Ecosystem Self-Assessment Workbook

A tool for collaborating with partners to understand the current state of your shared ecosystem.

This workbook is designed to be printed out and written on or annotated in a digital collaboration tool like Miro. It is designed to be used with our Ecosystem Self-Assessment + Facilitator’s Guide slide deck—find it at eddesignlab.org/ecosystemsframework
Contents

3-12 **Ecosystem Self-Assessment**
Complete assessment with detailed scale, space to track priority, and question what you do and don’t know.

13-14 **Quick Take Assessment**
The assessment without details and additional inquiry.

15 **Next Steps Statements**
“Mad lib” style exercise to support for your organization, yourself, and your ecosystem identify next steps.

16 **Parking Lot + Next Steps Organizer**
Use the below as a wrap-up of where you and your partners need to go from here.
Ecosystem Self-Assessment

Use the below rubric to draw a circle or “x” on the spectrum where you believe your ecosystem aligns with each element of the future state. Then, write in how much of a priority actualizing this element is to you. As you reflect, consider how you know and what you’re missing.

Future State Element #1

Across our ecosystem, our organizational identities are rooted in opportunities for economic advancement for learners, workers, and citizens.

Not at all:
Partnerships focus on a “what’s in it for me?” mindset and serve to meet the immediate needs of the organization. Regional partnerships are driven by funding goals or external metrics such as institutional rankings or graduation rates.

Somewhat:
Partnerships may originate from a “what’s in it for me mindset” but evolve to understand who is experiencing the widest gap in access, opportunity, and outcome in your region. If possible, partnerships blend and braid funding and identify opportunities to share success outcomes.

We’re There / Close:
Partnerships across our ecosystem center the needs and goals of learners and workers who face the largest barriers to opportunity, access, and outcome. Opportunities and funding is leveraged to focus first on the needs of these community members, even if it requires a delay in meeting the individual goals of an organization.

How do you know?
What specific programs, opportunities, or partnerships influenced your response? Is there data to support your thinking? Who are key stakeholders and decision-makers that influence your understanding of your current state?

What else do you need to know?
Are there data points missing from your analysis? Who might help you understand more?
### Future State Element #2

**Partners across our ecosystem are willing to adapt and accelerate change internally to meet the needs of community, industry, and the economy.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at All</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>We’re There / Close</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all: Partners across our ecosystem show up primarily when mandated. Partners rarely adapt current processes in order to support or expand partnerships.</td>
<td>Somewhat: Partnerships exist locally and rely on personal relationships. Aspirational new partnerships, such as global employers or new technology, are identified.</td>
<td>We’re There / Close: Partners across our ecosystem, particularly those able to leverage influence and resources, are willing to accelerate internal change in order to meet regional economic needs. A willingness to allocate resources, staffing, and design programs centered on meeting the needs of regional economic advancement is communicated and prioritized across partners.</td>
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#### How do you know?

What specific programs, opportunities, or partnerships influenced your response? Is there data to support your thinking? Who are key stakeholders and decision-makers that influence your understanding of your current state?

#### What else do you need to know?

Are there data points missing from your analysis? Who might help you understand more?

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<tr>
<td>1 = Not Really</td>
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<td>5 = Urgent</td>
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Future State Element #3

**Data systems across our ecosystem are shared and democratized.**

- **Not at all:** Data is collected individually by partners, if at all. Data is often unreliable and undefined. It is not shared, evaluated, or used to inform decision-making across partners.

- **Somewhat:** Data is collected by all partners, and, where possible, data reports are shared to inform understanding of needs. Data systems are independent of one another and communicating data requires staffing capacity and the potential for human error.

- **We’re There / Close:** Data systems are shared and democratized across partners, meaning that everybody has access to data and there are no gatekeepers that create a bottleneck at the gateway to the data. Data is used to inform decision-making and set measurable outcomes that are shared across the ecosystem. There is access to and transparency of this data to all, including learners and the greater community.

**How do you know?**
What specific programs, opportunities, or partnerships influenced your response? Is there data to support your thinking? Who are key stakeholders and decision-makers that influence your understanding of your current state?

**What else do you need to know?**
Are there data points missing from your analysis? Who might help you understand more?

Priority?
1 = Not Really
5 = Urgent
Future State Element #4

Funding across our ecosystem is long-term and awarded for shared outcomes and metrics. Funding recognizes the contributions of multiple partners across the ecosystem.

Not at all: Partners across a region compete for the same funding opportunities and often duplicate efforts. Shared proposals and blended funding is rarely an option.

Somewhat: Partners submit shared funding proposals, but funding is transactional and program-specific.

We’re There / Close: Funding is long-term and shared across partners to reach collective outcomes and publicly shared metrics aligned to regional economic advancement. There is an intermediary or functioning governance board that supports equitable funding across partners, and funders incentivize collaboration.

How do you know?
What specific programs, opportunities, or partnerships influenced your response? Is there data to support your thinking? Who are key stakeholders and decision-makers that influence your understanding of your current state?

