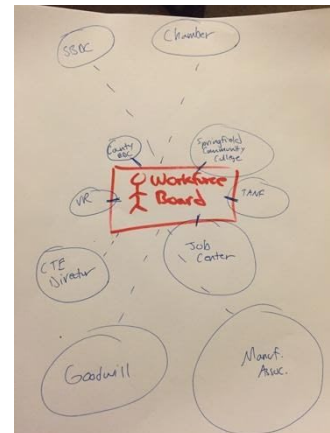
Step 2: Code your Actors.

Take a moment to code your principal actors/organizations. Code them in two ways: 1) Mark them with an "V.I." for Very Important, an "I" for Important, and a "N.I." for Not Important, depending on how important you see their role in your industry-led partnership efforts; and 2) Mark them with a "S" for Strong relationship, a "M" for Mediocre relationship, and a "W" for weak relationship, depending on your relationship with each of them.



Step 3: Draw your Universe

You are the center of the universe (well, your universe anyway!). Start with a blank piece of paper. Draw yourself in the Center. Now draw all the other actors in your universe around you, as big circles if they are Very Important, medium circles if they are just Important, and small circles if they are Not Important. And draw them very close to you if you have a Strong relationship with them, far away from you if you have a Weak relationship, and somewhere in-between if the relationship is Mediocre. What do you notice? Any surprises? What's been confirmed for you? Do you see any strengths or opportunities you had not thought of? Any gaps you want to address? Is there a "system" here, or parts of a system, or just many independent actors?



Step 4: Be Someone Else

Imagine you are another actor on your list. Pick anyone. How would their Universe of Connections look? Where is your organization on their map? What relationships does that organization have that might be useful to you? What relationships do you have that might be useful to them?

¹ This exercise modified from the Aspen Institute's Workforce Strategy Institute (WSI) *Sector Skills Academy*.

Step 5: Share your Map with a Regional Partner or your full Regional Team

Discuss what emerged as insights. How do your maps differ, or how are they the same? Are there different experiences or interpretations of how well actors behave as a “system” vs. independent actors, or are the interpretations similar? How would or does Industry view this Universe? What about jobseekers or students? What are the implications on your sector, or industry-led partnership, work?

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