

Building Strategic Partnerships – Webinar Transcript

Presented by Debbie Mills on October 14, 2013 live at the NCPN Conference in Austin, TX

Hello and Welcome to Building Strategic Partnerships Webinar

This Youth and Adult Career Pathways Event Series is designed to bring together professionals with a shared interest in connecting youth and adult learners with career pathways. Presenters are experts in the field and the events are designed to enhance your knowledge and give you usable information in each area.

While the live webinar is the central event, each topic is presented as a month long micro-group within the career pathways communities on the LINC site, and will include ongoing engagement and discussion before and after the live events.

If you missed one of the live webinars, all materials and webinar recordings will be available for download.

This webinar is entitled “Building Strategic Partnerships” and it’s the first of the YAP event series, and it will focus on building partnerships to support your programs through structures, governments and strategic partnering.

I will be your moderator, or presenter. I’m Debbie Mills, Vice President of partnerships with CORD and also the director of the National Career Pathways Network. I’ve been a subject matter expert for the Dept. of Ed, Office of Vocational Adult Education Career Pathways Initiative. And also a SME for the Dept. of Labor Career Pathways Initiative. I am national keynote speaker and I do workshops across the country, and in previous lives I’ve been a practitioner in the field. I was responsible, at a community college for workforce development grants, had a youth apprenticeship program, which was heavily involved by employers, and I’ve been an instructor at the secondary and postsecondary level.

We’re recording this webinar live from San Antonio, right at the River Walk, almost, at the Grand Hyatt. We’re at the National Career Pathways Network Conference.

These are our topics for our short time together, partnership goals, who are the players, defining the structure, roles and responsibilities of the players, developing the work for the partnership, and how to sustain your partners, partnership sustainability.

So let’s start with “Partnership Goals”.

Many of you are familiar with Perkins legislation where a lot of our money comes from in career technical education and professional development.

If you look at the legislation, there’s a required use of the funds at the secondary level and postsecondary level, and those demands...those activities really demand a partnership.

Um, number 6 says, is to support partnerships. The point is that Perkins, cannot be done correctly without good partnerships.

The Office of Vocational and Adult Education, known as OVAE, has designed a framework to clarify and define programs of study requirements as outlined in the 2006 Perkins legislation. You can find the entire document, I think the entire document is about 118 pages, was an implementation tool, we normally call this the 10 components, 10 OVAE program of study components is what we typically call it in the field. You can find it at cte.ed.gov.

Uh the document outlines the 10 supporting elements of the program of study and provides useful quality assurance markers for each component.

The document also suggests readiness and capacity guidance for each component. We will look at it, in somewhat in detail, because we will be looking at the "Partnership" one. If you look at all 10, uhh, here are the 10 components, and if you'll note that number 2 is "Partnership". But if you'll also note so many of the others cannot... need a variety of partnerships to be completed.

Each of the 10 components has a self-assessment input, each...uhh. Tool 1 of the webinar packet includes the Partnership self-assessment. The element characteristic listed on each of the self-assessment templates may serve as a set of quality indicators to gauge program of study implementation, readiness, and capacity, both at the state and local level.

When we talk about partnerships, it's not just about resources. It's about ideals and leaders. Partnerships are using that together for sharing resources.

But a true partnership is more of a net, it's about ideas and leaderships. We go beyond compliance to get to innovation.

To steal from Stephen Covey, we must begin with the end in mind. When we think about building a partnership or reinvigorating an existing partnership. What do we want to accomplish, hopefully your goals include connecting education to the economy, better turn on investment, increasing the quality of the workforce, increasing skillsets, leveraging resources, or supporting student success.

What are your partnership's goals? We have in the toolkit that comes with...I should say in the toolkit we have tools that come with this webinar...umm...we have the self-assessment piece from OVAE's 10-component framework as Tool 1.

Again, all of these webinar recording and supporting documents will be available on the LINCS website, and we'll give you all that information at the end.

So Tool 1 is the partnership goals, and you can look at that at your leisure. Ummm...with the assessment piece.

Let's talk about partnership members. Who are the players in your partnership?

Each partnership will be unique and there's no one-size-fits-all template for you to use. However, most successful partnerships have these broad categories of partners at the table: K-12 Education, postsecondary education, employers, community-based organizations, and workforce entities.

And I will even throw in Faith-based organizations in to the community based organizations, especially for those of you who are developing partnerships that will also include adult career pathways.

Let's look at each broad category in detail, who that might include.

