# IDENTIFYING EMPLOYERS IN YOUR INDUSTRY

## TOOL 2.1

Rather than using a pre-existing contact list of employers in your industry, take the time to develop your own. This will help you get to know the industry you've targeted at a detailed level. This tool provides tips on using both your existing partners and external sources to identify appropriate companies. Use the table to collect your contacts in a single place for easy reference. As a key first step, use the data that you compiled on your existing employer partnerships through Tool 1.2, then identify additional employers from other sources as well.

### WHO SHOULD USE THIS TOOL

Program directors, grant managers

## USING YOUR EMPLOYER DATABASE

Your organization can use a database of employers in your primary and related industries in a variety of ways. Use these ideas as a guide to help you determine if you are collecting information about the right companies.

You can use your contact database as:

> A source of outreach to potential partners with your training programs

> An invitation list for industry briefings and other networking events

> A conversation starter when reaching out to new businesses, by asking for their advice about whether you're reaching everyone you should

> A mailing list for workforce needs surveys that can increase your visibility and credibility

## LEVERAGE YOUR PARTNERS

The first names in your employer database will be your existing partners. Incorporate those partners that you identified through Tool 1.2 into your database. These employers are also a great source of additional names and advice for identifying more companies, and may be able to directly connect you with new employer partners. Leverage who you know by having them:

> **Request the membership lists of the industry groups of which they are members.** These could be trade associations or local chapters of national organizations. These membership lists are occasionally also available on an association's website.

> **Recommend other employers for you to contact.** You can help prompt your partners for suggestions by reviewing their LinkedIn connections for ideas.

> **Recruit their peers to explore a workforce collaboration with you.** Identifying and cultivating employer champions who will work with you to recruit new employer partners can be a powerful employer engagement tactic.

## TAP INTO LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Reach beyond your partner network to access other resources in your community that can help you identify potential employer partners. This can provide an extensive list of businesses that includes specific knowledge of each business referenced.

> **Local chambers of commerce**, **Workforce Development Boards**, and **economic development agencies** work with a large number of businesses and often seek the opportunity to build connections across the industry.

> **Real-time labor market information tools**, such as Burning Glass, can identify the local businesses with job openings in your sector that align with the skills taught in your training program.

## PURCHASE A MARKETING LIST

Complement your outreach with third-party information. Because the majority of jobs—particularly in hard-to-define clusters such as green, biotech, and IT—are with companies that do not associate with any industry-affiliated groups, look to resources that maximize your ability to find firms that operate under the radar.

Marketing lists are an easy source of detailed information about businesses in your targeted industries. Be sure to purchase a marketing list from a reputable vendor such as InfoUSA, Melissa Data, or Dun & Bradstreet. Marketing databases cost between $.07 and $.18 per record, but save your staff many hours of learning just how many relevant businesses are out there. You can focus the scope of records that you buy by searching for firms with the same NAICS codes as your employer partners. Including the NAICS codes in your employer database also allows you to sort it into clusters of businesses most likely to have similar training needs.

### What is a NAICS code?

The North American Industry Classification System is the federal system for categorizing businesses by industry. The first two digits of a NAICS code indicate a firm's broad industry, and the full six-digit code defines a more detailed industry cluster. Because it is used by many federal agencies, the NAICS code is a popular classification used by many private organizations as well.

## BUILDING YOUR EMPLOYER DATABASE

Maintain a simple database so you can track your employer partners and outreach efforts. You can use this table or create your own database. Be sure to include three basic types of information:

> **Contact information:** This includes the company's address and the details of the person within the company who serves as your primary contact.

> **Industry information:** Your description of the industry and its NAICS code are useful for organizing employers into related groups. Fill in as much detail about the industry as helps you, and be consistent so you can sort using these descriptions.

> **Connection to your organization:** Keep track of each company's primary contact within your organization so that a single employer doesn't hear from several staff members who have not coordinated. Add any short additional notes that are important for you to know at a glance, such as whether the company has responded to your outreach efforts.

