

Partners for Next Generation Education

Roles & Responsibilities of *etc* Partnership Members

- *How can you strengthen your etc partnership?*
- *How can partnerships close the culture gap between education and business?*
- *How can you avoid common mistakes?*
- *And more...*



ILLINOIS
Education To Career
Next Generation Education



A **Winning** Combination: *etc* and You

Education-to-Careers (*etc*) is Illinois's promise to support an educational system that will prepare each and every student for a successful career in the 21st century. It is our state's commitment to creating schools that are *Second to None*.

Realizing this goal won't be easy, and it won't happen overnight. But it can become a reality if local communities continue to build on successful public-private partnerships committed to improving the quality and relevance of education for all Illinois students.

That's where you come in. Whether you are a teacher or administrator, CEO or employee representative, parent or community leader, you were asked to participate in a partnership because of what you have to offer. Your educational background, work and life experiences, and unique perspective provide the partnership with information and insight. By combining your talents, energies, and resources with those of the other members of your team, you have begun to build a strong, successful, sustainable partnership.

Taking your *etc* partnership to the next level requires communication, collaboration, cooperation, and a commitment to focusing all the team's collective talents on a common goal. No matter how strong or adaptable your partnership is, your plan for the future must include long-term sustainability. In the following pages you'll find plenty of practical information and advice on strengthening your winning team in ways that work for students, parents, educators, employers, and the community.



Who Does What? Sample Roles and Responsibilities

Each member of your team has a unique role to play based on his or her strengths, experience, and resources. Two of the key groups in any public-private partnership are the educators and the employers. Here's an overview of what team members from these two groups are typically accountable for in a partnership:

Educators:

- *Developing curricula, instructional methods, and assessments that integrate academic and applied learning.*
- *Talking with educators in similar partnerships in Illinois and other states to learn about successes, share ideas, and find solutions to problems.*
- *Organizing “externships” that allow educators to visit local workplaces and learn more about other careers.*
- *Arranging for representatives from area businesses to visit classrooms as speakers, special instructors, or mentors.*
- *Working with employers to create opportunities for students to get real-world work experience through internships, apprenticeships, and co-op education.*
- *Setting up guidance programs that help students identify their aptitudes, interests, and goals.*
- *Promoting etc: Next Generation Education among students, parents, and other community members.*

The Goal: Essential Elements of *etc*

Every successful team has a goal. For a sports team that goal could be making the playoffs or winning the championship. For a business it may be increasing earnings and productivity. For an *etc* partnership, the ultimate goal is creating an environment in which all students in your community develop the academic and technical skills that prepare them for rewarding work and independent adulthood.

Your partnership has already assembled a team and begun work toward that goal. Now, the Illinois State Board of Education has determined a game plan for reaching that aim and condensed the plan into four essential elements. These four “to do” items are the basics of the *etc* playbook, guidelines your partnership can keep in mind while pursuing the ultimate goal of developing the next generation of Illinois education:

1. Create career awareness and exploration activities to help all students make informed choices about the future.
2. Integrate academics and their applications to teach all students how today's class work is relevant to tomorrow's careers.
3. Ensure a smooth transition from each level of education to the next to give every student a clear educational and career path to follow.
4. Offer work-based learning opportunities such as job shadowing, internships, and volunteer work to show every student what careers are really like.

By keeping these simple strategies in mind, partnerships can better prepare every student for future success. For more details, please read the booklet *Four Essential Elements of Next Generation Education*.

On Your Mark, Get Set, Go!

The path to building a successful *etc* partnership begins with a single step. By signing on to help provide 21st-century education for your community, you have taken that first, important step for the students of Illinois. You've done a lot of hard work to get this far, and it's a good idea to stop occasionally and take a look at where you are, how you got there, and where you're headed.

