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Building skills for a strong economy.

Strategic Employer Engagement:

Building Dynamic Relationships with Employers in Teen and Young Adult Employment Programs

A Workforce Development Practitioner's Guide

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IN PRACTICE SERIES

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Teen and young adult-focused workforce development initiatives play the important role of providing young people with the training, support and advocacy they need in order to succeed in the workplace. While understanding and responding to the needs of young people is valuable, of equal importance is the ability to engage with employers. An effective employer engagement strategy is one which, in addition to providing job opportunities for young people, enlists employers as partners in the process of preparing them for work. For such a partnership to flourish, it must address not only the needs of young people, but the needs of employers.

The tools included in this guide are focused on providing teen/young adult-focused workforce development professionals with resources to aid in planning and executing a successful employer engagement activities and related youth employment programming. These tools come from a variety of sources. Some are newly created, some have been adapted to fit the purposes of this guide and others are presented in their original form.

The goal is to provide flexible, practical tools that can be used (or adapted for use) in a variety of settings. While many of the tools may be used as standalone pieces, you may find that others work best when used in combination with each other. Still others may be more effective once staff has received training on how to use them. Tools are arranged in accordance with a five-step process:

- ✓ Step One: Assessing your current realities and goals
- ✓ Step Two: Preparing young people for the workplace
- ✓ Step Three: Finding employers for your program
- ✓ Step Four: Building relationships with employers
- ✓ Step Five: Managing the ongoing relationships you have built

Appendix: Developing an employer engagement marketing campaign

INTRODUCTION

This guide is designed around a strategic employer engagement model to help workforce development professionals in their efforts to increase the number and quality of training and employment experiences available to teens and young adults—a segment of the population that often struggles to find their place in the work world.

The strategic employer engagement model is loosely based on Miller and Heiman's *Strategic Selling*, a popular sales training methodology which stresses the importance of understanding the nature of a *complex sale*—one in which multiple people must give their approval in order for the sale to be completed. Though not technically a *sale*, our model recognizes that engaging in youth employment initiatives requires a complex commitment on the part of employers. Employers must make a substantial commitment of money and/or time, and it can be a challenge for employers to make youth employment initiatives fit into their workplaces. For workforce development professionals, recognizing the complexity of the commitment we ask employers to make - and thinking strategically about how to help employers make it--is an important first step to building stronger relationships with employers.

This model emphasizes the value of building a *dynamic relationship* with employers—one which includes connections with the people and departments who will help to ensure a successful job placement. With a larger employer, a dynamic relationship consists of connections with multiple employees at multiple levels in an organizations' hierarchy. An ideal mix will include high level decision makers/executives, human resources/recruiting staff, public/community relations staff, department managers & other staff members in any department. **A true dynamic relationship with an employer will include relationships at all of these levels.** By developing relationships at multiple levels you provide yourself with insurance against:

- Having a relationship which is dependent on the continued employment of one individual
- Overburdening one individual with every request you may have of that employer
- Being turned down by an employer who would be willing to work with you because you did not have a relationship with the right person/department
- Failing to learn about the full spectrum of that employers needs and potentially missing other opportunities to engage with them
- Gaining the acceptance of one person/department, only to have your success undone by another person/department that refuses to get on board.

In smaller organizations, one or more of the functions outlined above may be played by the same person (indeed, the sole proprietor of a small business may perform all of these functions). While it may not be possible to connect with multiple employees at one employer site; this model promotes focusing on the roles played by the people/person with whom you are connected. Even if those roles are consolidated into only one or two people, a dynamic relationship with a small employer will involve connections to whoever is responsible for high level decisions, recruiting, supervision, etc. Regardless of the size of the employer you are working with, building a *dynamic relationship* helps you to connect with the full spectrum of an employer's needs.

This guide will help you to think strategically through the process of finding employers to work with, but also about how to structure your relationships with employers to ensure that you make the most out of your connections.

STEP ONE

STEP ONE: PRE ENGAGEMENT: KNOWING YOUR CURRENT REALITIES

Before you start attracting new employers to your work it's essential to take stock of your current realities. Here are some basic questions:

- Are your staff members experienced in employer engagement or has this become an add-on task for them? If it's a new role, what type of training is necessary to give them the skills they need to outreach, pitch your organization, and keep up with business trends?
- What existing relationships do you have with local employers? Do you have enough relationships to serve your needs, or do you need to build on what you have?
- Are you competing with other organizations for the same group of employers? Would it make sense to join forces and create a united front for young people in need of jobs?

The tools in this section were selected to help you better understand your assets and challenges so that you can focus efforts most productively. Whether you are creating or fine tuning youth employment programs, developing a campaign to engage employers, or attempting to uncover business trends and employer needs in the labor market, the first steps involve figuring out what capabilities you already have and what new capacity you need to build.

Also, your ability to learn from what has or hasn't worked in previous employer partnerships will help establish your credibility in any endeavor with employer partners. If you've had employer engagement activities in the past or on a seasonal basis (i.e., summer jobs), think through ways that you can re-engage and build future follow through into your plans—this may include adding recognition activities, career awareness programs, or task-force activities to your community programs.

Self Assessment Tool: The self-assessment tool on page 7 will help you organize your thoughts about your current realities surrounding employer engagement. Use it to assess your staff's preparedness to mount an employer engagement campaign or work with employers; your agency's knowledge of its local labor market; your capacity to manage relationships with employers; and the strength of your "value proposition" to employers.

Inventory of existing employer relationships: Use the inventory tool on page 12 to compile a snapshot of your current relationships with employers and how they have engaged in your work**. TIP:** If your agency runs multiple programs, consider completing/comparing separate inventories for each initiative, or for the entire agency.

TAKE IT TO GO

Taking Stock Self-Assessment Tool
Current Realities
1. Which staff members (name/title) are responsible for Job Development/Employer Engagement?
2. Is Job Development/Employer Engagement a new responsibility for them, or an existing part of their jobs?
3. Have these staff members received any specific training in job development or employer engagement?
If so, how have these staff members been trained?

Directions: Complete the assessment below by checking the box which corresponds to both your agency's capacity and priories in the following areas:

Staff Preparation (how prepared is your staff to meet your goals?):	Capacity	Priority
	Check One	**Check One**
1. Job development/employer engagement staff has sufficient training/experience to achieve program goals	Needs Improvement____ Satisfactory___ Strong____	Low priority___ Medium priority___ High priority___
2. Staff has knowledge of local labor market in program's target sector(s)	Needs Improvement____ Satisfactory___ Strong____	Low priority___ Medium priority___ High priority___
3. Staff can articulate program goals/desired outcomes	Needs Improvement____ Satisfactory___ Strong____	Low priority___ Medium priority___ High priority___

Labor Market Information (do you know about your target sector?):	Capacity	Priority
	Check One	**Check One**
1. Awareness of key local employers in program's target industry sector(s)	Needs Improvement____ Satisfactory___ Strong____	Low priority___ Medium priority___ High priority___
2. Awareness of skill-set required in target industry sector(s)	Needs Improvement____ Satisfactory___ Strong____	Low priority___ Medium priority___ High priority___
3. Awareness of current and future job prospects in target industry sector(s)	Needs Improvement____ Satisfactory___ Strong____	Low priority___ Medium priority___ High priority___

Prospecting/Outreach needs:	Capacity	Priority
	Check One	**Check One**
1. Current relationships with employer(s) committed to providing **subsidized** job placements (if applicable)	Needs Improvement____ Satisfactory___ Strong____	Low priority___ Medium priority___ High priority___
2. Current relationships with employer(s) committed to providing **unsubsidized** job placements	Needs Improvement____ Satisfactory___ Strong____	Low priority___ Medium priority___ High priority___
3. Current relationships with employer(s) committed to engaging in other activities (career awareness events, advisory boards, etc.)	Needs Improvement____ Satisfactory___ Strong____	Low priority___ Medium priority___ High priority___
4. Number of committed placements is sufficient to serve all program participants	Needs Improvement____ Satisfactory___ Strong____	Low priority___ Medium priority___ High priority___
5. Relationships with/knowledge of local chambers of commerce and/or relevant industry/trade associations	Needs Improvement____ Satisfactory___ Strong____	Low priority___ Medium priority___ High priority___
6. Marketing/outreach tools (program brochures, letters, etc.) are sufficient to generate new relationships/placements in target industry sector(s)	Needs Improvement____ Satisfactory___ Strong____	Low priority___ Medium priority___ High priority___

Value Proposition (how are you "selling" yourself to employers?):	Capacity	Priority
	Check One	Check One
1. Ability to articulate program goals to prospective employers	Needs Improvement____ Satisfactory___ Strong____	Low priority___ Medium priority___ High priority___
2. Program goals are responsive to employers needs	Needs Improvement____ Satisfactory___ Strong____	Low priority___ Medium priority___ High priority___
3. Strategy for overcoming employer objections	Needs Improvement____ Satisfactory___ Strong____	Low priority___ Medium priority___ High priority___

Relationship management (how do you work with employers?):	Capacity	Priority
	Check One	Check One
1. Strategy to transition clients from lower to higher levels of commitment	Needs Improvement____ Satisfactory___ Strong____	Low priority___ Medium priority___ High priority___
2. Strategy to serve clients who struggle with/fail to meet program objectives	Needs Improvement____ Satisfactory___ Strong____	Low priority___ Medium priority___ High priority___
3. Strategy to maintain/repair relationships with employers if they have a negative experience	Needs Improvement____ Satisfactory___ Strong____	Low priority___ Medium priority___ High priority___
4. Strategy to recognize/promote employers who support your program	Needs Improvement____ Satisfactory___ Strong____	Low priority___ Medium priority___ High priority___

Summary Activity
1. Please list three strengths or accomplishments in your employer engagement efforts/strategy
2. Please list three challenges or capacities your agency would like to develop further.

