

GreenWays



JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT | TOOL 3.3

# CO-HOST AN EMPLOYER-FOCUSED NETWORKING EVENT

## TOOL 3.3

Education and training providers often host networking events such as career fairs for their students, but you could benefit even more by looking beyond events with an employment focus. Co-host an industry networking event that brings together a wide range of players from across your targeted industry. For example, an event in the solar industry could connect manufacturing and sales firms, installation companies, electrical contractors, banks, accounting firms, and law offices. A successful event for you is one where a wide range of attendees find the event helpful, leading these organizations to think of you as a valued partner who understands their needs and industry.

Use this guide to plan networking events as simple as a cocktail party or as elaborate as a vendor fair. This tool provides tips for each stage of event planning, including partnering with co-hosts, setting event objectives, selecting an event type, and inviting employers.

### WHO SHOULD USE THIS TOOL

Employer engagement staff

## CO-HOSTS

Organize networking events with multiple co-hosts whenever possible. By partnering with others who have a similar interest in bringing industry people together for networking, you can attract the widest possible audience.

**Type of organization:** Many types of businesses and organizations contribute to an industry, and as many as possible should be represented as attendees at your event. Two types of partners stand out as particularly beneficial co-hosts:

- > **Four-year universities and community colleges:** These institutions are the perceived source of workers by businesses. Partnering with them will be a draw to employers and will give you credibility. This also helps establish a personal connection, as many invitees may have attended one of these institutions.
- > **Industry associations:** Partnering with the appropriate industry association signals to your invitees that you are "one of us." This buys credibility, even with businesses that are not association members.

**Roles:** Not all co-hosts have to share equal roles in preparing the networking event. Make it easy for partners to co-host, even if that means they are just lending their name and you are doing all of the work. Roles could also include contributions such as an event space or speaking as part of the formal agenda. Be sure that everyone shares expectations about each partner's role.

Keep track of your co-hosts. Are the organizations represented the types that would be most helpful to you? Do you agree on the role that each partner will play?

PARTNER NAME	TYPE OF ORGANIZATION	ROLE

## OBJECTIVES

The design of the event will depend on what you and your co-hosts need from the effort. Gather information about your individual objectives and desired attendees, and use that to set common goals for the event. Once you have settled on event objectives, check them with employers that you already work with or other key members of your intended audience.


CO-HOST	OBJECTIVE 1	OBJECTIVE 2	OBJECTIVE 3	KEY ATTENDEES
Common Goals				

## PICKING AN EVENT

Many event types can serve as networking opportunities, and they range widely in complexity and cost. Select an event type that is the simplest way to meet your objectives, only going with more complex events if you have a specific reason to. In addition to considering your common goals, use operational and target audience criteria as a guide for selecting an event that works best for you.

As you compare events, consider:

- > What are your operational constraints in terms of staff time and costs? The more constraints you have, the simpler an event you need.
- > Who are you trying to attract? High-level people require a higher-value event that is targeted to their needs.

EVENT TYPE		PRIORITY: OPERATIONAL SIMPLICITY
<b>Cocktail party</b>	Meet-and-greet to enjoy food and beverage and exchange names	
<b>Issue roundtable</b>	Participants discuss common issues and report out	
<b>Speaker or panel discussion</b>	Leaders present about key industry issues, with networking before and after	
<b>Minimal vendor fair</b>	Key businesses and service providers exhibit their services	
<b>Full vendor fair</b>	Businesses and service providers bring exhibit booths or tables	
<b>Mini-conference</b>	1/2-day or full-day event involving speakers, panels, booths, food	

## GETTING THE RIGHT EMPLOYERS TO ATTEND

The most important part of a networking event is who attends. Focus attention on who you invite and how you will reach out to key attendees to get the right audience at your event. Use this table to help you consider who your priority industry leaders are. Invite not only a mix of attendees within the industry, but also representatives from supporting industries such as law firms, accounting firms, and consultancies. The chart below includes a few sample types of organizations, but you should define your own organizational priorities. As invitees RSVP, keep checking your attendees against this list so you can continue your marketing efforts until you reach your target audience.

ORGANIZATION TYPE	WHY IMPORTANT	WHO IS REPRESENTING?	SUFFICIENT REPRESENTATION AT LEVEL NEEDED?
Major employers and service providers			
Sales firms			
Law offices, accounting firms, and other support services			

## ACTION STEPS

Based on the roles that you set with your co-hosts, create a joint action plan for organizing, marketing, and hosting the event. This table includes examples of key activities, but you should add the logistical and content items needed for your event.

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	ORGANIZATION OR PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
Secure speaker for introductory remarks	Industry expert desired		
Space for the event	Provided by co-host?		
Send invitations and follow-up with key attendees			