

OPPORTUNITIES IN THE WORKFORCE READINESS PIPELINE

A Community Engagement
Toolkit for Business



Corporate Voices for Working Families, United Way Worldwide and Workforce Strategy Center, with the support of the Ready by 21 National Partnership, have combined their business and community engagement experience on education and workforce readiness issues and created two toolkits that assist business and community leaders in developing long-term, sustainable partnerships to ensure all youth are ready for college, work and life. The first toolkit, *Supporting the Education Pipeline: A Business Engagement Toolkit for Community-Based Organizations*, gave community leaders lessons and action strategies on how to identify potential partners, to set realistic goals and how to set up partnerships for long-term success. This toolkit, a companion to the first, will assist business leaders in cultivating relationships with community leaders, building the foundations for successful innovative community partnerships and strategically aligning a business' community initiatives to increase their return on investment.

Ready by 21 (www.readyby21.org)

Ready by 21 is a set of innovative strategies developed by the Forum for Youth Investment to help state and local leaders make a measurable difference in the lives of children and youth by improving the quantity, quality and consistency of supports for all youth along the “insulated education pipeline” - the full complement of settings where learning and development happens. Ready by 21 was created by the Forum based on more than a decade of work with state and local leaders interested in broad scale change. In communities around the country, Ready by 21 meets leaders where they are to reach the goal of ensuring that all youth are ready for college, work and life. Ready by 21 helps leaders to build broader partnerships, set bigger goals, collect and use better data, and take bolder actions. The Ready by 21 National Partnership, an unprecedented coalition of organizations is taking Ready by 21 into states and communities across the country. A “dream team” of the country’s most effective agencies, its combined reach is over 650,000 state and local leaders who impact the lives of more than 100 million children and youth.



Corporate Voices for Working Families (www.corporatevoices.org)

Founded in 2001, Corporate Voices for Working Families is the leading national business membership organization shaping conversations and collaborations on public and corporate policy issues involving working families. A nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, we create and advance innovative policy solutions that reflect a commonality of interests among the private sector both global and domestic, government and other stakeholders. We are a unique voice, and we provide leading and best-practice employers a forum to improve the lives of working families, while strengthening our nation’s economy and enhancing the vitality of our communities.



Workforce Strategy Center (www.workforcestrategy.org)

Workforce Strategy Center advises leaders who seek to make education and workforce development more responsive to the economy. Founded in 1998, WSC has worked with education, workforce development, and economic development stakeholders in more than 20 states to develop strategies to help students and workers succeed and regional economies grow. A pioneer in career pathways development and implementation, WSC’s research and work in the field of regional sectoral workforce development seeks to promote effective and innovative policy and practice.



United Way Worldwide and Education (www.liveunited.org)

The mission of United Way Worldwide is to improve lives by mobilizing the caring power of communities to advance the common good. United Way Worldwide invests in the three building blocks of life: health, education and financial stability; and builds social capital for sustainable change. United Way Worldwide works to reach scale and impact social change by increasing public awareness and will. United Way leverages both financial and volunteer resources through a network of nearly 1,800 community-based United Ways in 45 countries and territories. Through local as well as national initiatives, United Way Worldwide enlists millions of Americans to give, advocate and volunteer to make impact on the three building blocks of life. In education, United Way Worldwide strives to shift the trajectory of escalating high school dropout rates through its 2018 goal: to cut the number of high school dropouts in the U.S. in half. United Way’s model reframes education on a birth to 21 continuum and focuses on supportive communities, effective schools and strong families — strategies and approaches rooted in research. United Way will achieve this ambitious 2018 goal by utilizing United Way’s core strengths — a national network, committed partners and public engagement capacity.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This toolkit was made possible by a grant to the Ready by 21 National Partnership from the Altria operating companies: Philip Morris USA, U.S. Smokeless Tobacco Company and John Middleton Company. The views reflected in this document do not necessarily reflect the views of those who provided funding for this project.

We gratefully acknowledge our colleagues who provided thoughtful feedback on the toolkit:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Even during this time of economic instability, 53 percent of business leaders say their companies face a very or fairly major challenge in recruiting non-managerial employees with the skills, training and education their company needs.¹ In today's global economy, our nation's success depends more than ever on the skills of our workforce. Too many of our youth are not prepared to compete and succeed in the workplace of tomorrow. ►

Forward thinking business executives understand their human resources challenges are not going to improve without intervention. From small businesses to the chamber of commerce and economic development groups to large, multi-national companies with philanthropic and community impact programs, businesses have much to gain from partnering in communities to support efforts that ultimately improve the productivity of their current employees and the readiness of their future workforce.

In addition to building and sustaining the workforce readiness pipeline, benefits to partnering with community organizations can include:

- **Increased Visibility**
- **Community Connections**
- **Business Effectiveness**
- **Issue Expertise**

With these benefits in mind, *Opportunities in the Workforce Readiness Pipeline: A Community Engagement Toolkit for Business* is designed with two goals: one, to help business leaders cultivate and maintain relationships with community organizations, and two, to help business leaders strategically align their youth and education investments internally across distinct business divisions.

KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

To successfully launch and navigate a partnership, business and community leaders need to keep in mind the following:

- **Common Objectives**
- **Leadership**
- **Flexibility**
- **Language/Culture Differences**
- **Clearly Defined Roles**
- **Timing**
- **Measurement and Data**
- **Communications**

Identifying the right community partners and following the keys for community partnerships are essential, but to deliver strong outcomes and influence substantial community change, businesses should look to their community partnerships to form an evolving and sustainable community engagement strategy. A successful community engagement strategy identifies and coordinates all of a business' investments, connects these investments to overall business objectives, ensures that the investments are leveraging one another and creates a larger return on investment for the business and a greater impact in the community.

Ideally, a community engagement strategy includes executive leadership engagement, corporate philanthropy, policy advocacy and knowledge sharing within and across multiple business divisions, including communications, operations, human resources, finance and training and development. Integrating all of these efforts across the business can not only have an impact on a business' community engagement strategy, it can have a dramatic impact on how the business operates day-to-day.

Today's young people are not as prepared as they should be for the future demands of our global economy. It is imperative that business leaders become more strategically involved in the education system in their communities today to close the skills gap that currently exists. Business leaders can work with community partners and connect those efforts both externally in the community and internally across business divisions. Together business and community organizations can ensure that youth have the supports and education they need to be successful today and as the employees of the future.

ACTION STEPS

Items to consider when embarking on community partnerships and a community engagement strategy:

- **Opportunities for Identifying Partners**
 - Utilize current community partners
 - Identify organizations with visibility in the community
 - Get employee recommendations
- **How-To Sustain Community Partnerships**
 - Connect community partnerships to business needs
 - Make connections for executive leadership between community partnerships and business operations
- **The Business Case for Strategic Community Engagement**
 - Cuts duplication and streamline efforts
 - Demonstrates an increase in the return on your community investments
 - Results in greater buy-in from the business on the benefits of community engagement and their impact on the whole community
 - Gets employees involved in the selection of and participation in community initiatives

THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN BUSINESS DEPENDS ON A SKILLED & EDUCATED WORKFORCE

With more than one-third of all youth not graduating high school on time² and businesses reporting that more than 50 percent of those who do earn a high school diploma lack the written, verbal, critical thinking and problem solving skills they need to be successful³ America faces a profound challenge to its economic vitality and future. In today's global economy, our nation's success depends more than ever on the skills of our workforce. Too many of our youth are not prepared to compete and succeed in the workplace of tomorrow. ►

Even during this time of economic instability, 53 percent of business leaders say their companies face a very or fairly major challenge in recruiting non-managerial employees with the skills, training and education their company needs.⁴ This occurs during a time when there are more than 100 million candidates for 61 million job openings.⁵ Business cannot expect to remain globally competitive in an increasingly skills-based economy without having the human resources necessary to allow them to excel.

