

LIBBY LIVINGS- EASSA: Welcome, everyone! And we are delighted to have you here today for "Strengthening Partnerships for Manufacturing Workforce" in our Peer-to-Peer Conversation Number Four, with the overarching topic of "Keeping Your Partners Engaged."

So what we'd first like to know from each of you that are with us today, is we'd like to know what role you play in your partnerships. So if you will go to your chat box, go to where it says "Send To" in the bottom right hand corner, and click on "All Participants." And enter your role in the window there, whether you're a partnership lead, committee lead, participant, or just seeking a partnership.

So we are delighted to see who and what you will be representing today, again, as you enter that role in the lower right of your screen by indicating to "All Partic--

[CLEARING THROAT]

Greetings, Donna! Delighted to have you with us today. I know we've got others, and looking forward to seeing what your role is today.

Wanda, with Workforce Board, all the way in Connecticut-- good afternoon, Wanda! Great to have you with us today.

And as the rest of you are entering in your information there, we're going to briefly go through the agenda. We're going to have some introductions-- briefly discuss why we're here today. Then we're going to introduce your peer presenters today and get right into our discussion and Q&A.

First off, I am so honored, as always, to introduce you Sharon Miller, Director for the Division of Academic and Technical Education with the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education with the US Department of Education. Sharon is here to welcome each of you today and share a little bit about this project. Sharon?

SHARON MILLER: Thank you, Libby. And thanks to everyone for joining us for the final of our four peer-to-peer conversations titled, "Keeping Your Partners Engaged." I can't believe that we've already had three successful peer-to-peer conversations. They went so quickly.

Last week we took a look at the tensions that can develop within partnerships and how those

tensions can be managed-- and better yet, avoided. We appreciated what was shared by Dion Jackson and Susan Showen. And we were just plain happy that the rest of the community engaged candidly and meaningfully on this topic.

Today we are going to talk about mature partnerships. How do we keep our partners engaged over time? After all, the work can be tough at times, but it never ends. It can take a lot of energy to keep connecting with others. But how do we continue to generate needed energy and enthusiasm?

In this, our final such conversation, we hope to learn from you all again, as we have so far. This has been a great experience for all of us. And we thank our presenters and all of the participants. And with that, I'm going to turn it back to you, Libby.

**LIBBY LIVINGS-
EASSA:**

Thank you, Sharon, so much. And indeed, it is sometimes hard to keep that smile on your face and keep that rubber on the road.

We've had some awesome conversations that Sharon has already shared with you. And for those of you who may not have attended some of those earlier conversations, I wanted to share a little bit about the conversational approach and your participation today.

As your moderator, I'm going to introduce and define each topic. Our conversation today will be driven by sub-topics, and the co-presenters that I will introduce shortly will address those in reference to challenges that they have had, and what strategies they put to use, and what works, and what didn't.

We'd like to reiterate-- this is a conversation, and we hope you're going to capitalize on this opportunity to engage today and to freely inquire. Just like your peer presenters today, we are all colleagues who have traveled this road together. What better opportunity to take advantage of this today, get in that chat box, and engage, and network, and ask questions? So this is your official invite to participate and engage. Your participation will be facilitated, again, via the chat function, as you have already utilized.

So why are we here today? Well, we want to continue this conversation. And this is our fourth one in this TA series. This has been based on these topics garnered from conversations that we had for several months all across the nation with practitioners, such as yourselves, national experts, partnership representatives, and their partners from industry, education, and state and local governments. We're providing these conversations, again, as an opportunity for you

to discuss challenges and hear about challenges, and those strategies that your colleagues have applied and have had success with.

So, again, we want you to use that chat box to collect your questions and thoughts. Everything that you enter there we're going to capture today, and we want to make sure that we address any questions, one, while we are online with you. And then there will be an opportunity post-conversation today to do that also. So if each of you will, again-- I can see some of you have already utilized that-- click on "Send To" and "All Participants," so that you are ready to give a comment.

[INDICATOR SOUND]

We want to continue this conversation. And you can do that, as I've already mentioned, as part of the LINCS community if you go to a lincs.ed.gov to Strengthening Manufacturing Partnerships group. Today's thread will be posted at the same title, "Keeping Your Partners Engaged."

