YOU'VE LAUNCHED, NOW WHAT? Sustaining a Sector Partnership

This worksheet is for core team members to use as they consider what it will take to sustain sector partnerships.

CONGRATULATIONS! You have already significantly challenged the "status quo" by organizing and launching a sector partnership. Do not underestimate the value of this!

Three Reasons to Celebrate the Work You've Done to Launch a Sector Partnership

1. You are changing how you do business. Whether you are a community college, workforce or economic development organization, launching a sector partnership represents a fundamental shift in how you do business. Moving away from transactional relationships with employers, you have established a new way to work collaboratively, developing and implementing industry-driven, community-supported solutions.
2. You are expanding your impact. Sector partnerships deliver results. Beyond your core mission of training and placing workers or attracting new businesses, sector partnerships create stronger, more competitive economies, with clearer pathways for workers to access opportunity.
3. You are breaking down silos. Sector partnerships are all about people and relationships, not jurisdictions and institutions. By launching a partnership, you have transcended silos to address broad competitiveness needs of the sector. The priorities that result will likely cross institutional boundaries, requiring a new kind of collaboration.

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ARE YOU READY TO TRANSITION TO SUSTAINABLE IMPLEMENTATION?

- Have you established lead employer champions who are taking an active role in transforming partnership ideas into a written action plan?
- Have you achieved clarity around outcomes and strategies in key areas for action?
- Have you started teaming with community partners to implement partnership priorities?

2

HAVE YOU DEFINED THE ENDURING VALUE OF THE SECTOR PARTNERSHIP?

Since sustaining a sector partnership requires hard work and commitment, it's important to start with a shared understanding of why the partnership is valuable to stakeholders involved. Sector partnerships are:

FOR COMPANIES

- A place to address big opportunities for shared competitiveness
- A single table at which to work with public entities
- An opportunity to share costs related to needed solutions

- Other?

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FOR EDUCATORS

- A venue for faster understanding of changing industry needs
- A vehicle to identify, build and refine curriculum, programs and credentials
- The only way to truly create industry-driven career pathway systems

- Other?

FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPERS

- A way to strategically focus time and resources toward high-impact solutions for industry and workers
- A wholesale vs. a retail approach to serving employers
- A way to create highly customized and therefore highly accurate training solutions for employers that give workers the right training at the right time for jobs that exist now

- Other?

FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPERS

- A place for focused work with existing key industries on critical questions related to competitiveness
- A meaningful venue for working with workforce development and education
- A framework for organizing the strategies needed to support critical industries
- A tool to truly understand the strengths and opportunities of existing industry in a region that can inform retention, growth and attraction strategies

- Other?

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3 HAVE YOU CONSIDERED WHAT ORGANIZATIONAL HOME IS RIGHT FOR THE PARTNERSHIP?

What our options for an organizational home? (See table on page 27 of Workbook)

What does this role entail? What are the responsibilities involved in being an ongoing sector partnership convener?

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

There is no single, right way to sustain a sector partnership. Sustainability looks different depending on the partnership's priorities, the leadership and convening teams, and the community partners involved. These questions are designed to stimulate your thinking about what sustainability can be, and what it will take to achieve.

For Employers

- Have I considered how I'll stay involved as a leader but also delegate to others in my company?
- Have I engaged others in my company in the sector partnership?
- Am I acting like a partner or a customer in this relationship? Am I, and is my company, part of the solution?
- Am I taking full advantage of the informal benefits of the partnership, such as company-to-company networking, in addition to the formal benefits based on our shared priority action areas?
- Is my company directly contributing in-kind or financial resources to the partnership, or proactively assisting with identifying financial resources?

For Conveners

- Has my organization made any changes away from dependency on stop gap, soft money to support sector partnerships?
- Has my job description informally changed as a result of convening a sector partnership? Has it formally changed?
- Has my organization adopted the sector partnership approach as standard way of engaging and partnering with employers in critical industries? (Or is this an unusual, "unique occurrence"?)
- On a regular basis, do I map out partnership activities and members to identify new ways for individuals to contribute?
- Do I lead employer partners through a re-assessment of opportunities and requirements as needed, at least once a year?

For Program Partners

- Am I shifting how I participate in industry solutions by organizing with program partners around their needs (vs. around our programs)?
- Do I find myself "selling my wares" too often, or am I co-developing customized solutions for the partnership?
- Have I, or my program, changed how we engage with employers as a result of participation in a sector partnership?
- Have I, or my program, formalized commitments to the partnership via signed agreements or MOUs?
- Do I, or my program, contribute in-kind, staff time and/or direct financial support for the partnership's activities?

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COMMITMENTS AND NEXT STEPS

What are our collective commitments to developing a sustainability strategy and identifying an organizational home for the partnership? What commitments will the core team make to develop a sustainability strategy? What are our next steps?

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