If businesses are having difficulty finding the right talent today, what will they do tomorrow? Based on retirement, drop-out, skill and demographic figures, some economists predict a labor shortage of more than 35 million skilled and educated workers by 2030.⁶ Retirement alone will impact 70 million Americans and their employers over the next 10 years.⁷ Without

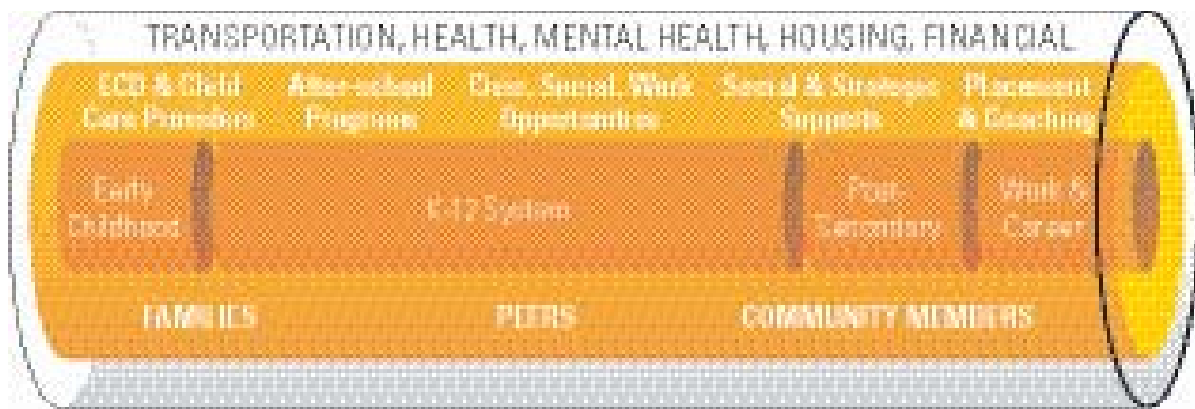
SOBERING FACTS

- One-third of all youth do not graduate high school on time.⁸
- Businesses say more than 50 percent of high schoolers lack the written, verbal, critical thinking and problem-solving skills they need.⁹
- Over a majority (53 percent) of businesses say their companies face a very or fairly major challenge in recruiting non-managerial employees.¹⁰
- There are more than 100 million candidates for 61 million job openings.¹¹
- By 2030 we could be experiencing a labor shortage of more than 35 million skilled and educated workers.¹²
- Retirement will impact 70 million Americans and their employers over the next 10 years.¹³

enough skilled workers, businesses will turn to other options, including outsourcing jobs or transferring operations overseas.

Best practice businesses are taking another approach. Forward thinking executives understand their human resources challenges are not going to improve without intervention. These leaders are focused on improving and expanding the workforce readiness pipeline. The workforce readiness pipeline follows youth, future employees, from early childhood through young adulthood and focuses on providing supports and services these youth need both in and outside of school – including basic needs and high-quality learning and engagement opportunities – to be ready for work and life by age 21. Youth who have the opportunity to move through the pipeline with all of these supports are more likely to enter the workforce motivated, educated and ready to succeed in our global economy.

THE WORKFORCE READINESS PIPELINE



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READY BY 21

Ready by 21® is one solution that brings all leaders in the community together to ensure youth move through the workforce readiness pipeline with the supports they need to be successful. Created by The Forum for Youth Investment, a nonprofit, nonpartisan “action tank,” Ready by 21 is dedicated to helping communities and the nation make sure all youth are ready for college, work and life by focusing supports on youth from cradle to career and in all the places where they spend their time.

To help communities strengthen the workforce readiness pipeline, the Ready by 21 National Partnership, which represents prominent organizations involved with the welfare and education of more than 100 million youth in the United States, offers leaders tools to change the way they work together to prepare youth for success in life. These tools and strategies support community efforts to build broader partnerships, set bigger goals, take bolder actions and use better data – all focused on strengthening quality supports and services for youth from birth through adulthood.



For more information on Ready by 21 please visit www.readyby21.org.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPACTING THE WORKFORCE READINESS PIPELINE

From small businesses to the chamber of commerce and economic development groups to large, multi-national companies with philanthropic and community impact programs, businesses have much to gain from partnering in communities to support efforts that ultimately improve the productivity of their current employees and the readiness of their future workforce. As partners, businesses and community organizations can meet a community's goals for youth while simultaneously meeting business' internal short-term and long-term goals.

Businesses will be successful in delivering the largest impact on their internal business objectives and their communities' goals for youth if they engage with community organizations directly and strategically. The majority of business leaders are involved in a variety of community-wide partnerships to advance the education and skill levels of their future workers.¹⁴

For instance, *Marriott International, Inc.* (Marriott) has leveraged its internship program with the National Academy Foundation to support their workforce readiness pipeline and break down perceptions of the hospitality industry. The program's focus on urban youth allows Marriott to recruit talented, minority youth, which cultivates diversity in their workforce nationally and locally and gives Marriott the opportunity to promote diversity in the leadership of the hospitality industry.¹⁵

Like Marriott, business benefits from partnering with community organizations through:

► INCREASED VISIBILITY

Business can utilize the positive reputations of their community partners to increase their visibility and outreach. Good community partners can also introduce and help publicize businesses in new geographic and demographic markets.

Partnering with community organizations can have an impact on customer loyalty. In a recent poll conducted by Public Policy Polling, through the support of Corporate Voices' member company, Workplace Options, 59 percent of respondents were more likely to patronize a business that was helping young Americans, specifically those that went to extra lengths to train and employ high school dropouts.¹⁶

Gaining loyal customers, who respect and support your community partners' work and in turn the work you are contributing to, can have a direct affect on increasing revenues.

► COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Community organizations' reputation can provide its business partners with access to key opinion, policy and community leaders. Key community partners will facilitate strong connections with these leaders – more than just a mere introduction. These relationships can assist with current and future regulatory requirements and legislative issues.

► BUSINESS EFFECTIVENESS

The Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship found 64 percent of surveyed business leaders say that corporate engagement produces tangible contributions to the business' bottom line.¹⁷ These bottom line benefits could potentially include higher revenues and lower marketing costs from the increased visibility and name recognition businesses receive from their community partners.

Another bottom line benefit to community engagement is increased employee productivity and loyalty. Businesses have the ability to engage employees by providing them with volunteer opportunities, asking for employee knowledge on the community and community organizations,

instituting an employee giving program or providing matching dollars to nonprofit organizations for the number of hours employees volunteer. These opportunities have been shown to increase creativity, motivation, and retention and also serve as professional development opportunities.¹⁸

Community partnerships can also serve as a platform to recruit employees from diverse backgrounds. According to a recent survey, 79% of millennials want to work for a company that cares about how it impacts or contributes to society.¹⁹

► **ISSUE EXPERTISE**

Community organizations often have in-depth experience and knowledge of particular issue areas (e.g. education, social services and healthcare). Businesses can tap this knowledge to strategize their community work to make sure it gets to the root causes of the problems that exist in their communities and to bring to life the values and goals the business had determined are important for success. By engaging in solutions that impact the root causes of social problems, businesses can realize long-term return on investments and sustainable change in communities.

Business and community partnerships not only benefit business, but also have the ability to strengthen support systems and structures that exist for youth and families, including education, healthcare and housing. These partnerships can have a positive impact on the region's economic development. In a recent Dickens-Baschnagel analysis, investments in early childhood education increased labor force participation, income, savings and investment, and tax revenues among program participants and their parents.²⁰ Communities are more likely to thrive and sustain through generations if business and community organizations partner.

Business leaders who are dedicated to making a substantial difference in the skill level of their current and future workforce can target their investments across human resources, talent development, diversity, philanthropy, government affairs and corporate responsibility to get the greatest return from their community investments. Businesses should look to their partnerships with community organizations to create a long-term impact and how those partnerships are imbedded into internal business operations.

With that in mind, this community engagement toolkit is designed with two goals in mind: one, to help business leaders cultivate and maintain relationships with community organizations and two, to help businesses strategically align their youth and education investments internally across distinct business divisions. Community organization partners can include government; faith-based institutions; elementary, secondary and postsecondary education institutions; nonprofit intermediaries and youth development organizations, including afterschool and mentoring programs, libraries, parks and community sports teams.

The toolkit focuses on education and workforce readiness issues, but the tools and action steps can be easily tailored to community initiatives focused around health, housing, the environment and other causes. The examples and strategies discussed in the toolkit can, and have, been used by businesses of all sizes.

When asked what are some benefits to working with community organizations Michael Stroik from Target replied, "Credibility. We want to make a difference and drive behavior change. Community organization partnerships can help us do that."

FAMILY FOR LITERACY: BUILDING STRONG COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

After years of dedicated corporate philanthropy and volunteer support for various organizations and initiatives in youth and education, KPMG LLP chose to focus its corporate responsibility strategy to achieve greater impact. The firm sought to develop new and expanded opportunities for volunteerism among KPMG's partners, employees, their families and friends, in nearly 90 local offices throughout the country.

The firm's leadership and corporate responsibility team identified literacy as a critical building block to long-term educational success. Literacy aligned well with the firm's longstanding focus on education, community and future workforce readiness issues.

Through an invitation-only request for proposal process and meetings with several nonprofit organizations, KPMG searched for a strategic organization to join them in building a literacy initiative that would have an impact in the community and engage KPMG personnel at both national and local levels. They identified First Book as that partner.

