Sector Strategies Organizational Self-Assessment

Is your organization demand-driven and sector-focused?

About This Tool

This self-assessment tool is designed to help local and regional workforce organizations (and current sector partnerships) determine how well they are implementing full-scale sector strategies today and where they should prioritize future enhancements.

For more information on full-scale sector strategies see ***ETA's Sector Strategies Framework*** document.

ETA Sector Strategies Technical Assistance Initiative
Sector Strategy Implementation Framework

Overview

Sector strategies – regional, industry-focused approaches to building skilled workforces – are one of the most effective ways to align public and private resources to address the talent needs of employers. While not new, there is a growing body of evidence showing that sector strategies are workforce interventions that can simultaneously improve employment opportunities for job seekers and the competitiveness of industries. As such, sector approaches have received renewed interest from government, the business community, and philanthropy.

Many regions and a majority of states are now investing in sector strategies as stand-alone initiatives or as components of other activities. In addition, a number of national initiatives and federal laws (including the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) are emerging that are driving workforce organizations, in particular, to embrace these approaches.

What is a Sector Strategy?

A sector strategy is a partnership of employers within a critical industry that brings together education, economic development, workforce systems, and community organizations to identify and collaboratively meet the workforce needs of that industry within a regional labor market.

How Does it Affect What a Workforce Organization Does?

Sector strategies represent a new way for workforce organizations to conduct business: moving from a "program administration" focus to a more strategic role building regional talent pipelines, addressing skill gaps, and creating meaningful career pathways for a range of workers in important regional industries.

But What Are True Full-Scale Sector Strategies?

Most workforce organizations haven't yet fully embraced the power of true sector strategies. Sector strategies are not add-on programs. They are not individual training initiatives in a particular sector. Rather, they represent a new way for workforce organizations to conduct business: moving from a "program administration" focus to a more strategic role building regional talent pipelines, addressing skill gaps, and creating meaningful career pathways for a range of workers in important regional industries. A demand-driven full-scale sector strategy means putting the business community in the middle of their services, and thinking more broadly about what a workforce organization or intermediary can do to help businesses thrive and grow beyond simply placing workers in jobs and arranging training.

The 20-question assessment is organized along five broad capability areas:

1 | Data-Informed Decision Making
Is your organization/partnership using rigorous data to make decisions about target industries and education and training investments?

2 | Industry Engagement
How broad and deep is the involvement of targeted industry sector employers in designing and delivering programs and services?

3 | Sector-Based Service Delivery
How well are you and your partners facilitating the delivery of workforce solutions that are responsive to the needs of workers and the targeted industry sector(s)?

4 | Sustainability & Continuous Improvement
How well is your organization able to measure sector strategy outcomes? Are you positioned to financially sustain sector work over time?

5 | Organizational Capacity and Alignment
Does your organization have the personnel, policies, vision, and resources in place to continually support sector strategy outcomes?

The capability areas, as described in the assessment, should be viewed as aspirational. They represent the capabilities that an organization that is interested in launching or advancing a full-scale sector strategy should seek to attain. It is rare that an organization would excel in all areas.

How to Take the Assessment

It is recommended that multiple individuals from the same organization (or from the same sector partnership) take the assessment and come together to discuss findings. Upon completion of the assessment, consider the following questions:

- What areas represent our strengths? Why?
- What areas represent learning opportunities?
- Is there important sector-related work that we are not doing? If so, what?
- Do we have different points of view within our organization about our self-assessment scoring? What can we learn from the different perspectives?
- What are our priorities for the next year?

Before taking the assessment, please answer the following question:

Is your organization currently leading or part of any active sector partnerships? If yes, which industries are you targeting?

