A top-down view of a desk with a laptop, coffee, flowers, and notebooks. The scene is dimly lit, with a soft glow from a laptop screen and a small candle. A person's hands are visible typing on the laptop. A bouquet of pink roses sits on the desk. A coffee cup with a lid is in the upper left. A notebook with a blue pencil is in the lower right. A small container with the word 'Flourish' is also visible. The overall mood is calm and focused.

# MISSION-ALIGNED STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS WORKBOOK

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Identify, Form, and Cultivate

CHRISTA B. DOWNEY

# SESSION OVERVIEW

We offer you four stages to cultivating mission-aligned strategic partnerships for the greatest impact and results.

## **Map:**

Clarify your company vision, mission, goals, and partnership needs

## **Identify:**

Understanding Strategic Partnerships

## **Form:**

Building a Strong Partnership

## **Cultivate:**

Nurturing Long-Term Success



# MAP

## CLARIFYING YOUR COMPANY VISION, MISSION, GOALS, AND PARTNERSHIP NEEDS

What are you creating? It's difficult to envision how to form partnerships if you are not entirely clear on what you are building and why. If you don't have clearly defined vision and mission statements, you might skip this section and jump right to Identify.

### CHALLENGE

#### Question 1

What is the problem/challenge you're trying to solve for?

#### Question 2

Why is this a problem?

#### Question 3

What is the problem with not addressing it?

#### Question 4

How have earlier attempts to solve this problem fallen short?

#### Question 5

What resources are needed for an innovative and effective solution?

# MAP

## CLARIFYING YOUR COMPANY VISION, MISSION, GOALS, AND PARTNERSHIP NEEDS

### IMPACT

#### Question 1

What does it look like when this problem is solved?

#### Question 2

How is the world different?

#### Question 3

What are the ripple effects?

### VISION

What is my **BOLD** vision for when this problem is solved?

### BOLDER?

### BOLDEST?

# MAP

## CLARIFYING YOUR COMPANY VISION, MISSION, GOALS, AND PARTNERSHIP NEEDS

### MISSION

#### Question 1

What do I see as my role/my organization's role in solving this?

#### Question 2

Why me/us?

#### Question 3

What core values guide me/us?

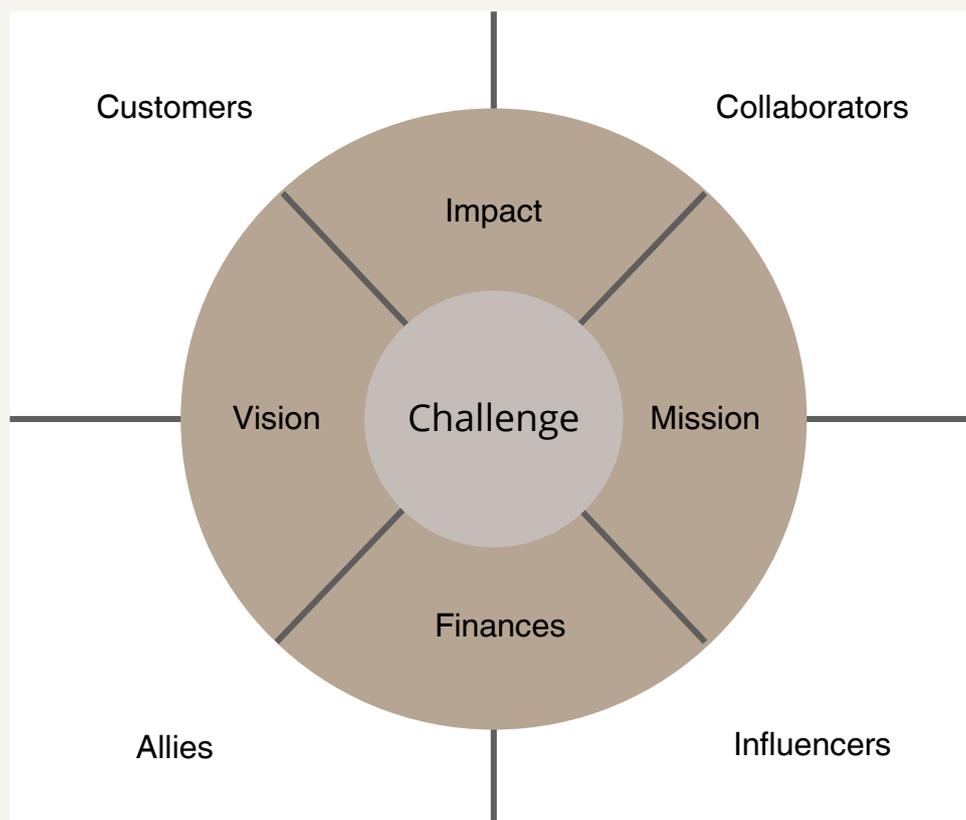
#### Question 4

What skills, knowledge, resources, and experiences do I/we bring?

