



## **AN EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT PLAYBOOK**

***"Colleges and Employers Collaborate to  
Develop the Skilled Workforce of the Future"***

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# The Employer Engagement Playbook

*A Guide for Community Colleges to develop meaningful employer relationships leading to successful workforce development programs.*

This Playbook was developed as a result of a study contracted by Cuyahoga Community College as part of the Achieving the Dream Community College Advanced Manufacturing Career Pathways Initiative. The research conducted for the "Aligning Advanced Manufacturing Programs to Address Skill Needs: A Study of the Employer's Role" report resulted in the identification of categories that describe the roles that employers play in their interactions with community colleges and other workforce partners.

Through an analysis of a number of community college workforce education and training programs, it was concluded that successful best practice programs were those that:

- Include employers who are actively involved in at least 3 of the following 5 categories of employer engagement (Oversight, Program Design, Program Delivery, Hiring, Financial, In-Kind Resources)
- Include employers who participate in activities with the college that are sustainable, strategic, continuous, and mutually beneficial.
- Identify, accomplish, and document program outcomes.

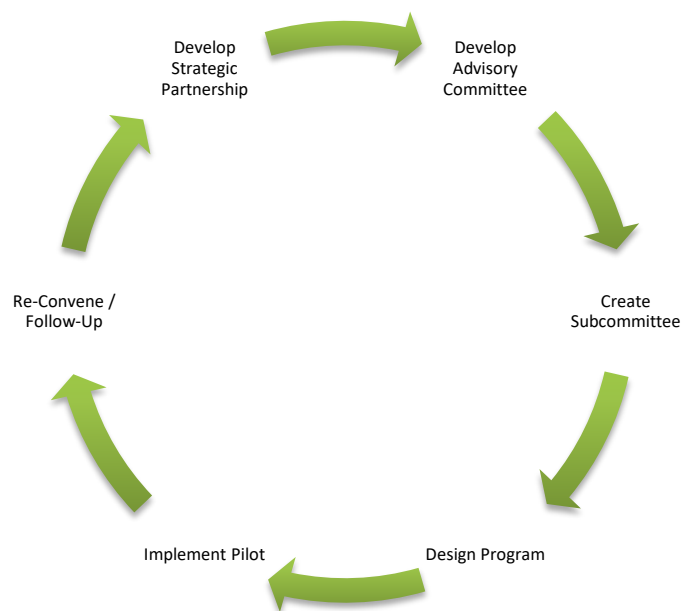
The Playbook is designed to help community colleges assess their status in relation to best practices and work with their employer and other workforce related partners to strengthen and enhance their efforts to better meet the current and future needs in their service area. It represents many of the recommendations emerging from the initial study. The six functions (Develop Advisory Committee, Create Subcommittee, Design Program, Implement Pilot, Re-Convening/Follow-Up, and Develop Strategic Partnership) indicate the stages where employers can actively participate in the workforce development process. The employers' role is described in each stage as well as those that should be played by the college and the other workforce partners. The specific activities are noted for each category. Background information and more details are provided in the report.

Since the product of the workforce development effort is a qualified candidate for the career positions, factors related to recruitment, selection, and retention are included in this Playbook. The student is critical to program success and all the partners must have a role in ensuring a successful outcome.

A continuous improvement strategy is key to the overall success, and is symbolized via the Employer Engagement "Cycle". The strategic partnership activities will ensure that there is a process in place for a feedback loop with existing committees, leading to replication and sustainability. The detailed actions that can occur at each step are found on the next page.

Community colleges that use this Playbook with employers who accept their responsibility in this process will have not only successful workforce development programs, but a relationship that will be sustainable and beneficial to all stakeholders over time.

**Figure 1: Employer Engagement Cycle**



Function	Develop Advisory Committee	Create Subcommittee	Design Program	Implement Pilot	Re-Convene / Follow-Up	Develop Strategic Partnership
<b>College Role</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop Advisory Committee</li> <li>Facilitate discussion to identify needs, then analyze based on common needs of all employers</li> <li>Rank based on urgency and most common needs</li> <li>Secure employer commitment for substantive participation, including Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to develop training programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish subcommittees that specialize in the different facets of a program, include SMEs</li> <li>In-depth analysis of common knowledge and skills needed in companies</li> <li>Confirm critical mass of employers to support training a student cohort</li> <li>Clarify employer expectations for student abilities and characteristics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and/or enhanced curriculum content to meet employer needs</li> <li>Include college faculty, adjunct, retention specialist, career coaches, program developers, and employers</li> <li>Develop program</li> <li>Reconvene subcommittee, confirm content, design format</li> <li>Secure commitment for ongoing involvement and internships</li> <li>Determine industry credential related to content</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine funding source</li> <li>Assess, interview, select students</li> <li>Deliver the program</li> <li>Ensure access to student support services for underserved populations, monitor and address barriers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review outcomes data to determine effectiveness and impact such as hiring, retention, etc.</li> <li>Determine if program revisions needed in content, format, recruitment, selection, delivery, student follow-up</li> <li>Review student progress. Look at traits of most successful students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Efforts made throughout lifespan of the initiative for continuous improvement feedback loop</li> <li>Share and possibly replicate with other colleges and/or other employees</li> <li>Facilitate ongoing engagement with employers</li> <li>Assess sustainability of model, identify other content areas</li> <li>Replicate and adapt process based on employer need and college capacity</li> </ul>
<b>Employer Role</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in advisory committee</li> <li>Provide information on current and future needs</li> <li>Discuss relationship between content of current programs and employer needs</li> <li>Commit to substantive involvement by key personnel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine specific knowledge, skills, and abilities needed</li> <li>Identify industry credentials currently being used</li> <li>Clarify and validate job descriptions to ensure they describe KSAs needed for the jobs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review proposed content / format / delivery structure</li> <li>Confirm match of training outcomes to employer workforce needs</li> <li>Accept selected industry credentials as learning outcomes for training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer internships</li> <li>Provide feedback/reports to college on student progress</li> <li>Offer tours, speakers, SMEs, for class participation</li> <li>Conduct mock interviews</li> <li>Assist with student selection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide data on outcomes</li> <li>Recommend revisions to address issues</li> <li>Suggest other employers to become engaged and participate in workforce development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize and promote value of participation with college</li> <li>Identify single point of contact for communications and interactions between college and company</li> <li>Commit to ongoing participation with college on workforce development</li> </ul>
<b>Partner Role</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify potential students, target population for introduction to training option</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate as needed to connect with potential students and support services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify , confirm, recruit pools of potential students</li> <li>Recommend funding options</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide support services to students</li> <li>Communicate with instructors and employers on behalf of students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in follow-up meetings to provide data and recommendations to improve all program aspects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commit to ongoing involvement as appropriate to offer input on future training programs and access to target populations</li> </ul>