# Next Gen Sector Partnership Refresh and Relaunch

Top Tips, Strategies and Facilitation Guide

Next Gen Sector Partnerships are continually evolving. As the industry shifts, the economy changes, and leaders come and go, it's essential that the sector partnership have regular opportunities to refresh and stay relevant to the industry and the region. Whether you're concerned your partnership may be stalling out or thinking ahead for how to keep your partnership fresh, this guide is for you.

## Signs Your Partnership Needs a Refresh

- **Industry engagement is waning.** The top indicator that you need a refresh is your partnership's industry engagement starts to drop off. This may look like fewer industry leaders showing up to your quarterly meetings, or action teams without active industry participants. If your meetings start to have more public partners in attendance than industry leaders, you need a reset.
- **You've relied on the same, core group of industry leaders for a while without attracting new members.** Over time, sector partnerships can come to rely on the same, small group of leaders to drive action. While this is often necessary to get things done (small teams are generally more effective than big, unwieldy ones), beware of relying on a small core *without engaging new members.* A sector partnership should be continually attracting new members, both mid-level managers within existing companies and new companies that have not yet participated. A refresh is a great way to bring in new voices and new energy.
- **The sector (or the economy) has changed.** Consider where the industry was when you initially launched your partnership. What has changed? Think about the impact of market forces, new companies locating in the region, regulatory changes, technology, or global events. The agenda that your sector partnership originally coalesced around may not be as relevant. A refresh provides an opportunity to recalibrate and refocus around the most pressing priorities facing the industry today.
- **Your agenda has gotten stale.** Your partnership is focused on just a single priority or is losing steam on all of its priorities. Perhaps you have accomplished the original goals you set out to achieve, or your partnership just couldn't get traction to make a change. In a healthy partnership, new priorities are identified regularly at quarterly meetings. If that hasn't happened in a while, it's time for a refresh.

## What is a Refresh Meeting?

**A gathering that brings together existing sector partnership participants with new companies that have not yet plugged in to bring new energy and new focus to an established sector partnership.** A successful meeting has four elements: 1) celebration of successes to date; 2) open discussion of where the industry is today; 3) strategic discussion to identify priorities for the partnership to focus on, re-forming action teams around those priorities, and; 4) commitments to join new action teams around those priorities. A refresh meeting looks similar to a launch meeting but also makes space to acknowledge and celebrate the work that has happened to date.

## Goals of a Refresh Meeting

- **To engage new industry leaders.** A refresh meeting is all about making space for new leaders to plug in, step up, and contribute to the partnership. This requires increasing both quality and quantity of business leader engagement. A successful relaunch meeting engages at least 20 business leaders; this ensures your partnership has enough participation to form action teams and share the load of moving your agenda forward. But it's not all about numbers. Sector partnerships depend on a certain kind of business leader that we refer to as "civic entrepreneurs." These individuals are collaborative and strategic. They see the success of their company, their industry and broader community as interdependent. Beware of the temptation to settle for any business participation at your launch meeting; careful attention to recruiting the right "civic entrepreneurs" is essential in positioning your partnership for success.

- **To re-charter action teams.** A refresh meeting will result in the formation of action teams around priorities that industry leaders agree are essential to the industry's competitiveness and that require a collaborative approach. Stay committed to the core principle of "no champion, no initiative." Action teams only move forward if there are industry champions committed to them.
- **To celebrate successes and reflect on learnings.** A refresh is a chance to look back on the work your sector partnership has done, to celebrate, and learn from your past experience. Don't be afraid to acknowledge missteps. Learning from what didn't work is critical to future success.
- **To reaffirm commitment to core principles.** Consider the core foundation your partnership is built on. What makes this effort distinct? (Examples: Playing the long game vs. quick fixes. Networks vs. hierarchies. Industry-driven vs. public partner-driven.). What core principles guide your work? (Examples: Continuous improvement, centering equity, action-focused).

| What Works Well | And Not So Well |
|---|---|
| A personal ask | Flyers or other marketing materials |
| A strategic discussion | A presentation or a guest speaker |
| Ending with commitments and follow through | Ending without clear next steps |

