



## Creating School, Community, and Business Partnerships

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## Collaboration for What?

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Start with the end in mind:

**Work experiences, jobs and a clear career path for youth**

This is the “Gold Standard” of transition outcomes

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## Collaboration is Necessary (and Good!)

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- Students and youth interact with multiple systems, programs, and professionals throughout transition years
  - Beneficial outcomes both at the individual youth level and at the larger system level can be best expected through the most coordinated application of resources and effort
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## What is Collaboration?

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- A **mutually beneficial** relationship between two or more parties who work toward **common goals** by sharing responsibility and accountability
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## Does interagency collaboration improve transition outcomes?

- Collaboration between schools, VR and other partners is effective only to the extent it is outcome driven
- When collaboration is directly focused on outcomes for youth and the systems that serve them – rather than merely referring them for a “hand off” to the next responsible party- higher school completion and employment rates are likely



## One study showed that:

- Youth served by collaboration teams scoring high on synergy - such as team empowerment, trust, and conflict resolution - experienced lower positive employment outcomes.
- Youth served by teams exhibiting high levels of task-oriented collaboration achieved significantly more positive outcomes than did teams low on this measure



## Engaging Each School-Community-Business Partner

The underlying approach is similar for all partners: Once their respective functions are understood partnership conveners should ask these questions:

- What do they each bring to the partnership? That is, why does the partnership need them?
- How might they benefit? That is, what’s in it for them?
- How do you make it worth their while?



## What’s in it for me?

### Schools:

- Improved IDEA Indicators 1, 2, 13, 14
- Increase college and career readiness rates
- Enhancements to curriculum



## What's in it for me?

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### Postsecondary education and training programs:

- Enhancements to courses of study
  - Improved degree/certificate completion rates
  - Increased enrollment of students with disabilities
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## Strategies for Engaging Education Partners

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- Include processes that link students to work experiences
  - Connect work experience and jobs to specific education interventions and courses of study
  - Plan for services from other partners that supplement school resources & services
  - Plan for direct and straightforward process to refer students to other programs, including VR
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## What's in it for me?

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### Vocational Rehabilitation:

- Opportunities to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services for students with disabilities
  - Increased successful rehabilitation case closures
  - Maximization of fiscal and program resources
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## What's in it for me?

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### Youth and Adult Employment Programs:

- Work exposure and occupational skills attainment of youth prior to service delivery
  - Higher placement rates
  - More funding support due to higher placement rates
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## What's in it for me?

### State government agencies serving youth and adults with disabilities:

- Improved outcomes
- Maximization of fiscal and program resources, that is, more “bang for the buck”



## Strategies for Engaging Service Partners

- Get the endorsement/blessing of leadership or key professional from respective partners, that is administrative “buy-in”
- Identify potential professional allies who will benefit from participation
- Make participation convenient, easy
- Use their “lingo” with them (but only with them!)



## What's in it for me?

### Businesses and employers:

- Meet current workforce needs
- Better prepared future workforce
- Improved community engagement



## Strategies for Engaging Businesses/Employers

- Streamline processes for referrals of students to employers, e.g., single point of contact
- Develop work based learning tools based on employer and industry needs
- Include (and join!) local business organizations such as Chambers of Commerce
- Staff development activities for educators, other professionals regarding business needs
- Avoid education, service system “lingo”



## It Doesn't Happen without Employers!

- The success of linking youth with work, and linking youth programs with employer partners, is as much about meeting employers' needs as it is about meeting the collective goals set by partners.
- Unless employers gain from the collaboration they are not likely to become or stay involved.



## Who Leads?

- Any of the partners who has a stake in outcomes of the collaboration
- Often this is the partner with the most to gain and/or who has a compelling reason to get things started



## Who Leads?

- Schools may lead because they have a statutory need to improve outcomes for students (remember: Indicators 1,2,13,14)
  - That is, more students get diplomas, fewer drop out of school, improved transition planning, and increased post-secondary education enrollment and employment one year after school exit



## Who Leads?

- Vocational Rehabilitation may lead because it has a new mandate to direct resources to students and youth for Pre-Employment Training Services (PETS)
- Business entities (e.g., BLN, Chambers of Commerce) may lead because they have a collective need to prepare the future workforce



## Key Responsibilities of Partnership Leaders

- Establish meeting agendas
- Facilitate meeting discussions and focus
- Ensure roles/benefits for all partners are clear
- Sets tone for member contributions
- Insures notes and minutes are kept and distributed
- Insures agreed upon activities are carried out
- Communication between meetings



## What about reluctant partners?

- Find out what they need and figure out how the partnership will give it to them. For example:
  - do they need better service outcomes (e.g., more placements, successful case closures...)?: make sure the partnership keeps this in focus. Stay away from single partner dominating the activity
  - do they have limited time to meet?: conduct short, succinct meetings, meet virtually, adhere to consistent and convenient meeting frequency



## What about presumed employability?

- Are all partners on board with the idea that all youth can work?
- If not, then what?
  - Professional development on employment strategies
  - Celebrate examples of successful employment
  - Get help!
  - Last resort: replace partner



## Connecting Partnership Activities to Outcomes

- Partnerships should start and end at the same place:
  - Creating opportunities for students and youth to obtain work experiences and jobs
    - How many youth get these opportunities?
    - What kind of opportunities were they? (type, duration, etc.)

You get what you count!!



## Partnerships Are Best Served

**When each partner can say “yes” to each of these:**

- Did I join the partnership understanding the end goal?
- Am I involved because of progress toward the end goal?
- Am I contributing to reaching the end goal?
- Is participating helping my organization reach its goals?



## Don't Forget Youth and Families

- Include youth (and their families) in any meeting about them and support their full participation in decisions that are made
- Seek to include the youth and family voice in partnership activities
- They are the best and most important resource about youth interests, aspirations, need for support and accommodations



## Where Do We Go From Here?

**Yes or No:**

- Do we “meet to meet”?
- Do we meet to satisfy some grant or funding mandate?
- Do we meet merely to organize a “hand off” to the next service?
- Do we meet because an influential community leader encouraged it?



## Where Do We Go From Here?

**Yes or No:**

- Do we meet with the end in mind – youth career development and employment
- AND
- Do we meet so that each collaborating partner gains something from the relationship?



## Now Available

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### A Guide to Developing Collaborative School-Community-Business Partnerships

<http://www.transitionta.org/postschool>

Click "Additional Resources"



## Want to Talk More?

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- **What?** Participate in the **Ask the Expert online discussion** after this webinar event
- **How long?** Nov. 17 - Dec. 3
- **Where?** [www.transitioncoalition.org](http://www.transitioncoalition.org)
- Follow the link in the **Chat Box** below