First Book is a nonprofit that provides new books to children in need. By tackling a critical barrier to literacy development – access to books – First Book is able to provide schools and programs serving children from low-income families with an ongoing supply of new, high-quality books and educational resources. KPMG knew that First Book was an innovative leader in social en-

terprise and had distributed millions of free and low cost books in thousands of communities. First Book had created unique and successful partnerships with numerous businesses. In addition, First Book's model is distinctive because its resources benefit thousands of local literacy programs, schools and organizations serving children in need, having both a national focus and a local impact.

First Book's leadership team wanted to explore a long-term relationship with KPMG and both organizations worked quickly to develop a deeper understanding of their respective needs, goals and capacities for building a successful initiative from the ground up. Resources and commitment was garnered from both sides and an initial discussion on funding a pilot program began. First Book was a perfect fit - the organization is creative, flexible and thrives on collaborations that can reach more schools and programs with access to desperately needed books. First Book admired KPMG's bold commitment and thinking about ways to achieve a strong national presence with vibrant local engagement opportunities. KPMG had found a partner with which they could build a relationship. Executives from KPMG and First Book worked together to identify both organizations' needs and goals and created an action plan that worked for both organizations. As part of launching this new initiative, they decided to conduct a pilot program. With this model, First Book did not need to ask for a large sum of funding at the outset, which can put off a potential corporate partner.

KPMG and First Book launched KPMG's Family for Literacy as a pilot initiative in six communi-

"First Book has proven to be the ideal choice. They are open and honest about what they can deliver, they keep their promises, and they are incredibly committed to fighting illiteracy and to the children they serve. KPMG and First Book truly work together as a team. First Book's organizational assets continue to benefit KPMG as Family for Literacy grows and succeeds, and the firm is proud to be helping First Book build capacity to deliver on its mission. We are proud to partner with First Book."

– Meghan Bracken, National Director, Corporate Citizenship, KPMG LLP

ties. KPMG and First Book used this first year to set initial benchmarks and test and refine approaches for volunteer engagement, community outreach and incremental fundraising to provide more books and resources to local schools and programs designed by the pilot offices. The program also allowed KPMG and First Book to gauge the scope of resources needed to scale this initiative to include all KPMG offices in the U.S.

The program drew on many aspects of KPMG's corporate responsibility efforts including: employee and family volunteerism; philanthropic giving; leadership and local office support strategies; events and publicity; and family, retiree, alumni and intern involvement.

KPMG's Family for Literacy expanded from six pilot offices to twelve in its second year, and is now operating in more than 30 local KPMG offices. In addition to the pilot offices, First Book now engages with every KPMG office in the U.S. through KPMG's summer and winter internship programs and through the firm's annual holiday community service project – all of which provide local programs with books from First Book. The

firm has expanded this relationship because of the data-based impact, both quantitative and qualitative. KPMG is able to extrapolate their impact from First Book's collection of quantitative data. In just over three years, KPMG has provided more than 1.5 million books to children in need, and the Family for Literacy initiative has been recognized with national awards for innovation in corporate social responsibility.

Kyle Zimmer, President and CEO of First Book says: "Our relationship with KPMG began many years ago, through just a few volunteer efforts in local markets. These early experiences helped us learn more about KPMG and how to work together when a larger opportunity came about. We are very proud of KPMG's Family for Literacy and the impact it has had on First Book's mission. The people of KPMG - from the summer interns to the global leadership, and its extended network of families and friends, have proven time and again to be tremendously smart, caring and generous individuals. Best of all, children in KPMG communities nationwide are benefiting from the outstanding commitment that KPMG makes to its communities."

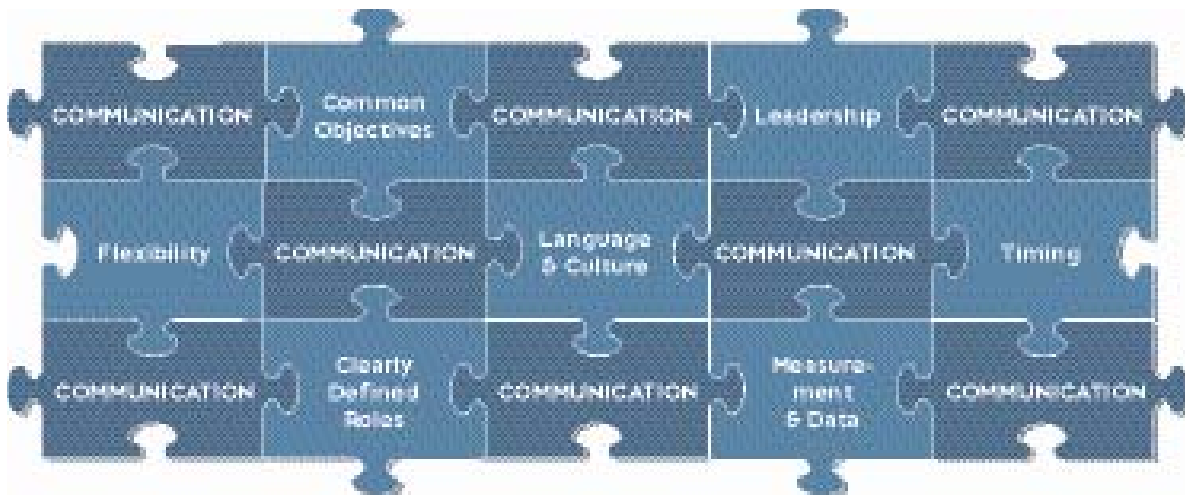


For more information on KPMG's Family for Literacy, visit www.firstbook.org/kpmg.

ESSENTIALS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community partners can provide businesses with the supports they need to remain competitive in local and global marketplaces, but a community engagement strategy takes dedication, commitment and hard work. Correct partners need to be identified, relationships with these partners need to be cultivated and in order for partnerships to have a strong foundation for success, the goals of all partners need to be achieved. ►

KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



A great amount of research and theory exists around what it takes to make a successful business and community organization partnership. Eight underlying themes have emerged from the study of these partnerships. To successfully launch and navigate a partnership, business and community leaders need to keep in mind the following:

► COMMON OBJECTIVES

Every organization will have different objectives and motivations for entering into partnership. The key is to understand these motivations and develop common goals and measurements to ensure the partnership is successful. Think about the needs of your partners to ensure the partnership's common goals encompass each organization's main objectives. The relationship needs to be a win-win for everyone involved.

► **LEADERSHIP**

Organizations have differences in leadership styles. Executives of one organization may prefer to be hands on, others may not. Determine who from each partner organization is going to be managing the work and also who has decision making authority. Dedicating more than one partnership advocate in each organization helps ensure the relationship continues even if individuals' roles change or they leave the organization.

► **FLEXIBILITY**

Working in partnership requires partners be adaptable to a range of situations. It is inevitable that outside influences will have an impact on the work of the partnership and its partners. Flexibility ensures leaders can deal with issues at hand, focus on the ultimate goals of the partnership and also allows for potential new opportunities to arise and help the partnership grow.

► **LANGUAGE/CULTURE**

Differences in language and culture will exist between partners. It is important to bridge these gaps when you are building the partnership's foundation. One effective way to do so is through an intermediary, an individual or organization who can take the time to understand each of the partners, their culture, leadership, and goals. The intermediary can ensure that partners are focused on the end goals of the partnership and translate language barriers that can exist between for-profit and nonprofit organizations. A less intensive approach would involve neutral facilitation where partners hold frank conversations about language and culture barriers when the issues arise. Being open and honest and having a thick skin can help overcome any barriers.

► **CLEARLY DEFINED ROLES**

You need to have a clear understanding of the roles each partner will play. Make sure you understand what your community partners are expecting of you and visa versa – make sure they know what you can expect of them. When kicking off a new partnership, consider getting each partner's roles and responsibilities in writing. This does not have to be a formal contract, but a short document will assist in ensuring there is a clear understanding among partners and that a system of accountability is in place. If the partnership begins to not meet your expectations, use that document as the basis for any discussions you have with your partners.

► **TIMING**

It is important for all partners to have a common understanding of when major milestones should be completed. Develop a schedule of activities or work plan. This schedule should include what needs to be accomplished in the next two weeks, three months and year – depending on the length of the partnership. Make sure the schedule also includes strategic points of re-evaluation to make sure that all partners are on track with progress to date. This allows for adjustments to be made as needed. For those partnerships you would like to sustain, make sure to keep setting goals and discussing future opportunities.