TAKE IT TO GO

Inventory of existing employer relationships

Program: ______________________________

Employer Name	Contact Name/Title	How did you connect with this employer?	*Engagement history*		
			Activity 1: ______________ *(e.g. # of youth hired)*	Activity 2: ______________ (e.g. Job shadow day)	Activity 3: ___________ (e.g. advisory board member)

TAKING STOCK QUESTIONS

1. Are staff members trained and ready to do employer engagement?
2. Do we have sufficient relationships to accomplish program goals?
3. Are there significant employers missing from our list?
4. Are employers engaged at multiple levels (i.e. hiring, career awareness & advising)?
5. Are there opportunities to engage these employers ways they currently are not engaged?
6. Are there patterns in how we connected with these employers?
7. What are the lessons learned from past relationships with employers? (Did we burn bridges? Not follow through? Get them excited and then not engage them?)

KNOW YOUR SERVICE LANDSCAPE

It is likely that others within your agency, or other local workforce development agencies, schools or community-based organizations are also seeking to build relationships with employers in your area. Being aware of these other players is of tremendous value. This knowledge can help you:

- Recognize opportunities to collaborate with/assist others who have similar/complementary goals (e.g. partnering with adult-focused staff, or a community organization that serves a different population may be an effective way to position your organization as a resource to help employers connect with multiple initiatives in a coordinated way)
- Coordinate your outreach efforts with others and reduce the *compassion fatigue* employers may feel as result of being approached by multiple agencies, while gaining efficiency in outreach efforts with the goal of engaging a larger number of employers than any one organization could reach alone
- Learn/benefit from the strengths of staff/agencies whose approach differs from yours
- Present a unified front to employers—instilling in them a sense that the workforce system is less complicated to work with

Use the tool on page 14 to organize your knowledge of the other programs/agencies providing services in your area.

TAKE IT TO GO

Crosswalking Youth Initiatives (Adapted from School and Main Institute, Boston MA)

Use this tool to map other youth-serving agencies in your area to assess potential collaboration opportunities & inform investments & implementation strategies.

Other Youth Service Initiatives/Agencies → **Background** ↓	**Your Agency/ Program**	**Other Agencies/ Programs**			
Overall Purpose					
Target Population Served (identify any eligibility criteria including age, specific barriers, etc.**)**					
Key Activities/Services (include length of service specifications, if any)					
Other Considerations (funding sources, data collected, etc.)					

STEP TWO

STEP TWO: GETTING YOUNG PEOPLE READY FOR WORK

Young people who are prepared to take advantage of job placement opportunities are the ‘product’ you are selling to employer partners. The process of preparing young people for employment is multifaceted and may involve more than one stage and/or program model. Preparation for youth employment includes developing “soft skills” such as showing initiative or developing an understanding of the social dynamics and hierarchical structures common in many workplaces, as well as job-specific “hard skills.”

What matters most is that employers have positive interactions with the young people you serve so that they want to continue to work with you. When you place a young person with an employer, it is necessary to consider whether the young person is ready to succeed in the workplace, and to have a plan for how you will measure their skills and performance. Being able to show an employer a return on their investment will help you keep and potentially deepen your relationship.

ESTABLISHING A WORK-BASED LEARNING PLAN

Effective ‘learn and earn’ programs have participants complete a training or learning plan to structure work activities and to give employers a tool for giving feedback. There are many methods of evaluating work readiness and performance; one commonly used tool is the Massachusetts Work-Based Learning Plan (MWBLP), a diagnostic, goal-setting and assessment tool designed to drive learning and productivity on the job. The tool is designed with flexibility in mind. As such, it can be completed by your program staff, a worksite supervisor, or program participant.

To locate the **Massachusetts Work Based Learning Plan** and related materials, visit http://www.skillslibrary.com/wbl.htm.

Chart 1 shows a list of some commonly measured skills that can be assessed with this tool.

Chart 1 Skills Assessed with Massachusetts Work-Based Learning Plan

Skill Group	Specific Work Readiness Topics
Work Readiness and Career Exploration Skills	World-of-work awareness Labor market knowledge Occupational information Values clarification and personal understanding Career planning, goal setting and decision making Job search techniques (resumes, interviews, applications, and follow-up letters) Survival/daily living skills
Foundation Skills	**Work Ethic and Professionalism:** Attendance and punctuality Workplace appearance Accepting direction and constructive criticism Motivation and taking initiative Understanding workplace culture, policy and safety **Communication and Interpersonal Skills:** Speaking Listening Interacting with co-workers
Specific Workplace and Career Skills	Collecting and Organizing Information Computer Technology and Software Critical Thinking Connecting with Customers and Clients Leadership Mathematics and Numeric Analyses Problem Solving Project Management Reading Research and Analysis Teaching and Instructing Time Management Understanding All Aspects of an Industry Writing

Depending on the scope of your program, a workplace learning assessment tool may be a simple pre- and post- checklist of skills; or it can be a dynamic description of a youth's evolving skills that is co-created by both the employer and the young person.

STEP THREE

STEP THREE: FINDING EMPLOYERS

Of equal importance to preparing young people for the work world is the role workforce development agencies, educators and community agencies can play in building connections with employers. This section offers ideas and resources to help you better understand your labor market. This includes resources to help you access (and make sense of) statistical data, as well as thoughts about to make the most of business networking opportunities, such as those provided by Chambers of Commerce or professional trade associations.

KNOW YOUR LABOR MARKET

While you probably know who the "big fish" are among local employers, it's wise to keep an eye on local job postings, business news, openings, closings, layoffs etc., to ensure that you know what's going on with employers in your area.

Keeping track of large employers is always advisable. If they require a large number of employees with a specific skill-set, perhaps you can tailor the training you offer your clients to help create a pipeline of future employees. Or, perhaps the steps which lead to a successful placement in an individual department can be replicated across several departments or branches, turning that employer into a source of high-volume placements.

Don't overlook smaller businesses—recent statistics from the US Small Business Administration (www.sba.gov) indicate that small businesses account for 47.8% of private-sector jobs in Massachusetts and that small businesses comprise 97.9% of the state's total number of employers. Additionally, small businesses may be easier to work with, as they often have more flexible HR policies, or fewer bureaucratic complications to stand in the way of making a placement.

USING LABOR MARKET INFORMATION RESOURCES:

Labor Market Information (LMI) exists in many forms and many places. Often the information is expressed in the form of statistics or reports which can be overwhelming to service providers who may not be data crunchers. Another challenge is that the information may not be parsed in a way which specifically lines up with the population, sector, or geographic region your program serves.

Don't allow these facts to discourage you from seeking out LMI—the more you know about trends in your local workforce, the better equipped you will be to design and deliver programs which serve the needs of your local employers. It can also be helpful to use LMI as a starting point for your conversations with employers. If the information you read points to some specific trends in the employer's industry, it may be interesting to explore how your analysis compares with the real-world experience of employers in your area.

One method for getting comfortable with LMI sources is to begin by looking at information related to a sector or occupation you already have some familiarity with. Once you understand how the information is presented, you may find it easier to interpret information about sectors you are less familiar with. While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to accessing LMI, below are some websites and resources which present such information in a variety of digestible forms:

- **The Massachusetts Online Labor Market and Career Exploration Resource Guide for WIA Youth Programs:** http://www.commcorp.org/resources/documents/LaborMarket_onlineRG.pdf

This Commonwealth Corporation publication points to several online LMI sources and suggests ways you may use them to augment your programs.

- **Employment Projections:** http://www.bls.gov/emp/home.htm

The Employment Projections Program (EPP) of the National Bureau of Labor Statistics has compiled a wealth of data-driven information on their website which can be used to explore employment trends across many industries. This includes the publication of an "Occupational Outlook Handbook" which highlights trends in many sectors. The handbook provides information on earnings, expected job prospects, what workers do on the job and working conditions. While you can use this information to inform your clients in their own job searches it can be especially helpful in your program design phase, allowing to you make more informed decisions about which occupations to target and what kinds of skills, education and supports your program can offer to clients seeking jobs in these fields.

How can I use employment projections?

One helpful way to use this site to research how many jobs there are (and how many are projected over the next 10 years) in a specific occupation. Whatever the young people you work with want to do (from Accountant to Zoologist), start by looking at the "EP Topics" section (on the left hand side of the page, about half way down). Mouse over the "Employment by Occupation" menu item and select "Occupational Data Search Tool." Then select "Search by Occupation." Now, by entering a keywords or job titles, you can get recent statistics or 10 year projections on how many jobs exist in this occupation. Now, you can compare and contrast different occupations to determine the most promising fields.

- **Post-Secondary Education and Training Search:** http://data.bls.gov/oep/servlet/oep.noeted.servlet.ActionServlet?Action=empeduc

A related resource is the BLS Post-Secondary Education and Training Search site. This site provides easy access to real-world data showing the correlation between levels of education attainment, job prospects and salaries for a wide range of occupations. This data can be used to identify promising occupations for young people, to illustrate the impact additional education has on their employability and earning potential, or to inform your agency's decisions about which occupations or credentials you may wish to build programs around.

How can I use information about post-secondary education and training?

Use this site to add another level of detail to the data you gathered in the search on employment projections. Here, you can see how job projections and basic wage information are impacted by the level of education a candidate has. You can use this information to inform the advice you give to young people about what level of education to pursue, or simply use it to illustrate to a young person the specifics of how attaining a higher level of education will affect the number of opportunities available to them in their chosen field.

- **Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development:**
  http://www.mass.gov/lwd/economic-data/

The Labor Market Information section of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development's website contains a wealth of information about local employment trends and projections. Here you can find lists (parsed by town, county, metro area or workforce investment area) of the largest employers in a given area; download staffing pattern and wage data for virtually every industry in the state, or research job projections for 750 occupations and 150 industries in Massachusetts.

How can I use local lists of employers?

Among the many useful resources on this site is the "employer" tab. From the main page, click on "Employers." This will bring you to page where you can search for employer information geographically and by industry sector. Here, you can find the names, locations and sizes of employers in your area. You can use this information to determine who the largest employers in your area are, to identify all of the employers in a given industry sector, or to discover employers you may not have known existed.

- **MassCIS:**
  http://masscis.intocareers.org/

http://masscis.intocareers.org/ViewHtmlStandalone.aspx?File=materials/Toolsforcounselors.htm

The MassCIS (Career Information System) web portal contains career information, planning and assessment tools designed to help both students and adults research educational and career opportunities. The site also offers a "Tools for Counselors" page with tutorials, activities career advisors can use with their clients.

How can I use career exploration materials?

