

NextGen Ambassador Briefing Package

Beginning in January 2020, a series of videos will be broadcast via Wyoming television stations, social media posts, web banner ads, press releases and a new Wyoming Workforce Development Council website explaining the early successes and goals of the Next Gen Sector Partnerships across the state. The hope is that this outreach campaign helps stoke the fires you all have already built, resulting in more understanding and participation in the Next Gen partnerships.

Below is an Ambassador Briefing Package to help you answer any questions you may receive from people in your community about Next Gen. Should you have further questions, please contact one of the members of the Next Gen Communications Team listed at the bottom of the briefing package.

Talking Points for Social Media

Briefly tell your why: Personalize your involvement in Next Gen and/or the council. Why are you involved? What problems/concerns does Next Gen address?

Describe what is in it for them: If you are reaching out to a specific group/industry, tailor the message to them.

- **Industry/Business:** Talk about your industry needs and how the partnership approach can help address growth. This is a business-driven approach.
- **Public Sector Entities:** Talk about how knowing what the industry-driven priorities are can allow your organization to better align its services such as targeted training to an entire industry vs a single occupation. Public sector can better target scarce resources to the best impact for the state, job seekers and industries.

Include a call to action: In the first and last paragraph, you need to have a call to action - what is the action you want the recipient to do.

- **Learn more about the initiative:** Ask them to watch the video, like Facebook or visit the website. (Make sure to include links)
- **Give input at quarterly Council meetings:** The council is seeking more industry leader input at its meetings. (Link to website and upcoming meetings)
- **Get involved with local sector partnerships:** To get involved in your local Next Gen partnerships, visit (link to page with contact info.)

Don't write a dissertation. People don't read long emails or social media posts. You don't need to cover all the details. That is why you need to direct them to the website or to watch the videos.

- **Example social media post:** Growing industries equate to more Wyomingites with better jobs. Watch this video to learn how the Wyoming Workforce Development Council has taken a business-driven approach to help us. #wyomingnextgen (include video link)

Use hashtags in social media posts:

- #wyomingnextgen

Develop short social media posts tailored to your specific audience:

- **Schools need to teach the skills our industry needs to grow.** Watch this video to learn how the Wyoming Workforce Development Council has taken a business-driven approach to help us. #wyomingnextgen (include video link like [this one](#))

Structure of Next Gen

The Next Generation Sector Partnership model is, in essence, the reverse of the usual model used by communities to plan for the future. Instead of government bureaucrats making rules and policies for businesses, Next Gen puts local businesses in the driver's seat. Sector partnerships are industry-specific, and they are chaired by businesspeople in those industries. The businesspeople know best what they need to succeed – and ultimately to make their communities prosper – and they are given a forum to discuss those ideas and implement solutions to obstacles. Government and community partners are in the room for the discussions, but those government and community partner representatives are urged to sit back and listen, rather than guide the discussion. Should a need for a change in policy or regulations arise, the government representatives can begin that process. Otherwise, it is the business representatives who guide the implementation of solutions.

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.

As an example, the Laramie County Wyoming Construction Sector Partnership spearheaded the launch of a new dual enrollment program in the skilled trades involving local school districts and the local community college. Industry champions are actively involved in promoting the program in schools, reviewing curriculum, providing internships, and offering assistance in the classroom. At the same time, they developed a referral system for high school students to connect directly with interested employers and implemented the first construction industry-specific job fair with the local one-stop center.

Goals of Next Gen

The success of every region across the country depends on the answer to two critical questions: first, are businesses thriving and creating quality jobs? Second, can people access those quality jobs by getting the right education and training at the right time? A community's ability to stabilize or grow its local economy and prepare people for opportunity depends on how it responds to these two questions.

The overarching goal of Next Gen Sector Partnerships is to offer a way to tackle these challenges. Next Gen partnerships harness the passion of forward-thinking business leaders to grow good jobs and build stronger education and training systems, working in partnership with a coordinated team of public partners in education, workforce development, and economic development.

SMART Objectives

Each region establishes its objectives based upon its action plan.

Process

Build the Regional Support Team - The Support Team can be a combination of workforce development, education, economic development, and community-based organizations.

Define the Scope of Industry Focus - Utilize Labor Market Data to select an industry and assess the relative advantages and disadvantages of choosing among several candidate industry sectors.

Prepare to Launch - The Regional Support Team will identify potential industry champions and invite them to the launch meeting.

Launch - A facilitated discussion with industry champions to identify industry needs in the region. Industry champions accept responsibility for coordinating success.

Move to Action - Industry Champions conduct conference calls to begin forming up Action Plans and Implementation Plans for each need identified in the Launch meeting.

Sustain and Evolve - Industry Champions and Support Team members can utilize the [Wyoming Next Generation Sustainability Toolkit](#).

Anticipated Questions and Answers

What are Next Gen Sector Partnerships?

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

How are Next Gen Sector Partnerships different?

The agenda is driven entirely by business leaders (vs. being set by the requirements of a grant or public program). Business leaders define the priorities they want to tackle together based on the unique needs of their industry. This almost always includes workforce development issues but often includes broader competitiveness needs (such as infrastructure improvements, technology adoption, supply chain coordination, or business-to-business networking). Since business leaders define the agenda, they are more likely to stay involved for the long haul.

Business leaders craft their own solutions (vs. providing input only). Business leaders personally champion priorities and lead action teams that drive results. Public partners play a supportive role, bringing resources to business-led teams, but they stay in the back seat while business drives. This ensures the partnerships are sustainable and action-oriented.