Building an effective *etc* partnership is easier said than done. Your educators, employers, and community leaders have broken down barriers, built bridges, and rejected rigid boundaries. You've learned to look at education in a whole new way. You've shown the courage to raise Illinois education to the next level of rigor and relevance. Now that your partnership is firmly established, here are ten steps you can follow to help it grow stronger and more effective.

Ten Steps to a Successful *etc* Partnership

1. Drafting an *etc* Dream Team: Bring the **Right People** to the Table

Building a successful *etc* partnership is a lot like fielding a championship sports team. You need players who are skilled at different positions, who will pull together even when the going gets rough, and who are committed to making the team a success. Plenty of teams, both in sports and *etc* partnerships, are packed with superstars, but that is no guarantee of success. As your partnership grows, changes, and faces turnover, you must continue to ask yourselves, "Who are the right people?"

- *Instituting in-school career development activities such as student portfolios and school-based businesses.*
- *Speaking out about the importance of skills education to their peers at meetings, conventions, and conferences.*
- *Helping to establish articulation agreements among local secondary and postsecondary schools.*

Employers:

- *Organizing the business community to welcome students for field trips, job shadowing, co-op jobs, internships, apprenticeships, and other work-based learning opportunities.*
- *Communicating to educators what they expect from high school graduates in the workplace, so curricula can be better designed to teach the right skills.*
- *Championing skills education through business and trade groups and civic and community organizations.*
- *Supporting Next Generation Education with tax-deductible donations of software, materials, equipment, or funding.*
- *Opening their doors so educators can spend time in local businesses.*
- *Providing personnel to make presentations at job fairs, speak to classes about career options, and serve as mentors.*
- *Giving students and instructors access to the latest workplace technologies.*
- *Encouraging the business community to hire graduates who have a Next Generation Education.*



Problem:
Educators and employers come from different worlds.

Solution:
Pool talent to produce positive results.

“We have to learn each other’s language. Educators don’t understand that we need things to happen right now. They don’t understand the need for change to happen as quickly as it does in business. We faced a similar problem 10 to 15 years ago with our suppliers. They didn’t understand the manufacturer’s need for change. So we started building supplier management programs, collaborating with our suppliers to make them more successful and at the same time meeting our needs. We need to do the same with our educators—to build partnerships that will help us understand each other and achieve what we need.”

—Terry Hoyland,
Educational Outreach Coordinator,
Caterpillar

Working with other *etc* partnerships has equaled success for the Lake County Education-to-Careers Partnership. Lake County teamed with the Northwest Suburban and North Suburban *etc* partnerships to create some joint activities including Leadership Luncheons and Teacher Treks. Both provide professional development and help create lesson plans that are used in the classroom.

The answer is different for each community. To determine whom to draft for your *etc* Dream Team, answer these questions:

- Who in your community can really make a difference in students’ lives?
- Which community and business leaders are recognized and respected?
- Who has a direct interest in helping students succeed?
- Who is a worker, not a watcher, who will take the role of a partner seriously and put in the effort to get the job done?

As you work toward a lasting partnership, filling in gaps and fortifying weak spots, it’s good to keep some basic principles in mind. The membership of some partnerships is dictated; for example, School-to-Work partnerships must consist of 51 percent private sector members and include representatives from specific areas, such as local educational agencies. But be selective. Fielding a team that fits the required partnership parameters on paper won’t guarantee success. Choose those people in your community who can make decisions and actually commit organizational resources to the work ahead.

Diversity: No sports team can be successful if every player excels at the same position. The same is true for an *etc* partnership. Diversity is essential to success. Just as a winning baseball team evaluates the skills needed when reliable players retire, you must fill empty spaces in your roster by looking for individuals whose qualities vary from one another. Bring together people with different personalities and backgrounds so your team can look at issues from many points of view. Find members with various abilities so your partnership can pool its multiple resources to meet common goals.

The Stakeholders: It makes sense to include representatives from as many different stakeholder groups as possible. Assembling a partnership team representative of all elements of the community shows a commitment to openness and inclusion. Again, however, be choosy.

