

# **WYOMING NEXT GENERATION SUSTAINABILITY TOOLKIT**



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# OVERVIEW TO SUSTAINABILITY TOOLKIT

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This Toolkit includes strategies from Wyoming Next Gen practitioners, as well as examples of effective practices from Next Gen communities across the country that are on the path to sustainability. These communities, like those in Wyoming, have all successfully launched Next Gen Sector Partnerships and are working on not only sustaining these partnerships, but also making a lasting commitment to the Next Gen approach. Specifically, these communities have focused on:

- Growing business ownership
- Increasing public partner support
- Making a shared commitment to sustainability (organizational, staffing, and funding)

At the Wyoming 2019 Next Gen Academy, in each of these three areas, Wyoming practitioners reviewed effective practices from other Next Gen communities, brainstormed additional ideas with their peers from across the State, and chose the best strategies for their regions.

During the Academy, they heard directly from business champions leading Wyoming's Next Gen Partnerships about what they have learned, what has worked, what hasn't, and how they are working to grow business ownership in their regions.

They also heard from business champions and public partners representing two of the most successful and long-lasting Next Gen Sector Partnerships in the country, both from Northern Colorado. These individuals described what it has taken to sustain this work for more than six years.

This Toolkit is divided into three sections - growing business ownership, increasing public partner support, and making a shared commitment to sustainability. Each section lists examples of effective practices from around the country that Wyoming practitioners chose as one of their top strategies to recommend to their region. Each section also lists other top strategies that Wyoming practitioners developed during the Academy.

Thus, this Toolkit is informed by best practices, improved by Wyoming Next Gen practitioners, and provided as a resource for Wyoming's regions as they move forward building and implementing their sustainability strategies in the months and years ahead.

# GROWING BUSINESS OWNERSHIP

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This section identifies practical strategies for growing both the breadth and depth of business ownership in Next Gen Sector Partnerships. Potential strategies are listed in the order recommended by Wyoming Next Gen practitioners who attended the July 2019 Academy. Some are strategies that were developed during the Academy, while others are strategies that were chosen (or adapted) from those used by other Next Gen communities across the country.

## Top Strategies to Grow the Breadth of Business Ownership in Next Gen

- 1. Sponsor a Friend** - Business champions and public partners commit to ensuring specific people join or support the Sector Partnership, mentoring and carpooling them to meetings if necessary.
- 2. Make Specific Asks** - Business champions make specific personal requests of other business leaders, so people can pitch in even if they don't formally join the Partnership or serve on Action Teams. They help people find their best fit: some are good at being "strategic drivers", others are better at being "tactical helpers." To get to more geographically-distant businesses, they use videoconferencing to increase the likelihood of participating.
- 3. Brand and Actively Market the Partnership** - Business champions and public partners work together to develop a logo/infographic/web presence, create an outreach packet to "tell the Partnership's story" (e.g., description of early wins, testimonials, talking points/elevator speech, list of benefits to business), and roll-out a comprehensive communications effort to reach target business audiences and generate traditional and social media coverage.
- 4. Source from the Supply Chain** - Business champions recruit their suppliers/sub-contractors and business partners to join the Partnership.
- 5. Help Replicate the Model in Other Industry Sectors** - Business champions and public partners from an existing sector partnership share their experience and help recruit business champions for a new sector partnership, including inviting new sector leaders to observe an existing sector partnership meeting.
- 6. Hold Recruiting Events** - Business champions host their own event or work with existing organizations where other business leaders can be found (e.g., chamber, industry association, service clubs).

7. **Leverage Business Service Professionals** - Business champions work with lawyers, financial advisors, and other business service professionals to help refer/recruit their business customers to the Partnership.
8. **Target Boards of Directors** - Business champions and public partners leverage their relationship with business leaders who are serving on local boards to recruit them to the Partnership.

## Top Strategies to Grow the Depth of Business Ownership in Next Gen

1. **Develop the Bench** - Business champions designate and deliver more people from their own company, especially those with specific skills helpful to the Partnership (e.g., human resources, marketing/communications, technical support). They develop succession plans so when someone changes jobs, the Partnership doesn't lose the company too. In other words, they make sure that there is company buy-in, not just individual buy-in, to the Partnership. They tap "up and coming stars," newer executives who can be groomed for growing leadership roles.
2. **Diversify the Roles Existing Business Champions Play** - Business champions deepen their individual commitment by playing new roles with their Partnership (See next page for examples of different kinds of roles business champions can play: Recruiter, Expert, Advocate, Investor, Communicator, Innovator, Worker).
3. **Deepen the Commitment** - Building on "early wins," a team of business champions decides to make a major shared commitment of in-kind and/or financial resources to take their Partnership to a new level. They ensure that every meeting ends with explicit commitments to build on current "wins," including agreement on the next Partnership meeting date (preferably at a place of business, with networking time and/or a facility tour). They professionalize meeting and project management (including using project management software).