And now for our peer presenters so that we can get into our discussion.

We are delighted to welcome two today. First, we have Irene Sherr, who is the Assistant Deputy Bureau Chief for the Bureau of Economic Development at Cook County. Hello, Irene!

IRENE SHERR: Hello-- [CLEARS THROAT] excuse me-- hello, everybody! Happy to be here today.

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: And so delighted to have you with us also, Irene. Thank you for taking the time.

We also have Pauline Vernon, who is the Interim Executive Director at the Greater Memphis Alliance for A Competitive Workforce. Hello, Pauline!

PAULINE VERNON: Hi, everyone, from Memphis!

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: [CHUCKLES]

As you can see, we've got north and south represented here. We've got Mason and Dixon lines, so we are good to go.

Here are our conversation topics. I want to go back to, though, to our colleagues today, and give a little bit of information to you. They're again, going to share those real-life examples of their challenges that they've identified as related to workforce education, again, centered around these three conversation topics that you see here before you. And they're going to give us some examples of strategies and what they did in face of these challenges.

Again, we invite y'all to provide comments, and questions, and provide additional strategy in that chat box. Again, this is a conversation. And for those questions and shared strategies we may not be able to target during this conversation, we're going to capture all of those and post them in the thread that we've already mentioned at lincs.ed.gov.

One final note before we begin our topic. Today's conversation is scheduled to end at 12:45. However, we're going to stay online an additional 15 minutes to provide further opportunity for conversation. So let's dig in, then, to these overarching topics.

The first one is determining return on investment. And that can entail so much more than you might think. It could be everything from just calculating and communicating that ROI. And what does that mean when we calculate? How do we identify incentives that are needed for those partners? How do we identify immediate priorities versus long-term priorities? And how do we manage those? What is the priority? And how do we convey all of that to stakeholders-- I mean, determining what is the message is and how we share that?

First off, I'd like to start. Let's go to you, Pauline. And I'd like you to share with our family today, as you did earlier in our conversation with us, in terms of how you identified your return on investment.

PAULINE

Well, thanks, Libby. Here in Memphis, in determining return on investment, we typically look to our business partners to play a key role. And an example of that is over the last two years, GMACW, the Greater Memphis Alliance for a Competitive Workforce, along with our regional chamber, we've launched four separate industry-led regional industry councils that are organized by demand occupation in two different sectors-- manufacturing and transportation.

VERNON:

As separate councils, the needs and priorities for each of those four councils are different, such as one has an immediate need for the development of a new training program versus another having more of a need for outreach for specific careers in their field. And so as our partnerships are growing within those councils, the ROI for each partner also grows as they develop improved direct communication, and then see improved responses and support to

their immediate and respective needs.

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: Thank you, Pauline. It sounds like y'all are pretty much spot on, then, with that response in identifying, then, your return on investment.

And Irene, do you have any bullet points that you'd like to share also, regarding your effort in ROI?

IRENE SHERR: Yeah. In Chicago, we decided to utilize a new model, or at least new for us, that was industry-driven and sector-based, to improve the competitiveness of the metal machinery and equipment manufacturing sectors in the Calumet region. And seven organizations came together and planned a launch that attracted over 25 manufacturers. And we know that manufacturers are hit up all the time by different groups pushing different programs. So this time, we wanted manufacturers to set and drive the agenda.

We, the service providers, literally sat on the side and not at the table. We were there in listen-only mode, and then simply were there to respond and support the manufacturers. And one of the reasons we think this has been so successful so far is that we've also engaged an outside facilitator to support us and the manufacturers as we move forward and identify our outcomes, and build trust.

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: Oh, that makes such good sense. So many times we will find ourselves at that table, and we're doing the talking instead of the listening. You all are certainly so wise to sit there and listen.

It's like my favorite analogy of walking in to order a pizza, and the guy behind the counter starts telling us what we want on our own pizza. So we've really got to take that time out and listen.

Anyone else? If you've got comments here, please don't be bashful. Let's share those in the comment box or quickly give us maybe a bullet point on what some of your strategies are and what's worked for you.