Simply belonging to a certain group doesn't make a person an effective partnership member. As you seek out people who support the *etc* mission, find those who are willing to put in the time and effort needed to transform your local education system. Be sure they have the authority to commit their organizations' resources to the cause.

The Three F's: There's no sure-fire way to select the best possible partnership members from your local pool of talent. However, research by the American Management Association finds that an effective team member is friendly, flexible, and focused on the positive. In addition, those who work best in a team situation are usually above average on the achievement scale, have the right skills for the mission at hand, and do not intimidate others or allow themselves to be intimidated.

2. Compiling Player Profiles: Identify **Motives**

No matter how long your team has been together, it can be helpful to sit down and find out why each member decided to join the *etc* partnership. What do the members expect to get out of their involvement? Why is *etc* important to them? What are their expectations for the partnership—and for the results the partnership produces? Listening to each other's stories, sharing opinions, and voicing concerns, can start the process of turning a group of individuals into an effective team with common goals and values.

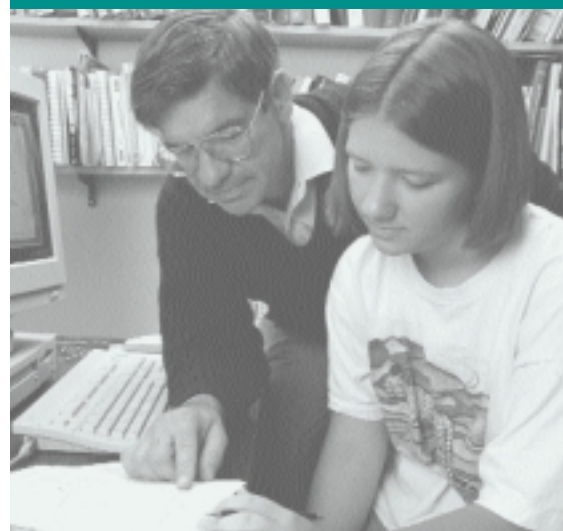
While compiling each player's profile, take special note of the self-interests that will keep each one involved in the partnership. For a partnership to succeed, each team member has to receive a tangible benefit. For example, an employer may see the partnership as a way to improve the quality of future job candidates, while the parent of an elementary school student wants to know that student will be prepared for life, not just for graduation.

Problem:
Educators aren't aware of what business needs.

Solution:
Companies give educators the opportunity to spend time outside the classroom and learn what business expects from graduates.

"I was amazed when I went on a Teacher Trek by the changes technology has forced onto the job market. I knew then we had to be looking with a fresh eye at the way we steer some of our job training programs. I work with business advisory councils all the time, and it still really opened my eyes. I can just imagine the effect on teachers who have been locked into a classroom for years."

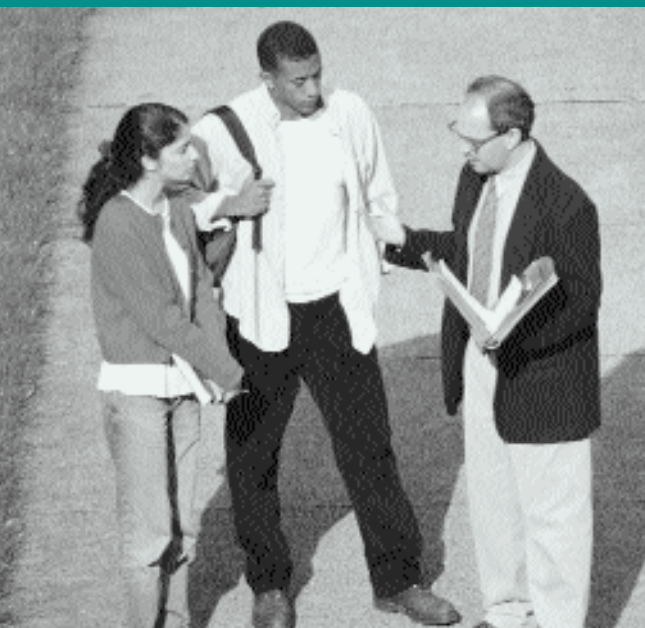
*—Barbara Oilschlager,
executive director,
Lake County etc Partnership*



Problem:
Classroom learning needs to be linked to the world outside the classroom.