> **Connection to your organization:** Keep track of each company's primary contact within your organization so that a single employer doesn't hear from several staff members who have not coordinated. Add any short additional notes that are important for you to know at a glance, such as whether the company has responded to your outreach efforts.

| COMPANY | ADDRESS | CITY | STATE | ZIP CODE | CONTACT | PHONE | EMAIL | INDUSTRY | NAICS | YOUR ORG. CONTACT | ADDITIONAL NOTES |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ABC Corp | 123 Street | San Diego | CA | 92001 | John Doe | 555-5555 | pxy@abc.org | Manufacturing Biotech | 334510 | Job Coach | Met at networking event |
| 123 Inc. | ABC Street | La Jolla | CA | 92002 | Jane Doe | 777-7777 | – | R&D – Life Sciences | 541712 | Program Director | Hired 2 participants |
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# RECRUITING YOUR EMPLOYER LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE

## TOOL 2.2

Employer leadership committees can play a critical role in developing effective partnerships with a job training or workforce development program, but they are often ineffective when they are not engaged in the most helpful way or lack the right members. Rather than ask only who is willing to serve, your organization should invite employer leaders that support your program needs and that have workforce needs that align with your program. This guide helps you select employers that can best serve on a leadership committee. Once you have your leadership committee in place, you should follow up by making sure that they maintain an active role in the program through activities that provide the significant benefits to the program as well as the employers themselves. These activities should evolve over time, as you demonstrate the value of the partnership to each member of your leadership committee.

### WHO SHOULD USE THIS TOOL

Executive directors, senior program managers, board members, and others who select members for leadership/advisory boards and committees and/or manage them.

## AN ACTIVE EMPLOYER COMMITTEE

Set the tone for your employer committee by removing "advisory" from its name. Employer committee, employer action committee, and employer leadership committee all imply an active role for members. Make this expectation explicit and ask forleadership—not advice. Advice is usually not the only priority for programs, and you can get it without forming a committee. It is better to have a small number of employers who make serious commitments than to have a larger group that offers advice and attends meetings.

Active employers benefit your program by helping you achieve your goals and by improving the external perception of your organization. Participating on the committee will help them by maximizing the program's ability to meet their workforce needs. Their commitment is a signal to others that your program has value.

## KEY ROLES FOR COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Articulate to committee members how engagement can benefit them. Members can address their workforce needs by training and retaining their workers through the program, hiring program graduates, or connecting to other training expertise from the organization. They may also benefit if you provide them with your own labor market information, as well the opportunity to meet with other employers and identify common concerns.

Build relationships with each member of the employer leadership committee. As you demonstrate your value to them, you can also seek more active support. In general, the continuum of employer engagement will evolve from informal and formal advising to intensive involvement that is integrated into your program design and delivery. In A Resource Guide to Engaging Employers, Randall Wilson defines the ladder of employer engagement as:

> Advising (less intensive)

> Capacity-building

> Co-designing

> Convening

> Leading (most intensive)

Not all of these activities have to occur within the context of the leadership committee. For example, an employer can help build program capacity through job site tours or mock interviews without committing to an ongoing leadership role. Make sure that you define the roles of committee members to most help your program, while still drawing on all of your employer partners at the appropriate level of engagement. The two most important roles for committee members are generally:

> **Employing your graduates.** This is a direct benefit to your program, and also boosts other businesses' perception of your program and its participants.

> **Actively promoting your program to other employers.**

Five other activities can also be valuable roles for committee members:

> **Involving themselves, and their employees, in the life of your trainees through program activities such as mentoring, internships, class presentations, mock interviews, and curriculum review.**

> **Endorsing or recognizing your training program and associated credentials.**

> **Guaranteeing interviews for program graduates.**

- **Assisting financially. This can be direct assistance through cash and in-kind contributions or by encouraging other industry firms to become involved.**
- **Sharing actionable information about trends and issues in the local industry that program staff are unlikely to find on their own.**

If you would like committee members to play other roles critical to the success of your program, list it here:

______________________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________________________

## CREATING YOUR EMPLOYER COMMITTEE CRITERIA

Once you have defined your employer committee's role, establish a set of criteria to guide how you recruit and engage employers to ensure your committee has a successful balance of member roles. Seek criteria that not only reflect your needs but also offer benefits to committee members. This will help employers stay engaged because they benefit from their involvement. These criteria are organized along the employer engagement ladder, so that the roles of members of the employer committee can progress and you develop a deeper relationship with them. You can decide whether any criteria are essential, employers must meet a certain number of criteria, or at least one committee member must meet each criterion.

