

Next Generation Sector Partnerships - A Primer

Sector Partnerships – What are they?

They are **partnerships of companies, from the same industry and in a shared labor market region, with education, workforce development, economic development and community organizations.** They primarily focus on the education and workforce training needs of an industry, but modern *Next Gen* sector partnerships focus on other issues related to an industry's competitiveness. This ensures deeper, broader, longer-term industry engagement.

Sector partnerships are **local (or sub-regional); industry-driven; and community supported.** They act as a **coordinating body** across multiple education, workforce development, economic development and other programs. These are all the programs required to truly support a regional industry, and to connect jobseekers to its jobs.

Sector partnerships must have an active convener.

Workforce Development Boards are often well positioned to do this work, but an economic development organization, a community college, organized labor entity, or community based organization can also help support. The convener is responsible for coordination, administrative and implementation support. Often a sector partnership is co-convener and staffed by two organizations.

No sector partnership is ever successful without members of **industry acting as leaders, advisors, champions and active partners.**

Critical Success Factors of Modern, Next Generation Sector Partnerships

Today's sector partnerships focus on more than just workforce issues. They facilitate conversations and commitments from employers focused on the industry's big opportunities for growth. They use the power of coordination across education, workforce and economic development programs to address the multiple needs of companies, including issues related to talent, infrastructure, supplier development, access to capital, technology, and others.

INDUSTRY-DRIVEN, COMMUNITY-SUPPORTED SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS



Designs by



In a good sector partnership, workforce development, education and economic development partners are joined at the hip when approaching industry, vs. independently approaching industry members. The partnership becomes the “go-to” or single-table for companies to get their needs met, verses navigating the dozens of available programs and resources alone.

No public partner ever “sells their wares” to companies in a sector partnership. Instead, the convener acts as a facilitator to find out industry needs, public partners jointly listen, and together develop solutions. Sector partnerships never put the cart before the horse by assuming training or other “solutions.” **What’s different about this?** Sector partnerships organize around industry needs, not around existing public program needs.

Ideally, each labor market region should have an active sector partnership for each industry critical to their regional economy. Even in rural areas this likely translates to between 3 to 5 active partnerships, likely in industries like healthcare, manufacturing or agriculture. Some areas may have partnerships in technology, tourism, transportation and logistics, or other industries. This must be driven by labor market information.

What’s the What’s in it for me?

<p>For Companies - a place to solve major talent issues, and to address other issues related to their shared competitiveness; a single table at which to work with public entities; an opportunity to share costs related to needed solutions</p>	<p>For Educators - a venue for faster understanding of changing industry needs; a vehicle to identify, build and refine curriculum, programs and credentials; a powerful vehicle to create industry-driven career pathway systems</p>
<p>For Workforce Developers - a way to strategically focus time and resources; an at-scale approach to serving employers (vs. just one-on-one engagement); a way to give workers the right training at the right time for jobs that exist now.</p>	<p>For Economic Developers - a meaningful venue for working with workforce development and education; a tool to truly understand the strengths and opportunities of existing industry in a region that can inform retention, growth and attraction strategies.</p>

Impact and Outcomes

Sector partnerships are among the few public program interventions with statistical evidence showing improved employment opportunities for workers. Companies benefit too, reporting increases in productivity, reductions in customer complaints, and declines in staff turnover, all of which reduce costs and improve competitiveness. Some sector partnerships are strongly correlated to job creation and new product lines of member employers, simply based on the networking power of the partnership.