Solution:
Organize "Teacher Treks."

The Northwest Suburban Education-to-Careers partnership sponsors summer "teacher treks"—one-day visits to businesses for area educators. Last year, 1,000 teachers from kindergarten through college level participated in 59 trips. Educators were paid \$100 for the first trek and most ended up wanting to go on more "field trips" for free, says Sally Griffith, the partnership's executive director. Trek participants are required to turn in a lesson plan based on what they learned. The partnership publishes the best plans in a book that is distributed to all schools and participants.



When conflicts arise and the newness of the partnership wears off, knowing each member's core reason for initially committing to the process will help the group's leader or facilitator keep the team on track and on its way to achieving its goals.

3. Developing a Game Plan: Define Your **Mission** and **Goals**

The purpose of your *etc* partnership is to invent and implement Next Generation Education in your community. That's the big picture. The work, however, is in the details. Specifically, your partnership must develop clear goals that everyone on the team understands, accepts, and is committed to achieving.

Begin with your mission statement. It should tell—simply—who you are, what you do, and what you stand for. Clearly convey that the group is bringing together a range of different talents and resources to improve local schools. Periodically review your mission statement to be sure it still reflects the work you are doing and the goals you've set.

If you decide to make revisions, encourage team members to collaborate in crafting a statement that will serve both as a road map for your partnership and a marketing tool to attract new supporters, donors, and partners in the community. When it comes to the actual writing, however, keep both the statement and the process simple by assigning only one or two team members to write a brief, memorable (and memorable) message.

Once the partnership has a clear and up-to-date mission statement, identify specific goals that will help fulfill the mission. A helpful way to set goals is to look ahead to the future and work back to the present. Determine what you would like your partnership to have achieved in

ten years, five years, one year. For example, do you envision teachers spending summers in career externships, or do you see every graduate meeting the Illinois Learning Standards? Once you visualize the long-range goals, you can begin to draft the short-term goals that must be achieved first.

Goals should be measurable, attainable, and accompanied by a clear set of deadlines. Assign goals to specific team members and ask them to create definite steps and timetables for achieving each task. By giving team members ownership over specific goals and holding them accountable through deadlines, you can easily keep track of your progress and greatly enhance the likelihood of fulfilling your mission.

4. Play Ball: Get to Know One Another

Looking back at your first few meetings, they may seem a bit like the first day of school. Everyone is excited and enthusiastic, but chances are they're also a bit reticent to share their ideas and expectations. Most partnerships get over this uneasiness in time, but new members will continue to come aboard as other members rotate out. Encourage participation by creating a welcoming, informal environment. Create opportunities for new and old members to learn about each other, such as icebreaker games, lunch breaks, and evening receptions. Consider team-building activities ranging from creative problem-solving challenges to a weekend retreat.

Finally, think about getting a professional facilitator to lead early meetings or step in and help reopen lines of communication if your partnership experiences problems. This neutral third party can create the opportunity for more participation, continually focus the group on common goals, and effectively channel disagreement into productive dialogue.



Problem:
Educators listen only to other educators.

Solution:
Recruit educators to be etc ambassadors.

Becky Densmore-Stoll, coordinator for the East Central Illinois Workforce Development Commission, effectively promotes the potential of *etc* and explains the concept by asking the schools where educators support *etc* to be models and ambassadors. When Densmore-Stoll sends these educators to do presentations in area schools, she says, teachers listen.



Problem:
Support for etc is weak because no one is familiar with the concept.

Solution:
Spread the word!

