Many institutions of higher education have offices or individuals dedicated to working with faculty and staff on community engagement strategies. Frequently, there are also offices of innovation and entrepreneurship, with people whose work focuses on developing relationships with industry, entrepreneurs, and other external stakeholders.

Professionals working in these roles focused on external engagement have often developed partnership principles to guide their work, and as a resource for colleagues at the university. This conversation guide is focused on helping you and your ecosystem partners consider what principles might be helpful for guiding partnership development in your ecosystem.

**Start the Conversation:**

**Just Getting Started?**

If you and your colleagues are just beginning to engage your college or university in ecosystem building, you may feel the need to do some groundwork before you dive into conversations. Take a look at [Getting Ready for Ecosystem Conversations](https://www.ccube.tools/) for ideas and considerations for engaging both your internal ecosystem as well as with external partners.

* Gather some key stakeholders in your ecosystem to consider what kinds of principles would serve as a good foundation for partnership building in your ecosystem. You can gather stakeholders in a face-to-face or virtual meeting. You might also consider whether it’s possible to carry out this “conversation” asynchronously via email, a discussion board, or across a series of one-on-one or small group discussions.
* Be sure to include at least one entrepreneur in your conversation. Because entrepreneurship ecosystem partnerships are designed to benefit entrepreneurs first and foremost, it’s vital that entrepreneurs participate in the conversation.

**Build an Equitable Ecosystem!**

Ecosystems thrive when they are inclusive, fostering connections, conversations, and cultures that embrace the entire community. Before undertaking this or any of the conversations on C•CUBE, review [Centering Access, Belonging, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity in Ecosystem Building](https://www.ccube.tools/). Apply the five questions under “Putting it into Action” as you plan this conversation.

* Start by asking conversation participants if they have been engaged at their institution or organization—or with external partners—in developing principles of partnership. What have those experiences been like? Who has participated? How have such efforts helped (or not) with ecosystem building?
* If participants do have examples of partnership principles from their own institution or organization, consider including these among the examples to be reviewed in the following steps.
* Explain that you are providing some examples of principles that have been developed by other institutions and organizations. Note that each list of examples includes a link to a website where there is more detailed information about the principles. This list may include examples from some of the organizations in your conversation (see previous bullet).
* Before digging in to your conversation, ask participants to review the examples. So that participants have the time to understand the example principles more fully by visiting websites, you might consider dividing up the examples among participants so that each person only needs to look at one set of examples.
* When you’re ready to begin the conversation, start by asking participants which example principles have resonated with them. Why do they resonate? Are there principles that anyone in the group doesn’t like?
* Based on your conversation with the group, record on the worksheet at the end of this document a few of the principles you like—note these in the first column. Have participants share ways they think the principle would help in the ecosystem and record this information in the second column. If the principle would need to be revised to fit your ecosystem, record a revised version in the third column.
* Talk about what’s missing after you’ve generated these initial ideas. Are there other principles that you and your ecosystem colleagues can identify and develop that will help with trust-building across the ecosystem? What are the best ways to promulgate these principles across the ecosystem?
* Discuss your responses. How will what you learned through your discussion about partnership principles help you develop effective partnerships in the ecosystem? What other scaffolding will need to be provided, beyond principles, to help build trust?

**Example Principles of Partnership**

Following are examples of principles of partnership from universities’ and other websites. Take some time to review them, then discuss as a group which of them you feel would be helpful to participants in your local ecosystem. How would you adapt them to fit? Use the worksheet at the end of this document to record the group’s thoughts.

NOTE: in some instances, the principles have been abridged from the full version on the website. Visit the websites for more detail.

From Ohio State University  
[engage.osu.edu/partnership-principles](http://engage.osu.edu/partnership-principles)

* Awareness of partner needs associated with values, assets, and challenges.
* Shared resources and responsibilities leveraging strengths for mutual benefit and collective impact.
* Accountability through evidence in practice and evaluation.
* Commitment to stewardship ensuring trust, compromise, efficiency and sustainability.
* Recognition of successes affirming the value of partnerships.

From London School of Economics   
[blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2016/08/15/research-collaboration-between-universities-and-industry-five-principles-to-make-it-work/](http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2016/08/15/research-collaboration-between-universities-and-industry-five-principles-to-make-it-work/)

* Principle 1. Share information in ways that are accessible and relevant to the other party.
* Principle 2. Identify discrepancies in modes of operation and invest in establishing a common language.
* Principle 3. Leverage third-party brokers.
* Principle 4. Develop trust through small wins and regular interaction.
* Principle 5. Assemble teams with common attitudes and complementary skills.

