

# BUILDING SCHOOL-COMPANY PARTNERSHIPS

## DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

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### OVERVIEW OF THE PARTNERSHIP

#### The Partnership

<b>My School</b>	<b>Company</b>
Natural Sciences Vocational School	Environmental Protection Laboratory

The reason for the partnership

Our vocational school supplies future workforce for the local companies in the fields of chemical engineering and environmental protection. Partnering can help our school adapt to the needs of the job market and work skills, and the company will be able to influence skills and knowledges that the future employees will possess when they finish our school.

Brief explanation of the partnership	The partnership between the Natural Sciences Vocational School and the Environmental Protection Laboratory company will provide students with mentorship opportunities and internships. Based on the feedback gained from both the students and the company, the school will develop teaching plans that will further improve the skillset of students.
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## ANALYSIS

Reflect on the following questions and explain.

Question	Answer & Explanation
How do we currently train our students and how do we engage as a school with local businesses (e.g. volunteering scheme, internships programs etc.)	At the moment, some of the local companies offer scholarships to students who work for them after finishing our vocational courses. There are also partnerships with local companies and institutions that students visit and learn about during 1 to 2-hour tours.
How are partnership activities currently linked to the curriculum? Are they 'add ons' or are they an intrinsic part of students' learning? Are they part of certain subjects or available to all students?	<p>The scholarship partnership is not linked to the curriculum. It is also not available to all students because scholarships are provided only to the best students.</p> <p>Visits and tours are part of the curriculum of a specific subject and are available to all students. They are intrinsic parts of students learning, and students are expected to write a report and reflect on the visit and connect it to the material the learned at school.</p>
What strengths do we have? What are we known for as a school? (ex: logistics, market knowledge)	Our school is known for science-oriented curriculum. We have a flexible timetable and can adapt to companies' schedule. The students who choose our school have a high interest in scientific areas and are motivated for learning.
What kinds of skill sets do our local employers have, and how could those be applied? (ex: technical skills, management skills, marketing)	Local companies employ a wide range of professionals who can serve as role models for our students. Smaller companies can offer advice on entrepreneurship and small-business ownership.
What can we provide that will directly benefit our partners? (ex: recognition, networking opportunities)	We can provide an opportunity for the employers to directly influence the skillsets and knowledges they want to see developed in their future employees.

<p>How are roles and responsibilities for initiating and managing links to companies currently managed? Are they ad hoc or clear and structured? Are partnerships intrinsic to anyone's job description?</p>	<p>At the moment, some partnerships are managed by the school leadership, and the partnerships that are curricula based are managed by a specific subject teacher. It is clear whose responsibility is which company, and which aspect of it. There is not a single job position that is responsible for handling partnerships on the school side. Some companies, however, have a job position that oversees handling public and community relations.</p>
<p>Can educators be involved in partnerships during school hours? Can we enable them to be involved outside school hours? Can involvement in partnerships count as part of continuing professional development?</p>	<p>Educators are involved in a partnership as a part of their school hours since they are visiting companies with children as a part of their subject curricula. So far, there was no need for this position to extend outside of school hours, but that possibility exists if the partnership deepens, and new activities are added. Aside from scholarships for students, large companies also offer up to one week of training for teachers which counts as professional development.</p>
<p>Can we manage required paperwork, such as handling background checks, getting district approval for projects as needed, and getting permission slips signed?</p>	<p>Yes, the paperwork has been manageable so far, for both sides.</p>
<p>What resources are we likely to need? Do we need support from the school leadership team? Is any support available from the district/municipality or the local business community, e.g. Chamber of Commerce?</p>	<p>We will need space for meetings, presentations, and mentorships. This space can be provided by the school, outside of school's work hours. If district or municipality have community spaces that can be used for this purpose, we can also use those.</p>
<p>What data do we need so that partnership efforts and achievements are tracked and assessed? What type of record of achievement can employers provide for students? How can we celebrate student achievements?</p>	<p>We need qualitative data on how many hours is spent on the activities, how many students participated, which percentage of students were satisfied, neutral or dissatisfied with the activities. We will also need qualitative data in the form of written feedbacks (maybe feedback forms) from students and employers. Employers can provide students with various certificates for completing a course, a workshop or finishing an internship. Some employers can also give more detailed feedback on students' skills. As a way of celebrating the partnership and students' achievements we can have a day dedicated to students' presentations about their own experiences or awarding the "Worker of the year" or "The most skilled student" awards in a small ceremony attended by school staff and company representatives.</p>

## RETURN OF INVESTMENT

### Challenges

Identify two big challenges that you believe the partnership may be able to address.

Business/community challenges	Education challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Lack of workforce with proper skills.</i> In the modern world the skills needed for a certain job can evolve quickly, and knowledge is outdated by the time children leave schools. Partnering with schools can help future employers shape the skills and knowledge they want their future employees to have.</li><li>• <i>Young people relocating to other cities because of the lack of employment opportunities.</i> Croatia is rapidly losing its demographic, mostly due to a lack of job in their hometowns. Students could use partnerships with companies to find their future workplace or be inspired to start their own companies.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Low motivation of students because they can't see applications of their knowledge.</i> It is a known fact that the material thought in schools often seems irrelevant and purely theoretical to students. Having an opportunity to use their knowledge in the real world will motivate students for further learning.</li><li>• <i>Gaps in curriculum regarding the skills that students need for work.</i> Curricula are sometimes very old and not in alignment with current needs of the job market. Companies can influence changes in the curricula that will adjust their content to the actual needs of the workplace.</li></ul>

### Benefits

Identify three benefits your organization would want to realize from its partnership work.

