

Identifying the Core

Understanding Your Strengths,
Stakeholder Needs, and
Partnership Gaps

Melanie Akwule, MBA



Our 3-Workshop Journey

SESSION ONE

Partnership Ecosystems
Overview

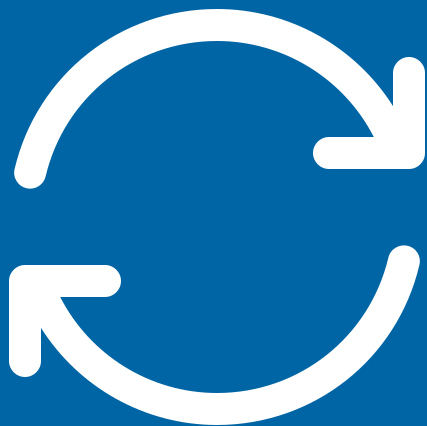
SESSION TWO

Identifying
the Core

SESSION THREE

Partnership Ecosystem
Value Propositions





A Quick Recap of **Session 1**

01

Partnership Ecosystem for ESEs:

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

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



Group Discussion



"What's one partnership challenge you've faced recently and how did it arise?"



1 Defining Organizational Core Competencies



First... A Definition

Core competencies are the **resources** and/or **strategic advantages** of a business, including the combination of pooled knowledge and technical capacities, **that allow it to be competitive in the marketplace.**

They are what the company does best and **consist of the combined activities, operations, and resources** that distinguish the company from competitors.

- [Investopedia](#) -



A FEW EXAMPLES FOR ESEs

1. Workforce Training & Development

- Providing job readiness programs (resume building, interview prep, soft skills training).
- Offering industry-specific certifications (construction, hospitality, healthcare, IT, etc.).
- Implementing on-the-job training for skill-building and career advancement.

2. Wraparound Support Services

- Addressing barriers to employment such as housing, mental health, childcare, and transportation.
- Offering case management and personalized support plans.
- Connecting participants with financial literacy and coaching resources.

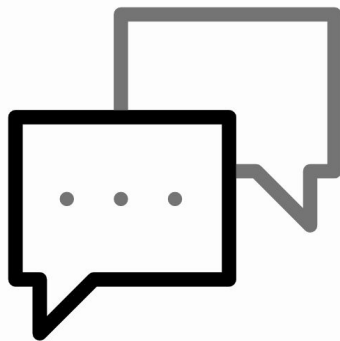
3. Case Management & Holistic Support

- Providing personalized career coaching and goal-setting.
- Helping participants navigate barriers like legal issues, health challenges, or addiction recovery.
- Offering post-placement support to improve job retention.

Identifying Your Core Strengths

- Criteria for defining core competencies:
 - **Value:** Does this competency provide unique value?
 - **Rarity:** Is it a distinguishing factor from other organizations?
 - **Sustainability:** Can it be maintained and scaled over time?
- Consider/Assess:
 - People & Teams
 - Technology
 - Business Processes





Share Your Core Competencies

- Identify 2-3 core strengths that define your organization
- Share responses in chat or raise hand



Case Study

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STAFFING

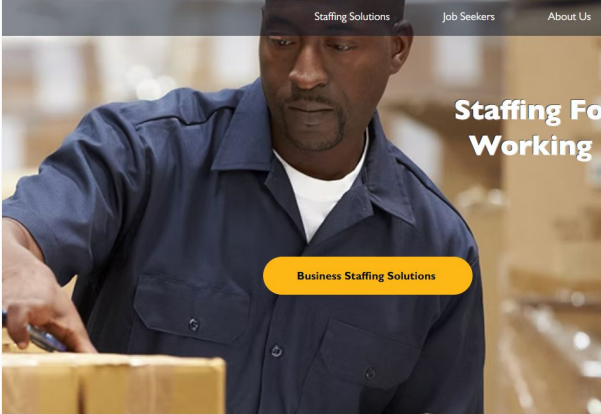


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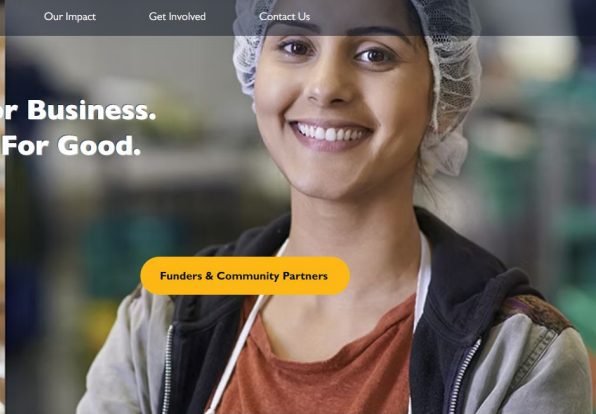
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\$49.5+
Million Payroll



25,000+
Workers Nationwide



100,000+
Rides to Work





Leveraging Strengths to Build Strategic Partnerships

Introducing: [First Step Staffing](#), an Atlanta-based ESE

First Step Staffing provides job opportunities for individuals experiencing homelessness, veterans, and those facing barriers to employment. Founded in **Atlanta, Georgia**, First Step has expanded to multiple cities, successfully employing over **8,000 individuals annually** by strategically partnering with **businesses, workforce development agencies, social service providers, and impact investors**.



