



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



የሳይንስና ከፍተኛ ትምህርት ሚኒስቴር
Ministry of Science and Higher Education - Ethiopia



Education Works

UNIVERSITY EDITION

**ADVANCING CAREER READINESS AND PRIVATE SECTOR NAVIGATION
THROUGH UNIVERSITY-EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT**

June 2020

USAID'S BUILDING THE POTENTIAL OF YOUTH ACTIVITY
Institutional Capacity Development Support to Ethiopian
Higher Education Institutions

Brandeis

THE HELLER SCHOOL
FOR SOCIAL POLICY
AND MANAGEMENT
Center for Youth
and Communities



Save the Children.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our deep appreciation is extended to the leadership of Bahir Dar, Hawassa, Jigjiga, Jimma, Mekelle, and Samara Universities and the employers associated with them that the Save the Children/ Brandeis University team interviewed. They endorsed the value and necessity of *transferable life skills* and expressed their willingness to engage with universities to ensure students are prepared for the 21st Century work force.

Much of the content in this guide stems from Save/Brandeis Rapid Assessments of the six universities and subsequent Action Plans to build or strengthen students employability and career readiness programming, Brandeis' three decades of experience in youth employability, and global research. Employer engagement was identified as a key goal by every source.

This guide is made possible by the generous support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Building the Potential of Youth Activity: Institutional Capacity Development Support for Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions. The contents are the responsibility of Save the Children and Brandeis University and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

CITATION: Curnan, S.P. and Hughes, D.M. (2020). *Education Works: Advancing Career Readiness and Private Sector Navigation through Effective University-Employer Engagement*, University Edition. USAID's Building the Capacity for Youth Activity: Institutional Capacity Development Support for Ethiopian Institutions of Higher Education: Save the Children US and Center for Youth and Communities, Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University. Retrieved from <https://heller.brandeis.edu/cyc/reports/index.html>

PURPOSE

To introduce University Presidents and Career Development Center leadership to a spectrum of roles employers can play in Ethiopian institutions of higher education and why this is important.

OUTCOME

University leadership is prepared to assess their current level of engagement with employers and determine the way forward to strengthen those relationships in order to enhance students' knowledge, skills, abilities, mindsets, and expertise necessary for the 21st Century labor market.

WHY STRENGTHEN UNIVERSITY-EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT?

WHY?

There are many interconnected factors –

- ❑ Current employer engagement with universities is quite variable and in most cases not institutionalized
- ❑ There are poor employability and career options for university graduates
- ❑ Youth unemployment is believed to put the country at risk for social and political crises
- ❑ Government mandates and leadership driving universities to take on the student employability development and career readiness issue
- ❑ University missions direct them to be leading economic engines for the country, but without sophisticated practices and structures that enable them to fulfill this charge, they are missing the moment

WHY?

There are many interconnected factors –

- ❑ Employers report students are graduating with limited employability knowledge and skills. Graduates usually –
 - ❑ Don't understand what employers expect
 - ❑ Are ill-equipped to respond to jobs that will constantly evolve
 - ❑ Don't understand the emerging economic reality in Ethiopia (moving from primarily agricultural to industrial/technological eras) and don't have the skills to navigate it

WHY?

The current Ethiopian workforce supply and demand mismatch is threatening youth livelihoods and wellbeing, productivity and innovation, sustainable economic opportunity and the future of higher education institutions

- The current skill level of Ethiopia's workforce is far from what will be required to achieve the country's transformative ambition; rather, it **constrains the growth of existing businesses and dampens investment in new ones.**
- "More than 80% of the employed population is concentrated in low-skilled occupations.
- "Secondary schools and universities/colleges **do not have built-in career navigation tools for students to map the workforce ecosystem.**"

- #etworks Program: A Comprehensive Market-Oriented Work-Readiness Project, Jobs Creation Commission, 2020

WHY?

THE SUPPLY AND DEMAND MISMATCH

“...Under-skilled youth represented 28.9% of Africa’s population, more than double the 13% recorded in other developing regions. In education, around 8.3% of youth had reached tertiary education versus 20.6% of their peers in other developing regions. More than half, 56.9%, received basic to secondary education only, compared to 36.4% in other parts of the developing world. This mismatch impacts earnings, job satisfaction and job stability.