K-12 education, we're talking about school districts, high schools, career centers, career academies, CTE programs, maybe college and career readiness programs, dropout prevention, resource training, student organizations.

In looking at your K-12 entities, in thinking who needs to be at the table.

Post-secondary education you might be looking at career services, adult Ed partners, occupational programs for sure, developmental Ed, continuing education, workforce development, customized training, and even financial aid.

Employers, it may be argued that employers are the most important player at the table. Are educators developing the product for the employer? Some could argue this case. Are other partners supporting the products somehow, for example community-based organizations?

I would also include when I talk about employers, maybe economic development associations, maybe labor associations, and broad category, however you may want to keep them separate.

Again, there's no one-size-fits-all.

Workforce Entities: K-12, P16, P20 councils, whatever they're called in your area, workforce boards, one stop center. Community based organizations have a big role to play with adult career pathways and play a part where education cannot, cannot.

These include social service agencies, faith-based agencies, local government agencies, and other volunteer organizations.

We also want to look at existing partnerships and initiatives. Most of you are developing or re-invigorating, or tweaking a partnership, and most of you are not starting from scratch, although you may be.

So, but we need to be strategic about things. You don't want to reinvent the wheel if existing partnerships can connect or may be leveraged in your network. You most certainly want to be inclusive and connect with current and existing partnerships and initiatives.

On the other hand, you don't want to perceive that existing partnerships are already sufficient. You may need to benchmark existing committees and partnerships and evaluate their membership.

You want to look at a career technical education program advisory committees that already exist in your area. Consider inviting them to join the partnership, or at the very least some kind of connection should be made, and possibly across representation of existing secondary in or post-secondary program committees should be explored.

Remind them that the goals of the partnership need to be validated by the partnership members.

With this webinar I've developed a tool for you to use that is called "Partnership Members". The first column gives you categories, the second column gives you suggestions, and the third column is for you to write in local players that you are considering.

These define the structure. The structure will be defined by many things including what is already in place, what has happened at the state level, if it's urban or rural. What works in NYC may not work in Malvern Arkansas. It depends on where you're at.

There's usually partnership activity at the state level, your state level agencies are collaborating. This might include state level department of labor, Department of Ed, human services, commerce, community college system, higher education. There needs to be some type of partnership structure at the regional in or local level.

This needs to include employers, postsecondary education, school teams, and community.

Dependent on how many postsecondary institutions there are in a region or how rural that region is, the lines between regional and local level might be blurred.

Again, there's no one-size-fits-all when it comes to partnerships, and especially in the partnership structure.

Here's a visual diagram of how some structures exist across the country. Your partnership may or may not look like this. Again I want to stress there's no one-size-fits-all when it comes to partnerships.

But this visual will get you to thinking.

As I said previously, there's usually collaboration at the state level, represented by the oblong box at the top.

Sometimes this designates a few industries that are critical to the state.

Represented by the boxes on the left.

Those are usually industry councils or committees. They may be meeting at the state level.

There's usually a regional or local council with all the players. This is over in the middle of the page or screen. There may be an executive committee. There may or may not be a manager. This regional or local council may designate sub-committees or task committees, which is designated by the smaller ovals on the page.

These task committees may be based on specific tasks or maybe even a cluster.

In the present slide the subcommittees are based on task.

The council of partnerships must connect to all educational institutions in the partnership region. Thus, the rectangles to the right. These educational institutions may want to develop a career pathways team to develop, to implement the task and findings of the council, council or partnership.

Some may use existing committees in the schools and colleges to implement the task. In addition to business representation on the partnership council, the structure should allow for collaboration and connection to any existing business and education partnerships. Such as local, secondary, or postsecondary CTE program advisory committees. This structure should allow for some type of inclusion or reporting mechanism so that no stakeholder group is operating in silo. In other words you want to build a network.

Let's go to another example.

This structure is similar to the previous structure but in this structure manufacturing is a critical industry, so the local career pathways partnership has a committee, or sub-committee, or task committee, entitled "manufacturing".

That local subcommittee connects to a large manufacturing committee or council at the regional level.

This slide shows how a regional partnership that has more of the community college might connect to the high schools.

Another example. You don't want to reinvent the wheel if existing partnerships exist and you can connect or leverage their network. You most certainly want to be inclusive.

This diagram shows one way that the partnership council or committee can connect to those local advisory committees, or local partnership, or local program occupation advisory committees.