Sector Strategies Organizational Self-Assessment

Data-Informed Decision Making	***Is your organization/partnership using rigorous data to make decisions about target industries and education and training investments?***	
Elements of a high-performing sector-focused organization	*If you think your organization rates as a "5" (see ratings key below) you consider it to have the following in place:*	
1 | Understanding of the region's most important industry sector(s) through use of rigorous economic, industry, and labor market data collection and analysis	• You use tools (e.g. location quotient analysis, traditional and real-time LMI), to regularly quantify your region's most competitive and emerging industries. • You have agreement across partners (e.g. economic development entities) about target industry sectors. • You use LMI and target industry data that focuses on your *actual* regional economy (e.g. where labor and goods flow) rather than on only a WIB's service delivery area or a county border). • You have a formal process for an ongoing review of data and for making adjustments to target industry sectors.	**1** **2** **3** **4** **5** *Action Items:*

1 = Not at all | **2** = Making progress but a long way to go | **3** = Have some of this, sometimes | **4** = Yes, in place now | **5** = Not only in place but we are excelling

Elements of a high-performing sector-focused organization	*If you think your organization rates as a "5" (see ratings key below) you consider it to have the following in place:*	
2 | Process in place to identify specific skill needs, level of demand, and area education and training program gaps within target industry sector(s)	• You regularly use both traditional and real-time data sources as well as focus groups and/or interviews with employers to identify growth occupations within target sectors and specific skill and hiring needs. • You have a formal and continuous process involving education partners to work with employers to review labor market demand, and identify/validate workforce needs and specific KSAs of critical occupations. • You have a formal process to identify gaps among existing regional education, training worker support, business services, and the needs of the target industry sector(s) employers. • You have a clear grasp of the employment disparities (e.g. based on race, ethnicity, gender) and individual and systemic barriers to economic security faced by job seekers/workers in your region	**1** **2** **3** **4** **5** *Action Items:*
3 | Provision of data that is understandable and shared across partners to enable joint, collaborative decision-making	• You have up-to-date materials (i.e. reports, industry briefs) that clearly and compellingly identify regional target industry sectors and their workforce needs. • You have the reputation, regionally, as a "go-to" source for target industry data and workforce needs.	**1** **2** **3** **4** **5** *Action Items:*

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Industry Engagement	***How broad and deep is the involvement of targeted industry sector(s) employers in designing and delivering programs and services?***	
Elements of a high-performing sector-focused organization	*If you think your organization rates as a "5" you consider it to have the following in place:*	
4 | Regional influence to bring key industry leaders to the table and understand the needs of their businesses	• You have relationships with business organizations within the target industry sector(s). • You've developed criteria (e.g. high job quality, career paths, a great reputation among workers and job seekers) to identify which employers to focus on involving and supporting through use of sector partnership resources. • You have the ability to easily identify and convene a network of large and small employers (and key decision-makers from those employers) within the sector(s), or credible relationships with business organizations that will include you in their meetings and conversations.	**1 2 3 4 5** *Action Items:*
5 | Industry as a strategic partner in designing and executing services and programs	• You have specific vehicles for soliciting ongoing workforce needs from industry partners (not just during periodic meetings or surveys). • You have industry partners that help define program strategy and goals, identify necessary skills, competencies, and resources to support education (e.g., equipment, instructors, internships), and, where appropriate, hire qualified students who complete programs.	**1 2 3 4 5** *Action Items:*

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6 | Capability to take on the sector partnership intermediary role if required	• When necessary, you can play the intermediary role, including guiding the partnership; managing its work; maintaining strong relationships with employers; maintaining an up-to-date understanding of employer needs and opportunities; and guiding efforts to evaluate and make improvements to a sector partnership. • You have credibility with the target industry sector(s) and entrepreneurial attitude to guide sector partnerships where employers want to take it.	1 2 3 4 5 *Action Items:*
Sector-Based Service Delivery	***How effectively are you and your partners facilitating the development and delivery of workforce opportunities that are responsive to the needs of an entire targeted industry?***	
Elements of a high-performing sector-focused organization	*If you think your organization rates as a "5" (see ratings key below) you consider it to have the following in place:*	
7 | Capability to fill the industry's near-term workforce needs	• You've had success in working with education partners through a sector strategy to develop responsive curriculum/courses for target sectors to provide immediate access to customized training and certification programs as needed. • You've had success in providing systematic support to employer needs—across an entire industry—in business outreach, hiring services, retention programs, etc. • Your organization (e.g. WIB, AJC) has the agility and flexibility to develop new programs rapidly in response to target industry workforce needs.	1 2 3 4 5 *Action Items:*