The best way to get to know this site is to explore it. Either you or the young people you work with can create an account, or log on by providing the ZIP code for your town. Once logged in, the site provides user-friendly access to tools and information related to job search, education options, military careers, and self-assessment tools.

USE YOUR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE/TRADE ASSOCIATIONS EFFECTIVELY

Most Chambers/trade associations offer structured networking events (often breakfast or "cocktail" events) that are a great way to meet people and to gather business cards or distribute your program information. Chambers of Commerce and professional trade associations exist to help businesses grow. Businesses join these groups for a variety of reasons, such as to gain access to group insurance rates, to receive member discounts on business products, or participate in business-focused trainings and seminars. But businesses know that a major benefit of joining these groups is the opportunity to network with other professionals. While, for some, the desire to network is limited to a desire to meet potential customers, others are open to making connections of all kinds.

Too frequently, community based agencies overlook the value of the networking opportunities these groups provide. While it is true that a networking event full of sales people may be intimidating at first, it can also be place to get your message out to many employers at the same time. Attending these events is a good idea, but don't overlook the other ways a chamber or trade association can be of help including:

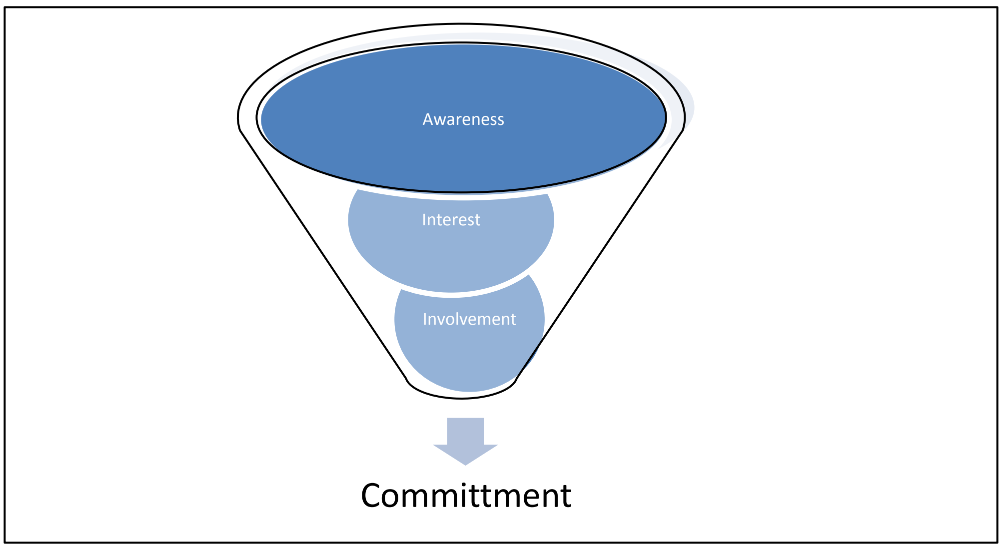
- Chamber/trade association leadership and staff may be able to provide insight into local employers and industry trends, or may be able to introduce you to individuals whom they know to be interested in your cause.
- They may also be willing to help you promote your cause to their members by providing some space in their member publications or giving you some time to speak at an event.
- Chamber/trade association networking events are a great place to find "champions" of your cause. Even if the people you meet are not decision makers at their companies, if they take an interest in your work, they may be willing to introduce you to others (at their company, or in their field) who are decision makers.

- Often the real work of these associations does not happen at networking events, but through committees and subcommittees focused on specific areas (HR, community service, education, etc.). If you can get time in front of these groups (or get a seat on a relevant committee) you may gain access to different people than you'll reach at a general networking event. Targeting committees whose mission aligns with your goals can help you reach not only an employer, *but an employee who is interested in your cause.*
- Often these groups publicize member directories or lists of committee members, even if you can't get time in front of a relevant committee, these lists may be a good starting point for your prospecting efforts. If you use them, don't be shy about mentioning how you found their name.

THE "FUNNEL" APPROACH

A popular way to think about prospecting for empoyer relationships is the funnel metaphor. The basic idea is that when you make employers aware of your programs, they are at the top of your funnel. As they become *interested* and get *involved* in your programs they move through the funnel. The desired outcome is a group of employers ready to make a *commitment* to working with your program on an ongoing basis.

Figure 1
Employer Commitment



Thoughts on applying the funnel metaphor:

- **A funnel is wider at the top:** Successful prospecting begins by creating *awareness*. While not every "aware" employer you input into your funnel will progress all the way to a commitment, your goal should be to fill the top of your funnel with as many *aware* employers as possible—ensuring that if you lose some along the way, there will be others to replace them.

- **A funnel gets narrower toward the bottom:** For those who remain in your funnel, your job becomes to move them through the process—when an employer is *interested* in your work, try to strengthen your relationship by getting them *involved* in something (even if it's only a one-time event). Today's *involved* employers are your best prospects to become tomorrow's *committed* employers.
- **Keep your funnel full:** While employers in the later stages of the process are engaging in your programs, you should always be seeking to add new employers into the top of your funnel. This will ensure that you always have more prospects to work with.
- **Manage the output of your funnel:** When an employer makes a commitment to work with you, be sure to follow up quickly. It sounds simple, but too often employment programs miss the chance to work with a committed employer, because they aren't prepared to follow up.

STEP FOUR

STEP FOUR: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH EMPLOYERS

While identifying employers who are interested in your work is an important first step, the real value of these connections is the relationships you will build over time. Only by getting to know an employer and understanding their needs and interests will you have a chance to engage them as a resource to help with your work. You may find that some employers are interested in hiring the young people you serve; while others may be willing to serve in other roles, such as advising in program design, or sharing their industry expertise with young people, or with program staff.

Because employers' needs and interests may change over time, how you manage your relationships with employers is important. This process begins with the first impression you make—your initial "pitch."

PITCHING YOUR SERVICE TO EMPLOYERS

The most important thing to remember about pitching your services to employers is that your pitch should be constructed in a way that makes it clear to an employer why working with your agency will benefit them. While it is true that young people will benefit by being placed into a job and your agency will benefit by successfully placing more people, these elements speak to the needs of your agency and your clients—not the needs of the employer.

Ideally, your pitch should emphasize how your services will benefit the employer (i.e., helping them save money, complete overlook projects, provide extra coverage during staff vacations, etc.). The **business-need pitch** emphasizes ways in which working with you will help an employer meet their own needs/goals. Elements of a **business-need pitch** about youth employment might include:

- Youth employment is a low-cost way to address current staffing needs
- Engaging in youth employment programs will provide good PR for your company
- Job candidates from Youth employment programs will have already received skills and work-readiness training that prepares them for success at your company
- Introducing young workers to your field today will help build your industry's workforce of tomorrow

Other employers (or people who work for them) are concerned with how the company is perceived in the community or value the idea of corporate social responsibility. These individuals may be responses to the **community-service pitch,** which emphasizes ways in which working with you will serve the needs of the population you are representing.

Elements of a **community-service pitch** about youth employment might include:

- Hiring young people is good for building their confidence and social skills
- Hiring young people gives them a positive outlet which may keep them out of trouble
- Being a mentor to a young person is personally rewarding
- Hiring young people shows that you care about the community

In constructing your pitch it is valuable to develop versions which include both the business need and community service elements and to consider which version is appropriate to the person your speaking with. For example, an employee involved in the financial management of a company may be more responsive to a business-need pitch (how can working with you save the company money?), while someone in community relations may be more responsive to a community-service pitch (how will working with you reflect positively on the company?).

Regardless of their formal title or role at the company, it is important to ask questions of the person you're speaking with to better understand their interests. It is possible that an employee may have a personal or professional interest in either version of the pitch. By asking good questions and being prepared to deliver either style of pitch, you place yourself in the best position to deliver a pitch which speaks to the needs of the employer.

Before you deliver your pitch, it might be helpful to ask some basic questions first:

- How does your company currently find new employees?
- What are the skills/attributes your company seeks in new employees?
- Does your company have experience working with young people/youth employment programs?
- Does your company value community involvement?
- Do you have existing community partners?
- What role/interest do you (the target of your pitch) have in the hiring process?

The answers to questions such as these may help you determine which style of pitch is most likely to resonate with the person you're speaking with.

ELEVATOR PITCH

An "elevator pitch" is a short (30-45 second) description of who you are and what you do. As the name implies, it is the pitch you would give if you found yourself in an elevator with a key decision maker at one of your target employers and had only one or two minutes to explain why they should be interested in working with you. Because you never know when you may have to deliver your elevator pitch, it is a good idea to have one prepared. Your elevator pitch should be short and to the point explaining what you do, and why the listener should be interested. Use the worksheet on page 25 to help you construct your elevator pitch.

TAKE IT TO GO

Elevator Pitch Tool (adapted from business growth consultant Beth Goldstein's book, Lucky By Design: www.m-edge.com)

First define your target audience (who's standing in the elevator with you) and then complete the information below, remembering that you need to deliver this message in two minutes or less.

Target Audience____

- What are three things that might intrigue this target group/person about my agency/program?

  1.
  2.
  3.

What is important to this person as it relates to my agency/program (this is the "So What Factor")?

- Does this person make decisions relevant to my goals?
- Why would this person want to work with me?
- What impression do I want to leave with this individual?
- In 7 words or less, what is my value to employers?

Now, begin crafting your script. Remember, you do not need to use these exact words. As a matter of fact, you should not use these precise words because this template wouldn't be natural for most people. This is provided as a guideline to use in creating your pitch. It's more important to be natural and honest than to develop a script that sounds stilted and insincere.

- In general your elevator pitch should include:

1. Your agency/program name, your name and your role in the organization
2. A clear, concise description of your service and the benefit(s) it provides
3. The current or potential demand for this service
4. A statement about what makes your service unique or sets it apart from others
5. A brief but compelling statement about your service's value as it relates to this person (e.g., addressing staffing needs, saving money, helping the community)
6. Your organizational and/or technical capacity to implement that strategy
7. Your personal energy and passion for making your program succeed

Below is the general template you will use to develop your elevator pitch:

Elevator Pitch Script:

Target Audience____

Hello, thank you for asking about my agency/program. I'm [Your name] and [agency/program name provides[service] for [target audience] . We offer [primary services/strengths] to meet or satisfy the [employer's major want/need] . Our work is important because [your passion, community and/or business impact] . If this is of interest to you, I'd love to provide with a little more detail. Can we set up a time to speak about this further?