Remember that some employers that know you best might not meet your criteria, and they might not be the best choice for your committee. Your closest partners are likely to already be supportive even without a committee role. Other employers that best fit your selected criteria might not have heard of you yet. Recruit them using Tool 2.3.

| POTENTIAL CRITERIA | YES | NO | DISCUSS |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Advising** | | | |
| Attends quarterly meetings | | | |
| Shares information about industry trends and issues | | | |
| Provides management advice to executive director | | | |
| **Building Program Capacity** | | | |
| Hiring now or likely to be hiring soon | | | |
| Has hired one of our graduates | | | |
| Has hired more than one of our graduates | | | |
| Connects to the program to help retain workers | | | |

| POTENTIAL CRITERIA | YES | NO | DISCUSS |
|---|---|---|---|
| Agrees to share openings and interview referred candidates | | | |
| Provides paid internship for trainees | | | |
| Provides unpaid internships for trainees | | | |
| Provides employees for mock interviews | | | |
| Offers facilities and a guide for company tours | | | |
| Contributes in-kind support (space or equipment) | | | |
| Contributes at least $________ | | | |
| **Co-Designing Curricula and Career Pathways** | | | |
| Reviews and comments on curriculum, if requested | | | |
| Provides an engaged mentor to at least one trainee | | | |
| Validate the skills and qualifications of graduates | | | |
| Offers employees to serve as instructors/presenters | | | |
| **Convening Workforce Partnerships** | | | |
| Identifies common needs with other employers | | | |
| Jointly develops workforce strategies and program designs with other employers | | | |
| Signs support letters for grant proposal requests | | | |
| **Leading and Sustaining Partnerships** | | | |
| Considered a knowledgeable and successful business in the employer community | | | |
| Provides introductions and referrals to industry leaders | | | |
| Recruits a minimum of __ companies/year to join committee | | | |
| Supports funding for the program in political campaigns and advocates with public officials and legislators | | | |

# DEVELOP HIGH-LEVEL RELATIONSHIPS

## TOOL 2.3

Developing relationships with the top leadership of successful employers should be central to your employer engagement strategy, because these decision makers are critical to ensuring that the businesses fully support your partnership. The buy-in of high-level staff also sends a powerful message to other employers that you are an industry player.

This worksheet offers step-by-step guidance for your initial outreach to the leadership of potential partner organizations. The recommended actions respond to the limited time and availability of high-level staff, and are planned for maximum impact and efficiency.

### WHO SHOULD USE THIS TOOL

Executive directors, program directors

## WHO SHOULD YOU TARGET?

High-level staff members are defined by the scope and range of actions that they can take on their own authority, and they primarily include:

> Principal business owners

> Chief executives (CEO, COO, CFO, CTO)

> Department heads

> Some senior program managers

## PREPARE INTERNALLY

Before you talk to anyone external, prepare internally. Prior to your meeting, conduct significant research to determine which employers may be the best fit for your organization based on factors such as their workforce needs and alignment with your mission. Once you have completed this step, you need to cement buy-in for these partnerships within your own organization. Determine who within your organization should be aware—and supportive—of these potential partnerships. Outreach to these staff members will take time but will also generate buy-in and champions while ensuring that you do not accidentally create turf wars.

Relevant internal staff:

> ______________________________ > ______________________________

> ______________________________ > ______________________________

> ______________________________ > ______________________________

Be sure to prepare all staff in your organization who are equivalent to the high-level external partners. This might be your executive director or others who work in the upper levels of your organization.

Meetings with these individuals should focus on:

> **Program content.** If needed, provide a refresher on how your program benefits your organization, participants, and partner organizations. Benefits may span mission, reputation, and finances.

> **Outreach activities.** Let your colleagues know who you plan to contact, and be prepared to discuss how you selected these targets. With a focus on their unique standing in the community, ask for targeted help with outreach to these or other important contacts.

