

Partnership Ecosystems Overview

Understanding, Mapping, and Strengthening Your Partnerships

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Our 3-Workshop Journey

SESSION ONE

Partnership Ecosystems
Overview

SESSION TWO

Identifying
the Core

SESSION THREE

Partnership Ecosystem
Value Propositions



Today's Workshop

SESSION ONE

Partnership Ecosystems Overview

- What is Partnership Ecosystem Mapping?
- Keys to Successful Partnership Ecosystem Mapping
- Overview of Partnership Channels

SESSION TWO

Identifying the Core

- Organizational Core Competencies
- Internal Stakeholder Group Profiles and Needs
- Partnership Ecosystem Gaps

SESSION THREE

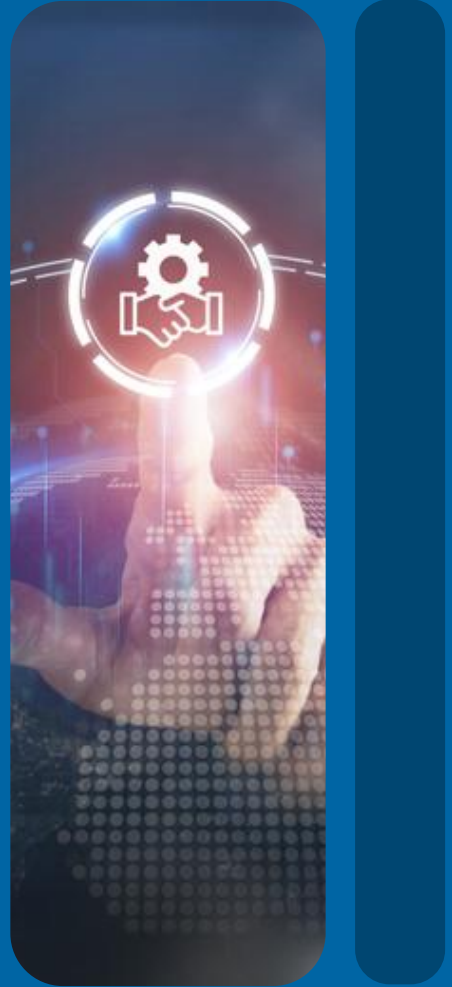
Partnership Ecosystem Value Propositions

- Optimizing for Internal Stakeholder Value
- Optimizing for Value to Partners
- Drafting Value Propositions



1

Partnership Ecosystems Mapping Overview



What is a Partnership Ecosystem?

"A partner ecosystem is the complex interconnected **network of strategic partners** that you engage with to help **sell, distribute, implement, and support your products or services.**"

- *Impartner* -



The Power of Partnership Ecosystems for ESEs

-01-

ESEs don't just sell products and services:

They also provide paid employment and supportive services to individuals facing barriers to work

-02-

Partner ecosystems enable:

- Access to wider range of resources
- Expanded reach to new markets and customer segments
- Specialized expertise from other organizations

-03-

Resulting in:

- An increase in your ability to provide meaningful employment opportunities to marginalized populations; therefore achieving social impact goals