‘Under-skilled youth often accept mismatched jobs out of desperation.’ To help close the skills gap, ‘African countries must develop policies to facilitate school-to-work transition of their youth.’”

- Adamon Mukasa, senior researcher, African Development Bank, “Let’s Address Skills Mismatch in Jobs for the Youth,”
2019 African Economic Conference

WHY?

THE SKILLS “MISMATCH,” “SHORTAGE” OR GAP HAS BEEN WELL DOCUMENTED...

“In a 2018 global survey conducted by ManPower Group, 45% of employers globally, state that they are not able to find employees with the skill sets they need, the highest this percentage has been in over a decade. In addition to the field-specific knowledge and skills required for the job (technical skills), **employers are increasingly looking for employees, both entry level and more senior employees, who have ‘a demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems,’** these skills being considered more important than the candidate’s undergraduate major.”

- *Education Works: Transferable Life Skills Trainer’s Guide (2020)* quoting ManPower Group 2018 and Association of American Colleges and Universities

WHY?

THE SKILLS “MISMATCH,” “SHORTAGE” OR GAP HAS BEEN WELL DOCUMENTED...

“In a *Wall Street Journal* survey, 90% of employers said that **life skills/employability skills were as important as technical skills** and **89% said that they could not find employees who had the right set of skills.**”

“In Ethiopia, as investments in education, number of universities, and levels of educational attainment have risen in the last decade, job creation and wage growth across the public and private sectors will have to keep pace to meet the employment needs and aspirations of the newly educated. Currently the public sector has absorbed most of the increase in educated workers. While the share of employees with a higher education degree has more than doubled between 2003 (9%) and 2014 (23%), the **‘pool of unemployed has also become increasingly educated.’**”

- *Education Works: Transferable Life Skills Trainer’s Guide* quoting *Wall Street Journal* and World Bank Group, 2016

WHY?

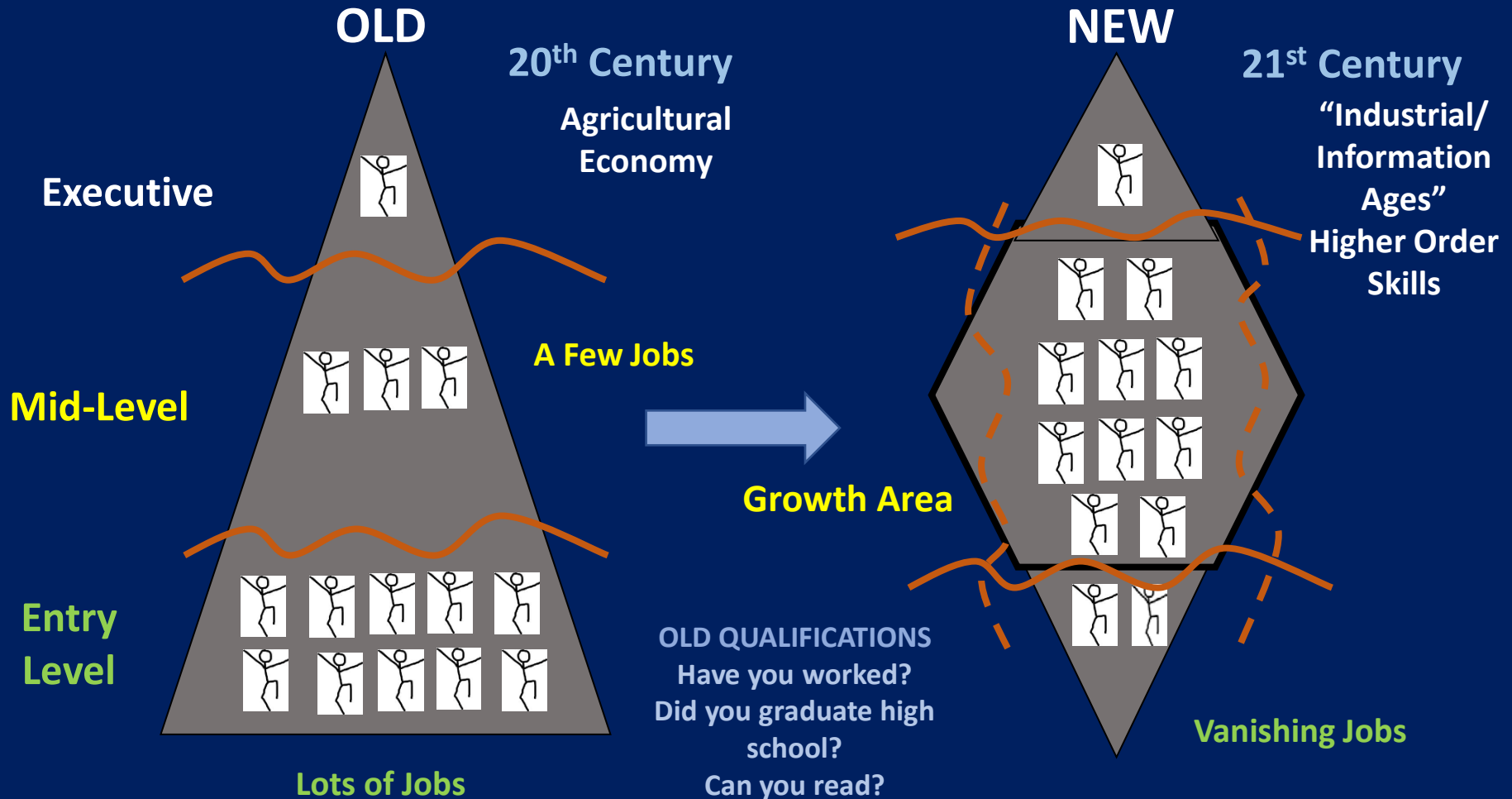
THE SKILLS “MISMATCH,” “SHORTAGE” OR GAP HAS BEEN WELL DOCUMENTED...

