



Building Business Partnerships for Global Citizenship Education

Introduction

Since 2018, Bridge 47 consortium partners have been exploring the potential of partnerships with other sectors for advancing the mission of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The partnerships developed ranged from policy makers to academia, from media to health services and from businesses to museums. The partnerships, initiated by Bridge 47, promoted learning about and for sustainable development using a variety of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) methods.

For those GCE practitioners and organisations who have not yet explored the possibilities of cross-sector partnerships, the Bridge 47 publication, *Out of the comfort zone? Global Citizenship Education and Cross-Sector Partnerships for Sustainable Development*, is a good starting point. It presents the opportunities and challenges and includes reflective questions to help readers think critically and practically before engaging in potential partnerships. It also provides case studies of GCE based partnerships with the private sector, among others.

As part of their explorative partnership work, the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) worked with consultancy firm, *Remarkable Partnerships*, who designed and delivered training to Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) on building effective Global Citizenship Education partnerships with the private sector. This

booklet is a summary of the key practical learning points from their training and will be useful for those CSOs that, after some research and reflection, have identified the private sector as having potential to support them in achieving their mission.

What can businesses offer you/the mission of Global Citizenship Education?

The question of what businesses can offer you is largely driven by the question “how can we achieve our mission faster and with greater impact?”. When it comes to Global Citizenship Education, businesses are likely to be able to offer the following:

- **A new audience and wider reach:** companies, in particular large employers, can provide you with access to learners (senior decision makers, employees, suppliers and customers) – all potential active global citizens that you may not have reached otherwise.
- **Programmatic commitment:** the company could pledge their support and commitment to the UN SDGs, starting with embedding sustainable development practices throughout their organization – from supply chain assessment to ensuring all employees have opportunities to learn about issues of justice and

sustainable development through lifelong learning.

- **Skills based volunteering:** their company is likely to have expertise that you could use, whether through pro bono marketing or strategy support, think about what they could help you achieve by offering staff time and skills. By working with sub-groups of the organization to consider global issues, they may empower a greater impact than you could achieve on your own.
- **Technology/innovation:** supporting you to scale your technological solutions – whether through software or innovation teams, could have huge impact.
- **Funding:** by providing a gift or engaging in fundraising they may be able to support your existing, essential GCE work.
- **Increased visibility:** By sharing case studies, key messages and benefits of programmatic commitments, amongst their stakeholders, they may support you to build momentum in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Networks/channels:** consider whether they have introductions that they could make to other companies or influential individuals that could help you achieve your mission.

What can GCE organisations/ practitioners offer businesses?

By identifying what you can offer a business, it can be easier to work out the level of support you can expect in return. Though by no means a comprehensive list, some benefits you could offer a business are listed below:

- **Professional development:** you can provide GCE workshops to staff and senior leaders to help them explore issues of justice and sustainability. See [here](#) an example of the IDEA- Deloitte partnership that did just this. Businesses are becoming increasingly aware of the Sustainable Development Goals and are including SDG actions in their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies and action plans.

- **Employee engagement:** through volunteering activities, ‘lunch and learns’ or CSR days/ weeks.
- **Topic expertise:** if you are looking at a particular area (e.g. gender inequality or climate change), there are likely businesses looking for advice on this.
- **Community engagement:** many businesses may have the same target audience as you, and therefore you will be able to support them in community engagement.
- **Social impact:** you can provide them with case studies that prove they deliver their social purpose and meet their CSR requirements.
- **Increased customer loyalty:** by offering opportunities for customers to engage with your values, they will build their connection to ‘the brand’.

Why being ‘purpose-driven’ is an exciting opportunity for business

As Simon Sinek says in his seminal book ‘Start With Why’, “people don’t buy what you do, they buy why you do it.” As such, it is essential for CSOs and businesses to communicate their purpose to their target audiences. By partnering with businesses, you give them the opportunity to demonstrate their purpose in a more powerful and meaningful way, and the benefits are clear:

- 73% of millennials are prepared to pay higher prices for products that are more sustainable, as are 66% of global consumers (Nielson 2015).
- Unilever’s purpose-led brands are growing 69% faster than the rest of their business and delivering 75% of the company’s growth (Unilever 2019).
- 86% of Gen Y would think about leaving a job if the company they work for does not have an impactful Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy (PWC 2008).

These benefits for businesses are a key reason for them to engage, and a significant way to achieve these is through a business-CSO partnership. The same benefits will transfer over to your CSO – by offering supporters opportunities to engage directly with your purpose and mission, you will build loyalty and achieve your mission faster.

Types of partnership

Business-CSO partnerships come in many shapes and sizes. The Collaboration Continuum below is adapted from Austin and Seitindi’s 2012 research into partnerships, and outlines four different types of partnerships. With this continuum in mind, we see that by being more strategic with your business partnerships, you have the opportunity to achieve your organisation’s mission faster and with greater impact.