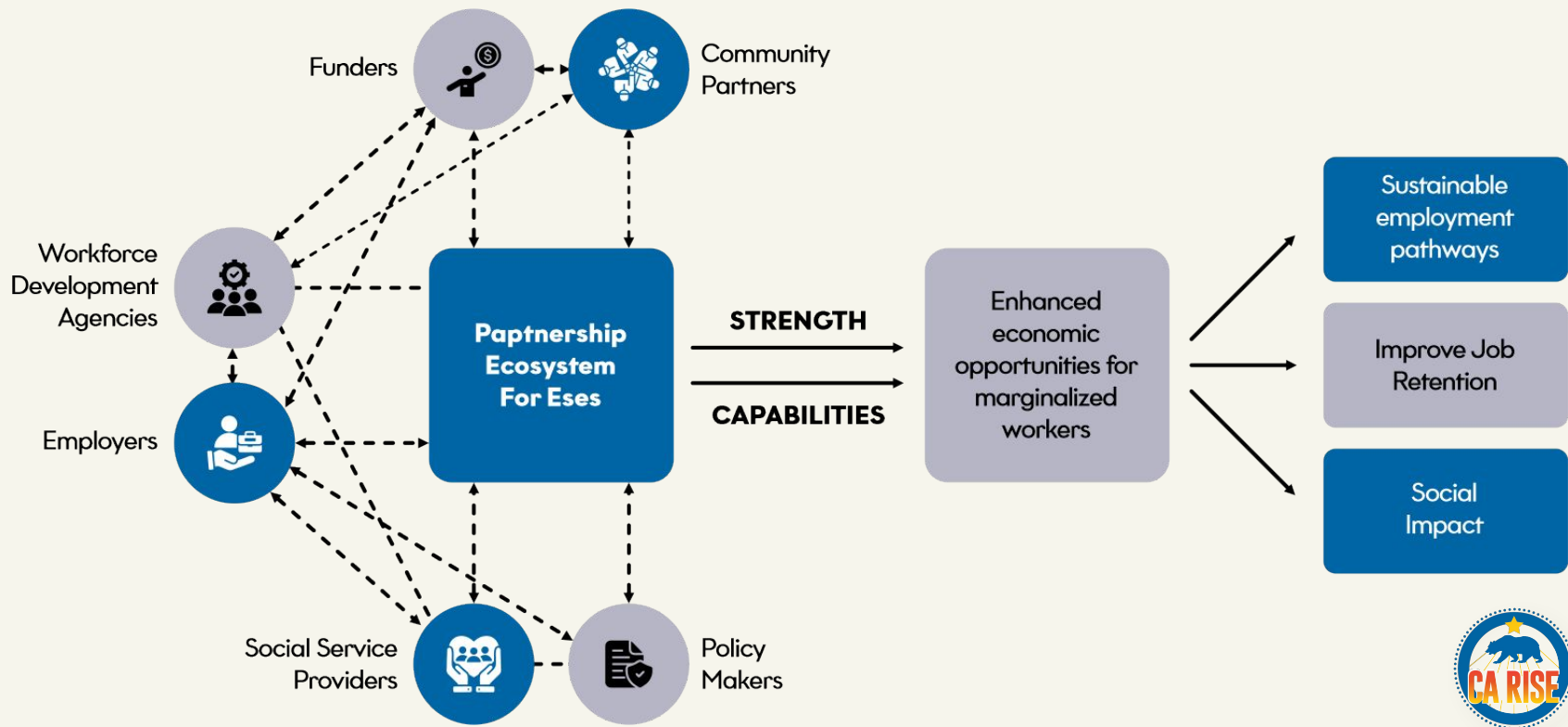
Group Discussion: Identifying Valuable Partnerships



*"What type of partnerships
have you found most valuable
to your ESE?"*

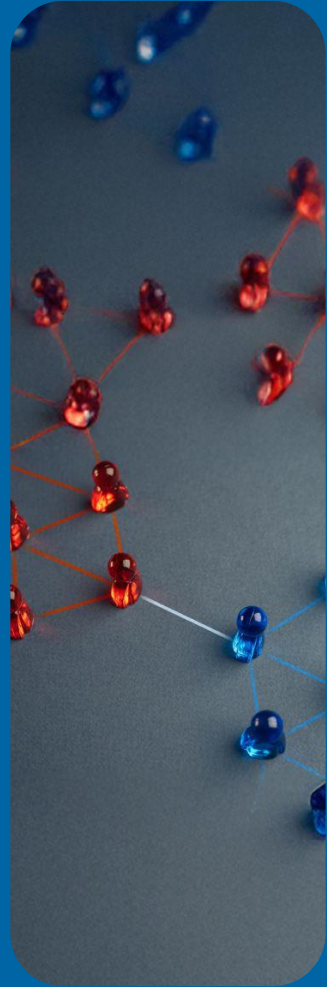


Visualizing a Partnership Ecosystem



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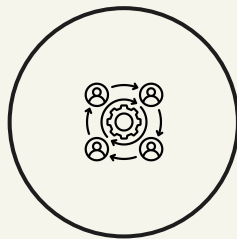
Keys to Successful Partnership Ecosystem Mapping





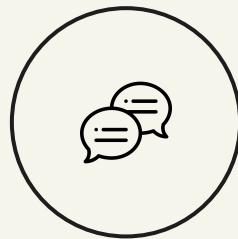
Clarity

Understanding your organization's role



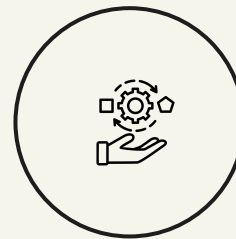
Alignment

Matching partnerships to mission/goals



Communication

Transparent and effective engagement



Adaptability

Adjusting as partnerships evolve



Common Challenges in Partnership Mapping

- Lack of alignment with organizational needs
- Unclear expectations and miscommunication
- Difficulty in maintaining long-term partnerships



Case Study



Introducing: [Cara Collective](#), a Chicago-based ESE



Cara Collective provides workforce development programs for individuals experiencing homelessness, poverty, or other barriers to employment. Through a strong partnership ecosystem, Cara Collective connects participants with employers, social service providers, and training organizations to ensure long-term employment success.



