THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

Sector Workforce Intermediaries:

Next Generation

Employer-Engagement Strategies

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Workforce Strategies Initiative
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Contents

Preface

On September 12, 2014, the Aspen Institute's Economic Opportunities Program and the Annie E. Casey Foundation hosted a one-day meeting of leading workforce practitioners to discuss how we can redefine employer engagement to mean influencing businesses' human resource and training practices in addition to responding to pipelines needs. This paper summarizes that conversation.

This paper was funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. We thank them for their support but acknowledge that the findings and conclusions presented in this paper are those of the author(s) alone, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Foundation.

A note from the author: It was a privilege to participate in discussions with such a gifted and dedicated set of practitioners. I have tried to find the right voice to accurately portray the rich dialogue that took place and hope that I have succeeded. This is a difficult era on the front lines of workforce development, and there were a great many elements of best practice shared in the meeting.

My thanks are due to Maureen Conway for affording me this opportunity and to both Maureen and Allison Gerber for their thoughtful comments on the draft. Special thanks are in order to Bob Giloth for the critical, conceptual, and institutional support that he has provided to the sector-workforce movement throughout its development.

Executive Summary

Sector workforce intermediaries arose through community-based organizations trying to connect low-income, low-skilled workers to meaningful employment. They often gained in-depth knowledge of specific sectors to generate or improve employment while also promoting the viability of employers for future success.

With its focus on social change on the one hand and market-based solutions on the other, the sector-workforce field has steadily expanded to encompass a far greater diversity of clients, intermediary institutions, and funders (especially from the public sector). As this still nascent movement continues to grow and diversify, increased attention is being paid to the nature of the relationship between sector intermediaries and employers and to the quality of jobs being generated for low-income, low-wage workers. With the huge structural imbalances affecting the bottom end of the labor market, when so many hold jobs that are insufficient to meet basic needs, what is the role of sector intermediaries in promoting better quality jobs? And how best can they play it?

With these issues in mind, the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Aspen Institute invited a number of leading practitioners to a one-day meeting centered on the question: "How can we expand the definition of employer engagement to include influencing businesses' human resource and training practices in addition to responding to pipeline needs?" The question was meant to be provocative and to elicit lively discussion, not necessarily neat conclusions.

What ensued was a rich discussion of current practices and of the status of the field itself. Given the geographic and institutional diversity now encompassed by the sector-workforce field, it was of little surprise that the participants did not arrive at a common framework to define employer engagement. As one participant put it, "Employer engagement means different things from different stakeholder perspectives."

The purpose of employer engagement also differed among participants. To some, it was "to put forward a straight service model" to help employers meet the bottom line and thereby stay engaged with employers. For others, it was to "make the case for employers to take more

responsibility for the development of human capital." In the same vein, another participant said, "The heart of community organizing is relationship building, and employer engagement is part of that process."

One area of agreement was on perceived elements of success in influencing employer decision-making on job quality. One success element identified was the *quality of the relationship* between the intermediary and the employer, i.e., one that "is a two-way street….based on mutual gain and trust"; or as another participant put it, "It is the strength of the relationship that allows us to push the envelope in improving job quality." A second, somewhat related factor cited was *patience* — measured in years. "The timelines needed to establish trusting relationships do not always match those of funders." A third was *flexibility* in rapidly changing economic environments, which participants characterized in various ways, such as, "to have a system that changes what you are reaching for as the external labor market changes"; "to be able to turn before change overtakes you"; and "[including] needing to change sectors."

Tactically, "each intermediary needs to determine how far to go with advocacy for job improvement." A great deal depends on choosing the right employer from the outset. "There are high road and low road employers, even for the same jobs." Numerous participants stressed that sector intermediaries should use their status in the community as *leverage*, "coming to the [employer] relationship as equal partners ... as co-investors." "Recognizing champions publically" was seen as critical to maintaining and expanding employer participation. "Sector knowledge allows you to play an inside game," and this knowledge is a huge factor in identifying skill gaps and designing training and placement. It also affords the opportunity to network with companies and form alliances with other sector intermediaries on a regional basis.