- “While the literate proportion of the population increased from 33% in 2005 to 52% in 2013, this still means that **almost half (48%) of the labor force is illiterate.**
- “Ethiopia’s attempt to unlock human capital depends primarily on bridging the learning gaps to improve educational attainment.
- “Two of the five Human Capital Index indicators have a direct bearing on the education system: years of schooling and quality of learning.”

- #etworks Program: A Comprehensive Market-Oriented Work-Readiness Project, Jobs Creation Commission, 2020

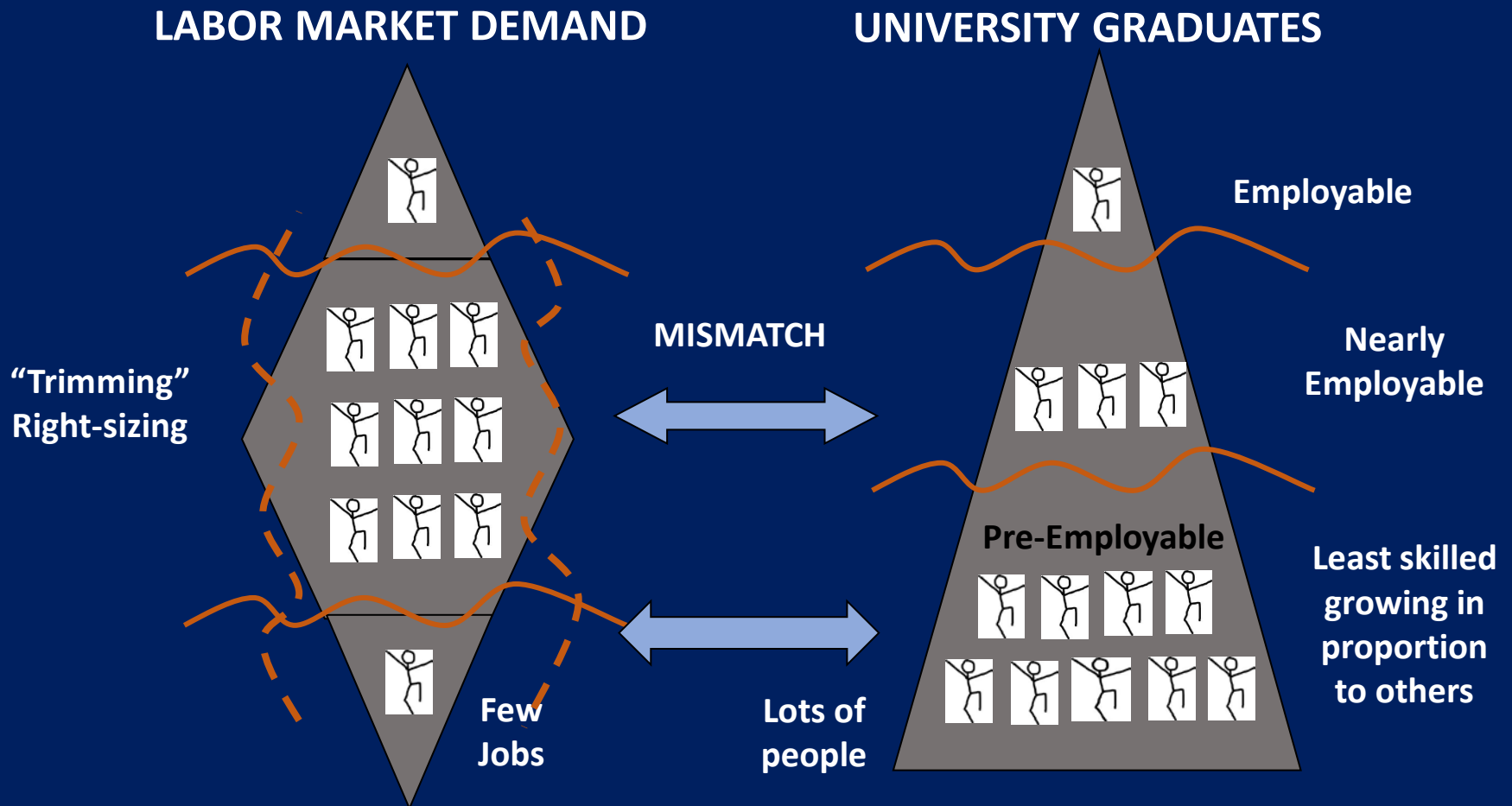
SNAPSHOT – THE GEOMETRY OF THE PROBLEM

THE CHANGING LABOR MARKET FOR UNIVERSITY GRADUATES



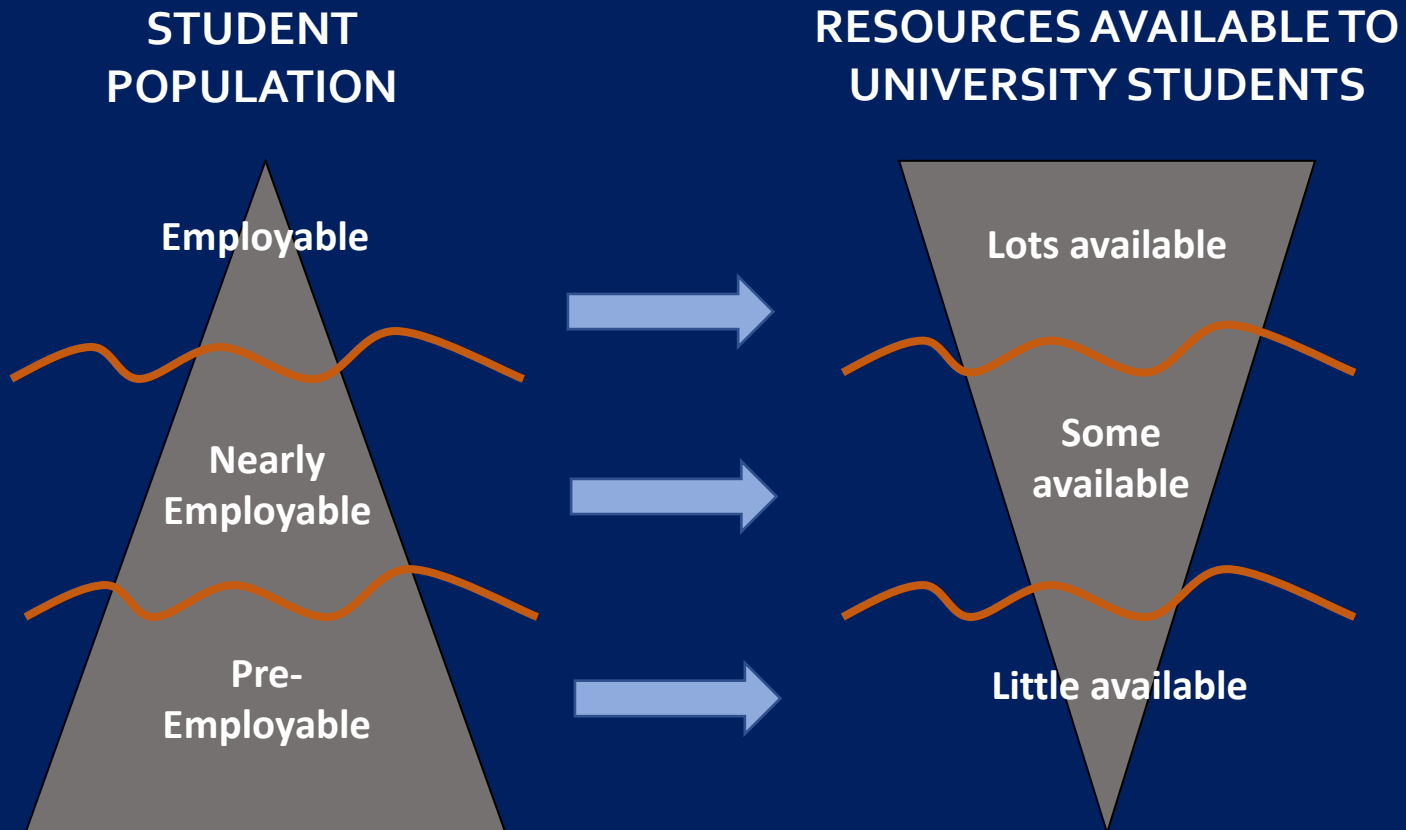
SNAPSHOT – THE GEOMETRY OF THE PROBLEM

THE EMPLOYABILITY GAP: CURRENT



SNAPSHOT – THE GEOMETRY OF THE PROBLEM

THE GREAT MISMATCH

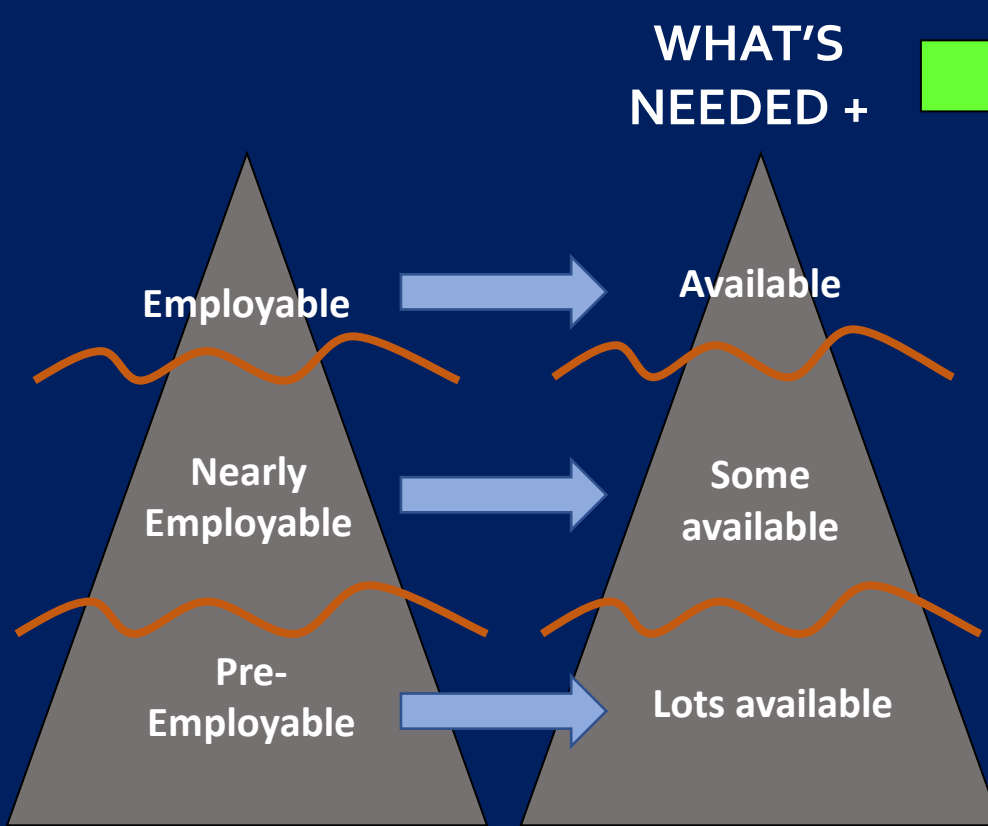


Need to turn the “triangle” on its head!

Meet students, especially women students, where they are and match with transferable life skills competencies throughout their university experience.

