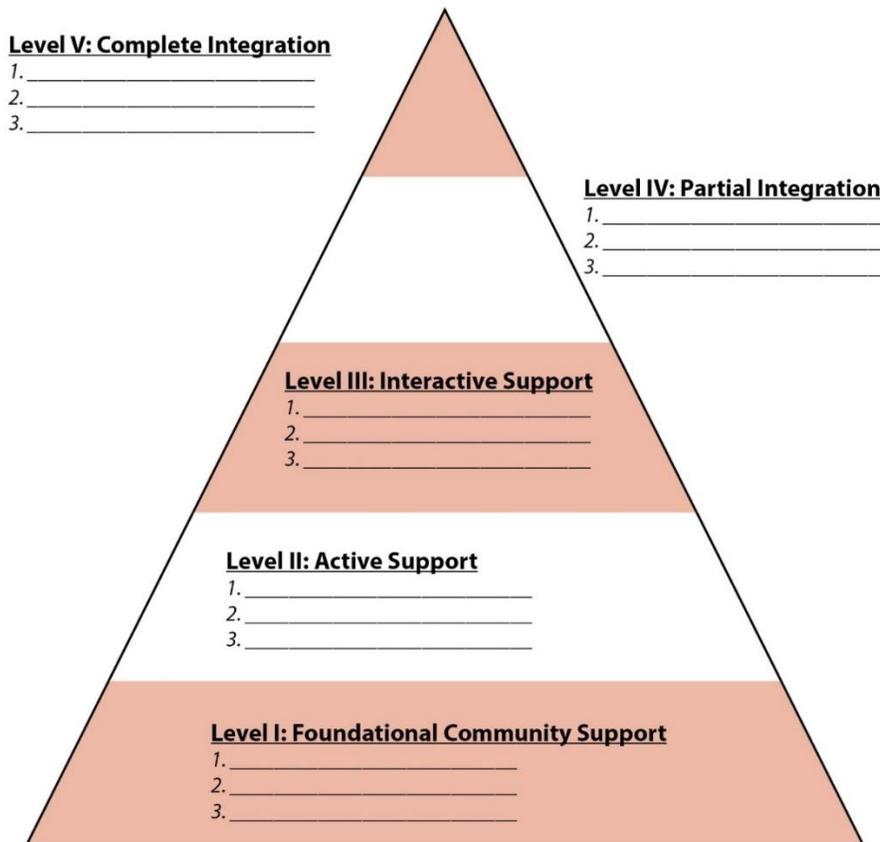


# The Partnership Pyramid

*Not all partners are the same – recognizing that is the first step towards deepening relationship*

Educators typically talk about individuals and organizations who support students and their schools and colleges as a “partner.” The person who donates \$20 to a fundraiser is a partner. The person who supplies free coffee and pastries to your advisory board meetings is a partner. The person who spends dozens of hours a year volunteering with students is a partner. The person who sets up an internship program for all eligible students while helping to review and update the curriculum is a partner.

## The Partnership Pyramid



But these represent very different levels of value to your program, and calling each of them the same thing can muddy your thinking as to what kind of support you're getting, and more importantly, what kind of support you want. Instead, think about the different levels of support your partners provide, and how you can move them from one level to the next. Even if you continue to publicly call them all partners, thinking privately about these different tiers can be very helpful in building a stronger partnership effort.

The model shared here is the Partnership Pyramid, which comes originally from NC3T's *Employer Engagement Toolkit* (and used with permission). You may come up with your own levels, perhaps based on the dollar value of contributions or some other metric, and that's fine; the key is to be able to think about what partners are providing, and how you can deepen that relationship.

## LEVEL I: FOUNDATIONAL COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Every partnership program, like every pyramid, needs a base. And Foundational Community Support is the base level of your partnership program.

Foundational community support refers to the general level of support your community has for its educational institutions, both for education in general as well as career and technical education (CTE) in particular. There's no active, personal relationship with stakeholders at this level; instead, it refers to characteristics like the following:

- Does the community vote in favor of bond issuances?
- Do you have "champions" or leaders, either internal or external, who support local education?
- Do most parents send their children to the public schools? Do they encourage them to go to college locally?
- Does the media treat local schools and colleges fairly or even positively?
- Do people talk favorably about the local educational institutions?

Realistically, as one educator, there's not much you can do to impact the level of support across your entire community (though, over time, a strong partnership program can strengthen community support). But it is good to think about how much support there is: A pyramid can only be as large as its foundation allows.

## LEVEL II: ACTIVE SUPPORT

At the "Active Support" level, people and businesses are taking concrete, individual actions to support students and schools; however, they're doing it without ever coming into contact with students or educators, and their work doesn't have any impact on the way that instruction happens. Some examples include:

- Donating to a fundraising campaign for new equipment or facilities, travel to competitions, or other initiatives
- Coming in as a group on a weekend to clean up school grounds
- Giving to a scholarship program

- Contributing in some way to a CTE program, like sponsoring food for meetings or donating equipment or materials to a program

As you can imagine, people supporting education at this level are excellent candidates for getting more deeply involved. They've made the decision to take action to support learning; now you just have to reach out to them to talk about ways in which they can make a greater impact.

### LEVEL III: INTERACTIVE SUPPORT

Interactive support is in the "sweet spot" of career and technical education: Businesses working directly with students is the heart and soul of work-based learning, giving students direct exposure to the industries and professions in which they're interested.