A completed script might look something like this:

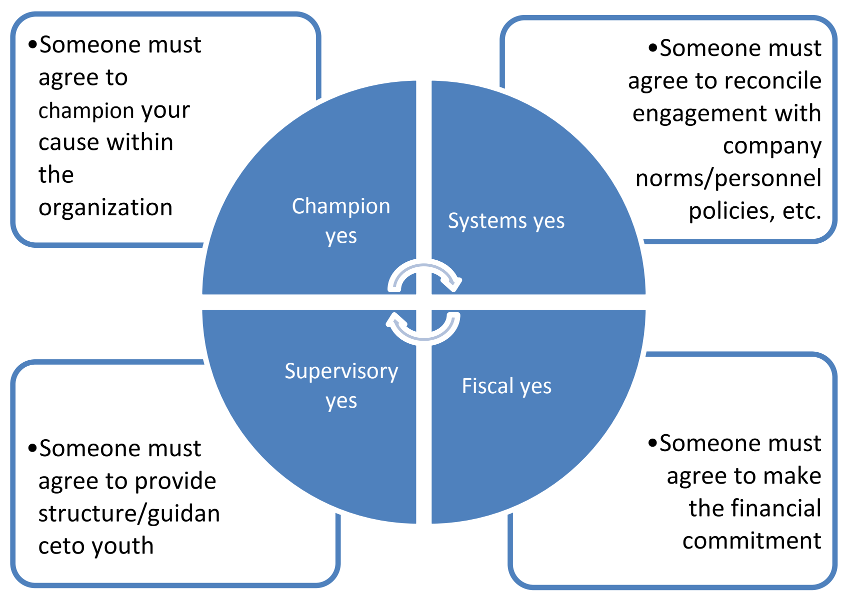
Target Audience: Hiring Manager at a local hospital

Hello, thank you for asking about my agency/program. I'm Jane/John Doe and the ABC Healthcare Training Program provides career readiness and skills training for young people seeking to enter the Medical Assistant profession. We offer skills training and certification our candidates and help employers by offering candidate screening and skill testing to make it easier to find qualified, work ready candidates. Our work is important because there is a great need to create a pipeline of talented young people to fill future openings in the healthcare field. If this is of interest to you, I'd love to provide with a little more detail. Can we set up a time to speak about this further?

DYNAMIC RELATIONSHIPS AND "THE 4 FLAVORS OF 'YES'"

The center of the strategic employer engagement model we introduced at the beginning is the notion that in order for a placement to succeed *the employer must commit to youth employment on four levels.* One level, of course, is that they must have the desire to welcome young people to the world of work (to champion the cause of youth employment); but they must also be committed to making youth employment work with their internal systems/policies, supervisory and fiscal structures.

With this idea in mind, it becomes important for you to build a *dynamic relationship*—one which includes connections to people and/or departments who span all of these areas. It is important to make sure that, within your contacts at any individual employer; you have all four of these bases covered. If you have identified someone who is a champion of your cause, but have not identified a willing supervisor, your placement is likely to fail. Similarly, if someone on staff is willing to hire young people, but they are not authorized to release funding to pay the wages, you won't get very far. Building a dynamic relationship ensures that you have the connections you need in order to make a successful placement.



Depending on the size of the employer, your dynamic relationship may look different from one employer to another. In a larger business, you may have relationships spanning multiple levels within the employer's organizational hierarchy, whereas in a smaller employer it may mean that you're only working with one or two people. Regardless of how many people are involved, the true test of whether your relationship is dynamic is if it can help you to achieve all **4 flavors of "yes"** from the employer:

1. **The Champion Yes**
   A champion is someone connected to the organization, at any level, who believes in your cause. A champion may be someone from within the organization, or from outside of it, but who has knowledge of/relationships with the people who play a role in the decision about whether or not to engage in your work. When you have identified a champion, your goal is to get them to say yes to helping you navigate the organization. A champion can introduce you to key decision makers, be an internal (to the employer) advocate for your program/cause, and help you understand the needs and culture of the organization.

2. **The Systems Yes**
   The systems yes generally comes from someone involved in human resources or personnel functions. To achieve the systems yes, you must assure this person that hiring a young person will not interfere with company policies (payroll, scheduling, dress code, personal conduct in the workplace, performance standards, etc.) that the hiring of a young person will not violate child labor laws, workplace safety regulations or union regulations, etc. This person must also understand how your agency can be used as a resource if any such issue should arise.

3. **The Supervisory Yes**
   The supervisory yes must come from the person/persons who will provide direct supervision to the youth. This person must understand and agree to the role they will play in shaping the young person's day to day experience of work and learning. This includes assigning and evaluating work, monitoring attendance and personal conduct and providing feedback aimed at helping the young person succeed.

4. **The Fiscal Yes**
   The fiscal yes must come from the person who agrees to financial investment in hiring youth. This person must agree to release the funds/resources necessary to bring the young person into the organization. While this yes is of special significance in an unsubsidized placement it is also vital to a subsidized placement, as every employer incurs the costs associated with training and supervising a youth worker. Additionally, if your strategy involves moving an employer from subsidized toward unsubsidized employment, you will benefit by having the finical commitment of the organization.

Because each organization is different, these people will have different titles or functions from employer to employer, and in some case the same individual may be empowered to offer more than one of the "yeses" you need. With an employer you do not know, or with whom you may not yet have a *dynamic relationship*, it's safe to make some educated guesses about the people/departments these yeses will come from, but before proceeding too far, it's wise to seek the counsel of your "champion" before setting your assumptions in stone.

Use the following tool to map an existing relationship with an employer and determine whether you have the right relationships to get the "yeses" you need.

Employer Relationship Mapping: Have you built a dynamic relationship?

A *dynamic relationship* includes connections spanning *multiple levels/functions* in an organization. **In larger organizations** an ideal mix should include high level decision makers/executives, human resources/recruiting staff, public/community relations staff, department managers & other staff members in any department**. In smaller organizations** a dynamic relationship should include the people/person (even if it's only one or two people) who perform these functions.

A true dynamic relationship with an employer will include relationships at <u>all</u> of these levels.

As a youth job developer, you can increase your chances for success if you've heard a "yes" from each of the following:

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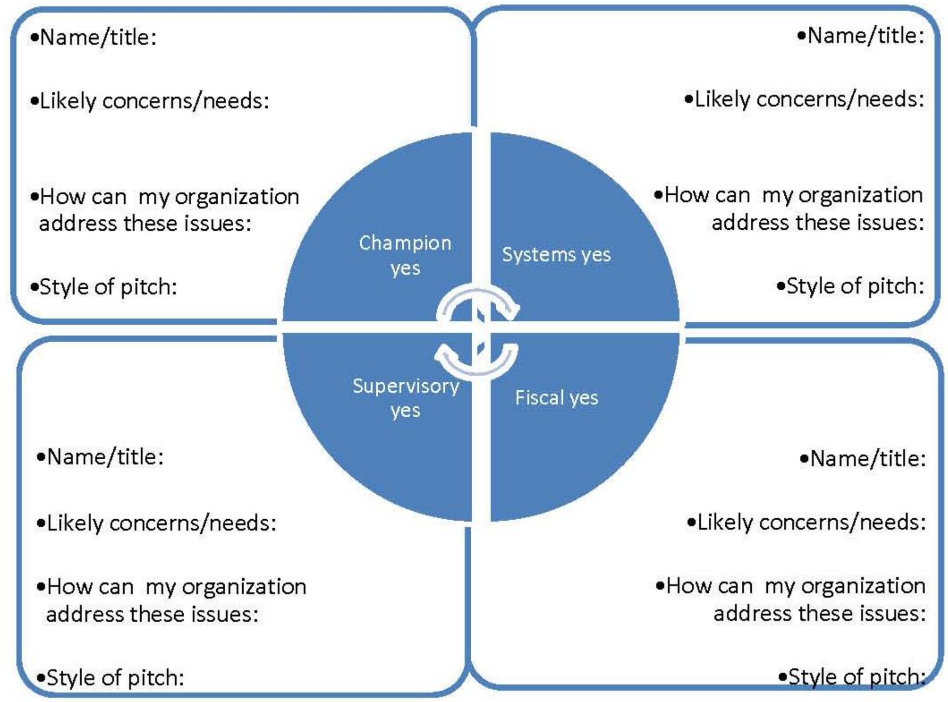
Employer Relationship Mapping Tool



Instructions: Using an existing or prospective employer relationship as your model:

List the person/people (name and/or title) who is the target to provide each kind of "yes" and then answer the following strategic questions:

1. Do I have a relationship with someone who can give each kind of "yes?"
2. What concerns/needs is the person responsible for giving each "yes" likely to express?
3. How can my organization help address these issues

Should my style of pitch for each "yes" emphasize how my program addresses a *business need* of the employer, how it engages the employer in *community service*, or both*?*

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Notes on Relationship Maps

Once you have mapped a relationship with an employer, consider how the relationships you have (or don't have) should have an impact on how you work with them.

For example:

- Remember: In some organizations a single contact person may be responsible for more than one "yes."
- If there is not a "champion" among your "yeses," it should be a high priority to cultivate this relationship.
- If you are having trouble identifying the title/person that can provide a specific "yes" your "champion" is a resource to help you identify the right person.
- Any employer who has given a "fiscal yes" is a strong prospect to hire young people, but if you have not yet achieved a "systems" or "supervisory yes" from the employer, your placement may not be successful.
- If you have only achieved one "yes" from an employer, consider whether there are other ways to immediately engage that person in your work (e.g. hosting a company tour, serving on an advisory board, etc.) while building toward the other "yeses" needed to secure a job placement.
- If you have mapped several relationships, look for patterns which may indicate whether you are successfully building dynamic relationships—if one (or more) "yes" is frequently missing form your maps, perhaps you can adjust your outreach strategy.

Overcoming Objections

In the process of trying to obtain each "yes" it is likely that you will encounter objections from employers. These may be based on concerns ranging from finances, to workplace safety to fears about the level of young people's work readiness. The nature of these concerns is also likely to vary depending on the role of the person with whom you're speaking.