Source: [Cara Collective Performance Updates & Annual Reports](#):

Cara Collective Partnership Landscape - Part 1

Employers (Corporate & Small Businesses)

- **Key Partner:** Advocate Aurora Health, Northwestern Medicine, Cushman & Wakefield
- **Role:** Hiring trained participants, providing mentorship, and offering career advancement opportunities.
- **Impact:** Over 70% of graduates remain employed one year after placement.

Workforce Development Agencies

- **Key Partner:** Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership
- **Role:** Providing funding for skills training and connecting participants to broader workforce initiatives.
- **Impact:** Expanded access to industry-recognized credentials and technical training.

Social Service Organizations

- **Key Partner:** Heartland Alliance, Housing Forward
- **Role:** Offering housing support, mental health counseling, and financial literacy programs.
- **Impact:** Holistic support addressing barriers beyond employment, leading to improved job retention.

Cara Collective Partnership Landscape - Part 2

Philanthropic & Government Funders

- **Key Partner:** The MacArthur Foundation, City of Chicago
- **Role:** Providing grants for training programs and supporting innovative employment models.
- **Impact:** Financial sustainability and program expansion to serve more individuals.

Training & Education Institutions

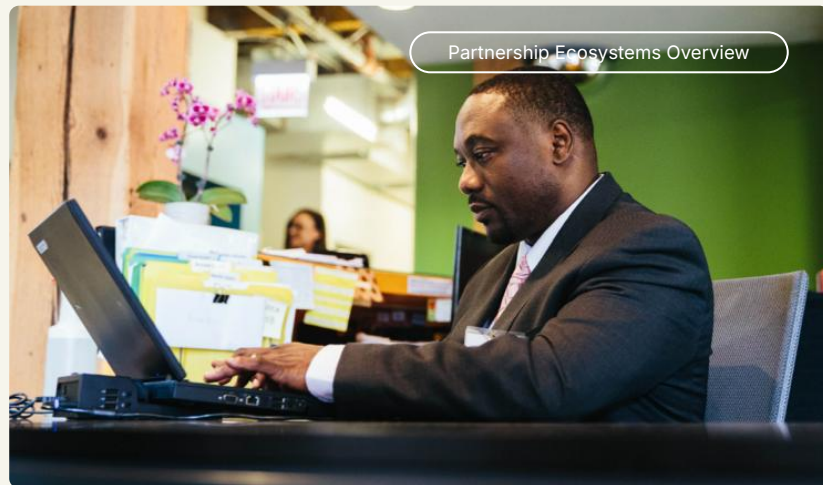
- **Key Partner:** City Colleges of Chicago, National Able Network
- **Role:** Delivering job readiness training, digital skills education, and industry-specific certifications.
- **Impact:** Increased participant qualifications, leading to higher wages and long-term career growth.

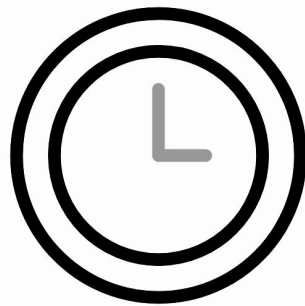


Cara Collective: The Results

- **Long-Term Employment Success:** 70% of program participants stay employed after one year.
- **Ecosystem Alignment:** Employers benefit from a steady pipeline of skilled workers, while social service agencies help stabilize employees' lives.
- **Scalability:** The Cara Collective has expanded its model beyond Chicago, demonstrating the power of a **well-integrated partnership ecosystem**.

Source: [Cara Collective Performance Updates & Annual Reports](#):





Breakout Rooms

Identifying Existing Partnership Channels



3

Identifying Existing Partnership Channels



Partnership Channels for ESE Operations



Corporate Hiring Partnerships

Collaborate with large companies to create direct employment pathways for program graduates.

Example: An ESE partners with **Target** or **Amazon** to provide trained workers for warehouse and logistics roles.



Workforce Development Agency Partnerships

Work with government-funded programs to provide job training and placement services.

Example: Partnering with the **Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership** to align with local workforce development initiatives.