While not a core agenda item, scale was addressed partly in terms of advocacy. For example, "As a community-based organization, you have to work with individual clients, but always keep your eye open for bigger opportunities." That is, creating systems change, including in areas such as hiring practices, is an important avenue to scale. Expanding into sectors other than health care, manufacturing, and construction was also viewed as important to extending the reach of sector work, and furthering our knowledge of apprenticeship systems — the what, where, and how — in areas other than construction presents an important opportunity in this

vein. One lingering challenge came up repeatedly: "Right now the whole workforce system is focused on the supply side. We know little of addressing employment and advocacy from the demand side." There is a great need for further clarity on this issue.

While the meeting produced no definitive, overall conclusions on practice, there were *summary questions* raised that point to the challenges currently faced by the field. Fundamentally, is there a unified vision for the sector field? Additionally, from the practitioner standpoint, how is the field currently defined? From its roots in the community-development movement, the sector movement has expanded to serve a far greater number of clients through more diversified networks, but has the field become too diluted in content and clientele? Is the bottom end of the labor market being squeezed out by downward pressure? "Are we victims of our own success?"

In practice, there appears to be two principle areas of emphasis. One focuses on service delivery and meeting the immediate needs of employers; the other is more advocacy based, seeking changes in, for example, hiring policies and practice. As was stated repeatedly, conventional funding favors service and does not support innovation. This raises the question of what the sector field might look like if it were to be envisioned free of funding influences. There is a continuing need to focus on "raising the floor as well as the ladder" for low-wage, low-skilled workers so that integrated models of service and advocacy may continue to gain interest.

Practitioner Meeting

I. Introduction

Sector workforce initiatives arose in the early 1990s through social-action organizations eager to connect poor communities to productive employment. Working directly with clusters of enterprises in their local economies, these initiatives focused on training for low-skilled and low-wage workers and job placement.

In many cases, these intermediary organizations evolved into active players within the sector, gaining in-depth knowledge that allowed them to pinpoint training and placement needs while also promoting the economic viability of the sector itself to ensure future employment opportunities. They also worked to upgrade the employment of incumbent low-skilled and low-wage workers within given sectors. From the outset, most sector initiatives have also played an advocacy role, effect systematic change in hiring practices, labor regulations, and compensation policies. [1]

With its focus on social change on the one hand, and market-oriented solutions on the other, the sector workforce field has steadily expanded, attracting the attention of practitioners, funders, and policy makers.[2] Currently, with tens of millions of dollars invested, hundreds of workforce partnerships have been formed, serving hundreds of thousands of workers.[3] In the recognition of the value of the field, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of

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[1] For an extensive treatment of sector workforce initiatives please consult: Conway M. and Giloth R., ed. *Connecting People to work: Workforce Intermediaries and Sector Strategies*, The American Assembly, Columbia University 2014. For a history see Chapter 3.

[2] For examples of current sector workforce intermediaries, refer to the participant list for the conference, attached as Appendix 2.

[3] Conway and Giloth, ed. Chapter 4

2014 explicitly mandates Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) to "convene, use, or implement sector partnerships."

The sector initiative, however, has never lent itself to a tightly proscribed set of activities. It has instead relied on social entrepreneurs with a vision for change and a practical sense of the opportunities present in the industry sector of focus. The specific path to choosing a specific industry of focus and to building industry knowledge and networks has varied across initiatives. While this flexible and entrepreneurial approach has been a strength for individual initiatives, it has also created challenges in supporting the spread of the approach. Some initiatives have sprung opportunistically from existing board members' or staff members' knowledge and connections; others hire industry insiders to gain knowledge and networks; others conduct research and survey firms; and still others have started their own enterprises. Some target industries that will hire many people; some are looking for industries open to hiring particular populations; others may focus on sectors where disadvantaged workers would have the best opportunities for significant economic advancement; and some may be interested in supporting regional economic growth.