They are supported by a broad-based team of public partners (vs. being driven by a single program or system). Next Gen partnerships are a team effort. They depend on a broad-based support team made up of education, workforce development and economic development leaders who collaborate to support the partnership and use the partnership as the go-to, shared table to respond to the industry's needs. They are not a special initiative or a passing fad; they are a long-term way of doing business and working together across programs and systems.

Who is involved?

Next Gen Sector Partnerships are industry-driven and community-supported. They are made up of business members of a target industry to make up an "inner table." This is where businesses shape and drive an agenda, one that has a heavy (but not exclusive) workforce and education component. Support partners from the community, including decision-makers from workforce development boards, job centers, Department of Human Services, vocational rehabilitation, adult education, temporary

assistance to needy families, etc., education, community-based training organizations, apprenticeship programs, as well as key economic development organizations and chambers of commerce and other stakeholders make up the “outer table.” They are the essential team of organizations that implement, with industry, the needed solutions and interventions to keep the industry strong and to get people jobs.

Sectors again? Really?

Sector Partnerships are not a new idea. For years, workforce development practitioners have used sector partnerships to address shared workforce needs of businesses in a targeted sector. But many of these partnerships have failed to achieve sustained business engagement over time. As funding for sector partnerships decreased across the country, many partnerships disappeared because they lacked the business leadership and commitment to sustain beyond an initial grant. Today’s “next-generation” sector partnerships center on strong industry leadership. The agenda is defined entirely by business leaders and focused on addressing what matters most to them: ensuring the industry has what it needs to grow and thrive. Since next generation sector partnerships tackle more than just workforce issues, the partnership has staying power, acting as a sustainable forum for business leaders to address shared priorities and work in collaboration with a cross-section of public partners in workforce development, economic development, and education.

This feels like we’re putting all our eggs in one basket. Aren’t we choosing industry winners/losers? How do you really choose and justify a target industry sector?

Choosing a sector to target for an industry-led partnership doesn’t mean that’s the only sector to pay attention to. Instead, it means that the sector merits the collective action of you and other public partners in workforce development, economic development, and education in your region. By working together to jointly target and engage with a critical mass of business leaders from the targeted sector, you have an opportunity to better understand the needs of that sector, to target efforts to support that sector, and to coordinate across multiple programs and systems to ensure you are aligned around industry’s needs. Ideally, your region will have multiple sector partnerships targeting the driving sectors of your regional economy. But take it one step at a time – there is usually a learning curve in launching their first sector partnership. Once your first partnership is up and running, your team will have the experience needed to launch additional partnerships in other industry sectors.

Isn’t industry input via survey and a focus group enough? We don’t want to waste their time.

For some purposes, yes. If all you’re looking for is input on specific questions (for example, what kind of equipment to invest in for a new training program), a survey or focus group will suffice. But if you’re looking for sustained partnership from business leaders, not just one-time input, a focus group or survey isn’t enough. In order to be committed and engaged for the long haul, it’s critical that business leaders define their own agenda on their own terms. As long as public partners are only engaging business people around their agendas (i.e. “What are your entry-level training needs?” “What will it take for you to hire ex-offenders?”), business participation will be limited. And, public partners may miss the big

opportunities to spur growth and competitiveness if they don't engage in broader, industry-driven conversations about what the industry needs to grow and thrive.

Aren't we leaning too far to the industry needs side, and not enough toward the jobseekers' needs side?

The single most important factor in ensuring jobseeker success is that businesses in the regional economy are growing, creating quality jobs for local residents. Without good jobs, no amount of jobseeker training and support services will achieve the outcomes we're aiming for. That doesn't mean that we only pay attention to the industry's needs and neglect the work of ensuring that job seekers have the support they need to access opportunities. Instead, by starting with industry's needs and working backward from there, we ensure that career pathway programs actually lead to careers because they are based on a highly accurate understanding of the industry's needs and developed in partnership with industry.

How do colleges fit in? What's the connection to career pathways?

Although sector partnerships do not explicitly center on education or workforce needs, talent development almost always comes up as a top priority. And sector partnerships are ideal vehicles for career pathway systems-building for two reasons: 1) they achieve a level of business engagement is difficult to sustain in program-based advisory boards, and 2) they act as a coordinating body across multiple education and workforce development organizations, providing a forum for developing true industry-driven career pathway systems that span multiple programs and institutions. For those reasons, it's critical that colleges and other education partners (K-12, CTE, Adult Basic Education) are actively engaged in sector partnership development.

Why economic development partners? Isn't this about workforce issues?

Sector partnerships are all about ensuring that that industry has what it needs to grow and thrive. That might mean infrastructure needs or supply chain coordination or regulatory issues or workforce development. It all depends on what business leaders agree is most critical. But most of the time, it's all of the above! That's why it's so important to have a broad base of public partners actively support sector partnerships and respond to the wide range of priorities that emerge.

How many industry partnerships should one area have?

Eventually, every major industry driver of the regional economy would benefit from having an industry partnership. However, it is important not to try to do too much too quickly. Study your local industries, assess them for readiness, build your support team, and start with one partnership. Do it well, learn a lot along the way, get some early wins, and leverage your successes and lessons learned to launch additional partnerships over time.

Industry partnerships take time and coordination. What about staff capacity to do this work? These partnerships share the load, take the building of a community support team seriously, and make sure concrete commitments are made and kept. Over time, the partnerships rethink staffing priorities and capacity-building choices. Existing staff shift their duties and learn to support industry partnerships. As staff positions open up, some may hire people with skills and experience that can help with industry partnership building. And, the partnership participants ask peers how they creatively manage with capacity constraints.

If you have questions about Next Gen Sector Partnerships or want to get involved, please contact the Next Gen Communications Team:

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