We're going to move on to our next topic, but don't let that stop you from any lingering comments that you might have on determining return on investment.

Let's go to the next one, then, Maintaining Relationships. And sometimes is so easy to get relationships off the ground, but as Sharon was mentioning, you've really got to put in that time, and invest energy, and just really, really-- just to maintain those relationships. That can

be everything from formalizing operations to those memorandums of understanding, understanding roles and in really defining those. But we have to advance those relational skills. They really have to take things to the next level, if you will.

In that perfecting the reach down, that means, how are we reaching down, then, from post-secondary to secondary, and even lower, to make sure that those relationships, A, are connected in a proper way, and that they're really going to work.

You know, Pauline, I'd like to start with you here. You talked to us in our earlier conversation about how discussions between partners as you are developing an agreement were key to you settling or setting those appropriate expectations. And can you share a little bit more about that? And I know you referenced your MOUs and how that was part of the process.

PAULINE

That's right, Libby. So when GMACW was being conceptualized, this was at the end of 2014, we were a relatively new organization. An MOU was developed and signed by regional workforce and education stakeholders. And that included folks like the local chambers of commerce, four of our two-year institutions that were going to play a key role in doing a lot of the technical skills training; the two workforce boards in the region; the University of Memphis, which is our primary public four-year institution; and our primary K-12 system in the region, the Shelby County School District.

VERNON:

This MOU basically laid the framework of rules for all of those stakeholders with a common goal of supporting regional employer education alignment, making sure that we were going to put that first and foremost and get it right. When we pulled together our sector councils, we also identified goals and roles for those organizations too that they could buy into and make sure that they were all on the same page. We feel that MOUs are important, not just to identify roles, but to also have a concrete demonstration of the partnerships that we're seeking to establish.

And you mentioned reaching down into the organization. We think it's helpful to have that type of agreement to share with working staff so that they can understand the interrelationships and also the commitments that have been made by their management team. We've updated our MOUs and information multiple times during the last several years, especially when there's been a change in leadership at these key organizations, to make sure that the documents stay relevant, current, and basically, are a living, breathing tool for us.

LIBBY LIVINGS-

That's just so true, Pauline-- so many of your points that you're talking about. And we've had

EASSA: an earlier conversation to our family out there about being on that same page and how critical that is in every aspect of the partnership, as Pauline is talking about here-- maintaining that relationship. We've got to continually be on that same page-- part of that, and getting the framework out there in those MOUs.

We'd love to hear from some of y'all. We're switching over to Irene. MOUs-- is it an issue for you, and what part of it an issue for you? Is it getting the framework in place? Getting the partners on board? What are your issues there?

So as we're waiting for your responses and comment, Irene, I remember in our conversation you talking about poaching. And I just love that terminology, 'cause I thought it was so authentic.

[CHUCKLES]

So can you explain a little bit more of what we were talking about in that conversation about poaching?

IRENE SHERR: Yes, when we started, even though all the organizations had some history of working together-- and we had an MOU-- there was this fear of poaching-- of one organization developing a better relationship with a manufacturer or an organization almost feeling like they own a company. And we worked hard to dispel that notion and had some hard conversations about that. We utilized a very effective video and some of the principles that are inherent to the next generation sector partnership model. And I think, Libby, you're going to share a link to the video. But we used it at the beginning of several of our meetings so that everybody would have the same foundation as we moved forward.

LIBBY LIVINGS-
EASSA: Yes, and that was a great video. I've just set up for all of you-- what she is referencing. And it is tremendous that nextgensectorpartnership.com-- great site-- another source. And again, today is all about resources and networking with our colleagues out there.

Malika has asked, "Do we have any examples of MOUs?" Absolutely, Malika. And for the rest you out there, all you've got to do is ask in that magic chat box, and we will do our very best to get you some examples for you to look at and review, things that your practitioner friends [INAUDIBLE]. That's what today is all about. Thank you so much-- and great comments. I just love so much that reference to poaching, because again, it was just so authentic.

So let's move on, then, to that Addressing Institutional Tensions. Tensions in any relationship, regardless of where-- what that point of tension might be-- is something-- it has to be addressed. And it's things like it is prevalent, and there it is again. It kept coming up in our conversations about that disconnect and common vernacular.