It is important to remember that some employers are being honest when they say they cannot hire young people. If their reason for objecting is sound (the company is in a hiring freeze, or there are industry regulations which prevent them from hiring young people), perhaps the employer can get involved in your work in other ways (e.g., participating in career awareness activities).

More often, however, objections stem form an employer not yet understanding that your agency/program exists to make the process easy for them. For this reason, it is important to have a strategy to overcome such objections. An effective strategy involves *listening* to the objection, *asking questions* to ensure that you understand it correctly and *responding* with information which reinforces why your agency/program is well positioned to address the employer's concern.

A common sales methodology is to frame your response to objections around the words *feel, felt*, and *found.* Use the tool below to guide your thinking about how you might apply this idea to common objections you hear from employers.

(Tool retrieved from: http://enviableworkplace.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/3-Step-Overcoming-Objections-Tool1.pdf)

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3-Step Overcoming Objections Tool

Nine times out of ten, an objection is simply down to a lack of understanding.
Objections can very easily be turned into a positive using 3 little words…
'…Feel, Felt, Found…"

Common Objections	3-Step Sentence
"I don't want to waste time having yet another agency meeting"	E.g. "I understand why you FEEL like that, other Clients of mine initially FELT the same way, but what they have FOUND is that it saves so much time in the long run, because it enables me to identify your priorities and needs so I can provide back up as things get busy later."
"I'm using another recruitment service."	"I can understand why you FEEL loyalty to your current supplier, many of my new clients initially FELT the same, but what they FOUND is that using us a back-up supplier meant that we were able to help them when a need had become urgent for them. This meant they kept their delivery commitments and prevented getting fined."

Practice Your Own:

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Adapted from Enviable Workplace

STEP FIVE

STEP FIVE: MANAGING RELATIONSHIPS WITH EMPLOYERS

Regardless of the focus of your program, your main goal with an employer should always be to *get them to say yes to SOMETHING.* Once you have achieved that goal, your next goal should be to *keep them involved.*

MODEL OF TIERED ENGAGEMENT

In today's economy we know that it's hard to find employers who have the resources to hire young people. Therefore, if it's relevant to your program's structure, it can be of tremendous value to establish a hierarchy of ways employers can get involved. For example:

Figure 3
Tiered Engagement

Unubsidized Employment
- Hiring teen(s) for summer or after school job(s)
- Adding teen employees to company payroll

Subsidized Employment
- Hiring teen(s) for subsidized job(s)
- Employer provides supervision, but wage paid by outside funding source

Serving as an Advisor
- Joining an ongoing advisory board or committee
- Introducing you to others in their field
- Providing feedback on a specific project/initiative

Career Awareness
- Hosting a company tour or job shadow day
- Participating in informational or mock interviews
- Participating as a speaker/panelist at a career event

NOTE: The hierarchy above moves from a higher to a lower level of financial and/or time commitment. Begin by asking for something at the top, and if you encounter resistance move down the list until you find a level at which the employer is comfortable participating.

Keep in mind: Your asks should reflect REAL needs. i.e., ask employers to say "yes" to activities which you actually plan to do. And if they agree, follow through quickly to get them involved.

Move them up (or down) the chain

When an employer engages in any of your activities consider them as a prime prospect to support your other priorities too. Keep track of their involvement with your work so you have a good idea of the ways that have/have not been involved. While you want to remain mindful of asking too much of an individual employer, a "yes" to something lower on your list of priorities can be the start of a relationship which builds toward them saying "yes" to a higher priority ask somewhere down the road.

Similarly, employers who have already engaged in your high priority activities are showing you that they see your goals as compatible with theirs. This means that they may be willing to engage in lower priority activities too. *When this is the case, be sure that a staff member is dedicated to maintaining an appropriate level of contact with the employer, to keep them engaged.*

NOTE: Being consistent about always asking from the top of priority list will help ensure that employers who do engage are aware of your priorities—this increases the chance that—if they engage in a lower priority activity--they will not be blindsided when you ask them for a greater commitment over time.

Strategies for engaging employers at multiple levels:

- Publicize the contributions individual employers make to your work
- Engage them as a partner in networking within their field (this strengthens your relationship with them by showing that you believe they are leaders in their field)
- Engage them in program design/delivery whenever possible
- Position yourself as an expert resource in the workforce development system and the workforce needs of their field

The now defunct National Employer Leadership Council's (NELC) "Participation Menu" (below) provides a useful way to think about how employers can get involved in your work. Use it to measure how many ways you have engaged with your current employers, or to generate new ideas to get them involved:

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

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Participation Menu - Examples	Ages	Length of Activity	Employee to Youth Ratio
Working Directly with Youth & Youth Service Staff			
Career Awareness			
• Career Talks: Visit young people in their program or school and explain your work, company or industry.	5-21	1-2 hours	1:25
• Workplace and Industry Tours: Let youth tour your work site, talk with employees and observe workplace activities.	5-21	1-2 hours	1:10 or 25
• Lessons/Learning Activities: Help a class, after-school program, or small group of young people work on a short-term activity or project related to your job or skills.	5-21	1-5 one-hour visits	1:10 or 25
• Career Days/Career Fairs: Present or staff a table at a special career event. Allow youth to meet you to learn about your company and industry.	11-21	2 hours to half day	Varies
• Tutoring: Meet with a young person to help him or her master basic or advanced skills.	5-21	2 hours a week	Varies
Career Exploration			
• Job Shadowing: Allow a young person to follow you around during your normal job activity.	11-21	Varies, 1 day to 2 weeks	1:1 to 5
• Job Rotations: Let a young people transfer among a number of positions and tasks at your worksite so they can learn about how each part of your organization contributes to products and services you provide.	14-21	Varies by program	1:1 to 5
• Entrepreneurship and Service Learning: Coach young people as they plan, develop, and operate or simulate a small business or volunteer project.	12-21	Min. 4-6 weeks	1:1 to 25
• Mentoring: Meet regularly to review and work on career-related skill needs and expose a young person to your career, life, and workplace environment.	12-21	Min. 10 months, 3-4 hours a month	1:1 to 2
Career Preparation			
• Projects: Support, coach, and teach a young person or small group as they work on a longer-term career-related learning project.	14-21	Min. 8 weeks, 1-2 hours a week	1:1 to 8
• Internships and Work Study: Provide a paid or unpaid, volunteer, school year or summer internship. Supervise specific projects or tasks, as well as mastery of targeted learning goals.	16-21	Min. 1 semester, 5-10 hours a week or full time for 4-6 weeks	1:1 to 8
• Occupational Training Program: Partner with an educational organization to deliver specialized training, usually leading to certification, which includes workplace experience.	18-21	Varies	1:1 to25
• Youth Apprenticeship: Provide a multi-year training program that combines school and work-based learning in a specific occupational area and leads directly into a related post-secondary program, job, or registered apprenticeship program. Paid or unpaid.	16-21	Min. 1 semester, 5-10 hours a week	1:1 to 8
• Apprenticeship (Registered): Provide a structured training program registered with the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training (BAT), US Dept. of Labor, or one of 27 State Apprenticeship Agencies or Councils approved by BAT.	18-21	1-6 years, defined by the program	Defined by program
Building a Workforce System			
• Local Governance: Serve as a member of local youth service, workforce, business, and industry leadership organizations and actively guide youth investment strategies.		1+ years, 5-10 hours a month	
• Industry Clusters: Work within an existing industry group or association to identify work-based and other learning opportunities for youth. Advise local workforce efforts.		1+ years, 1-2 hours a month	
• Industry Skill Standards: Participate in formal efforts to develop and share information about the skills your industry requires or will require. Strengthening Internal Company Practices		1+ years	
Strengthening Internal Company Practices			
• Internal Inventory: Review your company's current involvement with youth efforts. Ensure that resources support programs that match your company's interests.		3-5 hours	
• Supervisor Preparation: Provide training to employees who will supervise or mentor youth.		2-5 hours	
• Skill Standards: Incorporate industry skill standards into company training programs and performance review practices.		10+ hours	
• Employee Involvement: Encourage employees to get involved with youth service efforts. Publicize opportunities in company communications. Recognize or reward employees who participate.		1-2 hours a month	

Adapted for WIA youth services from the NELC Employer Participation Model

TAKE IT TO GO

Tiered Menu of employer Engagement

Use this tool to construct a prioritized list of ways employers can get involved in your work. Start at the top with your highest priority ask, and work your way down. For each prioritized item, list the commitments/activities required of employers.

1st. Prority
- committments/activities:

2nd. Prority
- committments/activities:

3rd. Prority
- committments/activities:

4th. Prority
- committments/activities:

For your consideration:

- Activities listed as high priority should reflect not only your organization's goals, but also a higher level of money/time an employer would have to commit to the activity
- In most cases, your appeal to employers should begin with an ask to commit at your highest level. Use lower priority activities as a way to engage employers who are resistant to the higher priority asks
- When employers are positively engaged in your lower priority activities ask them if they can commit to your higher priority activities
- *Consider the individual:* Your contact's title, or role within the organization may have some bearing on how they choose to engage. If your contact is not a decision maker in your high priority areas, match them to an ask which is appropriate to their title/role
- Use engaged individuals as "coaches" to help you understand how to engage others from their company in your work

ARTICULATING RETURN ON INVESTMENT TO EMPLOYERS

Engaging in workforce development initiatives requires a *complex commitment*. While employers may have many reasons for getting involved, it is likely that, at some level, the profitability of the company is among their primary concerns. Therefore is it important to have a strategy to articulate the value their involvement: what will they get in return for their investment.

In 2012, the US Department of Labor released as summer jobs toolkit which focuses on Employer engagement. This toolkit (which can be found online at: http://www.dol.gov/summerjobs/pdf/Toolkit.pdf) contains ROI related resources which can be found starting on Page 94.

In this section are two additional tools from work-basedlearning.org designed to calculate ROI.

ROI Worksheet: Taken From Work-bassedlearning.org:

Note: This template will help you in gathering data to make a Return on Investment (ROI) calculation for your work-based learning program. The information gathered using this form can be entered into the ROI Formula for a Work-based Learning Program template, also available for download on this site.

ROI calculations can be a lot of work, but are the most compelling argument from a business perspective for investments in work-based learning efforts. Please note that the cost and benefit types used in this tool are by no means exhaustive…you may add some that are unique to your particular project.