What else do you need to know?
Are there data points missing from your analysis? Who might help you understand more?

Priority?
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Future State Element #5

Partners across our ecosystem share an understanding of equity and engage communities as co-creators.

Not at all:
Ecosystem partners do not consider equity, nor do they prioritize services that support populations and people who are and have been historically marginalized in program design or evaluation. Learners or workers who are served by your programs are not consulted in decision-making or development of these offerings (designing for).

Somewhat:
Population-specific services serving marginalized populations (including but not limited to serving Black, Indigenous, People of Color, re-entry communities, and opportunity youth) inform programs and approaches, but partnerships are transactional and time-bound. A shared definition of equity does not exist across partners.

We’re There / Close:
Regional ecosystems are grounded in a shared understanding of equity and leverage the expertise of organizations led by and working with marginalized populations in co-design. You actively consult and work with those that interact with and are served by your programming or services (designing with). You regularly seek to understand the experiences and perspectives of your region, and value them as experts.

How do you know?
What specific programs, opportunities, or partnerships influenced your response? Is there data to support your thinking? Who are key stakeholders and decision-makers that influence your understanding of your current state?

What else do you need to know?
Are there data points missing from your analysis? Who might help you understand more?

Priority?
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### Future State Element #6

**Partnerships across our ecosystems center the needs of the population most negatively impacted by regional education and workforce barriers.**

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<td><strong>Not at all:</strong> Partnerships are driven by local politics, existing relationships, and are only responsive to immediate needs. Organization hierarchy impacts the majority of partnership decision-making.</td>
<td><strong>Somewhat:</strong> Partners individually have an understanding of populations they strive to serve better, but are not consistent or specific in strategies to support this population.</td>
<td><strong>We’re There / Close:</strong> Ecosystem partners are aligned across a shared vision of regional economic advancement and social mobility. Partners have reviewed data to identify populations most negatively impacted by education and workforce misalignment, and prioritize strategies to support this population. Open feedback channels exist between your organization and the folks you’ve identified who could be better served.</td>
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### How do you know?
What specific programs, opportunities, or partnerships influenced your response? Is there data to support your thinking? Who are key stakeholders and decision-makers that influence your understanding of your current state?

### What else do you need to know?
Are there data points missing from your analysis? Who might help you understand more?
Future State Element #7

Partners across our ecosystem share a clear, documented value proposition that incentivizes collaboration.

Not at all:
A clear value proposition to collaborate is not communicated. You and your ecosystem partner do not track impact.

Somewhat:
A clear business case is made, and a value proposition is understood by some members of your ecosystem, but not understood by all. The value proposition that is developed may not reflect the perspectives and drivers of all partners.

We’re There / Close:
All partners within a regional ecosystem understand the value proposition for a systems-level approach to supporting new majority learners. When operationalized, the approach is rooted in a collective vision for economic advancement.

Priority?
1 = Not Really
5 = Urgent

How do you know?
What specific programs, opportunities, or partnerships influenced your response? Is there data to support your thinking? Who are key stakeholders and decision-makers that influence your understanding of your current state?

What else do you need to know?
Are there data points missing from your analysis? Who might help you understand more?
Future State Element #8

Partners across our ecosystem collectively inform policy.

Not at all:
Partnerships with state and regional policymakers result in transactional or reactive funding to meet a current need or crisis. Partners do not see an ability to influence policy and do not seek to inform policy decisions.

Somewhat:
Partners across a regional ecosystem aspire to strengthen partnerships with policy makers at the local, state, and federal levels. Partners actively seek opportunities to share impact with policy makers. There is shared understanding across partners on how this policy affects community members.

We’re There / Close:
Regional ecosystems collectively inform state policy, federal policy, and national philanthropic investments. Regional ecosystems use shared metrics and outcomes to collectively advocate for transformative funding and policy changes that support collective outcomes for economic mobility of learners. Learners, workers, and community members are engaged in what to advocate for.

How do you know?
What specific programs, opportunities, or partnerships influenced your response? Is there data to support your thinking? Who are key stakeholders and decision-makers that influence your understanding of your current state?

What else do you need to know?
Are there data points missing from your analysis? Who might help you understand more?

Priority?
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Across our ecosystem, long-term investments are made to cultivate a culture of innovation.

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<td>Not at All:</td>
<td>Innovation, and the aligned practices that enable partners to adapt to the evolving needs of regional economic development, is poorly funded, if funded at all. Innovation is not embedded across roles and functions, nor is it considered accessible, relevant, and feasible to stakeholders across the regional ecosystem.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Somewhat:</td>
<td>Some partners have a process and staffing structure that supports innovative practices, but access to participate is limited. Resources are rarely dedicated to training towards innovation, nor is there a culture that supports risk and failure for all stakeholders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>We’re There / Close:</td>
<td>Consistent and long-term investments are made to institutionalize a culture of innovation and are readily available to staff, faculty, partners, and learners. Innovation is core to training, embedded in job descriptions, and part of the evaluation processes. Stakeholders, colleagues, and partners are rewarded for risks instead of for successes.</td>
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**How do you know?**
What specific programs, opportunities, or partnerships influenced your response? Is there data to support your thinking? Who are key stakeholders and decision-makers that influence your understanding of your current state?