And as our co-presenters have already shared, being on the same page-- having the same expectations, the same common vision and mission. And how do we address that faculty disengagement or just turnovers we've already heard referenced?

So let's talk a little bit about, then, competitiveness, territorialism. We've already heard a little bit about that poaching that we've had. And Irene, I want to start back with you again. If you could please share with us. I remember you had a model for engagement that helped y'all alleviate those kinds of tensions. Can you share that with us today?

IRENE SHERR: Yeah, we formed the Chicago Metro Metal Consortium a couple of years ago in response to a federal program. And that really provided us with a platform for our local stakeholders in the manufacturing ecosystem to share resources and collaborate. And through our regular meetings, we learned that two member organizations with overlapping geographic service areas had secured two complementary, but different department of labor grants for the same service area. And this was for the Calumet region of Chicago, which includes the city and the suburbs.

And one of those grants included language about this next generation sector partnership. And so several of the key organizations in this geography went for training together on the next generation sector partnership. And that really helped us, again, build a common foundation and work together to leverage those federal resources that we don't often have access to.

LIBBY LIVINGS- Oh, and again, that resource that she has shared with us is that
EASSA: nextgensectorpartnership.com that you see above in the chat box. So, if any of you have had experiences with tensions, or strategies, or have a question to pose here, please do not hesitate while you have the opportunity to have colleagues online that can also share resources and ideas with you today.

So while we are transitioning and waiting, then, perhaps for some of those comments and other questions out there-- Pauline, I love the conversation that we had. We talked about trust issues. You remember that?

[CHUCKLES]

PAULINE Right, right.

VERNON:

LIBBY LIVINGS- Can you expand on that quite a bit for our family here today?

EASSA:

PAULINE Well, I can certainly relate to what Irene has already mentioned as far as the trust, and
VERNON: especially as we were forming our sector industry councils between the educational partners and the business partners, and wanting to make sure that they were all on equal footing with each other.

So I think that between-- whenever there is tension, it's been our experience-- it's trust or communication. And once the trust has been established, then it basically boils down to communication challenges. So we did get through that, just as Irene did.

But going onto the communication, we've, as I mentioned earlier, we tried to lay things out in MOUs to make sure we're, first of all, speaking the same language. And so in addition to those partnership MOUs, we also established a consortium-wide guiding principles document to confirm the overall goals with our partners, including alignment with the employer sector counsel skill requirements, facilitation of articulation agreements, support of concurrent credit with secondary school programs, and other common goals to college partners. And then generally, we work together on these in work teams and are pretty self-directing.

However, when issues arise or tensions, we typically take that offline to discuss that with that faculty or management team, to really understand what the concerns are that are preventing that institution or individual from moving forward. We find that when we have open discussion like that, we're much more focused on resolving that challenge, and that we're much more likely, then, to lead to or find a solution.

LIBBY LIVINGS- If you can-- I'm going to ask you to expand a little bit. But let's just get down and dirty here.

EASSA: And let's talk about when that does happen-- I mean, if you can give us an anonymous situation here.

What would cause you to have to take one offline? How do you go about that process? We hear about breakups-- is it a text? Is it an email? But I'm smiling with tongue and cheek, but

how do you go about that offline process, and then how do you mitigate that? If you could maybe walk us through that a little bit.

PAULINE

Well, I can give you an example. I mentioned that we work with our industry councils, and one of the goals that I mentioned in that common agreement was to implement their recommended industry recognized credentials. When we had a specific situation where one of the college partners kept indicating that they had no need to implement a specific credential that the council were asking for, and we were all thinking that was just being a little obstinate on their part.

VERNON:

But when we were able to have separate communication at their location with their management team and all their staff, or the related staff, we really focused on what was the issue presented, what the requirements were for, the industry companies. And we basically found out that it was a financial barrier for the testing fees involved and not really a reluctance or an inability on their part. And we were able to solve it by getting down to the-- really, the root cause of the issue and not just interpreting it as a reluctance on their part.