► **MEASUREMENT AND DATA**

Businesses and community organizations may have different ways of defining and measuring the effectiveness of a particular initiative. Businesses are most often referring to hard, number-based facts when they refer to measurement. Some nonprofits focus more on the story of their impact, the qualitative measurement, and less on the quantitative measurement. The key to a successful partnership is to find a balance between the two because both measurements are needed to accurately depict success. More on measurement and data can be found on page 24.

► COMMUNICATIONS

Ultimately to achieve these first seven tips you must have excellent communication, both among partners, within their organizations and to the public. Developing a communications strategy and feedback loop to determine what information should be communicated to particular individuals and at what time is critical.

COMMUNICATION: THE FOUNDATIONAL KEY TO PARTNERSHIP SUCCESS

While all of the keys to successful partnerships are important, clear and consistent communication is one of the most critical. External and internal communication strategies help to ensure your community partnerships achieve long-term impacts. The growth of successful partnerships is often determined by how well those collaborations are promoted to leaders in the community and internal stakeholders.

As one of the keys to successful community partnerships, communication among your partners is essential to having an understanding of each partner's long-term and short-term needs, which will evolve over time. Strong and constant communication ensures that the partnership's scope and objectives are continually in line with the needs of the community. The needs of the communities where your employees live and work change over time. Your community partners should have a direct line into those needs and key partners who will be able to forecast and predict changes to keep your initiative ahead of the curve and meeting those needs as appropriate.

Along with communication amongst the partnership's leaders, it is important that the community understands the partnership, its goal and accomplishments. Work with your community partners to promote your work through:

- **Internal employee communications – bulletin boards, paycheck stubs, etc.**
- **Newsletters, both internal and external**
- **National, local and industry-based media outlets**
- **Presentations across the community, including to the chamber of commerce, city council, faith communities, school boards and economic development groups**

Have all partners distribute and recognize the work publicly and internally when a partnership:

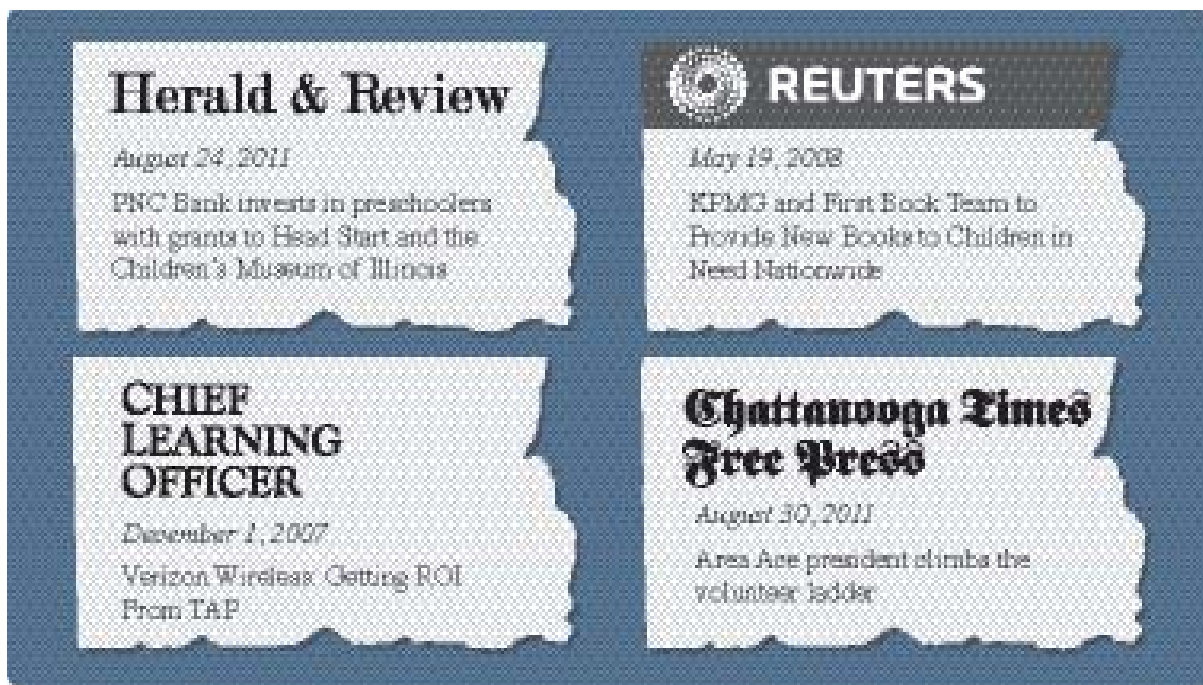
- **Launches an initiative,**
- **Hosts an event,**
- **Reaches a major milestone,**
- **Releases a publication, or**
- **Highlight significant contributions over time of financial, human and in-kind resources.**

With multiple organizations releasing the news, a wider net of community stakeholders will be reached.

Securing the support of your business' public relations team can greatly assist in these efforts. By making public relations leaders champions for your effort you can greatly expand the reach of your work. Use their expertise and experience. If you feel your community partners need assistance with their communication efforts, persuading the public relations team to provide in-kind expertise could have a large impact.

PARTNERSHIP MEDIA VISIBILITY

Successful partnerships can be highlighted in a variety of media outlets. The examples showcased throughout this toolkit have received media visibility in the following publications, among others.



IDENTIFICATION OF COMMUNITY PARTNERS

While communications is the foundation piece of successful partnerships, selecting the right partners is the first step in creating successful community partnerships.

When beginning to determine which community organizations might be the best fit for your business objectives, keep in mind the overall outcome of the project. A project can be short term with a small, but significant impact or a longer term project that can have a substantial and long lasting impact for your business and employees, your community partners, and the community at large. It is often safer to engage in a long-term partnership with an organization that you have worked with in the past. These organizations should have a better understanding of your business' needs and operating style. It is possible to be acquainted with an organization for months or even years before strategies align in a way that opens up the relationship to a potential partnership.

PARTNER IDENTIFICATION LITMUS TEST

Some things to consider when selecting the right organization for your business' goals and objectives:

- Does your business agree with the community organization's goals and mission?
- Does the organization have a strong reputation and position in the community?
- Does the community organization have a dynamic leader that understands the needs of your business?
- Have you previously partnered with the organization? If so, what were the outcomes? Make sure to reach out to the lead contacts on any previous partnerships. The qualitative information they provide on past experience would be essential.
- Does the organization have partnerships with other businesses? If appropriate, think about reaching out to those business leaders as a reference for the organization. This outreach could also form a larger relationship with multiple business and community partners – leading to increasing the leverage of everyone's investments.
- Does the organization have the capacity to do what you are envisioning? Consider the organization's capability to do small tasks such as returning phone calls and emails. Can the organization effectively take on the project in your eyes?
- Is the organization collecting data on their outcomes? If so, what are the results? If not, why?

The Helpful Group, a chain of 17 Ace Hardware stores in Tennessee and northwest Georgia, knows how important it is to select the right community organization partners. In order to ensure their investments would have the greatest impact, The Helpful Group needed to identify an organization that was focused on meeting the community's needs appropriately and efficiently. They found that partner in the United Way of Greater Chattanooga (UWGC). By developing a deep understanding of UWGC's operations, through participation on their Board of Directors, The Helpful Group knew the organization was dedicated to assessing the needs of the community and helping those who are less fortunate. UWGC's strategy ensured that The Helpful Group would get the most return on its investment.

“By partnering with the United Way of Greater Chattanooga, The Helpful Group selected a partner that reflected our values and mission. United Way has their pulse on the needs of the community and can ensure that our investments of time and financial support are used strategically to help: children achieve their full potential in life through education, families become more stable and independent, and the most vulnerable in the community.”

–Tom Glenn, President, The Helpful Group

IDENTIFYING PARTNERS ACTION STEPS

Here are some ideas on where you can connect with and learn about community organizations:

- Organizations you currently partner with either through grant making, volunteerism or smaller community collaborations.
- Community leaders who attend or present at meetings of the school board, Kiwanis, Rotary and Lions Clubs, chamber of commerce or your local workforce investment board.
- Nonprofits that work with or who are highlighted by community foundations, universities, research organizations, faith-based entities, local and state government and other businesses.
- Finally, do not forget to tap the expertise of your employees. What community organizations do they work with either on a professional or personal level?

CHALLENGES TO COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND SOLUTIONS FOR SUCCESS

Despite the benefits to partnering, business leaders report a several challenges and frustrations in their community partnerships,^{21,22} including:

- **Lack of Data Collection and Reporting**
- **Duplicative Conversations and Requests**
- **Lack of Transparency**
- **Cultural Differences**
- **Uncoordinated Efforts**
- **Leadership and Decision Making Variations**

How Can Partnership Challenges Be Overcome?