First Step Staffing:

CORE STRENGTHS



Teamwork ● Heart ● Resilience ● Integrity ● Vision ● Empower

first step
STAFFING



1. Workforce Training & Staffing Model

- First Step Staffing **hires, trains, and places** individuals in entry-level jobs across industries such as logistics, manufacturing, and hospitality.
- The organization **acts as a staffing agency**, managing payroll and HR services to reduce risk for employer partners.
- **Partnership Strategy:**
 - First Step partners with **large corporations** (e.g., **Amazon, UPS, Marriott**) to provide trained employees who are ready for work.
 - Employers gain access to a reliable workforce while fulfilling corporate social responsibility (CSR) goals.



2. Wraparound Support Services for Job Retention

- First Step recognizes that employment alone does not solve long-term challenges. They integrate **housing assistance, transportation support, and career coaching** to improve job retention rates.
- **Partnership Strategy:**
 - They collaborate with **nonprofits** like **United Way and The Salvation Army** to provide emergency housing and financial literacy programs for employees.
 - This **holistic approach** reduces turnover and improves long-term workforce stability.



3. Financial Sustainability Through Impact Investment & Grants

- Instead of relying solely on philanthropy, First Step generates revenue through **staffing contracts with businesses** while securing **grants and impact investments** to expand operations.
- **Partnership Strategy:**
 - Secured funding from **The Kendeda Fund, Robin Hood Foundation, and MacArthur Foundation** to scale services.
 - Partnered with **municipal governments** to receive workforce development grants supporting underserved communities.



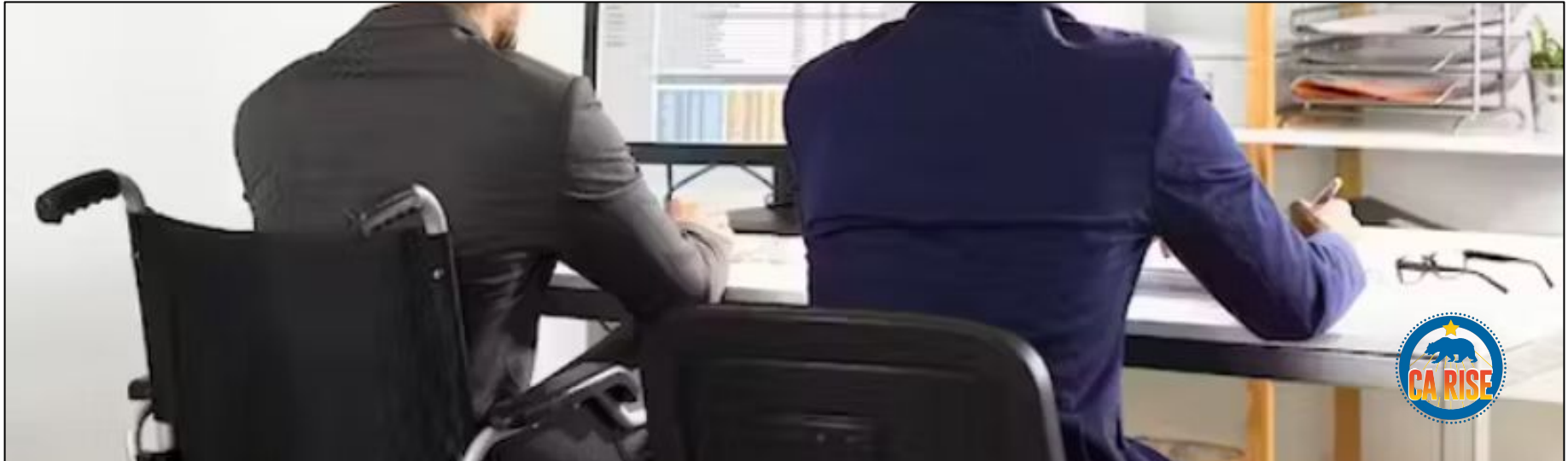
4. Scaling Through Mergers & Acquisitions

- First Step has successfully expanded by **acquiring staffing firms** and **repurposing them into social enterprises** that serve marginalized populations.
- **Partnership Strategy:**
 - Acquired **Philadelphia-based On Time Staffing** to expand workforce solutions beyond Georgia.
 - Built strong relationships with **local workforce agencies** to align with regional employment initiatives.