LIBBY LIVINGS-

Hmm. And if you don't mind, I'm just really going to-- I really want us to dig a little bit more into this, because there are so many pieces-- subtopics here in this institutional tensions. And again, I encourage y'all out there. If you've got a question here-- don't let me be the only one asking questions.

EASSA:

There's a lot of interesting points here, and I know one I'm thinking about is having been a practitioner in the field when you're having to bring everybody together, and we've got some discord about identifying skills and what is needed. How do you navigate that? What is that process that you're doing with this? I know an MOU gives you the framework, but what's that down and dirty process?

PAULINE

So, are you asking, Libby, about the skills-- that the credentials that the industry folks are asking for? I'm not really clear on your question.

VERNON:

LIBBY LIVINGS-

Yeah, we can take that as a point. We could. If there's a push and pull sometimes between either institutions about what's required from the employer or business and the industry side, and whether that's just identifying the skills-- any piece of that. How do you-- what's that-- how do you sit down and address that? How do you get to the reconciliation point?

EASSA:

PAULINE

Well, there are a lot of different ways, and there's-- I don't think there's one single formula. In a

VERNON: lot of instances, the college partners, they're all at different places. A lot may have already implemented some of the credentials and have experience with what's working. A lot of times, if something new is coming up, then we'll have to break that into a subcommittee, and that maybe a committee including industry representatives as well as the faculty of the institutions-- to just take it a little a step further-- and to really look at how those credentials or skill requirements relate to what they need, and courses, and what's currently being taught at institutions.

Another example is one of our industry councils wanted a very specific training program that wasn't being offered any place. After reviewing all of the technical schools in the area, they selected one to implement this program out, because they had more of the programming already in place and felt they could be easily launched there. And then we worked with the schools to launch it and replicate it as needed elsewhere. So we worked, again, very heavily with the industry folks to identify the skills, and then the faculty worked with them to help implement it.

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: And I am guessing when y'all were sitting down, then, it sounds like with that type of setting, what's happening is actually business and industries leading that conversation?

PAULINE
VERNON: Absolute, absolutely. And as I mentioned earlier, when we set up those councils, they are industry-led. They're chaired by industry folks. And I heard Irene saying that when she had her council meetings, the other partners were actually sitting on the back row or the sidelines listening to the industry folks talking. And that's very much how ours are set up too.

The GMACW staff and the chamber staff serve as staff to those councils, and those councils decide what their priorities are going to be, what direction they're going to take. And we basically help serve to implement it. Our councils were modeled after a very successful council here in Memphis, The Greater Memphis Medical Device Council, which is the 501 c6, and very focused on workforce, and very successful in their efforts.

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: Oh, well, thank you. And thank you for allowing me just to keep digging and digging there. There was just so much good stuff.

And Irene, I'm sure that you've got something, perhaps, to add to any or one of those points before we move forward. Do you-- anything else from any one of these angles that you might-- can add a strategy that you've utilized?

IRENE SHERR: Well, I think it's not so original, but I think we've-- for example, we've been focusing on promoting careers in manufacturing to high schoolers and below. And a lot of the manufacturers might complain about the schools and how to connect. And we just realized that they don't-- the school leadership and the manufacturers don't necessarily spend that much time together. And so we're going back to the beginning and having almost, say, a manufacturing school administrator mixer this week at one of the manufacturer's training facilities. So, I think sometimes you also have to just go slow to go fast.

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: Yeah, and I love that you've [CHUCKLES] mentioned that mixer there. You must have been mindreading Heidi Shepherd's question here. And thank you, Heidi. Heidi is posing "Does anybody ever engage partners in team-building-- just fun activities?" And that sounds like that mixer is a good one, Irene.

IRENE SHERR: Yeah, and another thing we've tried to do with our-- which is part of the next generation sector partnership-- is we've tried to do things a little differently. So, we had one of our meetings at a brewery, which for us was a little out of the ordinary.

[CHUCKLES]

So we have been trying to make things a little bit more fun. And we gave out some little swag goody bags and things at a couple of the events. So, I don't know if it really helped, but we've been trying.