As a business leader and strong partner in the community, how can you turn those challenging situations around? It is possible that your partners may not know that the partnership is not meeting your needs and expectations. You will need to communicate honestly about what is not working.

It is important to understand your business' priorities and your community focus and ensure your partnerships are meeting those priorities. There are many examples of businesses who were unsatisfied with their community partners. For instance, after one year of a three year partnership a business was unsatisfied with the data that was collected by their community partner and how it was reported. They discussed at length the measurements they were looking for and possible options to obtain better data. In year two the same, qualitative results were reported with no change. The business stood their ground and did not renew their grant funding for the third year. That money was then able to be utilized for projects with clear outcome measurements, which was an imperative for that business.

Business and community leaders can overcome these barriers, and realize the benefits, if partnerships are managed by leaders on all sides who are dedicated, communicative and patient. The essentials of community engagement will assist in building the foundation necessary to overcome these challenges.

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

To deliver strong outcomes and influence substantial, long lasting community change, businesses should look to their community partnerships to form an evolving and sustainable community engagement strategy. This strategy has the potential to influence the entire business across departments and business lines, to create deeper benefits for community partners and to increase a business' return on investment.

Identifying the right community partners and following the tips for community partnerships are essential, but for business the most effective way to develop a long-term community engagement strategy is by connecting the ultimate goals of the partnerships to direct business needs. These may be needs for increased access to materials and resources, better public visibility and brand awareness, or increased employee engagement.

Baxter International Inc., a global healthcare company, is ensuring that current students as well as future generations have the opportunity to learn and be inspired by math and science, while simultaneously meeting critical business needs. In 2008, the company launched Science@Work: Expanding Minds with Real-World Science, a multi-year partnership with Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to support teacher training and student development in biotechnology. The program represents the first and largest philanthropic contribution to biotech education in CPS history.

Baxter's objectives for the partnership include expanding curricula and professional development in CPS, providing hands on experience to students and teachers and demonstrating Baxter's commitment to a critical need in metro Chicago. A core tactical component is providing students and teachers with opportunities to experience science first-hand, through interactions with Baxter professionals. To date, Baxter has hosted more than 40 real-world experiences through career days, lectures and problem-based learning projects. Collectively, Science@Work has served 56,000 students and 649 teachers in 213 schools.

SUSTAINING PARTNERSHIPS ACTION STEPS

Thinking strategically across your business operations can help you determine if your current community partnerships are sustainable. For some, connecting community initiatives to business' needs is not necessary. For others it is not enough. It is important to determine the needs of your organization in order to make your business case for internal support.

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER...

- Are any of your current community initiatives connected directly to the needs of your business? Connecting community initiatives to day-to-day needs and challenges helps them to be a force internally.
- If your community initiatives are connected to business needs, is that connection being made for your executives? Business executives need to be shown a clear relationship between your community work and business operations.
- If your community initiatives are not connected to business needs is there a way to do so? It may be that your community partnerships are helping meet business needs. You may just need to create a frame around these disparate partnerships. This will build connections between initiatives and potentially creates an opportunity for a strategy to develop around the created framework.

Alice Campbell, Senior Director, Global Community Relations at Baxter says, “Math and science education plays a crucial role in developing today’s students into tomorrow’s innovative scientists, engineers and physicians. It is critical to meet the needs of the community, where you can be a good neighbor in many different ways.”

Science@Work enhances the company’s business through support of Baxter’s:

- **Mission to be a social responsible member of the community**
- **Sustainability priority to strengthen the company’s commitment to education, especially math and science**
- **Culture of volunteerism**
- **Leadership expectations and global inclusion strategy**

Aligning Baxter’s community engagement strategy to its strategic, long-term needs will have a greater collective impact, both for the business and the community.

CALCULATING A RETURN ON INVESTMENT FOR WORKFORCE TRAINING PROGRAMS

A major need of businesses across the country is a skilled and prepared workforce. Partnerships between community leaders and business that are geared toward creating workforce readiness training programs provide many benefits to business, but, still, they need to justify the cost of these training programs with real evidence of success. By utilizing and calculating these investments, business leaders can build the case for how workforce readiness training programs and community partnerships can benefit their business bottom line.

In a soon to be released economic report, entitled *Why Companies Invest in “Grow Your Own” Talent Development Models*, Corporate Voices, and national research partners, investigated and described how diverse American employers invest in workforce readiness training programs and how the benefits realized through these programs fulfill their business needs. These companies realize many qualitative benefits from their investments in these training programs and partnerships with community organizations, including greater workplace diversity, enhanced customer loyalty and greater community engagement. By developing and testing an economic Return on Investment Tool, these employers also produced a quantifiable positive return on their investment, realized mainly through higher retention rates. The research and tool provides a roadmap for other businesses that may choose a similar strategy of growing talent in partnership with community organizations.



For more information on the research and findings, visit www.corporatevoices.org/ROI-report.

RECEIVING MULTIPLE REQUESTS? HOW TO ENCOURAGE NONPROFIT PARTNERSHIPS

Business leaders have the opportunity to use their relationships in the community to spark broader action by changing the way community organizations do business. By encouraging community organizations to partner and becoming a champion for those partnerships, business leaders can increase the effectiveness of a community's efforts.

A cultural difference between for-profits and nonprofits is the effect of market conditions and competition. For-profits use competition to spark innovation. To be successful businesses must continually research their competitors. In an effort to reach a competitive advantage, expand to additional markets, or streamline services, businesses merge. In contrast, you will rarely see community organizations come together to gain an advantage and increase the benefits they give to a community. Competition often makes community organizations build up their silos and work with others even less.

Ready by 21 encourages communities to breakdown the silos that can exist between nonprofit organizations. Community organizations that work together can build off one another's strengths, which will increase the effectiveness of all of the organizations and ultimately increasing the return on your business' investment. By encouraging nonprofits to work together you eliminate duplicative work and provide a series of streamlined, effective and coordinated services for youth that span the entire workforce readiness pipeline.

Businesses can bring organizations together by using their knowledge, relationships and investments to support the nonprofits that chose to work together. Businesses can do this through various tactics:

- **RELATIONSHIP BUILDING**

As you partner with community organizations, think strategically about the other organizations they could be working with. Make the necessary introductions and assist the organizations in building relationships.

- **PARTNERSHIP REQUIREMENT**

By partnering only with organizations that use collaboration to make an impact across the entire workforce readiness pipeline, you are challenging partners to collaborate if they are going to work with you.

- **FUNDING REQUIREMENT**

Your request for proposals or grant requirements could include that a grantee must partner with others in their efforts to accomplish the work. You can also require organizations to find matching dollars for your support. There is an opportunity to incentivize community organizations by providing funding opportunities for organizations who submit joint proposals.

- **LEADERSHIP ROLE**

When discussing your business' community engagement efforts with other business, government and community leaders, highlight your partner organizations so other businesses and community funders will see the importance of investing in collaborative organizations, which can only increase the impact of your initial investment.

ESSENTIALS FOR INTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

Strong community partnerships are an important component of any business' community engagement strategy – whether a long-established strategy or one that is just taking shape. Ideally, a community engagement strategy includes executive leadership engagement, corporate philanthropy, policy advocacy and knowledge sharing within and across multiple business divisions, including communications, operations, human resources, finance and training and development. A community engagement strategy brings focus around how a business builds relationships and partnerships with community partners to assist in meeting both business and community goals. ►

Ensuring that a business identifies and coordinates its philanthropic and community efforts across all of these internal business divisions is essential to the effectiveness any community engagement strategy. A business who advocates for community organizations to strategically align their work, will have more leverage if their own internal efforts are aligned in a similar fashion.

The Business Civic Leadership Center of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce conducted a series of forums across the country to better understand how and why companies invest in communities. One business participant noted, "Sometimes it seems like the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing – and we're not just talking about different organizations; we're talking sometimes about initiatives within our own company."²³

STRATEGIC COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

By aligning your company's community partnership efforts you are taking the first steps in developing a community engagement strategy. A successful strategy coordinates all of a business' investments, connects these investments to overall business objectives, ensures that the investments are leveraging one another and creates a larger return on investment for the business and a greater impact in the community.

Businesses have the leadership ability and platform in communities to drive change by focusing their community investments in systems and strategies that advance a more holistic, integrated and coordinated approach to preparing youth for success in school, in the workplace and in life. In other words, business leaders should think purposefully about their investments in the community to ensure coordinated and integrated changes are taking place across the workforce readiness pipeline. This moves a business from participating in checkbook philanthropy to generating integrated, substantial impacts. This transition will impact a business' standing and brand in the community.