Given the variety of motivations for focusing on a specific industry sector and occupational cluster, as well as the range of pathways that sector initiatives have taken to building industry knowledge, offering clear advice to newer initiatives on the best way to engage an industry sector is not always straightforward. Indeed, this question of how best to approach employer engagement seems open to a number of interpretations. And as sector initiatives spread from nonprofit organizations (with a mission to help the economically disadvantaged) to education institutions and public agencies (with broad service charters), initiatives were designed to serve a much broader set of stakeholders and purposes.

The broad outlines of the sector approach appeal to a number of interests, and the concept has been embraced by a number of organizations and public policies. Questions remain, however, on the degree to which this family of approaches has a common set of practices related to issues such as how target industries are chosen; how to build durable relationships with companies; how many companies to work with at one time; what level of resources should programs expect companies to invest; what kinds of results should companies expect to see; and

at this moment in time, when so many work in jobs that are insufficient to meet their basic living needs, what is the role of sector initiatives in encouraging and enabling better quality jobs.

To address this issue, none are better placed than practitioners, and a number of leaders in the field were invited to a one-day meeting sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Aspen Institute. (The Agenda for the meeting is Appendix 1; the participant list is Appendix 2). The conversation centered around one organizing question: *"How can we expand the definition of employer engagement to include influencing businesses' human resource and training practices in addition to responding to pipeline needs?"*

What follows are key points from a discussion amongst roughly 30 experienced workforce development professionals as they debated this question. Quotes from participants are employed to illustrate key points, but we sought to encourage an open and honest conversation and as such, agreed from the outset that these quotes would not be attributed to the individual speakers. Like many agendas set for a conversation among passionate and experienced individuals, the agenda shown in the appendix was not strictly adhered to. The discussion below is therefore loosely based on the agenda, but was adapted to highlight the issues that most captured the energy of the group. The purpose of the discussion was to highlight both areas of agreement and disagreement, to better understand the diverse experiences and reflections of these leaders, and to draw implications on an important question of practice for the field as a whole. This paper is meant to give voice to the practitioners' discussions.

II. The Discussion

1. Context

The outlook for low-income and low-skilled workers of today is the most challenging in a generation. Poverty afflicts roughly 48 million Americans, including 11 million working poor. Despite recent employment gains, unemployment for middle-class workers continues to exert downward pressure, further depressing bottom-end employment opportunities and wages. As one

practitioner put it, "The economy is stacked against the poor; there needs to be a change in the nature of work, a movement toward a shared economy."

With constricted resources and increased service demand, practitioners engaged with low-income and low-skilled workers face enormous day-to-day pressure and continual tradeoffs in allocating services and in choices about advocacy as the seek to balance demands of different constituencies.

The meeting participants who confront these challenges represented the growing diversity of today's sector-workforce intermediaries. While all may be said to share the common goal of investing in human capital and connecting people to work, they differ broadly in geography, economic context, clientele, institutional orientation, and methodology.

Some are national in scope; others, the majority, are local or regional. Some are rural, others urban. Their respective clientele encompass low-income, low-skilled adults and youth, specific minority groups, the physically challenged, and formerly incarcerated individuals.

The organizations represented comprise a variety of types, from community-based non-profits to community colleges, labor unions, research organizations, and representatives of employers. The range of approaches to job preparation and placement closely reflects the local employment opportunities for their specific clientele and the sources of revenue available to them. While virtually all offer training, this may range from short-term training to apprenticeships and diploma education. Some organizations combine job placement with advocacy to enhance job quality, either with specific employers or at a system level. Some specialize in advocacy at a regional or national level.

Sector intermediaries engage with a range of retail, service, and manufacturing employers, as well as with a host of other stakeholders, including local, state, and federal governments; donors; research organizations; and other service providers. In many cases, these sector intermediaries serve as a lynchpin in the local workforce. As one participant put it, "You cannot offer a system solution if the pieces of the system do not fit together."