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: Well, I think it's always about building some rapport out there and establishing that common ground. Sometimes it's just the simple things. And Pauline, anything you might want to throw out there-- any kind of just fun, successful activities or something that may have surprised you, and you thought, "Ah-ha! This works. Let's do this again!"

PAULINE VERNON: Well, I think the thing that has been most rewarding, and I guess unexpected, in my, I guess, naivete, is when we started these councils with an emphasis on looking at post-secondary curriculum and improving those programs, and improving that alignment. And as we've gotten involved with them, or as the employers have gotten involved with them-- more involved in workforce-- that they really hadn't been before-- they started asking for more involvement in secondary, in K-12. As Irene was mentioning, they wanted to start recruiting younger and earlier into the pipeline.

And so that became a ready source of individuals and companies to participate in everything

from Manufacturing Day to this wonderful effort that we had here a year before called, "What's So Cool About Manufacturing?" which was an eighth grade student video contest. And many of those same council members opened up their facilities to eighth graders to come in with GoPro cameras, film and interview them, and then have a competitive voting competition to see which video was the best. We had 140,000 votes in the Memphis area on those student videos, which was a great outreach and recruitment tool.

**LIBBY LIVINGS-
EASSA:**

Great stuff. I want to stop here and pause and give a shout out to Dan Finley who is commenting. "Open, honest, and frequent communication definitely helps lessen the tension." You're right, because stone silence isn't going to get us anywhere, is it, Dan? He likes the idea of mixers, events. Because one of the biggest complaints is that "education doesn't understand." You're right. "Or vice versa."

That goes back to that establishing a common vernacular and getting on the same daggone page. It's just a different lens for you in the world. You're right. We're not so very different. We just have to understand from what corner of the room each one of us are coming, and what we're seeing, right? Thanks, Dan, so much-- love that comment. Love to have more of those.

We're going to move on, but we're certainly not going to stop. This is where we find ourselves at the 30-minute mark as we promised. For some of you there, that you will have to leave us today, we thank you for joining us. But we are going to stay online with anyone who would like to continue the conversation for another 15 minutes. Those of you that have to go can join a us at lincs.ed.gov to the-- again, to the thread of today's-- "Keeping Our Partners Engaged."

And I see here, if we continue on, we've already got some good inquiry. We're going to continue on and then start questions. Debra Shepherd, "What are the main points when mentioning building common vernacular?" So those main points-- and I'm going to say-- give Irene and Pauline each an opportunity. What would be your-- maybe your top-- your just 1, 2, 3-- quite quickly, when you're-- when you've got-- you're taxed with building a common vernacular, what is your 1, 2, 3 approach? Let's start with you, Pauline.

**PAULINE
VERNON:**

Well, I think first you have to outline what your goals are going to be and then try to list those. Definitely identify, then, what that strategy looks like. And then also just making sure that you're describing it in a way that is commonly understood.

I think a lot of times in education we tend to use acronyms or terminology that isn't understood

by industry partners. So especially when you're working with industry folks, you have to make sure that the terminology that you're using is very clear, and just trying to then articulate it in a document. Verify that with your partners to make sure that they agree with what it's saying, and they understand what it's saying.

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: You know exactly. We can't come to that common mission and vision if we don't even know-- if we're not working from the same vocabulary, correct? So it's almost like a big match game you had up there. If you had industry on one side and education on the other, and they're all writing down the terminology, how do we connect, and what words mean the same thing? So we all know what the same hell we're talking about.

So Irene, I'm going to go to you. And what are, maybe, your top three points, Irene, if you're tackling common vernacular? What's your first priority and your second priority?

IRENE SHERR: Very similar to what Pauline said. I mean, we've had, as I mentioned-- we're using an outside facilitator. And sometimes it feels like there's an incredible amount of communication, [CHUCKLES] and back and forth. And it's tedious in a way, but it is constantly reminding us of what our goals and objectives are, and what we really mean in terms of what we say we're trying to do.

So, it's-- I would say it's not a mediator. It's a facilitator.

[LAUGHTER]

Because a mediator suggests there's conflict, and it's not like there is conflict. But people do-- people hear what they want to hear, or may think you're talking about something that you're not. I totally agree with all the jargon that can get in the way. So, I would say it's really basically just good communication skills and checking in with your leadership.