Sharing its success stories has helped Elgin Community College Education-to-Careers Partnership build *etc* awareness and support in schools and communities. The partnership's Web site (www.eaetcp.org) features stories about teachers who are involved with the activities and achievements of the partnership. The teachers profiled have become well known and popular in their schools and provide information to other educators.

5. The Ground Rules: Decide the Basics of How You Will Operate

Remember the kids in grade school who used to change the rules of the game every time they started losing? The same scenario is often played out in partnerships when clear rules were not established in the beginning. Without ground rules, the most outspoken members tend to dominate, and pretty soon the rest of the team starts tuning out and turning off.

Establishing a few simple rules regarding how decisions will be reached, how conflicts will be resolved, and how members will interact, for example, will help the partnership operate more effectively and save the team a lot of time and trouble. Established partnerships may find that it's time to take a fresh look at the rules and be sure they still apply to the current situation.

Keep the guidelines clear and concise. Weighing down the partnership with rules to fit every possible situation will only stifle creativity and productivity. Periodically get input from everyone on the team about what is working and what isn't. Listening to members' opinions about guidelines for the group can reveal a great deal about their expectations, personalities, and attitudes.

6. The Roster: Assess Your Resources

As you move into the next phase of implementing Next Generation Education in your local schools, you need to reassess the talents, tools, and treasures your team brings to the game. Begin with the bottom line—a firm budget plays a major role in the decision-making process.

Beyond the budget lies the partnership's greatest resource pool—its members. Survey members to find out what resources partners are

willing to apply to the partnership's work. A partnership Resource Roster is a helpful way to map individual skills of new team members and the changing circumstances and new knowledge of members who have been around since the beginning. This database of skills, resources, affiliations, and knowledge will help in making assignments and maximizing contributions.

To assemble your own Resource Roster, create a simple form for members to list the following information:

- Professional skills and specialties (for example, public relations, fundraising, or curriculum design)
- Personal hobbies and interests
- Technology skills (for example, Web site design)
- Employer resources (assistance, both financial and in-kind, that an employer like a business or school might be willing to provide to the partnership)
- Affiliations (other organizations the member belongs to, such as civic or business groups, that might be willing to get involved with the partnership)
- Contacts (family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and others who might be interested in helping the partnership)
- Restrictions (for example, time commitments or physical disabilities that might limit participation in some activities)

7. The Line-Up: Define and Assign Responsibilities

Whether it's Little League or big business, every winning team has a captain, a team leader, someone who can rally the troops, coordinate efforts, and guide discussions. Your team leader should be someone who can motivate and delegate, not intimidate and dominate. A skilled public-private partnership leader understands how to capitalize on the strengths of all the group's members to achieve goals.

Problem:
*Educators often don't see **etc** as something that applies to them.*

Solution:
*Show teachers that **etc** is already part of their lesson plan.*

*Many educators have the misconception that **etc** is a program only for vocational education. However, progress has been made in showing classroom teachers and administrators that much of what they are already doing is part of the **etc** principles. Marketing **etc** to everyone as an extension of what they are already doing has made it more tangible and less invasive.*



When the going gets tough...

Public-spirited people usually get involved in a business-education partnership because they want to help schools and students. But they stay because of what they get out of it, not what they put in. That self-interest is the key to sustaining partnerships when the newness wears off and they hit rough spots in the road. Here's a sample of some of the benefits that a Next Generation Education partnership can offer to its members.

Students

- *More interest in school*
- *Life-long learning skills*
- *Real experience in the career world*
- *Marketable skills*
- *Information for making more informed decisions*

Parents

- *Better education for their children*
- *More motivated students*
- *Children with clear goals and marketable skills*

K-12 Educators

- *Increased student achievement and interest*
- *Higher graduation rates*
- *Greater community support*
- *New teaching tools*
- *Additional resources and volunteers*
- *Connections with higher education*

As the partnership changes and grows, it will be up to the team leader to assign tasks and evaluate the workload. The leader should periodically review the partnership's Resource Roster to determine who fits which task best based on the time, talents, and resources of each member. For a quick overview of some of the duties of two key groups—educators and employers—within a public-private *etc* partnership, see “Who Does What: Sample Roles and Responsibilities” on page 2.