## EXAMPLES OF BUSINESS CHAMPION ROLES

- **Recruiter** - reaching out to other business leaders and to community leaders, securing their tangible commitment to pitch in with implementation. Examples: signing up businesses to provide workplace experiences for students, using influence on public boards to grow participation in multi-organization collaborations.
- **Expert** - being the consistent reality-check to each other and to public partners on where the industry is headed and what is needed for success. Examples: creating the forum for understanding current and future staffing needs based on industry

changes and trends, helping update and supplement curriculum, providing guest speakers and adjunct faculty, working with local jurisdictions on permit streamlining or local policy.

- **Advocate** - organizing and focusing the collective industry voice and influence on shared goals. Examples: leading a career awareness campaign to change perceptions of your industry with youth, organizing an industry-wide initiative to improve needed infrastructure for growth (e.g., air service, broadband).
- **Investor** - providing “civic venture capital” to advance shared industry priorities, expanding the capacity of local community institutions and/or new catalytic organizations. Examples: funding the development of career awareness materials for students, underwriting scholarships, providing equipment to educational institutions, leveraging more public and philanthropic investment through matching funds.
- **Communicator** - articulating an industry growth agenda, a clear and compelling case for industry and community collaboration, and/or specific elements of a shared agenda. Examples: sharing unique insights into the state and potential of your industry, spotlighting early wins to build momentum and attract additional support, recognizing good collaborative behavior of local institutions in service of a common cause.
- **Innovator** - making internal changes to your business to be a better partner to the community and/or capitalize on new growth opportunities emerging from collaborative efforts. Examples: restructuring internal processes for placing and managing student interns, rethinking supplier strategy to include more local partners, changing hiring practices to recognize and reward credentials developed with local institutions.
- **Worker** - providing your own time and that of your employees, to support collaborative efforts. Examples: organizing meetings, managing committees, organizing tours of facilities for students across multiple companies (not just your own), writing proposals, doing joint training across companies and educational institutions.

# INCREASING PUBLIC PARTNER SUPPORT

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This section identifies practical strategies for increasing both the breadth and depth of public partner support in Next Gen Sector Partnerships. Potential strategies are listed in the order recommended by Wyoming Next Gen practitioners who attended the July 2019 Academy. Some are strategies that were developed during the Academy, while others are strategies that were chosen (or adapted) from those used by other Next Gen communities across the country.

## Top Strategies to Increase the Breadth of Public Partner Support in Next Gen

- 1. Address Gaps in Your Sector Support Team** - Conveners and other public partners work together to ensure strong participation from workforce development, education, and economic development on their sector support team. They ensure that public partners have commitment from the top of their organizations.
- 2. Advocate to Your Field** - Conveners and other public partners purposely advocate with colleagues in their profession or field to “sell” them on the benefits of Next Gen and encourage their participation and support. This could include developing “sister sector” relationships with other regions, working together on shared priorities.
- 3. Assume Responsibility for Delivering Your Part of the Region** - Individuals take formal responsibility for delivering business champions and public partners from their city or county.
- 4. Adopt an Integrated Approach** - Conveners and other public partners connect their efforts on behalf of the Partnership, rather than work with businesses in a fragmented fashion (e.g., K-12 and post-secondary partner on career pathways for the sector). Partnerships can act as “regional advisory committees” for multiple public institutions and systems.