SOLVING THE GEOMETRY OF THE PROBLEM

RECALIBRATE THE SUPPLY-DEMAND PORTRAIT: TURN THE TRIANGLE RIGHT SIDE UP – FROM MISMATCH TO REMATCH



- **Functioning Career Development Center** supported by President and employers
- **Flexible and varied career readiness/transferrable life skills** to address a spectrum of individual needs and skill levels and that has the means (through assessment) to identify those needs
- The management capacity to provide **intensive and long-term programming**, with appropriate interim outcomes, for those with the greatest skill gaps
- An **integrated and collaborative approach** to provide an array of employer-sponsored opportunities
- A **graduated sequence of transferrable life skills and hands-on opportunities** extended over time to develop and certify employability for the 21st Century



**CHANGE IS INEVITABLE
UNIVERSITY-EMPLOYER ENAGEMENT IS ESSENTIAL**

HOW CAN WE STRENGTHEN UNIVERSITY-EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT?

HOW?

UNIVERSITY-EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT CAN “TURN THE TRIANGLE RIGHT SIDE UP” FOR A BETTER MATCH AND BRIGHTER FUTURE

- There is a spectrum of roles employers can play in the university ecosystem
- There is a continuum of practice from co-existence to co-investment with varying levels of mutual goal setting and decision making, and outcomes for students and employers

HOW?

SPECTRUM OF ROLES EMPLOYERS CAN PLAY

- Mentors
- Internship Providers
- Apprenticeship Providers
- Curriculum Builders
- Instructors
- Labor Market/Industry Advisers
- Providing Employability Certifications
- Partners in Data-Driven Continuous Improvement
- Provide Jobs for Graduates with Transferable Life Skills Certificates
- And more...

CONTINUUM OF PRACTICE

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE CHARACTERISTICS AND CHALLENGES OF EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT?

“Readiness Factors” make success more likely – these tend to either facilitate or constrain advancement on a “continuum of practice”

READINESS FACTORS

FOR WORKFORCE NAVIGATION, SUSTAINED YOUTH LIVELIHOODS,
AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

KEY FACTORS							RESULT	
SHARED VISION FOR CHANGE	+	CREDIBILITY AND LEGITIMACY OF PARTNERS	+	COMMITMENT TO INVEST IN PARTNERSHIP	+	CORE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT WITH RESOURCES	=	READY FOR CO-INVESTMENT
	+	Credibility and Legitimacy of Partners	+	Commitment to Invest in Partnership	+	Core Leadership and Management with Resources	=	CONFUSION AND NO CASE FOR CO-INVESTMENT
Shared Vision for Change	+		+	Commitment to Invest in Partnership	+	Core Leadership and Management with Resources	=	LITTLE IMPACT, LITTLE LEVERAGE
Shared Vision for Change	+	Credibility and Legitimacy of Partners	+		+	Core Leadership and Management with Resources	=	FRUSTRATION ABOUT LACK OF COMMITMENT
Shared Vision for Change	+	Credibility and Legitimacy of Partners	+	Commitment to Invest in Partnership	+		=	STANDSTILL

IF ONE ELEMENT IS MISSING, THE RESULTS CHANGE.

