

Pitching Your Academy

Engaging Business Partners



As members of the NAF network, we're aware that today's high school students are tomorrow's leaders, innovators, and entrepreneurs. However, potential employer partners may not be so it's up to you to help them see. Here are the recommended steps to take to effectively pitch your academy to potential business partners:

Meet the business partner in person.

The power of personal relationships in partnership development cannot be overstated. Meeting with potential business partners in person will build a stronger relationship from the start. Instead, call to invite the potential business partner to a 20-minute face-to-face or virtual meeting in a comfortable, informal setting. If possible, bring students or an advisory board member to the meeting. The Guide to Engaging Employers can help you inquire, inform, and inspire during the conversation.

Bring the right materials.

Come prepared to the meeting with:

- Academy data, program overview, and advisory board marketing materials
- [NAF Academy Theme Overview](#) & [Brand Resources](#)
- Partner Involvement Interest Survey
- Benefits to Partnering with a NAF Academy

Make the case.

Partnering with NAF academies has benefits for everyone involved. Be sure to outline these benefits from the partner's perspective, but it's also important they understand the tremendous impact they can have on students and the community.

Assess interest and deliver a clear "ask."

As simple as it sounds, be sure to **clearly ask** the potential business partner to engage with the academy in the way that best suits their self-interest and/or specific need of the academy. This requires some research on the partner prior to your meeting. It's also important to understand and listen to their needs. During your meeting, ask about the following:

- Who would need to approve engaging with your academy?
- Who else in the organization or their networks might be interested or suited to working with your academy?
- Can they make an introduction on your behalf to the appropriate person?

Engaging with students is what typically seals the deal for new partners, so use the opportunity to ask the potential business partner to volunteer in an upcoming work-based learning experience, like guest speaking.

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Take it slow.

Partnerships develop along a continuum parallel to the work-based learning continuum. In the same way 9th grade students aren't yet prepared for the paid internship experience, **avoid asking a new partner to host an internship**. NAF has found that academies that are able to place 100% of students in paid internships achieve this by engaging partners through the work-based learning over time – developing a sustainable relationship.

Close the sale.

Wrap up the meeting with a clear call to action. If more time or information is needed to decide, have potential partners attend the next advisory board meeting as an observer.

Don't take "no" for an answer! If a person was interested enough to agree to a meeting, you can find some way for them to partner with the academy. Encourage engagement at any level and the partnership can build over time.

Follow up.

Send a thank you letter the day following your in-person meeting with a new partner. Even better, ask the student or advisory board member who attended the meeting with you to send a thank you letter, reiterating the clear call to action discussed during the meeting, including the logistical details for the engagement activity to which your new partner committed.