2. Employer Engagement

Given the rich geographic and institutional mix that comprises the sector field of today, it is not surprising that participants did not arrive at a common framework to define employer engagement. A number of points were made on this issue. "The framework definition largely resides in who you are working with." "Employers are not monolithic and must be engaged on an employer-by-employer basis." "Employer engagement means different things from different stakeholder perspectives."

Participants also described problems surrounding employer engagement. One participant said, "Workforce professionals are so busy that they don't have time to consider the strategy for workforce development." And another added, "The problem is that the workforce development field does not have an overarching goal or a vision of where it is going."

There was a range of positions on the purpose of employer engagement, e.g. "to bring the voice of workers to the table"; "to make the case for employers to take more responsibility for the development of human capital"; or "to move toward a stronger economy."

One statement reflected the parallels to the field of community development, from which the sector movement evolved: "The heart of community organizing is relationship building, and employer engagement is part of that process."

Some viewed engagement on an activist basis, i.e., to "exact better cooperation from employers in workplace practice, even in economically stressful times." Others explained, "I am not comfortable with only the low-income workers having to change in a bad economy without employers changing as well"; "Employers need to take more responsibility for the development of human capital"; and "It is not just jobs but building career ladders; we need to raise the ladder and the floor for poor workers."

To others, the purpose of engagement centered more on the addressing the challenge of placing low-income and low-skilled workers in a difficult economy, but the feasibility of employer engagement to address this challenge was questioned. "Employers are by nature risk

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averse and can pull out of the engagement at any time." "You have to realize that training and interacting with intermediaries is one small part of what businesses do." More sharply put, "the point of business is the bottom line: If you help them with profit, fine; if not, they end the relationship." "It is up to us to put forward a straightforward customer service model; I wouldn't think of telling them how to run their business."

Others were not as comfortable with as strict a statement on profit: "We do not think of profit as the only goal of many employers"; and "In forming a relationship, we consider ourselves co-investors in human capital, not simply service providers."

Most practitioners would probably agree with the overall stated purposes of "building authentic conversations about the economy and well-being and how to build common actions."

3. Some Elements of Success

The engagement process is viewed in many cases as "the bridging of two cultures—social action and business, where the intermediary becomes the translator." As one participant put it, "On the client side I speak of social justice; on the business side, economics."

The "quality of the relationship largely determines outcomes," and depends upon "mutual gain and trust; where it is truly a two-way street." "It is the strength of the relationship that allows us to push the envelope on improving job quality." Attaining a strong relationship depends upon "showing employers something that works, and this [process] takes time." In one case, an agency cited a ten-year period of sound performance needed to establish trust with a large-scale employer, but the agency is now "embedded" in the employer's HR department. Patience is critical, but there is an issue here. A number of comments were made to the effect that "The timelines needed to establish trusting relationships do not always match those of funders." "We are always under pressure to become financially self-sustaining."

A second factor cited repeatedly was flexibility. Both employers and intermediaries are in rapidly changing markets. "You have to have a system that changes what you are reaching for as the external labor market changes." "Flexibility needs to permeate throughout the organization to

be able to turn before change overtakes you." "Flexibility also means being able to see changes coming and to switch sectors." In particular, "longer term training needs must be managed alongside labor-market changes. Otherwise you run the risk of training into saturated labor markets."

4. Tactics

One key tactical challenge cited at the meeting was: "What value do we bring beyond placement?" The discussion that followed stressed, "Each intermediary must decide how far to go with advocacy for job improvement, to determine the particular sequence of steps, of when and how; and when does it go too far."

This again harked back to the quality of the relationship: "There is a continuum—from problem solving/transaction to a [trusting] relationship." "It is like dating: first date, second date, then … marriage and sleeping arrangements." Some participants reported consulting with behavioral scientists for advice on strengthening relationships and influencing employer behavior.