Businesses can focus their community engagement efforts in different areas. Some provide operational funding to one or more direct service providers. Others provide pro-bono services, in-kind donations, human resources and volunteer time to one or more nonprofit partners. Businesses looking to make a large scale impact can invest in the social infrastructure in the community including research, capacity building, database development and advocacy. These investments can increase the effectiveness, scale and sustainability of a community's efforts for youth.²⁴

STRATEGIC PHILANTHROPY: EARLY SEGMENT OF THE WORKFORCE READINESS PIPELINE

PNC'S GROW UP GREAT

The PNC Financial Services Group, Inc., one of the nation's largest diversified financial organizations, decided in late 2002 to focus strategically its philanthropic and human resource investments. After in-depth SWOT analyses, research, employee input and interviews PNC identified school readiness as its issue area of choice. Through *Grow Up Great*, a 10-year \$100 million initiative in early childhood education, PNC is strategically aligning its volunteer, philanthropy, advocacy and communications efforts.

- **Volunteerism:** PNC was detailed enough in its strategy to update its policies and procedures, including giving employees up to 40 hours per year in paid time off to volunteer in support of the program. Between 2004 and first quarter 2011 PNC employees volunteered more than 180,000 hours. The company's *Grants for Great Hours* program enables employees who volunteer 40 hours or teams of employees who volunteer more than 100 hours at a qualified early education center to receive a grant up to \$3,000 to present to that center. Through 2010, PNC *Grow Up Great* has invested more than \$340,000 in local preschool centers.
- **Philanthropy:** To date, more than 1 million children have benefited from \$30 million in grants to numerous non-profit organizations and other PNC-funded early childhood education initiatives. Almost \$13 million in those grants have supported innovative developments in new curriculum and teaching strategies.
- **Advocacy:** PNC used their influence with business executives, policymakers and key thought leaders to increase the dialogue surrounding the importance of quality early childhood education, including playing a role in passing Pennsylvania's first-ever state budget with a line item to fund pre-K programs in school districts, Head Start and other centers.
- **Communications:** *Grow Up Great* is an essential part of PNC's communications strategy. The initiative is highlighted in everything from print, broadcast and social media to ATM and in-branch materials.

By strategically aligning its investment, *Grow Up Great* has PNC's full force behind it and the results show.



For more information please visit www.pncgrowupgreat.com.

"Good corporate philanthropists leverage obvious business assets by, for example, garnering in-kind donations. Great corporate philanthropists identify the business' unique strengths – whether materials, intellectual, competitive or otherwise – to develop truly innovated social solutions that can be fully integrated with the business." (Mission Measurement)

BUILDING THE CASE FOR STRATEGIC COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Just like any venture, creating a community engagement strategy within your business will likely require making the case internally on why such a strategy is important. Some things to think about when making the case:

- Who do you need to persuade to get the approval necessary to move this work forward? Stakeholder mapping can help you identify those individuals and seek them out.
- What is happening strategically within your business? If there have been discussions around revising your community engagement strategy, now might be the appropriate time to have these conversations. If these discussions have not been taking place, what can you do to move executives in that direction?
- Critical elements of your business case. Strategic community engagement will:
 - *Cut duplication and streamline efforts*
 - *Demonstrate an increase in the return on your community investments*
 - *Result in greater buy-in from the business on the benefits of community engagement and their impact on the whole community*
 - *Get employees involved in the selection of and participation in community initiatives*
- Your business case could include how your business could better use its philanthropy to meet the needs of your employees, including effective childcare and school systems; safe neighborhoods and recreation opportunities (arts, culture, nature).
- Reach out to community and key opinion leaders to ensure your initiatives meet the community's needs.
- Utilize data in your business case including:
 - *Community outcomes, such as graduation rates - both high school and postsecondary education; employment rates; poverty indexes; and crime rates*
 - *Business metrics, these could include turnover and retention rates; productivity percentages; and employee happiness surveys*

“Business faces significant challenges in corporate giving - expectations from the community for financial support are always high. A lack of focus can often lead to the “spray and pray” approach, that is spraying dollars around and praying that they do some good.”

–Helen Carroll, Toyota Motor Engineering & Manufacturing North America

MAKING THE INTERNAL BUSINESS CASE: VERIZON WIRELESS

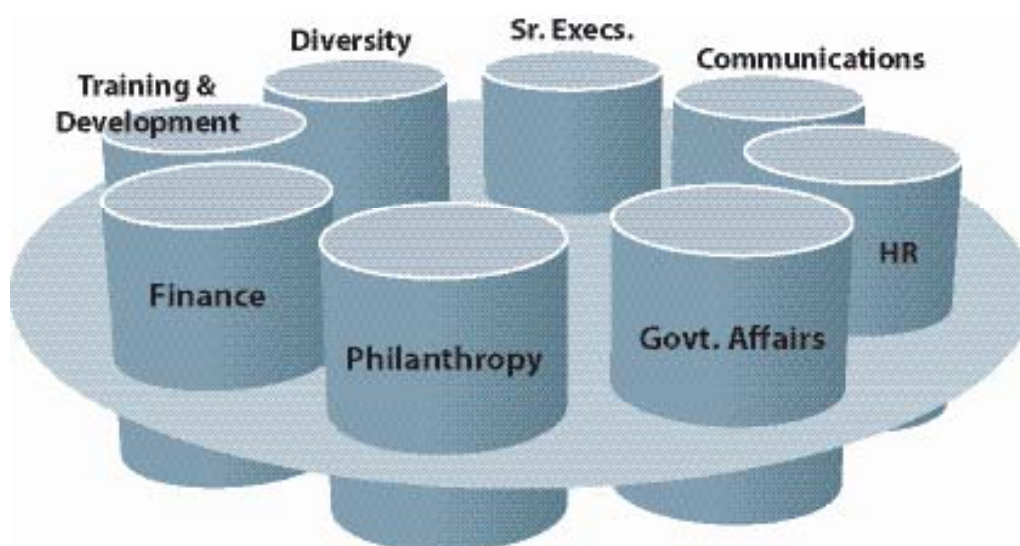
Verizon Wireless employs more than 84,000 people in 49 states, 80 percent of whom are “front-line” employees engaged in retail and customer service – entry-level positions that historically suffer high turnover rates. The Verizon Wireless tuition assistance program, called LearningLINK, helps the company address employee retention as well as other key business strategies such as recruitment, career mobility and job performance.

Verizon Wireless created a comprehensive measurement process that reports dollar-based returns on investments in LearningLINK for corporate leaders. According to LearningLINK National Program Manager Dorothy Martin, the key to winning continuous support for this comprehensive employee education program is the ability to measure and quantify for corporate leaders the contribution it makes to Verizon Wireless’ overall strategic goals.

Dorothy’s diligent measurement techniques demonstrate that the turnover rate of program participants is reduced by over 50 percent. This allows her to make the ROI business case that through turnover cost savings, LearningLINK covers its expenses and generates additional savings to the business. It is also one of the company’s most valuable recruiting tools. Fifty-five percent of LearningLINK participants say the program was a factor in their decision to accept employment at the company. Furthermore, job performance ratings are higher for LearningLINK participants and employees are three times more likely to get promoted or take advantage of career development opportunities when they participate in the program.

Even in the current difficult economic conditions, Verizon Wireless continues to invest in the post-secondary educational attainment of its employees because it is a winning talent development, recruiting and retention strategy and they’ve got the data to prove it!

INTEGRATING CORPORATE SILOS



Aligning your organization’s community partnerships is the first step to ensuring your investments have the most return. Integrating these efforts across the business can be a crucial and beneficial next step. Silos exist between different business divisions and one way to directly connect your philanthropic efforts to business needs is to bridge across those silos.

Increasing communication between finance, operations, government affairs, human resources, training and development and philanthropy can not only have an impact on a company's community engagement strategy, it can have a dramatic impact on how the company operates day-to-day.

A story from *CVS Caremark* shows how goodwill from one division – Workforce Initiatives – can benefit another – Government Affairs. Steve Wing, a former CVS executive, through his relationship with Corporate Voices was asked to testify before the Senate HELP Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety on the company's workforce initiatives. "The government affairs team was hesitant to allow me to testify because it was assumed one of the Senators on the committee had a negative perception of CVS. After some persuasion, I was able to convince them of the benefits and presented at the hearing. That particular Senator approached me after my testimony and could not say enough good things about CVS's work. The government affairs team could not have been happier. They were able to use CVS's good reputation from that event in conversations with Congressional members on separate legislative issues directly connected with our daily operations."

Aligning community partnerships across a business should not be seen only as work. CVS's story is proof that as colleagues from across the business share and collaborate everyone benefits.

