**Talking Points for Recruiting Business Partners**

Convincing potential business partners to get involved with your NAF academies is all about having the right messages at your fingertips. By using clear, informative, and compelling language that is geared towards your target audience’s interests and needs, you can gain supporters and provide more opportunities to students. Use the messages below in your conversations with business partners.

**What is NAF?**

NAF solves some of the biggest challenges facing education and the economy by bringing education, business, and community leaders together to transform the high school experience.

NAF is a national network of education, business, and community leaders who work together to ensure high school students are college, career, and future ready. NAF’s educational design ignites students’ passion for learning and gives businesses the opportunity to shape America’s future workforce by transforming the learning environment to include STEM infused industry-specific curricula and work-based learning experiences, including internships.

**How do NAF academies partner with businesses?**

There are many ways to get involved and support NAF academies, including some with a higher level of time commitment and others with a lower level of time commitment. Examples of these are:

* **Join an advisory board:** Advisory boards provide a critical bridge to industry by collaborating with educators to inform curricula and provide, identify, and organize work-based learning activities. This requires a higher level time commitment, however as an Advisory Board member, you can directly impact the academy by:
* Providing academy teachers with industry standards and practices to ensure classroom instruction is current
* Assist students with classroom projects and potentially serve as a judge of student work
* Providing academy students with a sequence of work-based learning experiences, including paid internships
* Serving as advocates for the academy and recruit other business leaders to the advisory board
* Providing and soliciting from the community financial support to ensure academy sustainability
* **Participate or host a work-based learning activity:** Work-based learning activities provide students with the opportunity to learn from business professionals and gain exposure to the workplace. Business partners may host a tour of their offices, participate in a career fair, host job shadows, guest speak in the classroom, hold resume writing workshops, or even participate in mock interview events. These efforts involve a lower level of time commitment but have tremendous impact on students.
* **Host an intern:** Paid internships are the culminating experience for NAF students and are designed to provide value to the employer. NAF strives for all academy students to have a paid internship while in high school and this is a requirement for students to graduate NAFTrack Certified. Once certified students are eligible for NAFTrack Certified Hiring, a promise from some of the nation’s top companies to give special consideration to NAFTrack Certified applicants for job opportunities.
  + **Why paid internships?** 
    - Paid internships mirror the real-world work place.
    - When an internship is paid, employers develop meaningful, structured learning experiences complete with assignments that provide value and allow the student to see their contribution to the company.
    - Paid internships motivate students to learn, work hard, and develop career and post-secondary goals.
    - [Research shows](http://blogs.wsj.com/economics/2016/07/06/paid-interns-get-more-job-offers-higher-salaries-than-unpaid-peers/) that shows that paid interns get more job offers and earn higher starting salaries than their unpaid peers.
    - [Research shows](http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/05/05/study-suggests-college-graduates-benefit-more-from-paid-internships) students from lower-income backgrounds are less likely to land a paid internship, which contributes - both in the short and long run - to the widening income inequality gap. In order to fill the workforce pipeline with highly skilled and diverse talent, we need to maximize the opportunities available to our largely underserved student population. Ultimately your business, the workforce, and the economy will be stronger for it.
    - Employers can observe the emerging work ethic and may even find their next full-time hire, ultimately saving in recruitment and headhunting costs.
    - And by paying them, companies gain interns with greater flexibility because they aren’t limited to students who can only work a sparse five hours per week in between their *paid* part-time jobs. That means: They’ll have more time to work for the company offering a paid internship.

**Why do NAF academies partner with businesses?**

Business partners are essential to the NAF design. They provide students with authentic work-based learning experiences and provide academy leaders with a critical bridge to industry. Partnerships with local businesses give students the opportunity to build relationships with mentors early and learn from successful adults.

**Why does this matter to business?**

* For industries struggling to fill positions in their companies with skilled and diverse employees, NAF academies work with companies to align high school education with future workforce needs, creating a talent pipeline and a pool of future workers.
* In the United States, job forecasts indicate that upwards of 65% of all future employment opportunities will require some post-secondary, be it a 4-year degree, master’s degree or technical or job specific training. Yet we still live in a country where nearly 1 in 5 students don’t graduate from high school.
* As the global economic landscape shifts, Americans continue to fall behind in developing the skills needed to compete in the modern workforce. It is becoming increasingly evident that it is not an employment problem, but an education problem.
* Businesses have limited access to a diverse, well-educated, future ready workforce.
* An unprepared workforce hinders America’s ability to compete in a global marketplace.
* When education and business work together, we can close the skills gap and decrease the high school dropout rate.
* The solution lies in bridging the gap between high school education and successful careers by providing young people access to a network of professionals, curriculum applicable to the working world, and work-based learning experiences.

**What are the benefits to business partners?**

NAF enables business people to play an active role in developing their future workforce by shaping talent in high school.

* Create a pool of skilled and motivated potential employees
* Improve employee retention and morale
* Lower recruitment and training costs by developing future employees local to the company
* Generate positive publicity in the community and increase exposure in the market served by the company
* Enhance capacity to manage a diverse workforce
* Increase interest in the company’s industry by inspiring the future workforce
* Meet a corporate social responsibility or employee engagement pledge
* Provide an opportunity for employees to use their professional skills to benefit the community

**Why NAF**

* An individual can make a difference in the lives of our future leaders by leveraging the power of the NAF Network.
* The return on investment is high. The majority of NAF students are minorities living below or near the poverty line who don’t have mentors in their lives to ignite their passion for learning or expose them to the vast career opportunities available to them. Schools and companies that work with NAF are able to open countless doors for students who never even knew they existed.
* By working with NAF your company will be at the forefront of workforce development, recruiting diverse talent with a solid foundation in hard and soft skills. In fact, through NAFTrack Certified Hiring, many top global companies have committed to give special consideration to NAFTrack certified graduates.