> **List of high-level contacts from your colleagues**, including the nature of the relationship and outcomes from previous collaborations. Ask your colleagues to identify critical decision makers that can help your organization develop strong, lasting partnerships with the employer. These may be individuals with whom they have worked directly, or with whom they are acquainted for other reasons (e.g., they have served on boards with them, or know them socially). In addition, it is important to determine the level of familiarity of your colleagues with these contacts, as well as outcomes from any earlier collaborations. The results of previous projects—successful or not—will help you frame future outreach. You should also note which staff member will be contacting each person:

> ____________________________________________________________

> ____________________________________________________________

> ____________________________________________________________

> ____________________________________________________________

> ____________________________________________________________

Prior to contacting these high level contacts, it can be useful to first reach out to other individuals in the community who are familiar to them. These may include individuals that serve on your board or work at a partner. A good initial step can be talking with these other individuals to learn more about the employers' interests and potential opportunities for collaboration. You can use these initial background conversations to gain critical insight on employer interests and determine if there may be an interest in collaboration among higher level-staff members with the employer.

List of other individuals in the community familiar with the target employer's high-level staff members (you should also note which staff member will be contacting each person):

> ______________________________________________________________________________

> ______________________________________________________________________________

> ______________________________________________________________________________

> ______________________________________________________________________________

> **Talking points.** Make sure that everyone agrees on partnership priorities and messaging. Even if you are conducting the primary outreach, all relevant staff should be on point for when they can help, or in case they have a chance encounter with one of these contacts.

Limited talking points that will not overwhelm potential partners:

> ______________________________________________________________________________

> ______________________________________________________________________________

> ______________________________________________________________________________

## INTRODUCTIONS TO EXTERNAL PARTNERS

Prepare for your introduction to potential partners by gathering information about both the company and the individual you are contacting. Also, stage your initial outreach to concisely express your purpose. This will help demonstrate your value in their terms so that you can successfully secure a meeting between your organizations.

### BACKGROUND

Company: ______________________________________________________________________

Background information: _______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Value of company to your program: _____________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Individual: ___________________________________ Title: ___________________________

Key biographical information: ____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

If you have a personal referral to this person:

Individual referring: ________________________________________________________________________________

Nature of their relationship: __________________________________________________________________________

### PLANNING THE FIRST APPROACH

Individual making the approach: _______________________________________________________________________

Reason they are best for outreach: ____________________________________________________________________

Method of the first approach:

- ☐ Phone call
- ☐ Email
- ☐ Personal contact at an event
- ☐ Through referral
- ☐ Letter with background packet
- ☐ Letter without background packet

Reason for outreach method: __________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

## MAKE YOUR PITCH TO EXTERNAL PARTNERS

After your introductory calls, start preparing for a meeting with your potential partner. Your first meeting is the most critical step in building a deeper relationship with an employer, and it is your chance to make your pitch about the relationship you want.

Attendees from:

| **Your organization** | **Potential employer** |
|---|---|
| ________________________________________________ | ________________________________________________ |
| ________________________________________________ | ________________________________________________ |
| ________________________________________________ | ________________________________________________ |
| ________________________________________________ | ________________________________________________ |

Key objectives (*make sure your objectives are realistic to achieve in this meeting*): __________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

Agenda (*if there is not an agenda, describe why or consider proposing one*): _______________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

| **Questions you anticipate** | **Answers to these questions** |
|---|---|
| ______________________________________________ | ______________________________________________ |
| ______________________________________________ | ______________________________________________ |
| ______________________________________________ | ______________________________________________ |
| ______________________________________________ | ______________________________________________ |

Materials:

> Background materials that have been sent: _______________________________________________________
_

> Materials being brought to the meeting: ___________________________________________________________

> Audio-visual materials (e.g., slides or video): _____________________________________________________

## FOLLOW UP AND KEEP FOLLOWING UP!

Continued engagement is critical to ongoing success. Once you engage the right partners, make sure you keep them informed and connected.

Describe how the meeting met or differed from expectations: ___________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________________

Follow up on any action steps that came from the meeting:

| ACTION ITEM | PERSON RESPONSIBLE | SHORT / MEDIUM / LONG TERM ACTION | DEADLINE |
|---|---|---|---|
| Thank you letters to all attendees | | | |
| | | | |
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Referrals to other potential employers: ______________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________________

Put a system in place to make sure that the action steps are completed and other regular follow-up continues with these employers. Some suggestions include:

- Assign a manager for client maintenance.
- Create a file for the employer that summarizes all key activities.
- Conduct monthly check-ins by email that briefly update them on progress and ask how your program can be best meet their needs.