A time frame should established for all of this data to provide realistic parameters for measuring both costs and benefits. Make sure you leave enough time for benefits to be observed and a value placed on these.

Measuring Costs of Work-based Learning Programs

Cost Type	May Include	Source of Data?	How Will Data Be Measured?	Who Will Collect Data?	Time Frame?	Dollar Value? $_____	Notes
Design and Development	• Needs analysis / research • Curriculum design and development • Course author costs • Purchase of copyrights or "off-the-shelf" material • Production costs for multimedia materials • Promotional costs for course or program						
Administrative	• Program management time • Administrative support Overheads						

Cost Type (continued)	May Include	Source of Data?	How Will Data Be Measured?	Who Will Collect Data?	Time Frame?	Dollar Value? $_____	Notes
Teaching	• Instructors' salaries, per diems, honoraria • Instructors' prep time • Instructors' travel and out-of-pocket expenses						
Materials	• Instructional materials (books, manuals, CD-ROMs, videos, consumables, etc.) • License costs for off-the-shelf materials, software, etc.						
Facilities and Equipment	• Training rooms • Computer labs • Food and drink • Computers, projectors, overheads, flip charts, special network connections, etc.						
Learner Costs	• Travel, hotel, out-of-pocket, etc.						
Opportunity Costs	• Opportunity costs of learners being away from the job / productivity losses / replacement costs						

Measuring Benefits of Work-based Learning Programs

Benefit Type	May Include	Source of Data?	How Will Data Be Measured?	Who Will Collect Data?	Time Frame?	Dollar Value $_______	Notes
Labor / Time Savings	• Reduced duplication of effort • Shorter lead time to reach proficiency (hours saved x $) • Operations performed faster (hours saved x $) • Less supervision required (supervisory hours saved x $) • Less time spent correcting mistakes (hours saved x $) • Faster access to information (hours saved x$)						
Productivity / Performance Improvements	• Faster work rate ($ value of additional units, sales) • Less waste / fewer rejects (real $ savings) • Less accidents ($ savings of claims, lost work, regulatory and administrative effort) • Improved competitiveness / higher market share						
Other Cost Savings	• Less maintenance costs because of fewer machine breakdowns • Lower staff turnover rates, resulting in lower recruitment and training costs • Less grievances, claims, job actions ($ saved)						

TAKE IT TO GO

ROI Formula: Taken form www.work-basedlearning.org

Work-basedLearning.org

ROI Formula for a Work-based Learning Program

Note: After you have gathered the relevant data using the ROI Worksheet, the totals for each cost and benefit type can be placed into this ROI Formula template.

Return on Investment (ROI) = (Benefits / Costs) x 100

This calculation will give you a percentage figure. If the return on investment is 100%, this means that the work-based learning program in question broke even in financial terms (Benefits = Costs). If the percentage figure is above 100%, this means that the financial benefits of the program were greater than the investment required. Obviously, the higher the percentage figure, the greater the ROI.

Costs	
Design and Development	
Administrative	
Teaching	
Materials	
Facilities and Equipment	
Learner Costs	
Opportunity Costs	
Total Costs	**$ Y**
Benefits	
Labor / Time Savings	
Productivity / Performance Improvements	
Other Cost Savings	
Total Benefits	**$ X**
ROI is (X divided by Y) times 100 =	**_______ %**

A FINAL WORD

The tools, resources, and ideas in this guide were designed to provide you with a framework to think strategically about the relationships you build with employers. Whether you've decided to adopt this framework step by step, or found an individual tool or concept which shapes your thinking about employer engagement, we hope you'll find greater success in your efforts to help young people enter the work world.

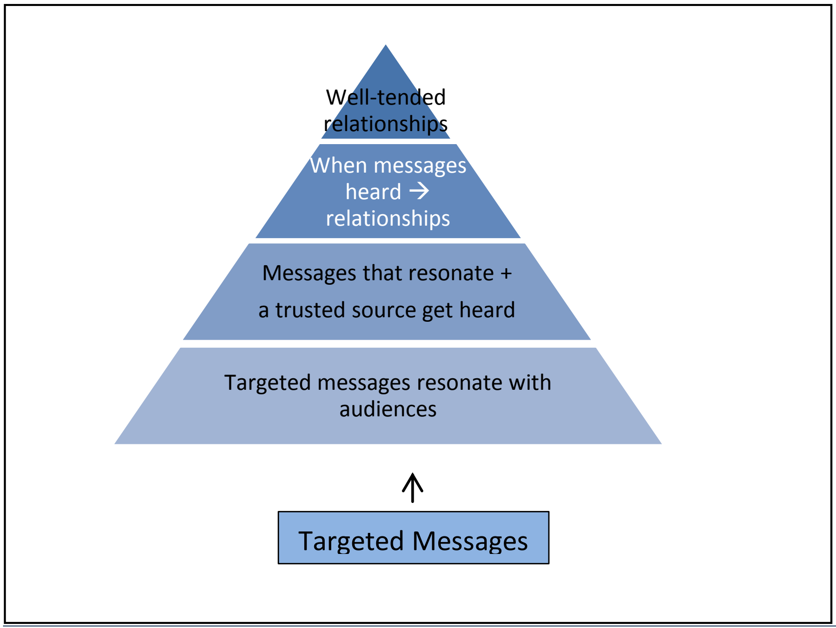
APPENDIX A: CREATING AN EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

Introduction: This section provides resources developed as a part of a grant-supported project to help local workforce investment areas in Massachusetts carry out employer engagement campaigns.[1] The purpose of an employer engagement campaign is to increase the number and quality of youth employment placements and employer-led career awareness and exploration activities—in employer-paid and state or city-paid youth jobs programs.

WHAT IS A MARKETING CAMPAIGN AND HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM MARKETING IN GENERAL?

Marketing can be defined as the messages and methods your organization uses to explain who you are. Figure 1 helps outline the dynamic involved with the right messaging. The key to successful outreach is developing messages targeted to specific audiences' needs and interests. Knowing what your audiences care about will make your messaging resonate with existing and potential employer partners.

Figure 1
Marketing Dynamic



[1] Commonwealth Corporation engaged Karen Horwitz, a strategy and marketing consultant in the nonprofit arena, to develop tools to help youth employment program planners create and implement employer engagement campaigns and outreach programs. The materials and related information in this section have been developed by Karen Horwitz or documented as part of a series of workshops held in the summer and fall of 2012.

To compete with the hundreds of messages that are ‘in the air’ at any given moment, work on developing relationships with people who can be reliable references for your program. Messages get heard when they come from a trusted source that has credibility among your audience (i.e., a community leader, a business association). It is estimated that 20-50% of purchasing decisions are the result of word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendations—particularly for new purchasing decisions. When messages are heard, the potential for building more relationships can happen. And once you deliver benefits and keep partners engaged, relationships become well-tended and can deepen.

Deep engagement with employer partners is a sign of mutually beneficial relationships; deep engagement also makes developing new relationships easier due to the WOM factor. In short, effective marketing can make your job in youth employment programming easier. First, you will have less start-up energy spent on reinventing the wheel when making placements. Second, youth participants benefit by your ability to structure more ‘cohort’ opportunities—whether they be multiple placements of youth in the same business or sector, or in employer partner-led work-readiness and career exploration activities.

A marketing campaign is a series of activities designed and executed to promote a new or existing product or service or to build the brand image of an organization. A campaign is generally a time-bound activity; it is usually a short-term effort but not exclusively. An employer outreach campaign can support ongoing employer engagement efforts or it can be used to attract a new group of partners to a program or organization. Either way, it is an endeavor that requires planning, coordination, and detail-oriented follow through to be successfully implemented. The steps outlined in this **Appendix B** will help you develop a marketing plan to organize and carry out your campaign.

STEP ONE: TARGET YOUR AUDIENCE

The first step in developing targeted messages is to prioritize your audience. It is not possible to effectively focus on every employer in your community. Think strategically about who is most important in meeting your goals. Spend time identifying your priority audiences. Use **Table 1** to help you come up with specific examples of the target audiences you need based on the goal(s) you are trying to meet.

Table 1
Identify Target Audiences

Identify Target Audiences	
Goal: Increase # of youth employed	• Who do we need to engage in order to meet this goal? • Who are actors? Decision-makers? Influencers? • Who is primary audience? Secondary audience?
Goal: Build Relationships with Companies	• Who can help us with this goal? • Are there partnerships/relationships we can form to meet this goal? • Who is primary audience? Secondary audience?
Goal: Get youth ready to succeed on the job	• Who can help us with this goal? • Who can help us determine if we have been successful? • Who is primary audience? Secondary audience?

Target audiences can be separated into two groups. **Primary audiences** are people with a direct role in responding to your outreach campaign. **Secondary audiences** are people who can help you meet employers and persuade them to get involved. Table 2 gives a sample list of primary and secondary audiences in an employer engagement campaign.

Table 2
Primary and Secondary Audience Examples

Primary Audience Examples	Secondary Audience Examples
• STEM employers • Healthcare employers • Green career employers • Manufacturing firms • ICT firms (information and communications technology) • Human resources associations • CEO roundtable –chamber of commerce • HR professional association • Entrepreneur association • CORI friendly employers • Hospitality and recreation • Retail	• Parents • City planner or mayor • Labor unions—apprenticeships and they know who is hiring. • Youth--qualified and work ready • Industry associations—specific sectors • Donors/foundations • Non profits • Schools • Workforce Investment Board networks—WIB boards • Community colleges-- for training • Media-can influence community involvement

STEP TWO: COMMUNICATE WITH KEY AUDIENCES

The foundation of marketing outreach efforts is the pitch. A pitch is a carefully constructed message that succinctly communicates a lot of information. It describes what your program does; signals understanding of possible objections; articulates the value or solution your program can deliver to the target audience; and states what action you want the person/organization to take.

Developing a pitch may be easier if you break the process down to separate components listed below and then blend them together:

- Program description
- Objections
- Response to those objections
- Value your organization can deliver to the audience

- What action you want this person to take

Program Description: Getting a program description that is crisp, appealing and relevant to target is not always as easy as it sounds. While the program description doesn't have to be audience specific, that is targeted to the health care field for example, it should be clear concise and compelling—something that everyone in your organization can say.