# TYPE OF PARTNERSHIPS

Who are potential partners? Start with what you know. As you speak with people and learn more, revisit this and adjust as needed.

Here are four angles for identifying people you can engage to help you clarify your direction, create effective partnerships, and set the foundation for building your business for maximum impact and results.



**Collaborators** bring complementary expertise and fresh perspectives, working together on projects, research, or problem-solving to enhance innovation and execution.

**Allies** are mission-aligned organizations or individuals who support common goals, advocate for shared causes, and create strategic advantages through mutual backing.

**Customers/Clients** are the foundation of any business, offering valuable feedback, revenue, and brand loyalty. Engaging with them beyond transactions fosters community and long-term trust.

**Influencers** amplify brand awareness and credibility, leveraging their platforms to reach targeted audiences, spark conversations, and drive engagement through authentic storytelling.

# IDENTIFY

## CUSTOMERS/CLIENTS

Customers are those who pay for your product or service. These are the people who will feel the greatest impact from your work. It's important to take time to really listen to what they have to say. Customer discovery is foundational for identifying market fit. Once you've identified potential customers, you can ask:

### Question 1

What do they see as challenges?



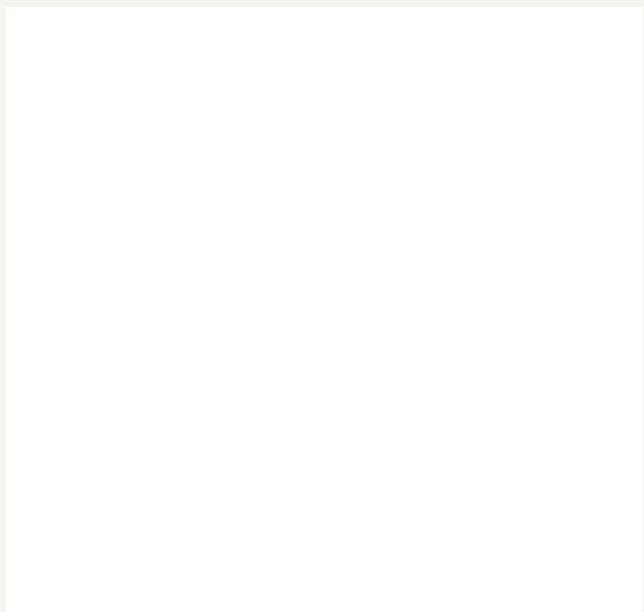
### Question 2

What have they tried already?



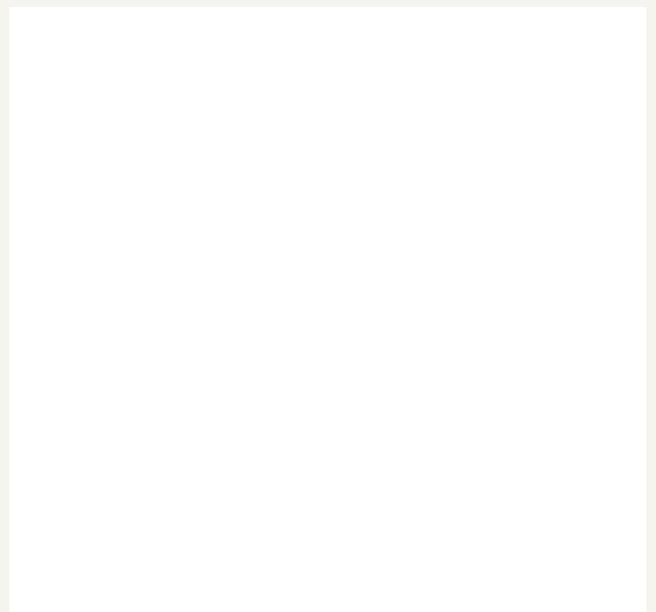
### Question 3

What do they see as possibilities?



### Question 4

Who else faces this challenge?  
Who else should we speak with?



# MAKE A LIST OF... CUSTOMERS/CLIENTS

Make a list of potential customers you might talk with to learn more about their challenges and needs. If you struggle to name individuals, this might be one of your asks for your network. Help them help you by describing your potential customers.