LIBBY LIVINGS-EASSA: And Dan has thrown this one out that is really a great smile-- or a translator. And that can be true. Sometimes we are speaking such different languages. We truly just about need a translator. And maybe we'll reserve, Irene, that mediator for when we've really got some strained so-called tensions there. So hopefully that won't ever be necessary. So, great stuff, y'all. Keep it coming.

I'd like to go back too, while we're waiting for some more comments, or strategies, or any resources, or websites y'all want to share with us-- I'm going to go back to-- maybe, Pauline, at the beginning you mentioned-- and if you've already given this, please refresh my memory.

But you mentioned that you lost industry-led sector council. What do you mean? Let's review the industry-led one more time, and how that affects the partnership-- that type of leadership.

PAULINE
VERNON:

Right, that was very important to make it a regional and also industry-led. I mentioned that we modeled our councils after the Greater Memphis Medical Device Council, which is a 501 c6, which was developed by employers-- part of GMACW coming into existence-- to address their sector's workforce challenges in the medical device sector.

We saw their success and that we understood that for real change to happen, we needed to have employers taking ownership over their sector's workforce in a leadership role, and not just serve on college advisory committees that meet a couple of times a year to listen to PowerPoint presentations by faculty.

So to launch our councils, we contacted a couple of leaders in each sector, invited them to have a conversation about workforce challenges, and they basically admitted that, yeah, there's plenty of challenges here. And then they agreed to play a bigger role, and that they wanted to have a bigger voice in workforce development. And then they'd sent the letters of invitation to their peers to then join them and joining this council.

The councils are chaired by the industry members, and they determine the agenda and the roles, and where they're going to take their council.

Talking about continued clarification-- when they were launched, we even identified what the roles for the councils would be as far as the chairman, the GMACW, and the chamber supporting them, so that it would be clear as far as who's doing what to help continue and move this forward.

LIBBY LIVINGS-
EASSA:

Yeah, and that's part of being on the same page. And that's just a really solid methodology for making that happen.

I want to return back to one of our bullet points. It had to do with return on investment. Because we all know if we want to keep people engaged, they're got to have some skin in the game. What's in it for me? We can go on and on.

But if each one of you-- and Pauline and Irene, we'll start with y'all-- and I'd love to see those comments in the chat box-- but just your one strongest example of what was your best return on investment example that you shared to get that partner to stay at the table? Was it data?

Was it placement? What kind of satisfaction? Was it numbers? What was that one thing?

IRENE SHERR: I could give an example. I mean, we're-- workforce is the biggest issue, but we also found that the businesses really long for-- and really welcome the B2B networking. And so we've really just started developing a number of opportunities for the manufacturers to do that. And we've been doing site visits and planned tours.

And just as a result of one-- one manufacturer said he saw technology at a peer's facility that he's going to implement, and it's going to save him thousands of dollars.

LIBBY LIVINGS- There you go.

EASSA:

IRENE SHERR: So it's the-- it's that kind of learning and sharing, which to the manufacturers is really helpful.

LIBBY LIVINGS- And Pauline? Your, probably, one greatest example of your most successful return on
EASSA: investment to sales?

PAULINE Well, and I mean, we've had, thankfully, many great examples that I-- and I think I'll just build
VERNON: on what Irene is saying. In addition to the networking, what I would expand it to say it's in addition to the business-to-business [CLEARS THROAT] networking-- excuse me-- because we're hearing from a lot of our business partners that before they got involved in these councils and with us, they really, pretty much worked in isolation and didn't really know the pipeline, and didn't know their real context at a lot of the educational institutions; were completely unaware of who their contacts could be at the workforce investment boards that could help them with on-the-job training contracts, or work experience, or you name it, there.

And so I think just that expansion of contacts for them in the workforce arena on top of actually seeing real progress in their individual council, whether it was speaking as a voice to get a common industry credential implemented, or quickly implementing a training program and turning that into a credit program that didn't exist in the region before. So we've had a lot of successes there. But I think just the overall networking is really key.