In creating your program description, consider the aspects of your program that may resonate with a need the target audience has. Examples of aspects of program that might be useful include the following:

- Our youth are come to you with support
- We call participants job seekers not 'kids' or youth
- We place high school grads and college grads
- We place young people in a wide age range: 14-24
- We serve your location and areas (towns, cities)
- We have low commitment ways to get involved as well as opportunities to hire youth
- We provide support systems that go along with individual placed —job coaching etc.
- Our service takes the burden off employers hiring process—we screen and refer qualified candidates
- We save you time and money
- Name drop—tell employers who else in the community is involved.
- Youth receive 10 hours of work skills –hard and soft skills
- Our services are free (note: some people don't view this as a positive feature)
- Describe the successes of your program
- We help young people find a career not a job
- We are involved with the community in important ways—companies will want to know this
- We've been doing our work successfully for many years

There may be aspects of your program that the target audience may not understand, find confusing or not very appealing. There are the words and ideas that you want to stay away from and not include in your program description. Examples might include:

- At-risk youth
- Free
- Low income
- Disconnected
- Hard to serve

- Inner city
- Dropouts
- Offenders
- Urban
- Use of Agencies Acronyms—i.e., DMR, DMH, MassRehab

Overcoming Objections: Knowing your target audiences' interests and concerns is critical to your message development process. Whenever you can, address your audience's business concerns or speak their language to show that you understand them. Spending time to figure out audiences' objections will pay off when you are pitching your program to potential partners. Learn how to answer the following questions:

Why do I (member of target audience x) care about what you are telling me?

- Will it make my life easier?
- Will if fix a problem I am facing?
- Is it about what I believe is important?

Objections tend to be audience focused, so this part of the pitch may have to be customized to the type of audience you are interacting with. **Table 3** shows a selection of common objections and some possible ways to overcome them.

Table 3
Overcoming Objections

Objection	Sample Ways to Counter Objection
We already have a quota	
No transportation	Market to businesses on bus routes, find transportation--some programs have a van
Why do your participants need help finding a job?	I'm trying to help you find the best –make best selection. Identify with employer what they are looking for. Everyone needs help--it's a tough economy and I'm filtering for your needs.
No work experience	We have great students, good extracurricular activities. They have heavy course load at school and manage—are good at time management. Have volunteered, done workshops with us. They are highly trainable—can learn your way. We can get training fund, focus on strengths; share job descriptions of what youth have done with other employers so that they can see how it relates to work environment
Contract corporate—way to get out of commitment	We would love to be able to give our presentation to your corporate office to educate staff there on how we might be able to help meet your community relations goals as well as your business needs.

They can't pass drug test	We drug test all our job applicants.
We hire youth only by referral—our employee's children	Many of our young people come with references from other local firms. I'd be happy to show you some testimonials.
We tried but it didn't worked out	I hear that you may have been frustrated by hiring youth in the past. I'd love to give you more information about how we screen young people to make sure it's a good match.
They have to apply online	We'd love to have our teens apply. Would it be possible to for us to prepare a presentation on how best to fill out online applications using your company's as an example.
Only hire people with college degrees	We have helped other companies both cut recruitment costs associated with hiring college grads and hire from a loyal pipeline of high school graduates with our help. I can tell you more about this if you are interested.
Our workers have to have HS degree	
Not hiring	There are other ways to get involved in our program—such as doing a guest speaker or a job shad; When do you typically hire. Hiring one of our young people could help your bottom line—here's what it would cost you to hire youth.

Define the value your organization can deliver to the audience: One of the central elements in a pitch is delivering the 'what's in it for me' factor. Private-sector businesses in particular are interested in their bottom line. They want to know how your program will help them, make their life easier, or contribute in some way to their objectives—be they bottom- line related (the business-need angle) or associated with community relations (the community-service angle).

Putting it together: Here is a sample pitch that ties together the elements described above and ends with a concrete action step.

> *My name is (name) and I work for the Career Center. We train, promote and prepare job seekers in our area for the jobs of today.*
>
> *We identify the employment needs of our health care industry and create a pool of qualified potential employees to fill entry level/high turnover positions in your industry. We have worked with several employer partners for the past 6 years by providing them with qualified employees. We have a success rate of 75% of our referrals getting hired and staying with the hospital for at least a year. We also provide ongoing support services for our local employers by offering job readiness workshops for their incumbent workers.*
>
> *Our services can reduce turnover in the entry level positions within your company. I noticed that you are posting several dietary, transport and other entry level positions on Craigslist monthly. Craigslist has a cost associated to it which we could eliminate by having us post and refer qualified candidates for these positions. We can accommodate your company as your hiring needs change. If you would like to make use of our services, which we have been providing the local area for over 15 years, we could start with your current entry level job positions and see if our services would benefit your company both financially and time wise.*

Ask an Expert

Q: How do you get a chance to give a pitch--do you do it by phone or in person?

A: Try your pitch at a job fair to practice. Finding the opening is difficult-there is no perfect answer to this question. One way is to dialogue—ask employers questions about what they do and find a way to take their points and weave your points in.

Q: **Is it alright to ask employers about how much they know about your organization before giving your pitch?**

A:

- It's a good idea to take your script and break up.
- Give employer a bit of the pitch and ask to call in a week after sending more information. Then try to set up a meeting.
- Know about the industry –know that they opened up a new office.
- Practice, practice, practice. Do your pitch front of your board members—not just your friendly colleagues.

Q: **Should I just show up? Go in and ask for hiring manager?**

A:

- Targeting part-time employers may be easier—more employers are up for that.
- Use your pitch informally where ever you go. Ask stores you go to if they are hiring youth. I went into a place for lunch recently—it turned out the manger was a summer youth participant.
- Do research before, use LinkedIn to find out hiring manager—try to avoid gate keeper.
- Stop in if you see a hiring sign.
- Get pitch ready for holiday season at retail stores. We invited Jordan's Furniture hiring person to come to our high school to interview students for the Christmas season.

STEP 4: BUILDING YOUR NETWORK

Once you have an effective message or pitch, it's time to find the right audiences to deliver it. Use your network for help in finding connections to employers in your community that are good matches for your program. Use the network map tool (**Table 5**) to identify people in each network category within your community.

Table 5
Network Map

Network Function	Specific Examples of From Your Community
Hub: --Highly connected in my community --Actively and effectively spread the word on local happenings	
Gate Keeper: --Link different groups --Is the first to know and entry point for community information	
Pulse-taker: **--**Has considerable influence --May or may not have high profile job	

Your mantra at this point could be 'mindful relationship development.' Think about who you want in your portfolio and who could connect you. You want to reduce the cold call aspect of prospecting as much as possible. Spend time identifying targets that are good matches for your program; then, be persistent and diligent about learning about them and finding a 'warm' connection. **Table 4** shows how to use three tools in prospect research.

Table 4
Prospecting Tools

Source	**Type Research**
Linked In	Company Targeting • Find information about target companies • Identify individuals who work at company • Find connections to individuals at company
Google	Individual Prospect Research • Research boards, affiliations of WIB Boards • Learn about individual within a company you are meeting
Networks	Network Mapping • **Hub**: Who is highly connected and effectively spreads the word? • **Gatekeeper**: Who links different groups and is the starting point for community information? • **Pulse-taker**: Who carries a lot of influence regardless of position?

Tapping into your networks is key. Start out by working with someone who knows and likes your group, make an 'ask' for your program. Make it clear and easy—start there and work out in your circles. Build WOM (word of mouth) exposure by contacting an employer who has had a positive experience with your program. Get her/him to do testimonial on Youtube. Contact a hub person or a gatekeeper and have that person circulate the testimonial.

Other ways to build networks include the following:

- Host chamber events
- Use Facebook and Twitter—send out updates and messages of interest

- Identify Community Reinvestment Act coalitions or other community partners with a business interest
- Sponsor business breakfasts with high profile speakers –mayor
- Engage local funders—individual donors, foundations, and corporations
- Conduct informational interviews
- Ask existing employer partners if they can introduce you to their affiliates

STEP FIVE: USING EFFECTIVE MARKETING METHODS

The success of a marketing campaign depends on developing a good strategy and then taking action to execute that strategy. Marketing tactics are the methods or ways you execute a strategy. One of the skills involved in marketing and outreach is the ability to match the right method with the right audience. For example, you wouldn't use Twitter and Facebook to communicate with audiences who do not value or understand social media.

Sample Tactics

- One-on-one visits
- Brochure
- Flyers
- YouTube
- Twitter
- QR code
- Facebook
- Testimonials—video
- Local cable access
- Joint market ads—with local sports team
- Ad in Chamber of Commerce newsletter
- Billboard
- Local radio
- PSA's to radio stations
- Interviews with local newspapers
- Local politicians
- Sides of buses
- FourSquare

A Note about Websites: A regularly updated website can be an effective tool for targeting companies. It provides legitimacy for your organization that is important to a company. Information on web sites can be shared easily after meeting with employers.

Targeting youth with websites is more difficult. Young people tend to prefer using social networking sites over websites. Developing a website for youth can be time consuming and potentially expensive to update. Spend time with staff and stakeholder to determine whether youth are an audience you need to target.

What to consider in creating effective web sites for employer engagement

Does the site target the following audiences:

-- Companies

-- Donors

-- Media

Are employer benefits clearly outlined?

Are there distinct messages for different audiences?

Are materials downloadable materials re: hiring youth?

Is Information on non-hire activities for employers included?

Are there highlights of employers who work with them?

Effective marketing materials help you deliver you messages in consistent, appealing ways. It's worth spending time to develop coherent marketing materials (identity brochures, fact sheets, testimonials, annual reports, etc.) or to fine tune existing materials. Plan how to customize your marketing collateral so that it is tailored to a specific target audience. Use the **Collateral Analysis Form** to assess your marketing materials.