Who is the right person to run this work? It should be someone with connections to at least one or multiple departments. Whether it is the creation of a new position or an addition to an existing role, the individual integrating silos existing in your organizations should have the following characteristics to best move the work forward.

- **Patience** – long-term, sustainable partnerships take time, often much longer than individuals anticipate
- **Attitude** – this work should be seen as an extension of their personal value
- **Communications** – ability to effectively persuade in written and oral communications is critical
- **Strategic Thinking** – it will be continually important to make connections both between departments internally and with outside organizations
- **Problem Solving** – the need for long-term vision, creative thinking to come up with out-of-the-box solutions to partnership and community problems and the ability to inspire partners to implement those solutions will be critical
- **Project Management** – they will need to ensure that a number of different, moving parts are aligned to one final goal

Once you have a clear vision of what you want to get out of any community partnership it is important to look at what other groups internally could benefit from being involved in the project. Different departments can serve different roles in the community and have different impacts on education and workforce readiness outcomes for youth. So many times when a business forms a community partnership someone internally is left out of the discussion. The following chart references which internal business divisions might have an interest or role in community partnerships and what actions they can take to be involved. For additional ideas, please see *Call to Action: Ready by 21 Business Engagement Menu* at www.corporatevoices.org.

ROLES FOR BUSINESS DIVISIONS IN COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Senior Executives	Be a business champion by giving speeches, participating on nonprofit boards, and getting involved in the media	Recruit other business leaders to get involved in their community	
Philanthropy	Provide grants with both short- and long-term impact via event sponsorships, evaluation studies and research	Match employee contributions through dollar-for-dollar matching or volunteer time matching	Provide in-kind contributions (space, equipment, transportation)
Human Resources	Provide volunteer opportunities for employees and report the employee morale and motivation ROI from these opportunities	Relay the skills you are looking for in your employees to nonprofit partners	Train nonprofit partners on human resources systems and practices
Training & Development	Provide teambuilding opportunities for departments by volunteering with nonprofit partners	Provide professional development training to nonprofit partners	Encourage employees to be mentors to gain leadership skills
Diversity	Use community partnerships to bring different employee groups together	Use partner's knowledge and expertise on different populations	Leverage community connections to focus community engagement strategy
Communications	Promote community partnerships internally through newsletters and intranets and externally through the media	Social responsibility programming and reporting	Train nonprofit partners on effective communications strategies
Finance	Help determine quantitative metrics	Provide funding	Train nonprofit partners on financial systems and practices
Govt Affairs	Meet with policymakers at the local, regional and national levels	Testify to legislative committees and sign letters of support	Advocate for specific policies

MEASUREMENT AND RETURN ON INVESTMENT

One way to begin coordinating internal programs and practices is to focus on measurement. By bringing together all of a company's foundation and corporate philanthropic projects, from in-kind contributions, job shadowing for students and volunteering to advocacy and grant making around a set of internal success measures you will see how various initiatives overlap. These measures will allow you to utilize the strengths of those initiatives and increase your return on investment. Tools exist that will assist businesses in integrating and measuring their efforts, however according to the Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship less than one in five business leaders report that their organizations are using them.²⁵

To get you started there are several different ways to use and collect data to determine the impact of your investments.

▶ NATIONAL

Businesses can and should use data from national organizations to assist in determining what types of initiatives they should be investing in and to persuade high-level executives to support those investments. Businesses can also use the data of national research and advocacy organizations to measure the impact of their investments from a big picture perspective.

▶ SYSTEM AND PROGRAM

For the greatest impact, businesses need to focus their community investments in programs and systems that are measuring their effectiveness. These measurements will assist business leaders in determining if their investments are being utilized effectively. According to the Deloitte 2010 Volunteer IMPACT survey, only 37 percent of business respondents say they discuss how the company can help the nonprofit collect data on the resulting social impact prior to embarking on a project.²⁶ Encourage and assist your partners to collect relevant, data-focused evidence that their work is having positive effects, if they are not already doing so. Work with your nonprofit partners to see what data they are currently collecting before requiring additional measurements.

▶ PARTNERSHIPS

One of the keys to successful community partnerships from page 9 is measurement and data. It will be difficult to assess if your organization's community partnerships are having their desired impact if there are no metrics, qualitative or quantitative, connected with the partnership's goals. One of the partners may take on the role of additional data collection. Another approach would involve using data that is already being collected by one of the partners or by an outside organization. For example, if your goal to get young people in the community a postsecondary education credential, you can collect graduation rates from area colleges and universities – these can be found through your state department of education or the National Student Clearinghouse.

▶ BUSINESS

Businesses produce a variety of metrics – from employee retention rates to inventory of stock and net revenue – all to ensure they are providing the greatest benefit to their shareholders and customers. The same goes for businesses who are investing in their communities – the best way to know the effectiveness of your investments is to develop metrics against your goals. What strategic outcomes would you like to see from your community partners? Can you add up the impact of several initiatives?

► SUCCESS STORIES

Data backed metrics are critical to knowing if community investments make financial sense, but there is more. Regardless of what the numbers say, at the end of the day is your work making a difference in the lives of people who need it most? Success stories, qualitative data, bring measurements to life and generate good media and also inspire further engagement from employees, management, etc.

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA: PRIVATE-SECTOR FUNDER COLLABORATION

The city of Richmond, Virginia is similar to many cities across the country: Leaders struggle with the most effective way to work together in order to provide appropriate services to children, youth and families. City leaders have taken a crucial step to improve these services by founding "Bridging Richmond", a partnership created to ensure that all children and youth have the supports necessary to succeed academically. Managed through the School of Education at Virginia Commonwealth University with support from United Way, Bridging Richmond is modeled after Strive, a breakthrough partnership of education, business, nonprofit, community, civic and philanthropic groups in Cincinnati.

One of the first tasks undertaken by the Bridging Richmond group was to build an asset map of all existing services for children and youth in the Richmond area. This process compelled Altria Group, a large community employer and corporate participant in Bridging Richmond, to lead a similar exercise to map all of the private-sector funding that was available for Richmond's children and youth. The hope was that the mapping of private resources would be able to answer the question, "Is our funding well calibrated to where the community's needs are?"

With the assistance of the Forum for Youth Investment and the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality, Altria revised an existing Ready by 21 community mapping tool, *Mapping Moving Trains*, to get a snapshot of how and where major Richmond companies and foundations were investing their youth-supporting dollars. A total of 15 organizations, including

corporations, corporate foundations, independent foundations, and the local United Way and community foundation, each submitted one year's worth of data describing their organizations' support for education and youth readiness.

The process both confirmed that Richmond-area contributors focus many of their resources on similar priorities, and also identified differences in the approaches they take and the way they frame their intents. For example, the 15 survey participants used more than 50 different terms to categorize the work their dollars supported for purposes of impact measurement. The Weikart Center's analysts were able to organize these into nine broad categories of impact where the funders commonly focus. Among these, the four most heavily supported were K-12 education, early childhood programs, postsecondary supports, and out-of-school time programming.

Altria believes the greatest value of the exercise was better information-sharing among colleagues. Altria employee Kathryn Fessler, Senior Manager, Corporate Contributions, who helped organize the inquiry, said, "Each of us sees the landscape through the lens of our organization's priorities. Reconciling those views against each other and the broader community's top needs could make all of our decisions more powerful. There are great opportunities to collaborate, especially where funders have impact priorities in common."

Corporate Voices will continue to track the efforts in Richmond. If you are interested in receiving technical assistance on how to replicate this partnership, please contact readyby21@corporatemoives.org.



For more information please visit www.bridgingrichmond.org and strivetogether.org.

IS IT WORKING? LOUISVILLE'S APPROACH

Businesses, through their leadership and standing in the community, can encourage schools, government and nonprofit organizations to use measurement and data to break down existing community silos. With budgets shrinking and pressure mounting on existing youth services it is mission critical that investments aimed to increase education outcomes are hitting the mark. Surprisingly, many cities, corporate partners and school systems cannot track if investments in non-school programs are actually moving the dial on outcomes or even important short-term indicators like school attendance. But there are a handful of communities effectively sharing data across systems.

Starting in 2004, a collaborative effort led by the City of Louisville and Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) worked in partnership with nFocus Software to develop a community wide approach for sharing data across school and community programs. The result is that after-school administrators now have access to key student records that provides immediate insight for matching attendees with the academic activities or tutoring programs that will best serve them. If the data shows a student's grades or test scores are low, the afterschool facility encourages the student to enroll in a tutoring program. If a student has school attendance or suspension problems, he/she can be matched to an appropriate intervention program. Local evaluations have noted that results have included improved school attendance, higher grade point averages,

and reductions in school suspensions. Future plans for 2011 include launching an online public pathway to provide better access to the most effective services and a robust analytic system for more efficiently tracking and delivering services.