Adapted by Curnan, S.P. and Hughes, D.M. (2020) from Curnan, S.P. and LaCava, L. (2005). *Learning from Business – Community Partnerships*.

A Cluster Evaluation Report for the Hitachi Foundation Global Corporate Citizenship Initiatives. Washington, DC.

CONTINUUM OF PRACTICE

THE CHARACTERISTICS AND CHALLENGES OF EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT

- No one sector can go it alone when addressing fundamental changes to the existing flawed systems (such as workforce development, education, welfare, and social programs) .
- Credibility and legitimacy of the university and the business partner to speak with authority and become respected sources of information about challenges and solutions.
- Commitment by both partners to invest adequate staff and resources in the partnership with shared values and agreement on their value added.
- Core leadership that can articulate the shared vision and initiative, build a constituency, manage the partnership, garner resources to support and sustain partnership goals, and evaluate progress.

FRAMEWORK FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE UNIVERSITY-EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT FOR ADVANCEMENT

The following are characteristics of effective university-employer engagement:

- Ensuring a good match and building trust before making a commitment.
- Framing shared vision, expectations, outcomes and reciprocal values with clarity.
- Learning the language and culture of partners and co-creating consistent, coherent messages and benchmarks.
- Building relationships and tapping into the power of the personal motivations and core values of individuals and the business or organization.
- Establishing metrics and a results-oriented evaluation and continuous improvement plan at the start of the working relationship.

FRAMEWORK FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

FOR WORKFORCE NAVIGATION, SUSTAINED YOUTH LIVELIHOODS, AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

KEY FACTORS									RESULT	
ENSURING THE MATCH AND BUILDING TRUST	+	FRAMING EXPECTATIONS AND VALUE ADDED	+	LEARNING LANGUAGE AND CULTURE FOR JOINT "OWNERSHIP"	+	BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND TAPPING CORE VALUES AND MOTIVATIONS	+	EVALUATION	=	CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF CO-INVESTMENT
	+	Framing Expectations and Value Added	+	Learning Language and Culture for Joint "Ownership"	+	Building Relationships and Tapping Core Values and Motivations	+	Evaluation	=	FALSE START, POOR SUSTAINABILITY
Ensuring the Match and Building Trust	+		+	Learning Language and Culture for Joint "Ownership"	+	Building Relationships and Tapping Core Values and Motivations	+	Evaluation	=	NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE, LACK OF CLARITY
Ensuring the Match and Building Trust	+	Framing Expectations and Value Added	+		+	Building Relationships and Tapping Core Values and Motivations	+	Evaluation	=	BOGGED DOWN IN JARGON, MISCOMMUNICATION AND RESENTMENT
Ensuring the Match and Building Trust	+	Framing Expectations and Value Added	+	Learning Language and Culture for Joint "Ownership"	+		+	Evaluation	=	LIMITED MEANING AND PRODUCTIVITY
Ensuring the Match and Building Trust	+	Framing Expectations and Value Added	+	Learning Language and Culture for Joint "Ownership"	+	Building Relationships and Tapping Core Values and Motivations	+		=	PLATEAU

IF ONE ELEMENT IS MISSING, THE RESULTS CHANGE.

Adapted by Curran, S.P. and Hughes, D.M. (2020) from Curran, S.P. and LaCava, L. (2005). *Learning from Business – Community Partnerships*.

A Cluster Evaluation Report for the Hitachi Foundation Global Corporate Citizenship Initiatives. Washington, DC.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

SPECTRUM OF ENGAGEMENT

Using the “Spectrum of Engagement: From Co-Existence to Co-Investment,” discuss examples of where and how your university fits