Social Services & Wraparound Support Partnerships

Team up with non-profits that offer housing, childcare, and mental health support to improve job retention.

Example: Partnering with **United Way** to ensure program participants have stable housing while seeking employment.



Community College & Vocational Training Partnerships

Collaborate with educational institutions to provide certifications and upskilling programs.

Example: Working with **City Colleges of Chicago** to offer training in healthcare or construction trades.



Financial Institution Partnerships

Partner with banks and credit unions to provide financial literacy training and access to credit-building opportunities.

Example: A partnership with **Chase Bank** to offer financial coaching and small business loans for ESE graduates.



Tech & Digital Literacy Partnerships

Work with tech companies to provide access to digital tools, IT training, and employment opportunities.

Example: Collaborating with **Microsoft Philanthropies** to offer cloud computing and cybersecurity certifications.



Impact Investing & Philanthropic Partnerships

Engage with social impact investors and grantmakers to secure funding for employment programs.

Example: Partnering with **The Rockefeller Foundation** to scale workforce training programs.



Government & Policy Advocacy Partnerships

Align with government agencies and advocacy groups to influence workforce policies that benefit ESEs.

Example: Collaborating with The National Skills Coalition to advocate for funding in workforce training programs.



Employer-Sponsored Apprenticeships & Internships

Work with businesses to develop paid apprenticeship programs that lead to full-time employment.

Example: Partnering with Tesla to provide hands-on training in green energy and EV manufacturing jobs.



Supply Chain & Social Procurement Partnerships

Collaborate with businesses that prioritize purchasing goods/services from ESEs.

Example: A cleaning services ESE partners with WeWork to provide janitorial services for office spaces.



Partnership Channels for Business Development

Strategic Alliances:

Collaborative agreements between independent companies that work together to achieve shared business objectives.

Joint Ventures:

Two or more companies forming a new, separate entity to pursue a shared business opportunity.

Affiliate Partnerships:

Relationships between companies that share a common brand or affiliation.

Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) Partnerships:

Involve one company (the OEM) manufacturing products for another company under their brand.

Research & Development (R&D)

Partnerships:

Companies collaborating on research and development projects.

Solution Partnerships:

Companies collaborating to provide a comprehensive solution to a customer's needs.

Technology Partnerships:

Focuses on the sharing or licensing of technology between companies.

Channel Partnership:

Companies working together to distribute products or services through a common channel.

Distribution Partnerships:

Companies working together to distribute products or services.

Co-Marketing Partnerships:

Companies working together to promote their products or services.



Partnership Channels for Business Development

Strategic Alliances

Strategic alliances are collaborative agreements between independent companies that work together to achieve shared business objectives. These partnerships involve pooling resources, expertise, and capabilities to develop, manufacture, or sell products and services.

Business Value:

- Access to new geographic markets or customer segments.
- Gain access to new technologies, intellectual property, or expertise.
- Share risks and costs associated with new ventures or market uncertainties.
- Strengthen market position and competitive advantage.

When to Consider:

- When seeking to enter a new market or expand geographic reach.
- Looking to access new technologies or expertise.
- Facing significant market uncertainties or competitive pressures.

Challenges and Threats:

- Managing differences in corporate culture, values, and decision-making styles.
- Addressing power imbalances between partners that can lead to conflicts or unequal benefits.
- Coordinating efforts and resources across multiple organisations.
- Protecting intellectual property and avoiding disputes over ownership or usage.

Joint Ventures

JVs involve two or more companies forming a new, separate entity to pursue a shared business opportunity. This type of partnership allows companies to combine their complementary strengths and share the risks and rewards of a new venture.

Business Value:

- Share the risks and rewards of a new venture.
- Leverage the complementary strengths of the partners.
- Enter a new market or industry with a lower investment.
- Pool resources and capabilities to achieve a common goal.

When to Consider:

- When seeking to enter a new market or industry.
- Looking to invest in a new technology or product.
- Wanting to combine complementary strengths and capabilities.
- Sharing risks and rewards is desirable.

Challenges and Threats:

- Integrating diverse corporate cultures and operations within the joint venture.
- Disagreements over control and decision-making within the joint venture.
- Planning for a potential exit from the joint venture, such as a sale or dissolution.
- Aligning performance expectations and incentives between the partners.



Partnership Channels for Business Development

Affiliate Partnerships

Affiliates are relationships between companies that share a common brand or affiliation. This type of partnership can be beneficial for increasing brand awareness, cross-selling products, and providing additional value to customers.