The partnership has a subcommittee, or task committee on a certain cluster. That sub-committee connects to the advisory committee in some manner, either by a direct report, or having someone sit on that committee.

So in defining your structure you need to be thinking about are there any existing structures?, especially if there successful and active.

Who's missing from your partnership? You have Tool 3 that comes with the webinar, to help you start eh process of visualizing what your partnership or structure should be.

Moving on to "Roles and Responsibilities".

Each stakeholder of a partnership will determine their roles and responsibilities, but there again some broad categories that these roles and responsibilities seem to fall.

K-12 education may want to look at college and career readiness standards, course sequences, contextual teaching, career development, transcript credit.

Adult education and that may be at the secondary level or at the post-secondary level depending on your state. But adult education we may want to look at program design, curriculum development, bridge programs which are critical, techniques for teaching your skilled adults, basic literacy, math and computer skills, English as a second language, and most certainly assessment tools.

Post-secondary should be looking at linkages between credit and non-credit. Chunking and modularizing the program, articulation agreements to promote portability, support services, and financial aid.

Community based organizations could be involved in referrals or recruitment, support services, marketing, case management, financial assistance, especially for those adults, and the hardest to server, food stamps, defendant care, transportation, education can take of the books and the tuition and the fees. But there's still the rent that has to be paid, grandma needs to go to the doctor and the car is broken and the baby needs milk.

A word about faith-based organizations. I would include faith-based organizations under community-based organizations.

Faith-based organizations have a role to play in many communities, and can especially can be helpful with adult career pathways and those hardest to serve.

Employers. The core of your partnerships should be employers. Employers are the customer. Employers need to identify the occupation that's in demand and what would be emerging.

They need to select what are the credentials for those occupations. What certifications, what credentials?

They need to identify the skillsets, workplace skills, foundational skills, soft skills, employability skills. They need define and develop the career rather, what are the jobs in an occupation.

They need to be involved in curriculum development. They can be involved in teaching. They could be mentors to our students, they most certainly want to them to employ our students.

Some employers are involved in funding tuition reimbursement, extra internships for faculty, judges for assessments, or for student organizations.

In your webinar materials that come with your webinar, Tool 4 is to help you define the specific roles and responsibilities.

Developing a program of work. Your partnership is only as good as the work that it accomplishes. Determine, to determine your program of work for the year, one must go back to the beginning, again stealing from Stephen Covey, begin with the end in mind. What were your partnership's goals? What were your partnerships goals? We talked about earlier about partnerships goals revolving around connecting education to the economy. Better return on investment, increasing the quality of workforce, increasing skillsets, leveraging resources, and supporting student success.

To determine how you are doing on these broader goals, there's some indicators that you can gather data from.

Transition rates for students from high school to post-secondary education. Look at the latest graduation class from high school A. How many of them transitioned to your community college, or your university, or your trade school, or your apprenticeship.

Academic performance. What are the high school's graduation rates. What are those graduation rates on career clusters? Maybe your graduation rate is..is 75% for the broad student population, but when you get to your cluster it goes down, and maybe goes up.

When students transition from secondary to post-secondary, what are the remediation rates? You want get a conversation started with employers. Bring to them the career cluster, focus on the data in the career cluster that they representing and bring the student data to them.

That X amount of students are transitioning to the community college for example, let's take manufacturing. Take to manufacturing employers, X amount of students are transitioning from the high school to the community college in manufacturing.

What's the transition rate and what is the remediation rate for those students.

It will begin a conversation that will usually end in a program of work. I've been looking at the retention rates, what are the retention rates for students in general but more specifically what are the retention rates in a specific program.

Program completers, or number 1 how do you define a program completer. How many complete the program. How many exit out with the industry certificate. How many exit out with an associate degree? And so forth.

Workplace, workforce placement. Once they've completed the program, are they placed in the workforce? Survey your employers. Are they pleased with their skillset? Are you community college that guaranteed their student's would have the skillsets of an occupational program?

If you as an employer did hire someone that went through the program at the community college and you were not pleased with the skillset, the community college would pay for the tuition books and fees to go through that course again.

Gathering data in any of these areas: transition, academic performance, retention, program completers, workplace, workforce placement, would be guaranteed to start a discussion that would lead to a program of work for the year.

Here are the steps in planning a program of work. The partnership's program will determine its plan of work.

Based on the current and objective needs of the community and what has been accomplished in the past. Once the priorities are set, the program of work can become more specific.