SPECTRUM OF ENGAGEMENT: FROM CO-EXISTENCE TO CO-INVESTMENT

FOR WORKFORCE NAVIGATION, SUSTAINED YOUTH LIVELIHOODS, AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

	Co-Existence	Cooperation	Coordination	Co-Investment
Type of Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goals and roles developed by university and employer separately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short-term transactions meeting immediate objectives for university project (employer funding) Activities of limited, single focus to meet key employer need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded self-interest for both the university and the employer Multi-dimensional project activities—with sense of longer-term benefits to meet employer and university needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive mutual goals and roles Activities planned and implemented on a large scale with long-term vision Value-based and value-added propositions
Effectiveness of Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal Respond to requests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend periodic meetings Task-based communication Updates on tasks in progress Problem-solving focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beginning to learn the language and culture of each of the potential partners Share ideas, “tools of the trade” Set standards for coordinated action Understand supply and demand chains of each potential partner Regularly scheduled meetings for ongoing communication, relationship building and coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing formal and casual communication based on relational assets and earned trust Joint formal communications in newsletters, on websites, trade venues, newspapers

Adapted by Curnan, S.P. and Hughes, D.M. (2020) from Curnan, S.P. and LaCava, L. (2005). *Learning from Business – Community Partnerships*.

A Cluster Evaluation Report for the Hitachi Foundation Global Corporate Citizenship Initiatives. Washington, DC.

SPECTRUM OF ENGAGEMENT: FROM CO-EXISTENCE TO CO-INVESTMENT

FOR WORKFORCE NAVIGATION, SUSTAINED YOUTH LIVELIHOODS, AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

	Co-Existence	Cooperation	Coordination	Co-Investment
Planning & Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Autonomous internal decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project-based planning and decision making by operating staff for both the university and the employer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment in research and development for joint ventures Co-created programs, classes Tactical planning and team decision making for continuous improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared planning and decision making Joint undertaking – develop and implement plans for an array of embedded mutually beneficial programming (in-service training for new hires at university, courses designed for specific industries with employer instructors, internships, apprenticeships, etc.) Strategic objectives are established and results monitored/reported by and for partners Focus on continuous improvement in policy, practice, and outcomes
Amount & Type of Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typically, independent funding streams Little or no common base of human resources & materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate philanthropy to a thankful university beneficiary, i.e. financial help, donation of products/services – often one-time transactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible, easily accessible sharing of resources – human, capital, and material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on organizing resources for sustainability and growth Joint, dedicated investments

Adapted by Curnan, S.P. and Hughes, D.M. (2020) from Curnan, S.P. and LaCava, L. (2005). *Learning from Business – Community Partnerships*.

A Cluster Evaluation Report for the Hitachi Foundation Global Corporate Citizenship Initiatives. Washington, DC.

SPECTRUM OF ENGAGEMENT: FROM CO-EXISTENCE TO CO-INVESTMENT

FOR WORKFORCE NAVIGATION, SUSTAINED YOUTH LIVELIHOODS, AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

	Co-Existence	Cooperation	Coordination	Co-Investment
Commitment/ Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little or no connection to upper levels of management/leadership Point of contact in corporate “giving” office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May participate in one-time events (panel speaker, job fairs, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aware of need for vertical and horizontal integration of staff and leadership of both the employer and university to be successful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Top company and university leaders engaged, knowledgeable, and supportive of the partnership Dedicated staff
Equality of Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employer and university operate on their own and in their own spheres University reluctant to reach out to employer “Culture of power and profit” in private sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University seeks employer assistance Employer “helps” university 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish new value proposition, value exchange/value added dimension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established, formalized relationships (MOUs) Shared responsibility and accountability

Adapted by Curnan, S.P. and Hughes, D.M. (2020) from Curnan, S.P. and LaCava, L. (2005). *Learning from Business – Community Partnerships*.

A Cluster Evaluation Report for the Hitachi Foundation Global Corporate Citizenship Initiatives. Washington, DC.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Given these initial steps for advancing university-employer engagement:

- **How does your university measure up?**
- **Can you identify where your university is on the readiness continuum?**
- **What spectrum of roles do employers play in your university?**
- **Where would you like to be? When?**
- **What do you need in order to increase your likelihood for success?**
- **What capacity building strategies would be helpful to maximize engagement of employers – both for the university and for the business sector?**

ALIGNED **EDUCATION WORKS** RESOURCES

Education Works: Transferable Life Skills Trainers' Guide and Curriculum 2020, University Edition

Education Works: Career Development Center Management Course, University Edition, Lesson 7: “Maximizing Engagement with Employers”

Education Works: Employability Development and Career Readiness Institutional Assessment Rubric, University Edition