First Step Staffing:

THE IMPACT

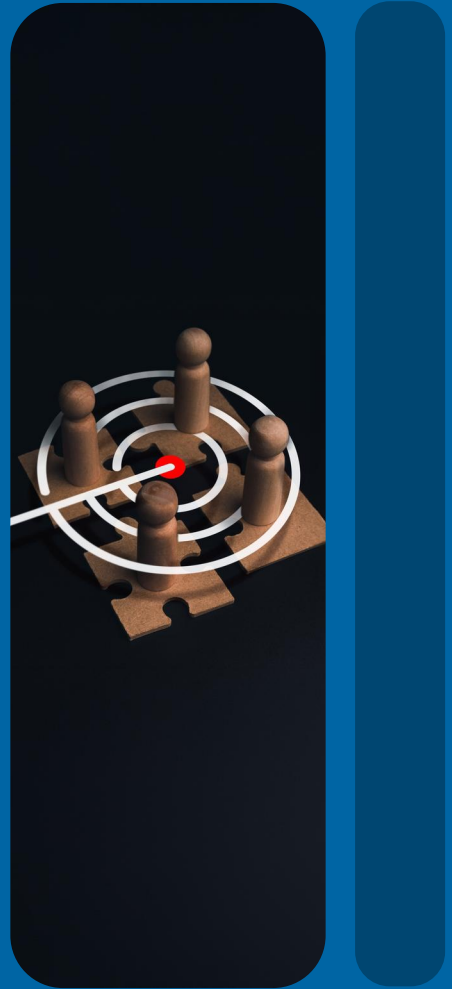


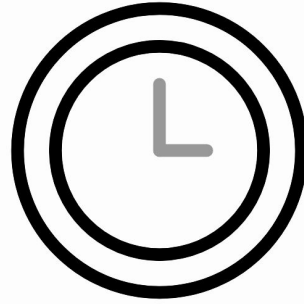
- **Over 8,000 individuals placed in jobs annually**, with a **65% job retention rate at six months**.
- **Major employer partnerships** with UPS, Amazon, and Marriott demonstrate how ESEs can integrate into mainstream hiring pipelines.
- **Blended revenue model** (earned income + philanthropy + government funding) ensures financial sustainability and scalability.
- **Cross-sector partnerships** (corporate, nonprofit, and government) create **a holistic support system** for employees.



2

Internal Stakeholder Group Profiles and Needs





Break out Room

Internal Stakeholder Needs



Two Sides of the Partnership Coin

- Core Competencies = **Value Out**
 - Helps you identify the value your organization brings to the partnership discussion table
- Mapping Internal Stakeholder Needs = **Value In**
 - Helps you identify the value you need to receive from a potential partnership



Identifying Internal Stakeholders

- Start with who are your internal stakeholders?
 - Groups within your organization that influence or are impacted by partnerships
- Examples:
 - Leadership, staff, program participants, board members



Understanding Stakeholder Needs



1

What are the key needs and priorities of each stakeholder group?

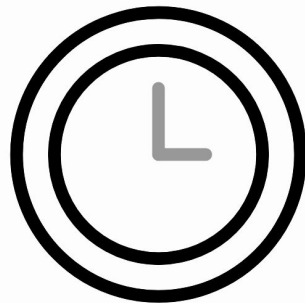
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How do these needs influence partnership decisions?



Mapping Internal Stakeholders By Core Competencies:

CORE COMPETENCY	KEY INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS
Workforce training & job placement	Training coordinators, job coaches, case managers
Wraparound support services	Social workers, case managers, mental health specialists
Employer & industry partnerships	Business development team, employer relations managers
Financial sustainability & business ops	Finance team, grant writers, impact investors, board members
DEI & inclusive hiring practices	HR department, leadership team, program participants
Data-driven program evaluation	Impact measurement specialists, operations team



20-Minute Breakout Room Instructions

Self-Reflection: 5 minutes

Guided Discussion: 15 minutes

- Who are your key internal stakeholders?
- What are their biggest challenges and needs?
- How well do your current partnerships address those needs?
- What additional partnerships may help to close the gap?



Reflections



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Key Takeaways from Breakout Rooms

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3

Partnership Ecosystem Gaps

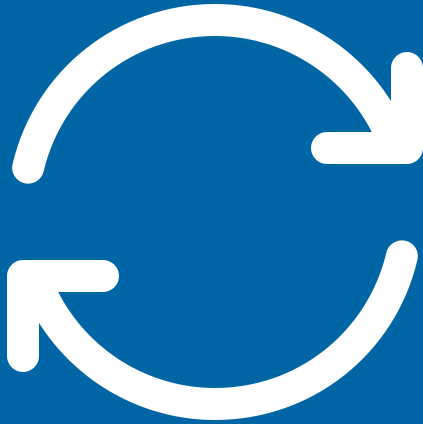


Reflection Question: Filling the Gaps



What's one gap in your partnership ecosystem that you need to fill?





In Summary...

01

Understand your core competencies and their role in partnerships

02

Outline internal stakeholders and their needs to determine strategic partnership needs

03

Identify gaps in the partnership ecosystem

Preparing for our last session..

Mental Prep:

Start listing potential partners that could fill identified gaps

Session 3 Preview:

Partnership Ecosystem Value Propositions

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



Take this quick survey:

<https://tinyurl.com/tpctsjfz>

