

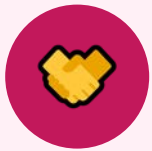
BUILDING BRIDGES

Bold Partnership Strategies That Expand Your Apprenticeship Ecosystem

Bonnie | Director, Center for Business & Industry | Lake Land College

Apprenticeships at Work Convening | Sponsored by ICCB

Let's Start With You



Raise your hand if...

- You've built a partnership from a cold, out-of-the-blue intro
- You've inherited one that was already broken and had to fix it

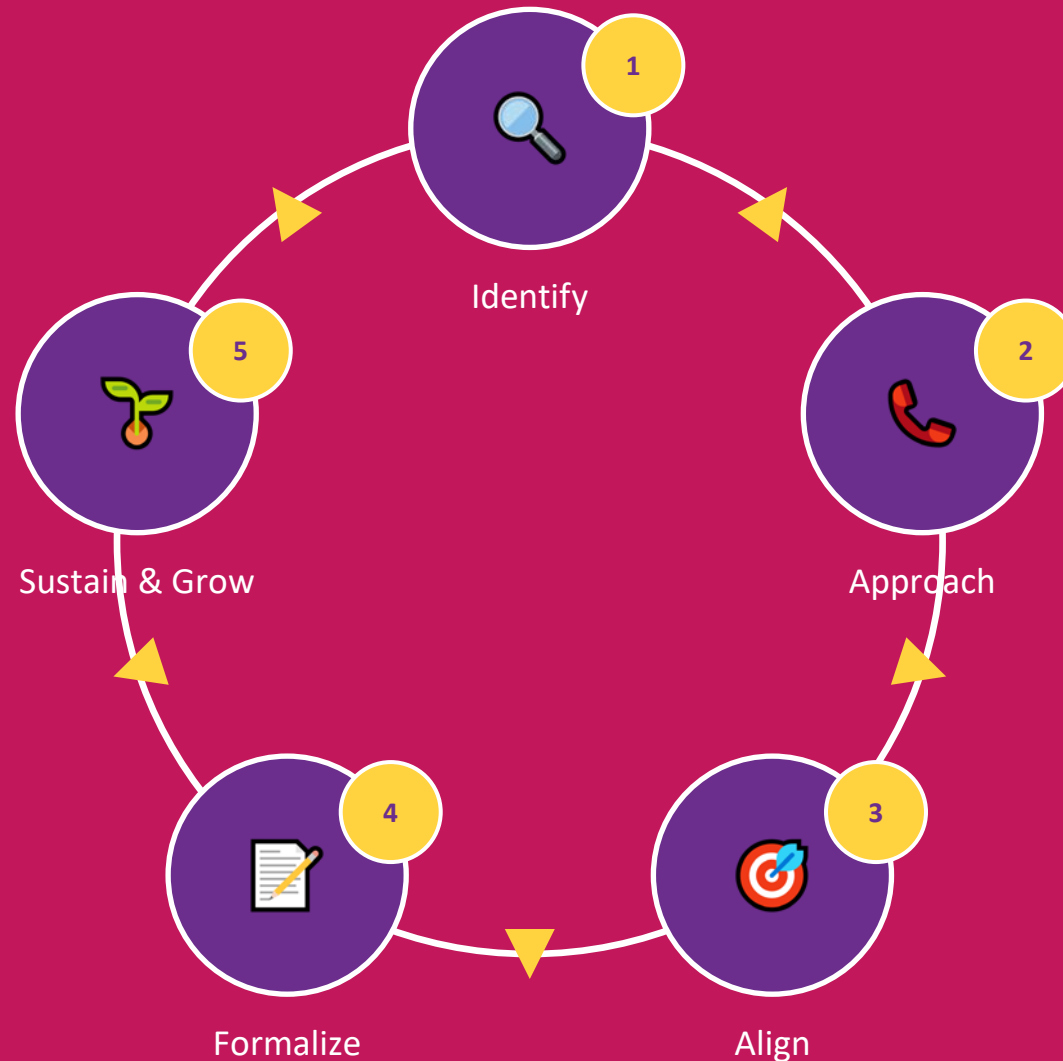
Here's the good news:

This framework works no matter where you're starting.

Cold start or fixer-upper — same five stages, same result: a partnership that lasts.

The Partnership Cycle

A cycle, not a line — your best next partner is often already inside your last one.



Today's Case: Midwest Fabrication



150 employees

Mid-size manufacturer



\$2M expansion

Just announced — growth mode



Skills gap

Growing hole on the production floor



No formal pipeline

Never worked with a college before

We'll walk this one partner through all five stages together — and you'll bring your own along for the ride.

Stage 1: Identify



What's the signal that tells you Midwest Fab is ready — before you ever make contact?

Turn to your neighbor — 60 seconds.

HOW I'D HANDLE IT

Public signals to watch: entry-level roles they can't fill, an expansion announcement, or a warm intro from an existing partner. For Midwest Fab, it's the expansion — that's your opening.

Stage 2: Approach



How do you make first contact — cold call, warm intro, or show up at an event they're attending?

Pair up again — 60 seconds. Which do you pick, and why?

HOW I'D HANDLE IT

Warm intro wins almost every time. For Midwest Fab, that's through a Chamber contact or an existing employer partner who already knows their plant manager.

Stage 3: Align



You're in the room with Midwest Fab. What's the first question you ask them?

60 seconds with your neighbor — what's your opener?

HOW I'D HANDLE IT

Start with: "What does success look like to you in 12 months?" Not "what training do you want." For Midwest Fab: 20 fewer open production roles. Now you're aligned on an outcome, not a catalog.