# IDENTIFY ALLIES

Allies believe in you or your vision. They are likely driven by similar values and have a complementary vision to yours. Plan to both learn from them and share your mission. This might include co-branding partnerships and nonprofit collaborations. Some of these allies may become collaborators for things like distribution deals, tech integrations, or affiliate programs.

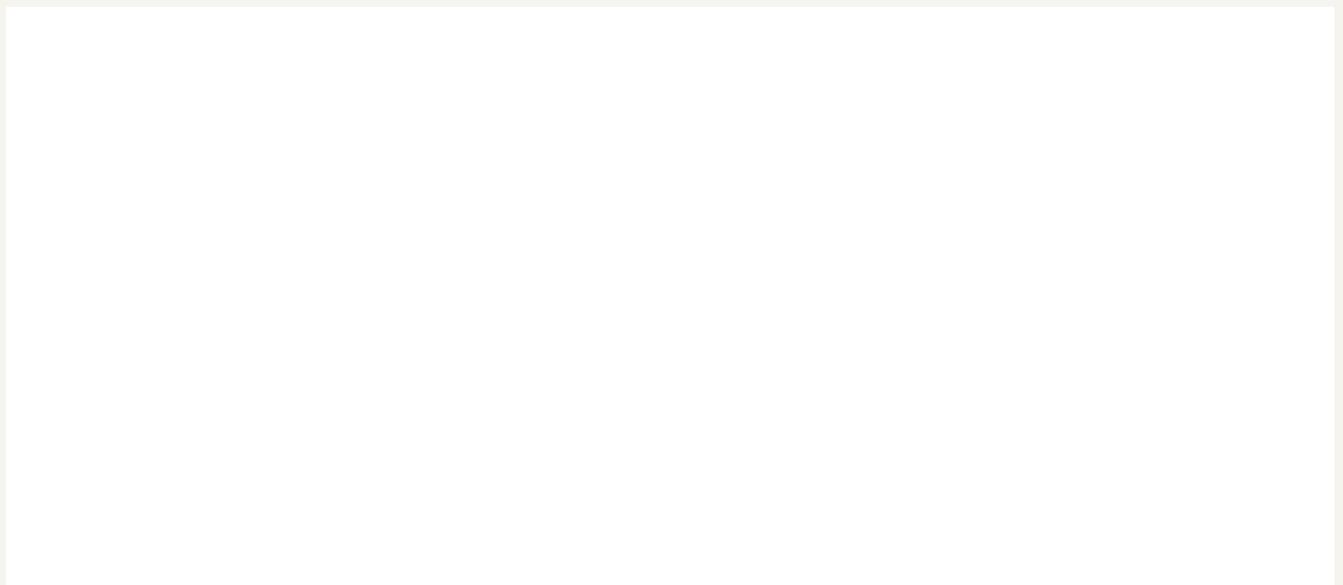
## Question 1

What else do they see as problems?



## Question 2

What else do they see as possibilities?



# MAKE A LIST OF... ALLIES

Make a list of potential allies you might talk with to learn more about their vision and the work they are doing. Include individuals, organizations, or a description of what people you think have an aligned vision.

# IDENTIFY

## COLLABORATORS

Collaborators can help you even though they may not yet understand the value of what you are doing. This could include your suppliers, distributors, manufacturers, professional or community organizations, or anyone else who is not your customer, not yet an ally, but has a complementary interest or resource. Ask yourself:

### Question 1

What skills, resources, knowledge, and experience do you need to tap into in order to reach your vision?

### Question 2

Who has these and how might you connect with them?

### Question 3

How are you hoping they might help?

# IDENTIFY

## COLLABORATORS

### Question 4

What might be their incentive for collaborating?

### Question 5

What do you have to offer?

### Question 6

How do these collaborators work? What is important to them?

### Question 7

Do they have standard procedures for partners, like an application or bidding process?

# MAKE A LIST OF... COLLABORATORS

Collaborators can help you even though they may not yet understand the value of what you are doing. This could include your suppliers, distributors, manufacturers, professional or community organizations

A large, empty white rectangular box intended for listing collaborators. It occupies the central portion of the page, providing a space for the user to write down names and details of potential partners.

# IDENTIFY

## INFLUENCERS

Influencers have power and voice (e.g. media, policy-makers, lobbyists). These are people who can help spread the word about the challenge at hand and what you are doing to make an impact. These influencers may care about your customer base, have a complementary vision, or they may simply believe in your vision. Start by sharing the problem as you see it, ask for their perspective, then share your plans. Ask yourself:

### Question 1

Who needs to know what you are doing?