Business Value:

- Increase brand visibility and recognition.
- Promote complementary products or services.
- Enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty.
- Generate additional revenue through affiliate commissions.

When to Consider:

- When seeking to increase brand awareness and visibility.
- When wanting to cross-sell complementary products or services.
- When aiming to enhance customer loyalty.
- When interested in generating additional revenue through affiliate commissions.

Challenges and Threats:

- Preventing fraudulent activities and ensuring compliance with affiliate program policies.
- Accurately tracking and measuring affiliate performance and commissions.
- Managing a large network of affiliates and maintaining positive relationships.
- Adapting to changes in the market and consumer behaviour.

Solution Partnerships

JVs involve two or more companies forming a new, separate entity to pursue a shared business opportunity. This type of partnership allows companies to combine their complementary strengths and share the risks and rewards of a new venture.

Business Value:

- Offer customers complete solutions to their needs.
- Provide a seamless customer experience.
- Capture a larger share of the market.
- Drive innovation through collaboration.

When to Consider:

- When operating in a complex industry with multiple product or service requirements.
- When aiming to provide customers with comprehensive solutions.
- When seeking to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty.
- When wanting to drive innovation through collaboration.

Challenges and Threats:

- Integrating different systems and technologies to create a seamless solution.
- Ensuring a positive customer experience throughout the entire solution delivery process.
- Addressing competition from other solution providers.
- Adapting to changing customer requirements and preferences.



Partnership Channels for Business Development

Technology partnerships

Technology partnerships are focused on the sharing or licensing of technology between companies. This type of partnership can be beneficial for companies looking to access new technologies, reduce development costs, or accelerate time to market.

Business Value:

- Gain access to cutting-edge technologies or intellectual property.
- Share development costs and risks.
- Bring new products or services to market faster.
- Drive innovation through collaboration.

When to Consider:

- When seeking to access new technologies or intellectual property.
- Looking to reduce development costs or accelerate time to market.
- Aiming to drive innovation through collaboration.

Challenges and Threats:

- Protecting intellectual property and avoiding disputes over ownership or usage.
- Ensuring compatibility and integration between different technologies.
- Becoming overly dependent on a single technology partner.
- Addressing competition from other technology providers.

Channel partnerships

Channel partners involve companies working together to distribute products or services through a common channel. This type of partnership can be beneficial for companies looking to expand their market reach, access new customer segments, or improve their distribution efficiency.

Business Value:

- Reach new customer segments and geographic markets.
- Optimise distribution channels and reduce costs.
- Drive sales through a wider distribution network.
- Provide a more convenient and accessible buying experience.

When to Consider:

- When seeking to expand market reach and access new customers.
- To improve distribution efficiency or reduce costs.
- When wanting to enhance the customer buying experience through an existing network of channel partners.

Challenges and Threats:

- Managing conflicts between different distribution channels or partners.
- Ensuring that channel partners meet performance expectations.
- Aligning channel partners with the company's overall strategy and objectives.
- Adapting to changes in the market and consumer behaviour.



Partnership Channels for Business Development

OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) Partnerships

OEM partnerships involve one company (the OEM) manufacturing products for another company under their brand. This type of partnership can be particularly beneficial for companies seeking to outsource manufacturing operations, reduce costs, or focus on their core competencies.

Business Value:

- Reduce manufacturing costs and overhead.
- Concentrate on core business areas.
- Increase production capacity without significant capital investment.
- Ensure consistent quality standards.

When to Consider:

- When seeking to outsource manufacturing operations.
- Looking to reduce costs and improve efficiency.
- Wanting to focus on core competencies and strategic initiatives.
- Requiring scalable manufacturing capabilities.

Challenges and Threats:

- Ensuring that the OEM meets quality standards and specifications.
- Protecting intellectual property and avoiding unauthorised use.
- Managing risks associated with disruptions in the supply chain.
- Becoming overly dependent on a single OEM.

Distribution Partnerships

Distribution partnerships involve companies working together to distribute products or services. This type of partnership can be beneficial for companies looking to expand their market reach, access new customer segments, or improve their distribution efficiency.

Business Value:

- Reach new customer segments and geographic markets.
- Optimise distribution channels and reduce costs.
- Drive sales through a wider distribution network.
- Provide a more convenient and accessible buying experience.

When to Consider:

- When seeking to expand market reach and access new customers.
- Aiming to improve distribution efficiency and reduce costs.
- Wanting to enhance the customer buying experience.