You should have annual priorities that are based on current and projected needs. And then once those priorities are set, you can get into more specific activities.

We can start looking at the time involved, the cost, the human resources and other support needed for each step.

Even when a sub-committee has been assigned to a task, one or more individuals should be responsible for getting each task going, getting it started, keeping it going, and providing the progress report.

Timelines should be assigned to a given task to plan for its completion. So a program of work has a hierarchy and any priorities that are broken into activities which are broken down into tasks, which can be assigned to committees and people which should be a timed, a specific time period.

In your packet that comes with the webinar, you have Tool 5, which is "Developing a Program of Work", which will help you in deciding your goals, list your priorities for the year, and then taking each priority for the year and develop activities which can be broken down into individual tasks with people and resource assignments, and then each of those tasks will be assigned a timeline.

Let's move forward to "Partnership Sustainability".

Partnerships usually begin informally, in fact partnerships usually begin with personalities and local relationships.

It can begin with two people being concerned with a workforce and it usually grows from there.

However, if you want the partnership to sustain, then a formal structure eventually needs to be developed.

An informal partnership is fine in the beginning, but people move in different positions and sometimes the momentum can be lost. A formal structure will help define what the partnership does, and how it operates.

You will eventually need a memo of understanding or some type of a written document that spells out the partnerships specifics. However, a word of caution, don't start out, don't bring your partnership together and at the first meeting, say "we need to do a memo of understanding".

You need to begin with your goals, and your common grounds. You will only that really do, you want to formalize your partnerships so it will sustain. Collaboration is based on individuals, but people leave.

When you get to a certain time in your partnerships and you will know, you will need to develop the MOU or memo of understanding and maybe you'll call them bylaws or maybe you'll be a little informal and call them operational procedures.

Whatever you call them, it's just really a kind of a prescription of the process that your partnerships use.

These are the typically items addressed in an MOU or bylaws or operation procedures.

The formal name of the partnership. What is the mission of the partnership? What are the goals? how board is it? How specific is it? What kind of organization and governance does it have? What does it look like? What does the structure look like? How does it connect to others?

Membership of the council. Who's on the membership, who belongs to the council? How would it evolve? How will it update? Do people get elected? How do they get elected? Where do you about vacancies? How long are they elected? When are they elected? What kind of attendance do you require? What is the specific role and responsibilities?

Will you have an executive committee? If so, you need to know how that will be designated. What will we do if there's a vacancy? Again, term and time of election. What are the duties of the executive committee? Will you have a chair person? Will you have a manager?

I've seen successful partnerships with lots of different colors and lots of different structures, lots of different looks.

But some of the most successful partnerships I have seen have had employers involved with the leadership.

Too many times, education seems to get bogged down in our processes and procedures, and business industry need to really own a good part of this partnership. So I highly recommend your chairperson, or your co-chairperson be from business and industry or an economic development corporation or workforce development. I have seen very successful partnerships where they co-chair where one is education, a co-chair from education, usually the community college president, and then the other co-chair is a leading employer or maybe the local economic development.

However, I've seen successful partnerships that look all different sizes, shapes, configurations.

We need to determine the elections, terms and times, meetings, we have annual meetings, regular meetings, special meetings, how will you send out the notice of meetings, once a quarter. Please understand though meetings should never be called just because of the sake of the meeting. Meetings also should never be called to disseminate information. There are other ways and then there's especially a lot of technology to disseminate information. Meetings should be for discussion and consensus.

You may also need to define in your operational procedure what task committees. But they may change. Also there needs to be an accountability measure, and then also allow for the dissolution and amendments to your operation procedures.

Tool 6 in your materials that accompany the webinar is about Partnership Sustainability and it talks about formalizing partnerships, and it gives you items and some notes for you to gather.

Here's Tool 6. So you can jot down notes of what maybe your committee's named, or maybe you already have one, what the purpose is, some notes on will we have officers. What kind of corresponding duties will they have, what kind of meeting guidelines, whether we'll have sub-committees, whether we'll have details of the sub-committees, or whether they'll have assignments?

Will we use parliamentary procedure, or know how do you amend the procedures and so forth.

In our short time together, we've talked about partnership goals, we've talked about identifying the players, and we've talked about defining the structure, roles and responsibilities of our partners, developing a program of work, how to sustain your partnership.

The next steps is that we will post this webinar for download and there will be additional resources and additional discussion. You can reach me at dmills@cord.org. And this will be posted on the LINCS website.