TAKE IT TO GO

Collateral Analysis Form (Horwitz Consulting)

Name of collateral/marketing piece:

Assessment Characteristic	**Score** 1= Does not meet this criterion 2 = Somewhat meets criterion 3 = Definitely meets criterion
Consistency – look: Extent to which this piece is visually consistent with other pieces of collateral (color scheme, logo placement etc.)	
Consistency – feel: Extent to which this piece feels like other pieces of collateral (i.e. consistent tone, imagery etc.)	
Ability to scan: Extent to which average reader could understand main points quickly	
Audience focus: Extent to which the audience(s) for the piece are clear	
Messaging: Piece contains messages for intended audience	
Call-to-Action: Contains clear "ask" that is appropriate for the audience (e.g. companies: provide a tour, hire one young person this summer)	
Easy to Complete Call-to-Action: It is clear how to comply with the ask and easy for the audience to do so (e.g. if you want to provide a tour, send back this prepaid postcard)	
Jargon: Contains no acronyms, short-hand or anything else a typical person would not understand	
Includes real stories: Piece has stories, pictures, quotes etc. from real stakeholders such as youth, companies, partners	
Stories are Matched to Audience: Stories, pictures, quotes etc. are appropriate for intended audience(s) of the piece	
Total Score	

For any characteristics that did not receive a "3", identify specific ways to improve the piece:

Assessment Characteristic
Consistency – look: The reason why this piece did not score a "3" was because ____ The way we can fix this is to ____
Consistency – feel: The reason why this piece did not score a "3" was because ____ The way we can fix this is to ____
Ability to scan: The reason why this piece did not score a "3" was because ____ The way we can fix this is to ____
Audience focus: The reason why this piece did not score a "3" was because ____ The way we can fix this is to ____
Messaging: The reason why this piece did not score a "3" was because ____ The way we can fix this is to ____
Call-to-Action: The reason why this piece did not score a "3" was because ____ The way we can fix this is to ____
Easy to Complete Call-to-Action: The reason why this piece did not score a "3" was because ____ The way we can fix this is to ____
Jargon: The reason why this piece did not score a "3" was because ____

The way we can fix this is to ____
Includes real stories: The reason why this piece did not score a "3" was because ____ The way we can fix this is to ____
Stories are Matched to Audience: The reason why this piece did not score a "3" was because ____ The way we can fix this is to ____
The Three Most Important Changes We Can Make Are

Ask an expert:

Q: **Is it a good idea to be confrontational in your marketing materials? We are working on a public service announcement and some of the suggestions we brainstormed were challenging to businesses. How do you know what works?**

A: You might want to consider your brand-- are you conciliatory, are you 'in your face'? Test it out with some of your audiences. Does the right 50% like the ad? How do you know that?

Q: **Can you use a specific industry's jargon?**

A: There is a benefit in using their language—it signals that you know them and it's a shorthand "We get you." In general, try to keep jargon to a minimum.

STEP SIX: MAKING THE PLAN–AND CARRYING IT OUT

A marketing plan helps you organize the series of steps needed to achieve a marketing or outreach goal. It describes your target audiences and lists your goals, strategies, and tactics. The plan will be essential in developing a work plan to carry out the campaign. The work plan should specify the project leads, project milestones and deliverables as well as project measurements. Finally, to keep a campaign on track, use a marketing communications calendar to help you organize your efforts. Make an effort to incorporate a specified number of 'touches' every month using a specific tactic. Planning ahead of time allows you to be thoughtful about budgets and schedules. A template for creating your marketing plan is included in **Appendix B**.

Goals, Strategies, Tactics—what's the difference?

It's helpful to articulate marketing goals, strategies and tactics so that you are not missing any of the pieces. Here are some examples of each.

The **goal** in an employer engagement campaign may be to increase the number of community employers willing to hire teens and young adults.

A marketing **strategy** is an idea of how the goal could be achieved. A good way to distinguish a strategy from a tactic is to use a 'what if we..." statement. The statement makes sense only if what you fill in the blank with is an idea.[2] If you complete the sentence with "…develop a web site for employers' it would not be a strategy because a web site is not an idea. One example of a strategy might be to segment different target audiences and offer a youth training plan that is customized to the industry. Another strategy might be to develop a teen employment agency set up to undertake short-term projects.

Marketing **tactics** are the actions you take to execute your strategy. They might be considered the 'how' or the 'where.' Developing a web site or a brochure that helps employers learn how to contribute to your program is an example of a marketing tactic.

[2] http://www.brandinsightblog.com/2009/11/01/marketing-strategy-vs-tactics/

Annual Marketing Calendar

When building this calendar, think realistically about:

- Which pieces you will have in-hand at what points in the year
- When your team or customers will be so busy that marketing efforts may not be a good use of resources (i.e. your team right before a big event, companies during holiday season)

For each priority audience, your goal will be to reach them 1-3 times a season depending on the directness of the touch, for example mailing your brochure is much more direct than an ad in a magazine.

Once you have completed this calendar, create a work-plan for every project on the calendar.

	Print efforts	Digital efforts	Personal Outreach	Events	Ads/PSAs	Other
Summer						
Audience 1						
Audience 2						
Audience 3						
Audience 4						

Fall						
Audience 1						
Audience 2						
Audience 3						
Audience 4						
Winter						
Audience 1						
Audience 2						

Audience 3						
Audience 4						
Spring						
Audience 1						
Audience 2						
Audience 3						
Audience 4						

APPENDIX B: CREATING A MARKETING PLAN

TARGET AUDIENCES

Place an asterisk by each of the audiences your organization is trying to reach

- STEM Employers
- Healthcare Employers
- Green Employers
- Manufacturing Employers
- Information and Communications Tech. Employers
- Employer Champion: *goes to bat to hire youth*
- Employer Fiscal Sponsor: *pays for youth employment*
- Employer Administrator: *gets youth ready & set up for work*
- Employer Manager: *oversees and provides feedback to youth*
- CORI-Friendly Employers
- Youth: *qualified, work ready*
- HR Association
- CEO Roundtable
- Chamber of Commerce
- Entrepreneur Association
- Parents
- City planner/Mayor
- Labor unions: *have apprenticeships & local hiring information*
- Donors/Foundations
- Administrators of Community Reinvestment Act
- Non profits
- Schools
- WIB boards
- Community colleges-- for training
- Media
- Others: *Please identify below*

PRIORITY TARGET AUDIENCES

From those audiences identified above, define which 3-4 audiences will help your organization meet its youth employment goals:

-
-
-
-

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Below, capture your program description; you can use the questions below to create it.

- How do you describe what your organization does?
- What are the aspects of your program that you are sure to mention when introducing it?
- What points/words do you typically stay away from?
- Is there anything that you find is particularly compelling for certain audiences?

OBJECTIONS

In the table below, identify the objections you hear from each of your top audiences and the best response to each objection.

Audience	Objection	Response

Audience	Objection	Response

VALUE TO AUDIENCES

In the table below, identify the value you deliver to each audience; the value you deliver answers the question: how will youth employment help them?

Values can be thought of as business value or community value; each will appeal to different audiences, so identify both.

- A business value is bottom-line focused (i.e. saves them money or increases sales).
- A community value changes or improve public perception by doing something good for the community.

Audience	Business value	Community value

YOUR PITCH

Capture your pitch below. It should take <u>no longer than 45 seconds to deliver</u> and it should be compelling, clear and exciting while highlighting each of the following elements:

- Agency/program name, your name and your role in organization
- Compelling organizational/program description
- Objections

- Response to those objections
- Value your organization can deliver to this audience (business & community values)
- What action you want this person to take (e.g. hire a youth, host a tour, sponsor an opening)

MARKETING TACTICS

Of all the marketing tactics below that you could use, identify the top two most effective tactics for your priority audiences.

• One on one conversations with people • Brochures • Flyers • Video testimonials • YouTube • Twitter • QR code • Facebook • Local cable access PSAs • Website	• Joint market ads (e.g. partner with sports team) • Ad in chamber newsletter • Billboard • Local radio • PSA's targeted to companies on radio stations • Interviews with local newspapers • Sides of buses • FourSquare • Other?

Audience	Tactics
	• •
	• •
	• •
	• •

PRIORITIZATION OF MARKETING EFFORTS

Below is a list of different marketing efforts you could undertake in the next 1-2 years. Select the efforts that are the most important to helping your organization reach its youth employment goals either from those below or by adding additional marketing efforts. You do NOT need to plan to do everything, some efforts are not worth the resources.

Depending on the cost, personnel time requirements etc. you may be able to fit in more or fewer projects in per year. Be realistic about what you can accomplish!

Description	Place 1 or 2 below for priority (1st or 2nd year)
Adapt existing material/tactic (i.e. brochure, video, testimonial, PSA) Piece to adapt is:	
Adapt another existing material/tactic Piece to adapt is:	
Create new materials/tactics not yet in place Piece to create is: Audience targeted with piece: How it will help us meet our goals:	
Create another new material not yet in place Piece to create is: Audience targeted with piece: How it will help us meet our goals:	
Work on pitch: Tweak pitch you already have, generate new pitches for priority audiences	
Train Internal Stakeholders: On the value you deliver, objections they may hear and how to counter them, on your pitch.	
Collect External Feedback on Materials/Tactics: *Connect with Board member or another member of audience targeted by a piece and get their feedback. Make improvements accordingly.*	
Other:	
Other:	
Other:	

MARKETING PLANNING

Create a work-plan for each of the projects prioritized for year 1 and year 2 in the last section.

Year 1 Priority Projects	**Project 1**	**Project 2**	**Project 3**	**Project 4**
Project lead				
Additional members of team needed				
For input				
For review				
For sign-off				
Other				
Project milestones (e.g. 1st draft completed, layout proposed etc.)				
Milestone 1				
Milestone 2				
Milestone 3				
Milestone 4				

Project deliverables (e.g. first draft with reviewed content, second draft with content in layout)				
Deliverable 1				
Deliverable 2				
Deliverable 3				
Deliverable 4				
Success measurement				
We will know this project was successful if…				
We can measure that by…				

Year 2 Priority Projects	Project 1	Project 2	Project 3	Project 4
Project lead				
Additional members of team needed				
For input				
For review				
For sign-off				
Other				
Project milestones (e.g. 1st draft completed, layout proposed etc.)				
Milestone 1				
Milestone 2				
Milestone 3				
Milestone 4				

Project deliverables (e.g. first draft with reviewed content, second draft with content in layout)				
Deliverable 1				
Deliverable 2				
Deliverable 3				
Deliverable 4				
Success measurement				
We will know this project was successful if…				
We can measure that by…				