Challenges and Threats:

- Managing conflicts between different distribution channels or partners.
- Ensuring that channel partners meet performance expectations.
- Aligning channel partners with the company's overall strategy and objectives.
- Adapting to changes in the market and consumer behavior.



Partnership Channels for Business Development

Research and Development (R&D) Partnerships

R&D partnerships involve companies collaborating on research and development projects. These partnerships can be particularly valuable for companies seeking to accelerate innovation, reduce development costs, or access new technologies.

Business Value:

- Develop new products or services more quickly.
- Share development costs and risks.
- Gain access to cutting-edge research and expertise.
- Develop innovative solutions that differentiate the company.

When to Consider:

- When seeking to accelerate innovation and develop new products or services.
- Looking to reduce development costs and share risks.
- Aiming to access new technologies or expertise.
- Wanting to gain a competitive advantage in the market.

Challenges and Threats:

- Protecting intellectual property and avoiding disputes over ownership or usage.
- Coordinating research efforts and ensuring alignment between the partners.
- Protecting sensitive research data and maintaining confidentiality.
- Allocating resources effectively to support the R&D partnership.

Co-marketing Partnerships

Co-marketing partnerships involve companies working together to promote their products or services. These partnerships can be beneficial for increasing brand awareness, generating leads, and driving sales.

Business Value:

- Enhance brand visibility and recognition.
- Attract new customers and generate sales leads.
- Reduce marketing expenses by sharing costs.
- Leverage the combined strengths of the partners.

When to Consider:

- When seeking to increase brand awareness and visibility.
- To generate new leads and drive sales.
- To reduce marketing expenses.
- When aiming to leverage the combined strengths of the partners.

Challenges and Threats:

- Ensuring that the partner's brand aligns with the company's brand image.
- Maintaining consistent messaging and branding across all marketing channels.
- Tracking and measuring the effectiveness of co-marketing campaigns.
- Allocating resources effectively to support co-marketing efforts.



Partnership Channels for ESE Operations

Community College & Vocational Training Partnerships:

Collaborate with educational institutions to provide certifications and upskilling programs.

Workforce Development Agency Partnerships:

Work with government-funded programs to provide job training and placement services.

Social Services & Wraparound Support Partnerships:

Team up with nonprofits that offer housing, childcare, and mental health support to improve job retention.

Impact Investing & Philanthropic Partnerships:

Engage with social impact investors and grantmakers to secure funding for employment programs.

Government & Policy Advocacy Partnerships:

Align with government agencies and advocacy groups to influence workforce policies that benefit ESEs.

Corporate Hiring Partnerships:

Collaborate with large companies to create direct employment pathways for program graduates.

Financial Institution Partnerships:

Partner with banks and credit unions to provide financial literacy training and access to credit-building opportunities.

Tech & Digital Literacy Partnerships:

Work with tech companies to provide access to digital tools, IT training, and employment opportunities.

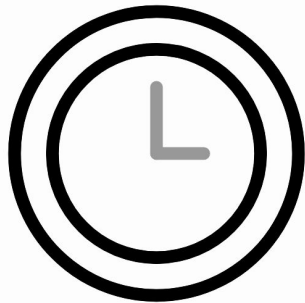
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Work with businesses to develop paid apprenticeship programs that lead to full-time employment.

Supply Chain & Social Procurement Partnerships:

Collaborate with businesses that prioritize purchasing goods/services from ESEs.





15-Minute Breakout Room Instructions

Self-Reflection: 5 minutes

Guided Discussion: 10 minutes

- What are your current partnership channels?
- Where do you see gaps or opportunities?
- What's working well, and what needs improvement?





Let's Debrief!



It's easy to let a partnership
fizzle out if it's not actively
maintained.

Different strategies for
stewarding and
acquiring partnerships.

Click to add a note

Click to add a note

Capacity to maintain
partnerships vs ROI
of the partnership.

Key Takeaways from Breakout Rooms

Click to add a
note

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Group Discussion:



What surprised you the most about your partnership ecosystem?





A Quick Recap...

Partnership Ecosystem for ESEs:

01

A network of interconnected organizations that collaborate strategically to enhance economic opportunities for marginalized workers.

02

Keys to Successful Mapping:

Clarity, alignment, communication, adaptability

03

Identifying Partnership Channels:

Business development vs ESE ops



See You Next Week

Mental Prep:

Start mapping your partnership ecosystem

Session 2 Preview: Identifying the Core

- Organizational Core Competencies
- Internal Stakeholder Group Profiles and Needs
- Partnership Ecosystem Gaps