**What else do you need to know?**
Are there data points missing from your analysis? Who might help you understand more?
Future State Element #10

Across our ecosystem, partnerships create opportunities for lifelong learning and upskilling.

Priority?
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<td>Partnerships have remained the same for many years. New partners, particularly those representing emerging technology, non-traditional education approaches, and industry are rarely invited to partner with longstanding regional institutions.</td>
<td>Ecosystems aspire to welcome new partners to the conversation but there is no structure to identify the needs of new partners or onboard them. Certain partners have more control than others regarding who is invited to the table.</td>
<td>Higher education partnerships are rooted in creating opportunities for lifelong learning and reskilling. Higher education leaders actively seek to partner with online learning, adult education and training, edtech, and employers to develop permeable pathways across work and learning.</td>
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How do you know?
What specific programs, opportunities, or partnerships influenced your response? Is there data to support your thinking? Who are key stakeholders and decision-makers that influence your understanding of your current state?

What else do you need to know?
Are there data points missing from your analysis? Who might help you understand more?
Ecosystem Self-Assessment 1/2 (Quick Take)

For each element of the future state, draw a circle or “x” on the spectrum where you believe your ecosystem is currently. Then, write in how much of a priority actualizing this element is to you.

**Future State Element #1**

Across our ecosystem, our organizational identities are rooted in opportunities for economic advancement for learners, workers, and citizens.

- [ ] Not at All
- [ ] Somewhat
- [ ] We’re There / Close

**Priority?**
1 = Not Really
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**Future State Element #2**

Partners across our ecosystem are willing to adapt and accelerate change internally to meet the needs of community, industry, and the economy.

- [ ] Not at All
- [ ] Somewhat
- [ ] We’re There / Close

**Priority?**
1 = Not Really
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**Future State Element #3**

Data systems across our ecosystem are shared and democratized.

- [ ] Not at All
- [ ] Somewhat
- [ ] We’re There / Close

**Priority?**
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**Future State Element #4**

Funding across our ecosystem is long-term and awarded for shared outcomes and metrics. Funding recognizes the contributions of multiple partners across the ecosystem.

- [ ] Not at All
- [ ] Somewhat
- [ ] We’re There / Close

**Priority?**
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**Future State Element #5**

Partners across our ecosystem share an understanding of equity and engage communities as co-creators.

- [ ] Not at All
- [ ] Somewhat
- [ ] We’re There / Close

**Priority?**
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Find the other 5 elements on page 3. →
Ecosystem Self-Assessment 2/2

Future State Element #1

Partnerships across our ecosystems center the needs of the population most negatively impacted by regional education and workforce barriers.

Priority?
1 = Not Really
5 = Urgent

Future State Element #2

Partners across our ecosystem share a clear, documented value proposition that incentivizes collaboration.

Priority?
1 = Not Really
5 = Urgent

Future State Element #3

Partners across our ecosystem collectively inform policy.

Priority?
1 = Not Really
5 = Urgent

Future State Element #4

Across our ecosystem, long-term investments are made to cultivate a culture of innovation.

Priority?
1 = Not Really
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Future State Element #5

Across our ecosystem, partnerships create opportunities for lifelong learning and upskilling.

Priority?
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Next Steps
Below are three “mad libs” to help you and your team identify next steps.
Fill in each: one for your organization, one for yourself, and one for your ecosystem.

#1 Organization

Within the next 30 days ____________________________ commits to ____________________________

______________________________

Tangible Action

which will support in addressing ____________________________

Experience of People Most Affected

and support our efforts in ____________________________

Future State Element

#2 Individual

As an individual contributing to our ecosystem, I, ____________________________, commit to ____________________________

Your Name

beginning to/enhancing my efforts to ____________________________

Tangible Action

in order to support our efforts to ____________________________

Future State Element

As an individual hoping to support our ecosystem, I commit to rethinking/reconsiderring ____________________________ in order to change/reduce ____________________________

Something You Do

An Unintended Negative Outcome

#3 Ecosystem

Within the next 30 days ____________________________ commits to ____________________________

Your Region’s Ecosystem

______________________________

Collective Action

which will support in addressing ____________________________

Experience of People Most Affected

and support our efforts in ____________________________

Future State Element
Parking Lot + Next Steps Organizer
Use the below as a wrap-up of where you and your partners need to go from here.

**Whose voices are missing?**
What other stakeholders do you need to align with?

**What do we need to better understand?**
What research needs to come next?

**What questions do we still have?**
What questions do you need to address and explore in your next conversation?