One fundamental comment on tactics was: "The key to success is to choose the right employer; there are high road and low road employers. Try to find the best job placements in the first place; for the same job there are usually differences by employer."

Another participant added, "Research the employer to show what value you can bring; research the sector to see where they fit in the range of practice." One practitioner cited winning wage increases by showing competitive data in the sector. Another knew the driver absentee rates in their targeted sector and promised to improve it with their trainees and, when given the chance, did so.

To influence hiring practice, "Get beyond the HR department to the floor managers who really know the skills gaps and hiring needs." "Consider your front-line staff as sales people." It was stressed a number of times that "It is the personal relationships from staff-to-staff that matter."

There were a number of discussions on assessing the leverage that intermediaries have to influence an employer's hiring and training practices. Two factors emerged. The first was competent service delivery in training and placement: "Delivering value cements the relationship." "We have an inside game and will always have good inroads with employers as long as we deliver to their HR needs." "An employer doesn't want to use twenty training organizations. They would rather have one." An employer's dependence on a competent intermediary provides significant leverage.

The second was community-based representation. Sector intermediaries often play a vital connecting role in the community or region that provides a power base. As one practitioner put it, "Imagine what would happen without your organization?" Tactically, "With community respect comes clarity and power; we sit at the table with employers as equals; we bring much to the relationship; we should never forget that."

A number of participants stressed the leverage gained from the positive recognition of employers who strive to improve job quality. "Recognize champions publically; have them recruit other businesses." "Have good employers help shape your training program; have them help in public policy"; and "Put leading employers on your board."

5. Broader-Based Advocacy: Scale and Capacity

An additional tactical challenge was voiced on advocacy: "Are you about project success or systems change?" In other words, what impact can you have more broadly among a number of employers or on policy change in the broader community? As one practitioner put it, "As a community-based organization you have to work with individual clients, but you have to keep your eyes open for bigger opportunities." For example, one participant described getting a female welder hired at a company that had not previously hired females for that position. This led the community-based organization to push for placing more female welders with the company. In another case, formerly incarcerated clients were hired, consistently performed well,

and the intermediary secured steady job placements. Thus, advocacy can be integrated with service to significant effect; they are not mutually exclusive.

There was a steady commentary on the issue of the "bigger picture." "There is a continuum of tactics: from marketing to awareness-building, to achieving employment, to changing hiring practice, to systems change."

"The sector approach should serve as a catalyst to ignite creative strategies." "It is important to link employers within the sector and to facilitate networking by bringing the champion companies with you to engage others; this lends greater influence." One additional point from a different but important perspective: "To really address job quality practically we should get 75 employers in a room and listen to what they have to say on good jobs."

While the issue of scale was not the major agenda item, there were a number of comments on the subject. Some connected the issue of scale to changing large systems and building larger partnerships, as in: "To address scale we need to work with organized labor." "We need to move from transactional relationships to transformative relationships and systems change." "Our primary concerns right now are exclusive to those people we directly serve. We need to get beyond this." Apprenticeships were a system of particular interest that generated discussion. "Apprenticeships should involve unions, otherwise the credential does not travel with you." The interest in apprenticeship also extended to its political appeal and potential for connecting to public funding and other policies: "[Apprenticeships] seem to have bipartisan support, which is important as the WIOA is implemented." Ultimately many had questions. "Apprenticeships match training with employment, but we don't know enough about the what, the where, and the how."

Some saw pathways to greater scale by expanding into new or more employment sectors. "We need to break into sectors beyond healthcare, manufacturing, and construction." "Healthcare was a good choice because it has a lot of jobs, and the credentials and training needs are clear; this should guide entry into others sectors." "Sector intermediaries should join forces more among ourselves, especially on a regional basis."

Several noted that the public funding and policy environment around workforce development does not support achieving scale by changing systems, and offers few opportunities for innovation. "The problem is that the public workforce system is meant to move a person from one point to the next; it does not provide for sector-based skills training." "Federal austerity does not support innovation. It is remarkable what many intermediaries have achieved within the workforce system." "There is no secure funding stream, public or private, for sector workforce needs."