Identifying prospects

When looking for companies, we recommend focussing on a qualified list of approximately 10 companies rather than a big, long list of prospects. This enables you to take a more tailored approach and form more valuable partnerships in the long run.

To create your qualified list, we recommend asking the questions below to brainstorm target prospects:

- Who shares our purpose?
- Who has an obvious link to our cause or organization?
- Who shares our target audience?
- Who shares key locations (e.g. countries or cities)?
- Who has the resources to solve our problems?
- Where do we have a contact?
- Who is it realistic to partner with?

THE COLLABORATION CONTINUUM



The ten or so companies that answer the majority of these questions are the best prospects for you to approach. However, do bear in mind that where you have a contact and who shares your purpose are the biggest factors in how successful you will be.

Consider researching and approaching small and medium sized enterprises in your local area as they are likely to have a lot to offer, want to give back to their communities and be less overwhelmed with requests from charities and civil society organisations.

Building your partnership proposition

Your partnership proposition is the opportunity that you're offering to prospective business partners – think of it as a theory of change for both the business and the world, that will help you secure meetings with your top prospects. A strong proposition can make or break a potential partnership, so getting it right is crucial. Your proposition should contain the four following elements:

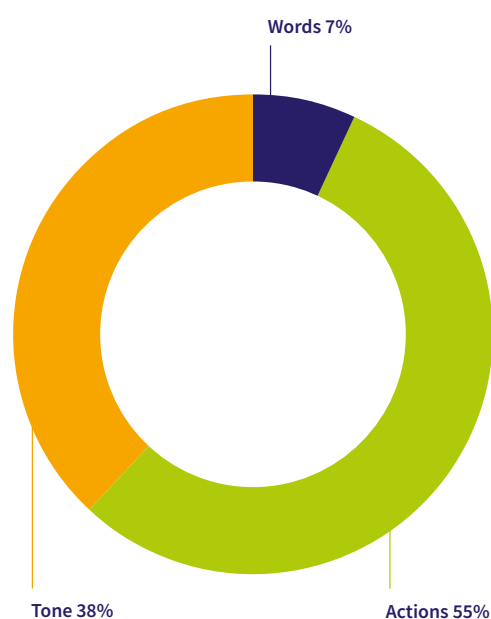
- 1) **Stories and problems:** by explaining the impact your organisation has on an individual level, you are able to engage business decision makers on an emotional level – you can then show them the size of the problem that you need their help to solve.
- 2) **Urgency:** it is vital that you inject urgency into your cause. After all you want businesses to partner with you in an extraordinary way, because their business as usual response will not be enough.
- 3) **Benefits you can offer:** unique reasons why companies should partner with you. For example, 'our partnership opportunity will position your company as a champion of sustainable development.' This ensures your partnership makes commercial, as well as emotional, sense.

- 4) **Partnership activity:** finally, you want ideas that make your partnership offer feel tangible – what will your partnership look like? Whether it's GCE training or a joint campaign, having this nailed down will make your offer feel real.

To identify your partnership activity, it can help to work out what you are hoping to achieve from your partnerships – what you can offer companies and what you are looking for in exchange.

Securing meetings

When we communicate with another person, only 7% of what we take in is from the words that are said. The other 93% comes from the tone in which the words are said (38%) and the body language of the person speaking (55%) – this shows that if we only communicate via email, we are only using 7% of what is available to us. By getting face to face – even if via video call – you give yourself a much stronger chance to influence your target prospect. Therefore, you should aim to secure meetings with each of your target prospects.



If you know someone who works at the company, we recommend you ask them to make the approach to the senior decision maker or manager that you want to meet – this means that you come recommended, and it increases the chance of securing the meeting (and the partnership).

If you don't have a contact, we recommend you contact the decision maker. Start by identifying the shared purpose between your organisations and articulate this in an email or phone call.

Whichever way you make your approach, we recommend you ask for a 30 minute meeting to share a partnership opportunity that you believe is perfect for their business. This is easy to say yes to, will intrigue them, and allows you to build bespoke ideas for each prospect.

Tone of voice

It is important to note that when pursuing partnerships with companies, you should try as much as possible to speak in simple terms. Every CSO and the GCE sector has its own language, acronyms and jargon that can be hard to decode from the outside.

Ensure that you make the emotional case for your cause and make it clear that your partnership will create mutual benefit. You may find it helpful to refer to the Sustainable Development Goals framework or other research to explain your purpose.

By coming with a professional and clear tone of voice, you give yourself the best chance to secure and deliver brilliant meetings. See the Bridge 47 publication on [Tone of Voice](#).

Delivering brilliant meetings

With the meeting secured, it is important to remember that you only get one chance to make a first impression. So, you need to make the most of this opportunity. We recommend you approach this meeting with two key things in mind:

- 1) The goal of your first meeting is to get a second meeting. You don't need to secure the partnership there and then, just ensure their interest in hearing more.
- 2) The business is the 'hero'. This is a 180-degree shift on how you look at things, and it changes everything. The work of your organisation is incredible, but you need the business to come on board to help you achieve your mission: they are the difference you need to achieve your purpose. As such, you need to ensure the meeting is about them and showing the impact they can make, not about you.