Stage 4: Formalize



You're aligned. What actually needs to be in writing before you deliver anything?

60 seconds — what's on your must-have list?

HOW I'D HANDLE IT

At minimum: scope, cost, cancellation terms, and ownership if it doesn't work. Also decide the vehicle — registered apprenticeship, contract training, or informal. For Midwest Fab: apprenticeship territory.

Stage 5: Sustain & Grow



The program launched and it's working. What do you do in month six to keep it alive?

60 seconds — what's your move?

HOW I'D HANDLE IT

Scheduled check-ins, not just when something breaks — plus one question: "Who else in your network needs what we just built?" That's the cycle closing back into Identify.

Your Turn: Place Your Own Partner

Think of one real partner — new or ten years old. Where are they on the cycle right now?

1 Identify

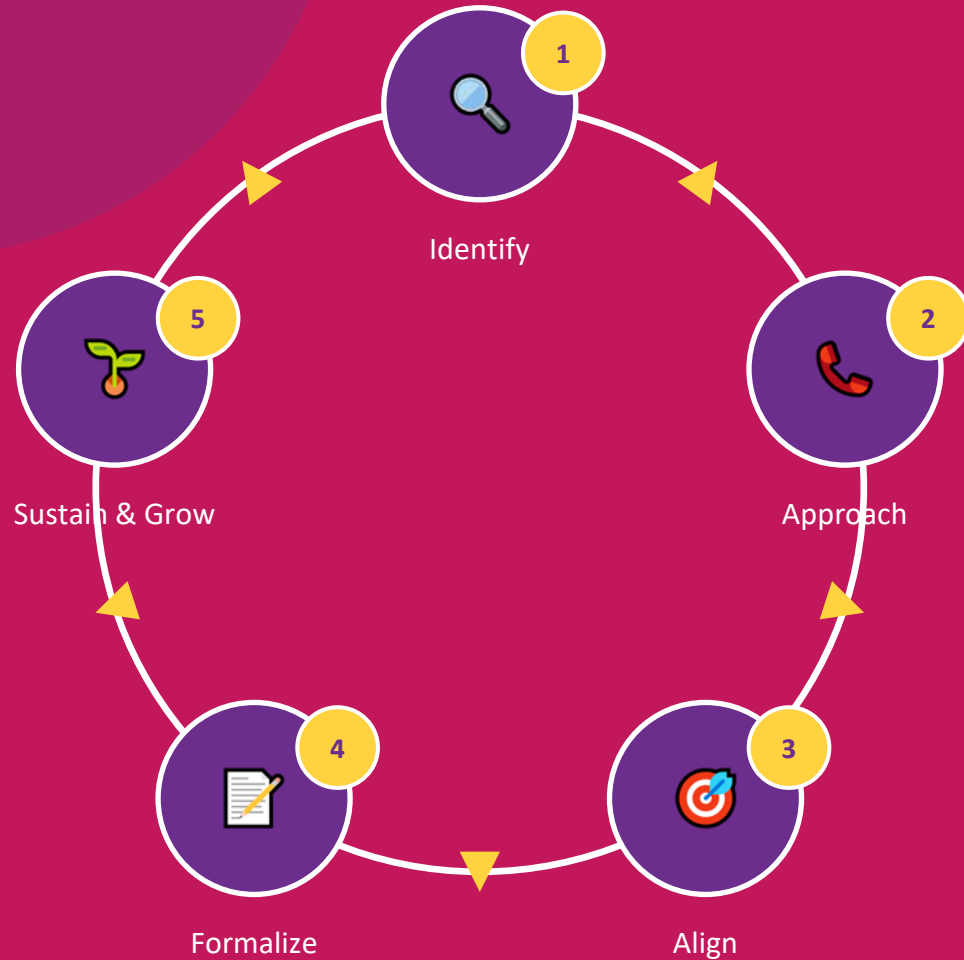
2 Approach

3 Align

4 Formalize

5 Sustain & Grow

2 minutes — silent work, just for you.



Where's Your Partner Stuck?

Would two or three of you share which stage your partner landed on?

Identify → Approach → Align → Formalize → Sustain & Grow

Thank you.

Let's Stay Connected

I'd love to hear how you use this framework — reach out any time.



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The Partnership Cycle

A repeatable framework for building and sustaining partnerships with industry, associations, and CBOs. It's a cycle, not a line — your best next partner is often already inside your existing one.

1 Identify	2 Approach	3 Align	4 Formalize	5 Sustain & Grow
<i>What's the signal that this partner is ready?</i>	<i>How will you make first contact?</i>	<i>What does success look like to them in 12 months?</i>	<i>What needs to be in writing before you deliver anything?</i>	<i>What's your check-in cadence after launch?</i>

Today's Case: Midwest Fabrication

A mid-size manufacturer (150 employees) with a growing skills gap on the production floor, a newly announced \$2M expansion, and no formal training pipeline. We'll walk this composite partner through all five stages — use it as a model, then apply the same thinking to your own partner below.

Your Turn: Place Your Own Partner

Think of one real partner from your own world — brand new or ten years in the making. Use the space below to jot down where they stand at each stage right now, and what your next move might be.

1 Identify	2 Approach	3 Align	4 Formalize	5 Sustain & Grow

Key Takeaways

- The cycle repeats — Sustain & Grow feeds back into Identify. Your best next partner is often inside your current one.
 - Warm intros outperform cold outreach almost every time.
 - Align on outcomes (“what does success look like?”), not a menu of services.
 - Put scope, cost, and cancellation terms in writing before delivering anything.
 - Schedule check-ins after launch — don't wait for something to break.
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Let's Stay Connected

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