LIBBY LIVINGS- I wanted to go back and thank Crissy, who has shared a great resource from us-- coming out
EASSA: of Pennsylvania. And they have a foundation skills framework that they utilize to get everybody on the same page. Thank you, Crissy.

And again, what we find out is there is no greater opportunity than networking with your

colleagues here, and to find any type of resources to give you, ideas, to tackle some of those challenges you might be having out there in the field. So thank you, Crissy. And anybody else that has a resource or a web thing that you'd like to share, or just anything, you're welcome to send within a text or--

[STATIC]

I want to go now, and I want each of you out there to be thinking about this as we tip down into our final minutes. And I'm also going to go again to Irene and Pauline, my super co-presenters. What's your one super hint for keeping partners engaged? And this is going to be one of those in a sentence, or one or two words or less. And everyone out there, I want to hear from you-- but your super hint for keeping partners engaged. And it can't be donuts. So Pauline, Irene, go!

IRENE SHERR: For us I would say it's a peer-to-peer outreach. So as Pauline said, our invitations are signed by manufacturing leadership-- them speaking directly about the value that they're gaining from the participation. And I think that's what's been helpful.

**LIBBY LIVINGS-
EASSA:** Great, great. Pauline!

**PAULINE
VERNON:** Well, and I would say-- 'cause partners are-- both our educational partners and our industry partners-- is understanding their needs and challenges, and working to address their needs and challenges, and making sure that you're constantly checking in and reassessing what those are. Because they do change. And as you resolve one particular issue, or you think you have, just keep checking in and show that you're continuing to work them.

**LIBBY LIVINGS-
EASSA:** Yeah, and I think that goes so much not just to keeping them engaged, but keeping them happy, and also that return on investment-- is that response. So that's great stuff.

Anybody else out there? Looking for some of them one or two-words.

"The only constant is change." Well, amen, Crissy, to that. I'm telling you. And we have to be ready for that.

As I so often say, one of my favorite cults films, *Shift Happens*-- and I'm going to make sure that I spell that out for you so that you all know what I'm saying-- not something else. But shift

does happen, and I always say it's like a Facebook status-- by the time you post it, it's already outdated. So we do have to be in continual conversation and communication, and making sure that we are-- there are no gaps in that communication-- to keep things happening and rolling along.

Anybody else? Anybody else have a super hint for us on how to keep those partners engaged? I love all this input that y'all are sharing with us today.

And while I'm waiting for those, if Pauline or Irene have maybe just one or two-- if you've got one last sentence of encouragement or advice, or just something-- one more sentence you'd like to give to our family out there before we go today.

PAULINE Well--

VERNON:

IRENE SHERR: Well, I would just thank everybody for participating, and I'm impressed at the exchange that began just through this conversation.

LIBBY LIVINGS- Yeah. It's been a great conversation all the way up to number four, hasn't it?

EASSA:

Pauline, anything final you'd like to give us?

PAULINE I just want to say that when you're working in workforces, I think everybody knows it really is a team sport. And I've really been happy to see how willing people are to be partners and to get engaged and stay engaged. And so I think we're just very fortunate, and we all need to work hard together to make sure it continues to happen. And thanks, everyone, for letting me participate in this. I really enjoyed it as well.

VERNON:

LIBBY LIVINGS- Yeah, well, you're right. There is strength in numbers.

EASSA:

And just a couple of points there. If you'd like to continue this conversation-- we hope you do-- you will join us at lincs.ed.gov and Strength in Manufacturing Partnerships. Today's thread, of course, is "Keeping Those Partners Engaged."

And as a final before we say goodbye-- and there is the link there, as you can see-- we want to thank OCTAE for this incredible opportunity for TA, for all the practitioners out there in

manufacturing and other partnerships-- great information regardless of the basis or industry.
We thank you all and hope you will join us.

And if I could have the-- quickly if Pauline and Irene-- we've lost our PowerPoint. If you could put in your email addresses there-- I will also. Y'all are welcome to contact any of us post-webinar. If you have any other comments, or any other suggestions, or any other questions that we might assist you with, that's fine. And [INAUDIBLE] there.

Again, we thank you for joining us and hope you will continue the conversations with us online.
Have a great week.

IRENE SHERR: Thank you! Bye bye.