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Elements of a high-performing sector-focused organization	*If you think your organization rates as a "5" (see ratings key below) you consider it to have the following in place:*	
8 | Capability to meet the industry's longer-term pipeline needs across a range of skill levels	• You have an up-to-date inventory of regional education and training programs relevant to the targeted industry sector(s) in order to determine assets and gaps. • You can facilitate area educational units (e.g. K-12, adult education, community colleges, career & technology institutions, universities) to work together in response to targeted industry sector(s) to address identified regional long-term workforce needs at all educational levels. • You have experience and the ability to influence target sector(s) employers to develop, incorporate, and/or expand industry-recognized credentials.	**1** **2** **3** **4** **5** *Action Items:*
9 | Ability to overcome barriers for lower-wage workers in order to facilitate employment and career advancement within the targeted sector(s)	• You've identified barriers to work that are individual and systemic in nature (e.g. lack of work experience, substance abuse, transportation, child care), created solutions, and brought about industry-wide changes that support them as standard practices. • You've worked across an industry on career advancement solutions (e.g. tuition assistance, enhanced credentialing structure, on-the-job coaching) to encourage worker mobility.	**1** **2** **3** **4** **5** *Action Items:*

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Elements of a high-performing sector-focused organization	*If you think your organization rates as a "5" (see ratings key below) you consider it to have the following in place:*	
10 | Experience with and capability to develop effective, employer-validated career pathways in support of the target sector(s)	• With partners, you have experience with mapping and designing modularized curricula and career pathways across a range of skill needs (entry-level to advanced) to serve target industries. • You've had success in designing education and training pathways that enable students and adults to move seamlessly between academic and career technical programs, to and from work, and to achieve advanced credentials.	**1** **2** **3** **4** **5** *Action Items:*
11 | Experience with and capability to design and implement, with employers, work-based learning models in targeted sector(s)	• You have experience building and funding—on an industry level—models such as: ✓ On-the-job training ✓ Cooperative education ✓ Paid internships ✓ Pre-apprenticeship or Registered Apprenticeship programs	**1** **2** **3** **4** **5** *Action Items:*

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Elements of a high-performing sector-focused organization	*If you think your organization rates as a "5" (see ratings key below) you consider it to have the following in place:*	
12 | Partnerships with the right regional organizations to deliver comprehensive solutions in response to target industry sector(s) needs—while minimizing the duplication of services	• You have dynamic alliances (including clearly defined roles) with the following organizations in executing sector strategies: ✓ K-12, community colleges, adult education programs, private training providers, labor unions, and universities: To align curricula to career pathways and provide a bridge from secondary, pre-GED, and post-secondary education to a career. ✓ Local industry associations, chambers of commerce, and economic development agencies: To identify target industry sectors, convene industry, and jointly address regional growth strategies. ✓ Community-based organizations: To reach populations that are currently underrepresented in the target sector(s) and allow CBO services to be effectively integrated into sector-based strategies.	**1 2 3 4 5** ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ***Action Items:***
13 | Willingness and ability to respond to non-workforce needs directly related to the industry's economic development or growth opportunities	• You are open and have the capacity to engage sector partners to address non-workforce issues with employers (e.g. access to technology and innovations, streamlining suppliers or supply chains, transportation and logistics issues) depending on industry sector(s) needs.	**1 2 3 4 5** ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ***Action Items:***