- Students will have access to laboratory equipment and instruments that are not available at school. Schools usually lack the most current and sophisticated equipment that is used in companies. Students will have a chance to practice on and develop skills of handling modern laboratory instruments.



- Teachers will get feedback which will help in the alignment of the curricula they are teaching with the actual needs of the current job market.
- The school with a program that includes partnership with the companies will be more interesting to prospective students. With the ever-decreasing demographics, schools are losing students and are competing with each other to make attract students. Future students will show more interest in schools that have additional activities and resources, and school-company partnership can add that value.



## PLANNING & TIMELINE

Develop a plan for implementing the partnership.

Identification of coordinator	Timeline		
<i>Decide who the coordinator will be and describe his/her tasks</i>	<i>Define the timeline of the following activities and describe how they will be organized</i>		
<p>Partnership will be coordinated by one school representative from the rank of vocational teachers and one company representative whom the company finds most suitable for the position.</p> <p>Tasks for the representatives:</p> <p>Discussing expected benefits with all the stakeholders (students, teachers, school administration, company) and creating reports on the results.</p> <p>Ensuring regular communication between students, mentors and supervisors at the work site. Ensuring regular communication about students' progress inside the school. Regular communication with the company / school representative.</p> <p>Collecting and summarizing written observations.</p> <p>Preparing formal and carrying out informal types of evaluation (for example individual checkups with students).</p>	<i>Before the implementation of the partnership</i>	<i>Implementation of the partnership</i>	<i>Follow up</i>
	<p><b>January:</b> Select the teacher team that will participate in school – company activities.</p> <p><b>February - March:</b> Together with students create a plan about selecting and approaching companies.</p> <p><b>April - May:</b> Approach the companies with the partnership proposal. Students can present the plan to companies.</p> <p><b>June - July:</b> Decide on the goals and objectives of the partnership. Decide what type of partnership will we offer – our school would like to offer the students opportunity to be mentored and have internships in the company.</p> <p>Select the partnership coordinators.</p>	<p><b>August:</b> Teachers plan for the next school year and include the partnership activities into their plans.</p> <p><b>September:</b> Choose the classes and /or students who will be involved in the activities. Students write their CVs.</p> <p>Orientation with the selected students – explain the rules, warn about unacceptable behaviors. Students will fill out a form about their expectations about the partnership.</p> <p><b>October - March</b> Carry out the partnership activities:</p> <p>Mentorship – previously agreed number of students will work on a project. While doing the practical part of the project they will receive professional mentorship from the company employees.</p> <p>Internship – depending on the</p>	<p><b>June:</b> Company evaluation – company coordinator should collect the feedback from the mentors, supervisors and other workers who have been in contact with the students.</p> <p><b>June:</b> Student evaluation – students will fill out evaluation forms about their positive / negative experiences and achievements.</p> <p><b>June / July:</b> Company – school meeting will be held to co-evaluate the partnership, discuss the problems, and decide on future steps.</p> <p>Celebration party – strengthen the partnership and award the best students.</p>

		<p>workplace description, students can write their CV and cover letters to apply for the internship. Selected students will spend previously agreed number of days or weeks in the workplace under the supervision of a company employee.</p> <p>Student' work will be consistently monitored by their mentors and supervisors. They will report to company or school representative.</p> <p><b>April:</b> Presentations to younger students – students who have finished mentorships and internships will hold presentation to junior classes about their experience. The goal is to have more students who will apply for the scholarships and mentorships next year.</p>	
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## EVALUATION & REPORTING OF OUTCOMES

How are you planning to evaluate the partnership effort and keep a record of the outcomes considering the following questions?

**Design:** *Does the initiative's design maximize success?*

**Implementation:** *How has the initiative been implemented in practice?*

**Output:** *What has the initiative produced or delivered?*

**Outcomes:** *What impacts, effects or consequences has the initiative had for students?*

- In the terms of **design**, we will:
  - Hold a co-evaluation meeting with the company representative and discuss possible problems, setbacks and make appropriate changes to our future planning.
- In the terms of **implementation**, we will:
  - Keep a file on types of partnership activities we carried out: mentorship, internship, and presentation. File will contain the names of the students who participated and their monitoring reports.
  - Implementation will be constantly re-evaluated through the communications between the company and school representatives.
- In the terms of **output**, we will:
  - Count the number of students who have been mentored /involved in the internships and the number of hours spent under mentorship / internship.
  - Count the number of students who have listened to the presentations.
- In the terms of **outcomes**, we will:
  - Teacher committee will evaluate the quality of their mentored students' projects and compare it to projects of students who were not mentored. Students' feedback forms will be analyzed to see how the students felt about participating and about their future.
  - Collect supervisors' feedback on the improvement of the skills for the students who participated in the internship. Students' feedback forms will be analyzed to see how the students felt about participating and about their future.
  - Compare yearly numbers of students who listened to the presentations and applied for mentorships and internship to see if there was an increase in the student interest for participation in the partnership.

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