"Right now the whole workforce system is focused on the supply side. We know little of addressing employment and advocacy from the demand side." Similarly, another participant said, "Are we trying to change the game or not? We are not reaching anywhere near the numbers of people we need." "I get concerned; there are 10–12 million mid-level jobs to fill from retirement. Low-income people do not have the skills, and we don't have the [training] capacity to fill this need." Much of this discussion reflected agreement with the statement that "most low-income workers will bounce from one low-paying job to another and will not achieve middle class status."

"Are we going to work around the public workforce system or bring it with us? If we work around it we are condemning thousands to lousy service." "The system that is not working includes us. We are part of the problem; we need to influence local workforce policy."

6. Assessing Change

Given the broad spectrum of thought among sector intermediaries and with so much currently undecided on engagement strategy, it proved premature to posit a concrete set of metrics. But there were a number of poignant comments:

(1) "[Current] workforce practice is measured in transactions, not relationships."
(2) "It is difficult to measure changes in relationship; it is a qualitative exercise."
(3) "How do we measure job quality? Wage gains are necessary but not sufficient indicators." How do they compare with wages throughout the sector?

(4) "[Capturing] changes in hiring practices and credentials is essential."

(5) "Two of the most important indicators for improvements in low-end employment are a guarantee of a number of hours and steady scheduling to help poor workers attain more stability in their lives."

III. Summary Points for Further Discussion

The timing of the meeting was opportune as the sector workforce field faces some important challenges at this point in its evolution, and it gave practitioners the chance to engage, both formally and informally. While, again, there was no consensus on employer-engagement practice, the meeting gave rise to a number of issues and questions on the current status of the sector-workforce arena.

In particular, the discussion surfaced two somewhat conflicting strains of thought around working with employers. The first is that the role of the sector practitioner is to leverage their deep knowledge of a particular industry to engage and meet the needs of employers by sourcing and prepping candidates that they may not otherwise hire. Over time, this relationship may be leveraged to influence employer practices, but this is isn't the primary goal of the practitioner. The second point of view stems from the belief that there are sectors or employers that may, by their very structure or mode of operating, require practitioners to employ tactics (separate from training and placement) that more directly attempt to change employer hiring, compensation, or employment practices. In other words, practitioners may intentionally use their knowledge of the industry to employ a more disruptive strategy to expand the pool of better jobs that they can then help workers connect to.

The first strain of thought or strategy seems to be clearly making its way into the mainstream agenda for the larger workforce development field. As a result, the questions raised were as much about specific sectors as they were about the larger workforce development field. The second strain of thought has been present in some sector strategies from the very beginning, but it hasn't gained as much traction in the larger field. The question this imbalance raises is: Are

both strategies necessary as part of a larger field? Given growing inequality and limited progress toward economic inclusion, it is hard to imagine that a more disruptive approach will not be needed at times.

Thus, if sector strategies are to succeed in their ultimate aim of expanding economic opportunity for low-income and disadvantaged workers, then a critical issue is how to build a field that supports both strategies. This leads to a number of corollary questions:

(1) What are the capacities needed in the field, and in particular, what capacities need to be strengthened in practitioners and their partners? Practitioners may feel overwhelmed by the larger economic and political context and may struggle to find a leverage point for creating change. In addition, practitioners may have concerns that a "disruptive" sector strategy—one that aims to create change with respect to business practices—could be damaging to employer and funder relationships that are important to their work. How can practitioners be supported to do this work in their local labor markets?

(2) What does a supportive policy framework look like? Often this is conceived of as a framework that supports existing strategies, but if new strategies are needed, what is the policy framework that can allow new approaches to flourish? Is additional policy work needed to increase equity and opportunity? Is this the role of practitioners? Are there other strategies and other players that need to be engaged?