## Elements of a Successful Refresh Meeting

1. **A compelling invitation and a personal ask.** The best way to get business leaders to turn out is via a personal, peer-to-peer ask. This means that the invitation to a refresh meeting should ideally come from a business leader (or group of business leaders) addressed to their industry peers. (Similar to a launch meeting, this may mean that your industry champions sign the letter, but it is emailed on their behalf by the convening organization(s)). It should also be personalized. A follow up phone call goes a long way to encourage attendance. Divide up those calls among your public partner team and industry champions. Your time spent getting the word out about your refresh meeting is time well-spent; remember that the primary purpose is to bring in new industry leaders. Don't take shortcuts at this step.
    a. See guidance on [how to recruit business leaders]

2. **A well-facilitated agenda.** We recommend a facilitated discussion that keeps the engagement high and keeps the focus on your industry leaders. Follow guidelines for the launch meeting in terms of [room setup] and [facilitation tools].

   A strong agenda has five (5) parts:

| Agenda Item | Time | Recommendation |
|---|---|---|
| **I. Welcome & Introductions** | 10-15 mins | Start by setting the right tone by having one or more of your business champions kick off and welcome the group. Take time to hear introductions from all industry leaders in the room. This is time well spent since it's an important way for them to get to know each other. |
| **II. Where we've been** | 10-15 mins | Prepare one or more of your industry champions to reflect on the experience of the sector partnership to date. Why did you initially come together? What have your most significant accomplishments been? What work is ongoing? What work has been completed? Use this as a chance to celebrate where you've been while also teeing up the next chapter. |

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| **III. Where we are** | 15-20 mins | This is the time to broaden the discussion to include new industry leaders. Facilitate a discussion about where the industry is today. Consider this a warmup discussion to get the group talking and thinking strategically about where the industry is, and where it's going. Spend no more than 15 minutes here. Some questions you may use to start the discussion:<br>i. What are the biggest opportunities and trends shaping our industry in this region?<br>ii. What has you most excited about where the industry is going? What makes you nervous?<br>iii. What has changed in our industry since we initially launched? |
| **IV. Where we're going** | 30-45 mins | This is the heart of the agenda, where you'll identify priorities for action for the partnership to tackle. We recommend using a sticky wall or post-it notes to field ideas from participants, similar to a launch meeting. The key question for discussion is: "What do we need to do together (that no one company could do on its own) in order to capitalize on opportunities to strengthen and grow our industry here?"<br>i. If your partnership has action teams that you plan to continue, you can acknowledge that here by saying, "We know we need to double down on K-12 outreach. That's why we have a K-12 team that's partnering with schools to significantly increase the number of students participating in tours and career awareness activities." But don't let current work preclude new ideas from surfacing. Invite ideas from the group about how we could go further or deeper with existing work to get to the next level.<br>ii. Make space for new ideas. Invite creative ideas about what the partnership could tackle, inviting participants to describe what that would look like and require. Group their ideas into categories; these will serve as the basis of new action teams. |
| **V. Commitments and next steps** | 15 mins | This is an essential step. Once you've identified a handful of action areas, set priorities by calling for champions. Champions are industry leaders who volunteer to join at least one follow up phone call to flesh out their idea, develop a work plan, and define immediate deliverables and wins. If no one signs up for one or more priority area, take it off the agenda for now. Make explicit that this partnership will only advance an initiative if there are champions associated with them. Close the meeting with a recap of what you discussed and an outline of next steps. |

3. **Follow up and follow through.** It is essential that follow up from the refresh meeting is prompt and thorough. You need to instill confidence that this partnership is moving and that industry leaders can expect responsive staffing and follow through to keep their engagement and excitement high. Within no more than two weeks of the meeting, distribute a survey to all participants and set up follow-up meetings for each action team. Follow the protocol for follow up action teams from the Next Gen toolkit here. Set a second meeting of the full partnership within 90 days; this is important to bookend your refresh meeting and hold the teams accountable for getting things done.

Be proactive and intentional in cultivating new champions after your refresh meeting. A few one-on-one follow up conversations can go a long way in keeping new people engaged and plugged in. The stakes are high to keep new leaders engaged; now is the time to cultivate relationships that will keep them coming back.