## Top Strategies to Increase the Depth of Public Partner Support of Next Gen

- 1. Designate First Responders** - Conveners and other public partners work together to formally designate first responders from workforce development, education, and economic development, who have passion for Next Gen and share these traits:
  - Able to commit their organization’s resources and help secure additional resources (vs. just representing their organization)
  - Sensitive to keeping business champions in the driver’s seat (vs. taking over or driving their own agenda)

- Flexible and creative in viewing their organization's resources as a toolkit to be adapted/combined with those of other organizations (vs. pre-packaged, stand-alone, off-the-shelf solutions)
  - Collaborative and positive-sum in thinking and action (vs. competitive, zero-sum)
- 2. Deepen the Bench** - Conveners and public partners designate and deliver more people from their organization, especially those with specific skills helpful to the Partnership (e.g., curriculum, support services, marketing/communications).
  - 3. Diversify the Roles Current Public Partners Play** - Conveners and public partners meet regularly to understand the variety of resources that everyone can bring to the table to support Next Gen Partnerships. They deepen their individual commitment to Next Gen by ensuring that their organizations continue to expand the supportive roles they play.
  - 4. Define a Lasting Commitment to Next Gen** - Conveners and public partners formally change job assignments, policy, structure, and/or other organizational commitments to better align with Next Gen Partnership-building and support. Public partners are recognized and rewarded for their contributions to Next Gen success.

# MAKING A SHARED COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

This section identifies practical strategies for sustaining Next Gen Sector Partnerships in terms of organization, staffing, and financing. Potential strategies are listed in the order recommended by Wyoming Next Gen practitioners who attended the July 2019 Academy. These are strategies chosen (or adapted) from those used by other Next Gen communities across the country.

Organizational Options	Staffing Options	Financial Options
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue as a volunteer group, but secure a fiscal agent to be able to receive and disperse funds for Partnership activities.</li> <li>2. Join an existing organization, with the mission of that organization formally including the Next Gen Sector Partnership.</li> <li>3. Form a new non-profit organization with a board of directors, which could include staff and/or consulting support.</li> <li>4. Become a joint venture of multiple organizations, with a memorandum of agreement defining roles and responsibilities of the participating parties.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create one or more formal positions for coordinating your Next Gen partnership(s), to be filled from support organizations and/or Partnership businesses</li> <li>2. Continue to rely on donated time from support organizations and/or Partnership businesses.</li> <li>3. Hire flexible capacity in the form of consulting assistance to support the Partnership.</li> <li>4. If establishing a new non-profit, hire formal executive staff to support the Partnership.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Better use of existing resources and staff, including continuous re-purposing of time.</li> <li>2. In-kind donations of time, facilities, equipment, services, etc. to support Partnership activities.</li> <li>3. Partnership revenue generators or “earned income”, such as membership fees, event tickets, and products created by Partnership (e.g., directories, videos).</li> <li>4. Financial contributions from participating businesses or public partner organizations, or from individuals or private foundations.</li> <li>5. Grant funding from local, state, or federal government sources.</li> </ol>

# ACTION PLAN FOR NEXT GEN SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

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1. Describe the Next Gen Sector Partnership(s) that you commit to sustaining beyond 2019, including results achieved to date and actions proposed for the future.
2. What are your top 3 strategies for growing business ownership in your Next Gen Sector Partnership(s)?
3. What are your top 3 strategies for increasing public partner support for your Next Gen Sector Partnership(s)?
4. How will your Next Gen Partnership(s) be organized? What organization(s) are making a formal commitment to provide a “home” for your Next Gen Partnership(s) beyond 2019, ensuring that it (or they) are industry-driven and action-oriented?
5. How will your Next Gen Partnership(s) be staffed? Who is committed to be part of the convening team past 2019? Who are your industry champions committed beyond 2019?
6. How will your Next Gen Partnership(s) be financed? What is your current approach? What new/additional sources of funding will you pursue?
7. What is your process for periodically assessing progress, revising priorities, and refreshing your partnership(s) action agenda?
8. How has Next Gen changed the way people work together on workforce, education, economic development and other priorities? How will you sustain those changes?
  - a. Businesses working with each other
  - b. Businesses working with public partners
  - c. Public partners working with each other

### **Terms of Use for Next Generation Logo and Toolkit**

The Next Gen toolkit is designed to help teams successfully build and sustain industry-led, next generation sector partnerships. Use and sharing of the tools and materials are encouraged, with the expectation that full attribution be given via intact Next Gen name and logo on all materials used and shared. The Next Gen Sector Partnership name and title and/or logo is used only for official Next Gen materials and shall not be used on materials created by other entities. If using Next Gen tools, we ask that you join and contribute to the Next Gen Community of Practice to connect and share with other practitioners across the country involved in Next Gen sector partnership-building.

The Next Gen Sector Partnership staff, a team of four independent consultants - Lindsey Woolsey, John Melville, Francie Genz and Emily Lesh - collaborate to make the Next Gen sector partnership community of practice possible.

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