At the "Interactive Support" level, your community and business partners are supporting programs by working directly with staff and students; however, they're doing so in ways that do not change the way instruction happens. Some examples:

- Business representatives coming in to the classroom as guest speakers
- Serving as career mentors
- Hosting site tours for students
- Establishing job shadowing, internship, co-op, or apprenticeship opportunities
- Working side-by-side with students on a real-world project (construction students working with industry partners to build a house for example)
- Engaging with CTSOs in leadership development activities and competitions as judges
- Hosting one-week teacher externships over the summer
- Serving on an advisory board

### LEVEL IV: PARTIAL INTEGRATION

"Partial Integration" involves working directly with educators and students, but in ways that change how instruction happens. This could involve facilities, curriculum, program culture, or other opportunities to better serve students. Some examples:

- The Simon Youth Foundation is the nonprofit arm of Simon Property Group, the largest manager of high-end malls in the country. After seeing students hanging out during the school day, the foundation offered a local district free retail space to house an alternative school. Today they host 24 such schools in 12 states, making it more likely that high-risk students complete their education.
- In several communities, experienced business executives serve as long-term mentors to new principals. They decide on their goals together, which range from culture change to improving management skills. This changes the way that the schools operate, and has in fact resulted in dramatic academic improvement in states that measure such initiatives.
- The Gowan Company worked with the Crane School District in Yuma, AZ to build a science/math program for advanced students, paying for teacher salaries, technology, curriculum, and supplemental resources. By providing a high-end STEM opportunity within the local schools, Gowan was able to recruit scientists who wanted to work in a community that had such opportunities for their children.

These types of partnerships require a greater level of commitment and responsibility on the part of your business partner; for partners to commit to this level of support, they need to feel a sense of ownership of your program (usually gained through successful relationships at lower levels over time) and they need some level of decision-making in developing the initiative. (Those who have had a job with responsibility, but no authority, understand why a partner wouldn't commit without some level of discretion.)

## LEVEL V: COMPLETE INTEGRATION

"Complete Integration" involves true, equal collaboration among education and industry partners. This is rare, but not unheard of, and employers continue to struggle with a shrinking labor pool, you can expect to see more who are open to making such an investment. Some examples:

- The National Academy Foundation has five academy models, each designed in collaboration with partners from a particular industry, including designing the school model (including required internships), co-development of curricula, and strong involvement from local business leaders.
- The first P-Tech School (Pathways in Technology Early College High School) opened in New York City in 2011, co-founded by IBM, City University of New York - City Tech, and the New York City Department of Education. These schools go from grade 9 to 14, with students graduating with both a high school and two-year degree in an in-demand field. There are now dozens of P-Tech schools across the country.
- Apprenticeship programs can be considered as complete integration models: The employer is responsible for defining the outcomes and learning standards and for working with an education partner to ensure high-quality instruction that supports the work-based learning effort.

With Complete Integration, business partners are full and complete partners, with all the authority – and responsibility – that entails. While the commitment is significant, such relationships offer great benefits as well, such as ensuring a pipeline of qualified, capable, and prepared potential employees.

## ACTION PLAN

Using the pyramid graphic on page one, make a list of your current partners at Levels Two, Three, and Four. (Level One supporters require a different strategy, with support found in the fourth report in this series, while Level Five partners are already fully involved). For each, determine which ones might be willing and able to deepen their involvement, and what you can do to further engage them.

Current Partners	What they do now	How to move them to the next level?
<b>LEVEL II: ACTIVE SUPPORT</b>		
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

LEVEL III: INTERACTIVE SUPPORT		
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
LEVEL IV: PARTIAL INTEGRATION		
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

Remember the old saying in sales: “Your current customer is your best customer,” and think about how you can work with your current partners to deepen their engagement using this model.

### ADDENDUM 1: INTERMEDIARY ORGANIZATIONS

Colorado has an incredible dedication to inter-organizational collaborations, whether it’s among state agencies, educational organizations, workforce centers, chambers, sector partnerships or community-based organizations. In some cases, intermediary organizations play a crucial role in helping to collect industry, education, and students/job seekers. While not exhaustive, here are a few examples of intermediaries in Colorado:

- **CareerWise Colorado** <https://www.careerwisecolorado.org/>
- **Skillful** <http://skillful.com/>
- **Adams County Education Consortium** <https://www.adamscountyeducation.org/>
- **Southwestern Colorado Area Health Education center (AHEC)** <https://swcahec.org/>
- **Talent Pipeline Douglas County** Referenced in the “Brain Trust” article published by CSU [http://engagement.colostate.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/2018\\_07\\_10\\_17\\_41\\_23.pdf](http://engagement.colostate.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/2018_07_10_17_41_23.pdf)

### ADDENDUM 2: Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs)

Colorado supports nine statewide Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO) which connect Colorado CTE students to real works experiences with professional development, individual and team competitions, leadership training, and community service.

Engaging with CTSOs in competition judging, event support, or leadership development activities is an excellent way for potential industry partners to experience CTE in action.

To connect with CO CTSOs, visit [coloradostateplan.com/educator/career-and-technical-student-organizations](http://coloradostateplan.com/educator/career-and-technical-student-organizations)

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide has been developed by Colorado CTE, housed at the Colorado Community College System to help Colorado CTE educators build strong and lasting relationships with employers and other stakeholders. For more information on CTE and other resources available to help you, please visit <http://coloradostateplan.com/>.



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