(3) What are the outcomes that sector programs should be aiming for and held accountable to? The most common outcomes measured have been to look at changes in standing among individuals served. These types of outcomes are relatively straightforward to measure, but the scalability of this type of outcome is often questioned. A "disruptive" sector strategy may seek to create change in the organization of work—an outcome that potentially could have scale in that it could affect many workers in an industry, but these outcomes are much more challenging to measure or attribute to a program. Developing an integrated outcomes framework would be a key step to encouraging an integrated field of practice.

(4) What is the role of philanthropy in the next round of innovation in this field? How can philanthropy support the continued expansion of quality programming that has gained support in the public sector while also pushing for continued innovation and adaptation to a challenging economic context?

The sector field has grown and expanded significantly from its roots in the community development movement to encompass a much broader spectrum of institutions and geographic contexts. On the one hand, clearly more people are being served and significantly greater resources have been mobilized under the banner of sector-based initiatives, particularly from the public sector. On the other, there is concern that the field has become diluted in its content and less sharply focused on the needs of low-income and excluded populations. The field is at an exciting and challenging time in its development, and how these questions (raised by long-time leaders in the field) are addressed will be key to the field's future.

Next Generation Employer Engagement Strategies
September 12th 2014

The Annie E. Casey Foundation
503 North Charles Street
Baltimore, MD

Meeting Agenda

Organizing question for the day's conversations:
How can we redefine employer engagement to mean influencing businesses' human resource and training practices in addition to responding to pipelines needs?

Pre-reading:
Connecting People to Work, co-edited by Maureen Conway, vice president at the Aspen Institute, and Robert P. Giloth, vice president of the Center for Community and Economic Opportunity at the Annie E. Casey Foundation.
– Chapter 3: "A Brief History of Sector Strategies," Maureen Conway
– Chapter 4: "Industry Partnerships: Theory and Practice," Fred Dedrick
– Chapter 19: "Conclusion," Maureen Conway and Robert P. Giloth
http://www.aspenwsi.org/resource/connecting-people-to-work/

"To Reach Transformative Scale, Transform the Conversation: Scaling impact is much bigger than scaling an enterprise," by Gerald Chertavian, Stanford Social Innovation, April 2014.
http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/to_reach_transformative_scale_transform_the_conversation

Objectives for the meeting:
- Share perspectives on the current state of play in the workforce field in terms of employer engagement, and what has/hasn't changed over the past decade.
- Discuss implications for the next generation of strategies to work with businesses in the context of workforce-development goals. In particular consider these three elements with respect to employer engagement:
    o Purpose—how do/can strong relationships with employers improve outcomes for low-income workers?
    o Tactics—what strategies are used/needed to engage employers in ways that move toward those outcomes?
    o Metrics—what metrics are needed to assess the quality of employer relationships and the outcomes that result?
- Provide discussion and reflection for a white paper that influences the thinking of investors and program leaders regarding their work with employers

Agenda

9:00   Welcome and overview of goals and process for the day

9:15   Introductions

9:45   Framing Remarks
  o   Robert P. Giloth
  o   Maureen Conway

10:15 Small group conversations—Perspectives on employer engagement

  o   Round 1:   Aspirations for employer relationships: Are we there yet?
  o   Round2:   Getting there: What's worked in your work, and how do you know?

12:15 Plenary discussion
  ▪   Similarities/differences in goals/experiences?
  ▪   What's changed and what's stayed the same?
  ▪   What's needed next?

12:30 LUNCH—relax

1:00   Purpose of work with employers

  o   *What is the broader purpose? Do we see one? How would we redefine employer engagement? How would we communicate?*

1:45   Tactics
  o   *Is there consensus on the do's and don'ts of relationship building with employers? How well is this understood in the field?*
  o   *Is there something missing in relationship to the goals identified above?*

2:30–2:45   BREAK

2:45   Metrics
  o   *What should we measure: employer satisfactions, employer benefits, changes in employer practices, or something else?*

3:15-4:00   Conclusion and next steps

Meeting Participant List

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