Parents, taxpayers, donors and politicians rightfully demand a solid return on education and youth program investments. Certainly efforts like the one in Louisville should be an attractive

"I believe that other school districts can use the same strategy to encourage the best use of youth centers' services in the interest of improving students' classroom achievement, strengthening their commitment to school, and leading them to make good life choices."

—Marty Bell, Deputy Superintendent of the Jefferson County Public Schools

model to public and private funders looking for system-based approaches that can actually answer the question. Is it working?

To learn more about Louisville and other community data sharing initiatives, please contact Richard Wells, manager, nFocus Software by phone (512) 276-2070 or email at rwells@nfocus.com or visit www.nFocus.com.



For more information please visit www.nFocus.com.

MOVING FORWARD

Today's young people are not as prepared as they should be for the future demands of our global economy. To stay competitive businesses will rely on skilled talent to excel in the 21st century. It is imperative that business leaders become more strategically involved in the education system in their communities today to close the skills gap that currently exists. Business leaders are currently involved in education efforts, but those efforts can have an even larger impact with additional strategic and creative efforts. Business leaders can work with their community partners and ensure those partners work with one another. Most importantly, business leaders can connect their efforts both externally in the community and internally across business divisions. Each business division has different perspectives and assets that can add value. Together we can ensure that today's youth have the supports and education they need to be successful today and as the employees of the future.

RESOURCES TO UTILIZE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

CORPORATE VOICES BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUITE OF TOOLS

Corporate Voices, with various partners, has developed a suite of business and community engagement tools to assist leaders in working together more effectively, proactively, strategically and with all of the right players at the table to create the long-term and sustainable partnerships necessary to improve the odds that youth will be ready for college, work and life. These tools include:

- ▶ **Supporting the Education Pipeline: A Business Engagement Toolkit for Community-Based Organizations:** Corporate Voices, the Ready by 21 National Partnership, United Way Worldwide and Workforce Strategy Center partnered to create this toolkit, which provides lessons on how community leaders can identify potential business partners, set realistic goals and how to create partnerships for long-term success.
- ▶ **Call to Action: Ready by 21 Business Engagement Menu:** This dual purpose document provides business leaders with the various ways they can be involved in communities. Nonprofit leaders can also use the menu to learn the array of options that exist to get business active in effectively meeting a community's goals for youth.
- ▶ **Common Goals, Unique Strengths: Education and Business Partnerships:** Corporate Voices and the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) are working together to help communities build broader partnerships across the public and private sectors. In this brief, Corporate Voices and AASA highlight the benefits of these partnerships, tips for engaging educators and business leaders, and a case study illustrating these partnerships in action.
- ▶ **Business Engagement Stakeholders Wheel: Identifying Business Leaders in Your Community:** This tool for community organizations lists different business organizations and business leaders who could be potential partners, as well as information on the roles business can play to ensure all youth are ready for college, work and life.
- ▶ **Understanding the Needs of Your Business Partners: Building and Conducting a Successful Business Survey:** This tool offers practical advice to community organizations, helping them work strategically with businesses in their region and guiding them through a business survey to better understand the landscape of business investments in their community.

CORPORATE VOICES MICRO BUSINESS CASE SERIES

Corporate Voices, through the Learn and Earn and New Options initiatives, is continually highlighting best practice businesses who are partnering with organizations to make an impact across the workforce readiness pipeline. The micro business cases show, from the business perspective, why these partnerships are important. Companies highlighted include:

- AOL
- Crest Cadillac
- CVS Caremark & Worksource Partners, Inc.
- Georgia Power
- Health Careers Collaborative
- Southwire
- UPS

READY BY 21 TECHNICAL PARTNERS

The Ready by 21 Technical Partners offer communities a range of technical assistance tools and resources including research, data management, landscape mapping and leadership development.

- ▶ **Child Trends** (www.childtrends.org)
Child Trends is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research center whose mission is to improve outcomes for children by providing research, data and analysis to people and institutions whose decisions and actions affect children.
- ▶ **Community Systems Group** (www.communitysystemsgroup.com)
CSG's specialty and passion is the process of solving community problems. The technology that supports it. The skills required by those who lead it. The systems that outsiders such as funders, consultants and trainers need to nurture it. The evaluation that feeds it. The research that proves it works.
- ▶ **David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality** (www.cypq.org)
The core mission of the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality is to position point service quality as a powerful public idea that drives the out-of-school time field towards higher levels of understanding, expectation and action about the quality of experiences available for youth.
- ▶ **The Finance Project** (www.financeproject.org)
The Finance Project is a specialized nonprofit research, consulting, technical assistance and training firm for public and private sector leaders nationwide. They help leaders make smart investment decisions, develop sound financing strategies and build solid partnerships that benefit children, families and communities.
- ▶ **Gallup** (www.gallup.com)
For more than 70 years, Gallup has built its reputation on delivering relevant, timely and visionary research on what humans around the work think and feel. The Gallup Student Poll is dedicated to measuring the hope, engagement and wellbeing of America's students.
- ▶ **nFocus Software** (www.nFocus.com)
nFocus Software is the leading provider of data collection and outcome measurement software to the public sector. Today, nFocus Software's solutions track and measure for more than 2.2 million children in all fifty states and Canada.
- ▶ **Results Leadership Group** (www.resultsleadership.org)
RLG consultants, educators, coaches and facilitators develop the capacity of government and nonprofit organizations to produce measurable results for clients and communities. Results Leadership is the capacity of individuals at any level within an organization, partnership or collaboration to produce measurable results. Such capacity is fostered both through the development of individual competencies and by structuring institutions to support results-based decision making.
- ▶ **SparkAction** (www.sparkaction.org)
SparkAction's site and e-newsletters are a one-stop shop for news and tools to make a difference in the lives of children and youth. They gather, synthesize and promote the best information on a range of children and youth issues across the development spectrum, from organizations and leaders across the country.

OTHER RESOURCES

Organizations from across the country develop resources for business and community leaders on education and workforce readiness issues. Some of the most prominent include:

- ▶ **Association of Corporate Contribution Professionals** (www.accprof.org)
ACCP is the nation's leading independent organization providing services and support for corporate contributions, community relations and employee volunteer managers.
- ▶ **Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship** (www.bcccc.net)
The Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship is a member-based research organization committed to helping business leverage its social, economic and human assets to ensure both its success and a more just and sustainable world.
- ▶ **Business Tools for Better Schools** (www.biztools4schools.org)
The "Business Tools for Better Schools" toolkit is designed, by Achieve, Inc., to engage, energize and focus company and business organization efforts in education reform. The toolkit is geared towards both policy and practical involvement, primarily at the state and local level, in three key K-12 education reform business priorities: ensuring that graduates are ready for work and college; strengthening the STEM pipeline; and maximizing data-driven decisions in education.
- ▶ **Committee Encouraging Corporate Philanthropy** (www.corporatephilanthropy.org)
CECP is the only international forum of business CEOs and chairpersons focused exclusively on corporate philanthropy. Their mission is to lead the business community in raising the level and quality of corporate philanthropy. They offer their members essential resources, including a proprietary online benchmarking tool, networking programs, research and opportunities for best-practice sharing.
- ▶ **The Conference Board** (www.conference-board.org)
The Conference Board is a global, independent business membership and research association working in the public interest. Their mission is to provide the world's leading organizations with the practical knowledge they need to improve their performance and better serve society.
- ▶ **Council on Foundations** (www.cof.org)
Council on Foundation is a national nonprofit membership association whose members' collective assets exceed \$300 billion. They provide their members with services and support to help them succeed. They emphasize the value of philanthropy in the lives of people everywhere.
- ▶ **Independent Sector** (www.independentsector.org)
Independent Sector is the leadership forum for charities, foundation and corporate giving programs committed to advancing the common good in America and around the world. Their nonpartisan coalition of approximately 600 organizations leads, strengthens and mobilizes the charitable community in order to fulfill their vision of a just and inclusive society and a healthy democracy of active citizens, effective institutions and vibrant communities.
- ▶ **Points of Light/Hands On Network** (www.pointsoflight.org)
Points of Light Institute embraces service and civic engagement as fundamental to a purposeful life and essential to a healthy world. They have the history, the scale and reach, the leadership and the strategy to mobilize millions of people to tackle concrete, significant challenges.
- ▶ **U.S. Chamber Business Civic Leadership Center** (www.bclc.uschamber.com)
BCLC works with leaders from the business, government and nonprofit sectors to address and act on shared goals. Their overarching goal is to help build good will, good relations and good markets by focusing on issues that affect business from a social and economic standpoint.

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