

Employer Engagement Maturity Model

Intermediaries can use this model to assess and advance employer engagement—from initial contact to full strategic partnership—to support the goal of building strong, sustainable pathways that lead to quality digital jobs. Strong employer engagement is essential for sustainable and relevant pathways. There are five levels of employer engagement, and each level represents a deeper form of engagement with corresponding strategies and desired outcomes. Each stage builds on the previous, requiring increased trust and collaboration. Intermediaries play a key role in facilitating this progression.

This resource can be used across the pathway development life cycle and is especially useful in understanding how to deepen existing employer relationships. Use this model as an assessment tool to identify the current stage of employer engagement, and as a strategic guide to plan the actions needed to advance to deeper levels of partnership. It can also be useful for partnership mapping to plot employer partners across the model to guide relationship management.

Engagement Stage	Level and Description	Key Strategies	Primary Objective
New Relationship	<p>Level 1: Awareness</p> <p>Employers are unaware of or minimally familiar with regional digital jobs pathways efforts. Engagement is focused on building awareness and raising visibility.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share research and real-time labor market insights, such as trends in entry-level employment and digital skills gaps • Conduct employer roundtable discussions and industry listening sessions • Disseminate sector briefs and reports about digital skills that are in demand 	Establish visibility and credibility by raising employer awareness of the initiative's value and relevance
Working Relationship	<p>Level 2: Consultation</p> <p>Employers begin contributing feedback on their talent needs and the relevance of training. Engagement is focused on gathering input.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use surveys and focus groups to gather feedback on program design • Discuss hiring needs, skills, and competencies • Co-develop occupation-specific skills profiles or job descriptions • Host employer advisory meetings • Align employer feedback with labor market data in pathway planning 	Ensure that pathway design reflects employer needs and begins aligning with regional hiring needs

Engaged Partnership	<p>Level 3: Co-Design</p> <p>Employers participate in shaping curriculum and offer early-stage work-based learning opportunities. Engagement is focused on co-designing pathways and helping shape solutions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with employers in competency and curriculum development • Co-develop co-branded training modules or boot camps • Organize guest speaking engagements, site visits, and job shadows • Secure formal commitments through MOUs or partnership agreements 	<p>Strengthen employer investment by involving them in content development and learning exposure</p>
Strategic Partnership	<p>Level 4: Integration</p> <p>Employers co-deliver training and invest in advanced, sustained work-based learning activities. Engagement is focused on collaborating for shared delivery and advanced work-based learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch internships and apprenticeships as a talent development pipeline strategy • Coordinate mentorship from employer partners • Jointly manage training outcomes and participant readiness • Develop co-branded certification programs or capstones 	<p>Fully integrate employers into program delivery to improve authenticity, learner outcomes, and employment alignment</p>
Institutional Partner	<p>Level 5: Co-Ownership</p> <p>Employers take on shared accountability for long-term talent pipeline and economic development goals. Engagement is focused on employers as long-term co-owners of the strategy and is institutionalized across the employer operations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-invest in infrastructure, such as labs or training equipment • Collaboratively secure grants or co-sponsor funding initiatives • Create a joint governance structure or employer-led advisory board • Engage employers in long-term strategic planning and metrics tracking 	<p>Achieve lasting alignment and co-investment in systems that sustain digital jobs pathways</p>