8. Spread the Word: Communicate with Constituencies

When a team is winning, it gets a great deal of attention. Fans flock to the stadium, and everyone wants to share in the success. The same is true for *etc* partnerships. Let the community know about the results your team has produced, no matter how small. People love to support a winner, especially one from their own hometown.

Use the writers, communicators, and marketing and public relations pros on your Resource Roster to create messages and materials to reach out to parents, students, educators, and employers. Use the tools provided by the state or create your own. The vehicles are virtually limitless for spreading the word about your *etc* partnership, for example, Web sites and newsletters; presentations to local community and civic groups, parent-teacher meetings, and school assemblies; and local TV, radio, and newspapers.

By promoting Next Generation Education and showing the community how your *etc* partnership and its members are helping to make that vision a reality, you will attract new supporters and resources and increase your chances of success.

9. Three Strikes and You're Out: Avoiding Common Mistakes

One of the hallmarks of winning squads is their ability to play error-free. Fumbles, fouls, and penalties have reversed the fortunes of many talented teams. Learn from the experiences of other public-private partnerships by recognizing these three common mistakes:

Strike One: Making the process a priority. Partners who focus on how they are doing things tend to lose sight of what they are doing and why. Shoot for results instead. Positive results, especially early on, will motivate the team and help sustain momentum. Look for easy victories to build enthusiasm and a feeling of accomplishment. And always keep in mind what brought each member to the table in the first place. The team will remain positive and committed when the partnership delivers on the promises participation initially offered.

Strike Two: Too much talk and not enough action. Meetings are important, but discussing the job doesn't get it done. Give partners a reason to participate by delegating duties, setting timetables, and monitoring results. Make your partnership results-oriented to help motivate each member to contribute.

Strike Three: Ignoring the business-education gap. Educators and employers might both speak English, but they rarely speak the same language. Partnerships that pretend that these two groups are from the same planet will encounter continual communication problems and conflicts. If you recognize on day one that educators and employers have different priorities, pressures, and personalities, you can develop ways to help these two indispensable groups work together toward the partnership's common goals. One helpful tool is to use "translators"—individuals who can communicate and relate to both groups. Former educators who are now in business are ideal choices for this role.

Postsecondary Educators

- *Greater enrollment*
- *Closer ties to business*
- *More successful students*

Business

- *A better educated workforce*
- *Less money spent on recruiting and training*
- *Positive public image*
- *More motivated employees*

The Community

- *Stronger schools*
- *Improved economy*
- *Higher levels of education*
- *Better standard of living*



Problem:
etc is viewed as just another add-on.

Solution:
Link etc to School Improvement Plans and to Illinois Learning Standards

Many schools are completely consumed by student performance on tests and measuring improvement. Try marketing etc to educators in your community as a strategy for school improvement. Present it as making students' studies more relevant, helping them to achieve better grades, higher graduation rates, and so on. Take the same approach with Illinois Learning Standards. By tying etc concepts to school improvement efforts and to Illinois Learning Standards, you can make a stronger connection with educators.



10. The Scorecard: Set Benchmarks and Evaluate Progress

If no one kept score in a baseball or football game it would be difficult to determine which team was winning and how the individual players were performing. Keeping score and setting standards motivates team members to excel, achieve, and meet specific goals. Without a scorecard, it's tough to know if the team is progressing and what, if anything, has been accomplished.

To sustain enthusiasm and attain success in your partnership, set specific deadlines for the completion of various tasks and the achievement of goals. Hold members accountable for their assignments by monitoring the timeliness of accomplishments. Continuously evaluate your progress to determine what's working, to see what might need retooling or revising, and, most importantly, to celebrate the wins and applaud the players who produce positive results for the team.





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