From University of California Davis  
[research.ucdavis.edu/industry/partner-with-uc-davis/building-u-i-collaborations/principles-agreements](http://research.ucdavis.edu/industry/partner-with-uc-davis/building-u-i-collaborations/principles-agreements)

* Open Dissemination of Research Results and Information
* Commitment to Students
* Accessibility for Research Purposes
* Public Benefit
* Informed Participation
* Legal Integrity and Consistency
* Fair Consideration for University Research Results
* Objective Decision-Making

From Strada Education Foundation—Employer and Community College Partnerships [stradaeducation.org/report/employer-and-community-college-partnerships-models-and-practices-for-supporting-students-and-strengthening-the-workforce/](http://stradaeducation.org/report/employer-and-community-college-partnerships-models-and-practices-for-supporting-students-and-strengthening-the-workforce/)

* Incorporating student-focused practices around guidance, financial support, and work-based learning can support student success and help meet the goals of the partnership.
* The relationship and engagement between partners can take on many forms. Remaining fluid and responsive to what makes the most sense within a specific environment can help community colleges and employers develop the best structures to achieve their goals.
* Federal, state, and local policy contexts can shape the environment for community college and employer partnership development.
* Strategies to support alignment between employers and community colleges include establishing and articulating a shared sense of value, ensuring the buy-in and support of leadership, and engaging in tailored and coordinated relationship management.
* Valuable areas for future research on community college and employer partnerships include developing a deeper understanding of student and employer partnership perspectives and identifying effective practices for sustaining partnerships long-term.

From Cornell University   
[alumni.cornell.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/OEI-CALC\_Building-Partnerships.pdf](http://alumni.cornell.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/OEI-CALC_Building-Partnerships.pdf)

* Partners have agreed upon mission, goals and measurable outcomes for the partnership.
* The relationship between partners is characterized by reciprocity, mutual trust, respect, inclusion, genuineness, collaboration and commitment.
* The partnership builds upon identified strengths and assets, but also addresses areas that need improvement.
* The partnership balances power and among partners and enables resources among partners to be shared.
* There is a clear, open, transparent and accessible communication between partners, making it an on-going priority to remain flexible, empathize with each other, listen to each need, develop a common language, ensure safety and validate/clarify the meaning of terms.
* Roles, norms and processes for the partnership are established with the input and agreement of all partners.
* There is feedback to, among and from all stakeholders in the partnership, with the goal of continuously improving the partnership and its outcomes.
* Partners endeavor to build capacity and share the credit for the partnership’s accomplishments.
* Partnerships take time to develop and evolve over time.

From Community-Campus Partnerships for Health [ccphealth.org/partnering/principles-of-partnering/](https://ccphealth.org/partnering/principles-of-partnering/)

* The Partnership forms to serve a specific purpose and may take on new goals over time.
* The Partnership agrees upon mission, values, goals, measurable outcomes and processes for accountability.
* The relationship between partners in the Partnership is characterized by mutual trust, respect, genuineness, and commitment.
* The Partnership builds upon identified strengths and assets, but also works to address needs and increase capacity of all partners.
* The Partnership balances power among partners and enables resources among partners to be shared.
* Partners make clear and open communication an ongoing priority in the Partnership by striving to understand each other’s needs and self-interests, and developing a common language.
* Principles and processes for the Partnership are established with the input and agreement of all partners, especially for decision-making and conflict resolution.
* There is feedback among all stakeholders in the Partnership, with the goal of continuously improving the Partnership and its outcomes.
* Partners share the benefits of the Partnership’s accomplishments.
* Partnerships can dissolve, and when they do, need to plan a process for closure.
* Partnerships consider the nature of the environment within which they exist as a principle of their design, evaluation, and sustainability.
* The Partnership values multiple kinds of knowledge and life experiences.

From the Kauffman Foundation—Design Principles for Building Ecosystems

[www.kauffman.org/ecosystem-playbook-draft-3/create/](http://www.kauffman.org/ecosystem-playbook-draft-3/create/)

* 1. Put entrepreneurs front and center.
* 2. Foster conversations.
* 3. Enlist collaborators. Everyone is invited.
* 4. Live the values.
* 5. Connect people bottom-up, top-down, outside-in.
* 6. Tell the community’s authentic story.
* 7. Start, be patient.

**Adapting Principles of Partnership**

Choose some principles, from the examples, that you like. Note how you think each principle could help build trust among partnersh in your ecosystem building efforts, and how you might revise or adapt each principle to fit your ecosystem.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **An Example Principle We Like** | **How This Principle Would Help Our Ecosystem** | **How We Might Revise/Adapt the Principle for Our Ecosystem** |
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