With the above in mind, we recommend you keep your first meeting short and inspirational. Tell them a story about an individual affected by your cause, the size of the problem you want to solve and that you can't solve it alone. This will make them engage with your cause emotionally and you can start to build your case by adding the partnership benefits for the business. Of course, continue to keep in mind good GCE practice on images and messages and consider if a 'single' story can give the full picture.

Securing partnerships

The journey from the first meeting to a signed partnership agreement is a marathon not a sprint. This journey can often take between six months and two years. Having done some research into what it takes to make major decisions, Google produced a “7-11-4” framework so you can measure whether a prospect is ready to becoming a partner. This works out as follows:

- 7 hours of ‘dwell time’, where the prospect is thinking about you or engaging with your content
- 11 ‘touch points’, where they have been sent something by you directly and responded.
- 4 ‘mediums’, ensuring your prospect has engaged with you in 4 different ways – e.g. an email, a written report, a phone call and a meeting.

Once a prospect has met each of these metrics, they will be ready to be formally asked to become a partner. We recommend you pitch the partnership to a senior decision maker, then offering to send them a proposal of what the partnership could look like. This will give you the opportunity to clearly lay out the emotional and commercial rationale for your partnership in a strong and powerful document. Then once you have sent the proposal it puts the ball firmly in their court and encourages them to make a decision.

Creating truly collaborative partnerships

In order to be truly equal partners, we recommend that you create your partnership plan as a team – rather than one side pitching their vision to the other. To do this, we recommend bringing key colleagues from both organisations together for a half day workshop, to achieve the following:

- **Clarify vision and objectives:** what would you like the newspapers to say about your partnership in three years’ time?
- **Split into break-out groups on key partnership activity:** pair relevant colleagues (e.g. marketing teams) together to discuss key activities.
- **Groups present back:** prepare an overarching plan
- **Agree next steps:** start making it happen.

Delivering a five-star partnership experience

With the partnership secured, it is important to deliver the best possible partnership experience – this will ensure your partnerships achieve their full potential and give you strong foundations to grow and extend your partnership.

Remarkable Partnerships have identified five key areas to help you deliver a five-star partnership experience:

- 1) **Planning:** ensure that you agree shared objectives for your partnership that clearly state what both organisations want to achieve. It will help to agree who are the key contacts for each organisation and the frequency that you will meet and communicate.
- 2) **Relationships:** CSOs and businesses are fundamentally different organisation, but this is an opportunity as much as a challenge. By truly understanding each other’s organisations, you will create a stronger relationship to maximise your partnership potential.
- 3) **Inspiration:** as we mentioned earlier, telling stories is the best way to create emotional engagement with your cause. Ensure that you show your partner the impact they are having on your beneficiaries to keep them inspired.
- 4) **Delivery:** make sure that you not only deliver on your promises, but practice gratitude throughout the partnership. As you thank individuals that contribute towards the partnerships and celebrate

milestones, you bring those people closer to you and ensure longevity and trust in the partnership.

- 5) **Growth:** it is important to keep refreshing your partnership to ensure that both organisations stay engaged. As such, we recommend that you continue to pitch new ideas and ways to expand your partnership as you go. Try and ensure your partnership engages a wide cross-section of your CSO and the business – for example, if you’re already engaging their employees, think about how their customers could be engaged with the partnership too.

By focusing on these five key areas, your partnerships will flourish, enabling both you and the business to deliver your shared purpose faster and with greater certainty.

Further Information on GCE Partnerships

AKÜ (2020): *Building Cross-Sectoral Cooperation – Estonian Coalition for Sustainable Development.*

Bateman M and Kim J H (n.d.): *Political Leadership for Sustainable Development: Why do the Global Goals Matter to Local Councillors, and Why Do Local Councillors Matter for the Global Goals?*

Bridge 47 (n.d.): *Tone of Voice for Bridge 47 Partnerships.*

Bridge 47 (n.d.2): *Envision 4.7 Policy Paper: Cross-sectoral Cooperation.*

Bridge 47 (n.d.4): *Envision 4.7: Roadmap in Support of SDG Target 4.7.*

EADI (2020): *Building knowledge exchange partnerships - dialogues across Europe.*

Wittig-Ferguson, K., and H-J., Fricke, (2021): *Out of the comfort zone?. Global Citizenship Education and Cross-Sector Partnerships for Sustainable Development.*

Suša R (2019): *Global Citizenship Education (GCE) for Unknown Futures – mapping past and current experiments and debates.*

Young, R (2021): *Global Citizenship Education and the Police: An opportunity for partnership?*

Further GCE publications and research is accessible via the Bridge 47 website:

<https://bridge47.org/resources>



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