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Sustainability & Continuous Improvement	*Is your organization able to measure sector strategy outcomes and sustain sector work over time?*	
Elements of a high-performing sector-focused organization	*If you think your organization rates as a "5" (see ratings key below) you consider it to have the following in place:*	
14 | Ability to "build the buzz" about the value of sector partnerships as a means to continuously secure stakeholder buy-in	• You have marketing material developed to promote existing sector partnerships. • You have close connections with area media to build awareness about partnership goals and community support.	**1 2 3 4 5** *Action Items:*
15 | Sector partnership measures of success identified and tracked with continuous improvement processes built in	• You have a common agreed-upon dashboard of success indicators (i.e. consensus around sector partnership "outcomes"), determined in part by indicators needed to bring about systems changes. • Your measures reflect services to business. • You have a process in place for collecting and analyzing data, and using metrics to make future adjustments. • Your board, executive committee, or program committee routinely reviews sector partnership metrics.	**1 2 3 4 5** *Action Items:*

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Elements of a high-performing sector-focused organization	*If you think your organization rates as a "5" (see ratings key below) you consider it to have the following in place:*	
16 | Sustainable funding source(s) to establish and expand sector partnerships	• You have an understanding of available funding sources (e.g. grants, foundation support, repurposed program funds, discretionary funds, industry support), and a commitment to identify emerging sources that could support sector initiatives. • You develop strategies for sustainability and pursue them from the beginning of sector partnership operations. • You have a willingness to be innovative in finding, braiding, and utilizing resources to support sector partnerships (including public, philanthropic, and private sector resources). • You've had success in obtaining funding from multiple sources that pays for the intermediary roles, services, systems change strategies, and other costs of the sector initiative. • The business community contributes resources to the partnerships.	**1 2 3 4 5** *Action Items:*
Organizational Capacity & Alignment	***Does your organization have the personnel, policies, vision, and resources in place to support sector strategy outcomes?***	
17 | Organizational commitment to bring partners to a shared vision	• You've had success in collectively developing, with your partners (e.g. economic development, higher education), a shared vision around target industry growth and economic security for workers. • You have the capacity to serve in a sector partnership intermediary role when required (i.e. as the neutral and credible party/convener brokering relationships among sector partners).for the intermediary roles, services, systems change strategies, and other costs of the sector initiative. • The business community contributes resources to the partnerships.	**1 2 3 4 5** *Action Items:*

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Elements of a high-performing sector-focused organization	*If you think your organization rates as a "5" (see ratings key below) you consider it to have the following in place:*	
18 | Organizational culture that promotes a demand-driven approach within a sectors framework	• You have the leadership (executives, board) that understands the importance of and prioritizes a focus on serving employers for the purposes of aligning the workforce system to target sector needs. • Your organization has a strategic plan/vision that emphasizes the organization's role in driving regional economic security and industry growth through sector partnerships.	**1** **2** **3** **4** **5** *Action Items:*
19 | Organizational structure (administrative policy, committee structure) that supports industry engagement within a sectors framework	• You have staff member(s) with explicit roles to examine, across businesses, broader industry workforce trends for the purpose of executing sector strategies. • Your organization's board/oversight group includes private sector representatives that reflects the target industry mix. • You have an administrative structure that promotes and supports sector strategies (e.g. organizational or committee structure oversees sector initiatives). • You have administrative policies that support sector strategies (e.g. sector partnership concepts are explicitly built into organization's policy goals; American Job Center has a policy to prioritize services for target industry employers).	**1** **2** **3** **4** **5** *Action Items:*

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Elements of a high-performing sector-focused organization	*If you think your organization rates as a "5" (see ratings key below) you consider it to have the following in place:*	
20 | Staff have expertise about current target industries and have opportunities to hone knowledge as targets change	• Your staff has ample opportunities to attend targeted industry-related professional development events for the purposes of staying fresh on technologies, growth trends, and workforce needs. • Your staff understands the industry sector's language, pain points, high-leverage opportunities, and culture, and they respect the industry sector's culture. • All staff members, regardless of position, understand why a sector strategy approach makes sense, and their role within it.	**1** **2** **3** **4** **5** *Action Items:*

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