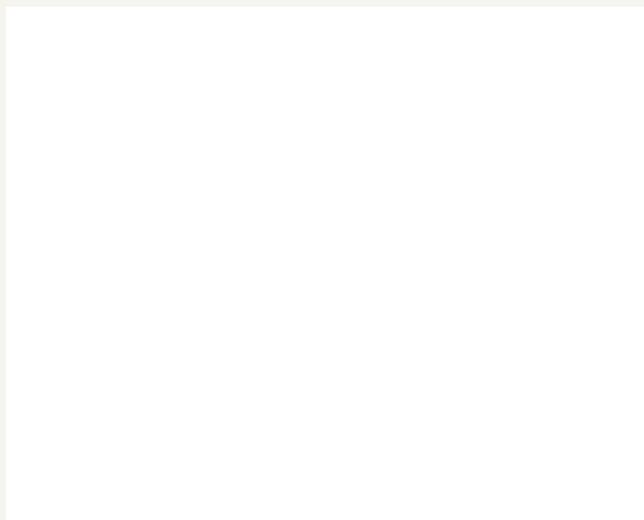
### Question 2

Who has power and voice?



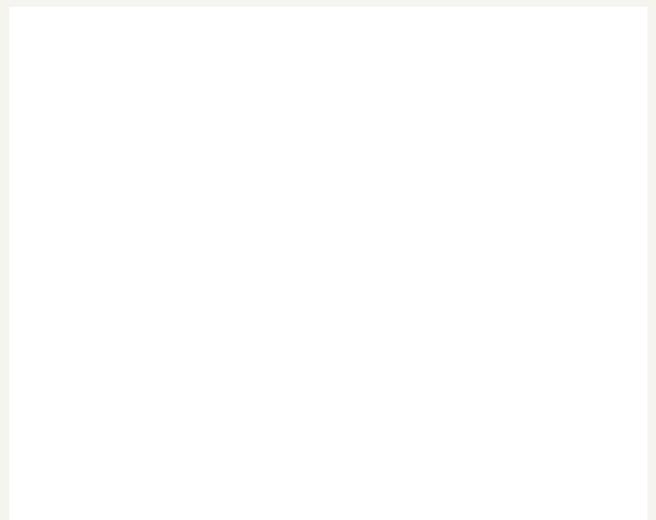
### Question 3

How might they see your vision aligning with their work?



### Question 4

How might you collaborate to reach each of your goals?



# MAKE A LIST OF... INFLUENCERS

An influencer is a trusted individual who shapes opinions and behaviors through their expertise, authority, or relationships, often via digital platforms. Their value lies in driving brand awareness, credibility, and consumer engagement with authenticity that traditional advertising lacks.



# FORM

## BUILDING A STRONG PARTNERSHIP

Now that you've identified strategic partners, you need to determine your approach. How you initiate and formalize the partnership effectively will vary depending on the organization. A warm introduction is always ideal, so think about who in your network might help connect you with potential partners. Make note of potential connectors here.

### Question 1

What is your ask?

### Question 2

What are the mutually beneficial relationship goals?

### Question 3

What's in it for them?

### Question 4

What is important to include in an initial agreement?

# LIST OF “ASKS”

## **Business Development & Growth**

- Introductions to key decision-makers and industry leaders
- Access to partner’s customer network for potential lead generation
- Joint participation in industry events, trade shows, and conferences
- Cross-promotion of services/products through newsletters, blogs, or webinars
- Collaboration on a whitepaper, case study, or thought leadership piece

## **Financial & Resource Support**

- Co-investment in product development or research initiatives
- Revenue-sharing agreement or joint monetization strategy
- Access to funding opportunities (grants, investors, accelerators)
- Infrastructure or technology support (cloud services, software access)
- Shared access to office space, equipment, or facilities

## **Marketing & Branding**

- Co-branded marketing campaigns, including social media, PR, and email blasts
- Featuring our company in partner’s existing content (newsletters, website, blog)
- Speaking opportunities at partner’s hosted events
- Inclusion in partner’s referral programs or reseller network
- Joint sponsorship of industry events or competitions

## **Product & Technology Collaboration**

- Integration of our product/service with the partner’s ecosystem
- Beta testing opportunities for new technology/products
- Sharing proprietary data, analytics, or customer insights
- Joint R&D efforts to enhance product offerings
- Licensing opportunities for partner’s technology/IP

## **Operational & Logistical Support**

- Assistance in scaling operations (manufacturing, distribution, fulfillment)
- Introduction to supply chain or vendor relationships
- Support in regulatory compliance and industry certifications
- Guidance on market entry strategies for new geographies

## **Talent & Knowledge Exchange**

- Hosting joint training sessions or knowledge-sharing workshops
- Access to subject matter experts for innovation and strategy discussions
- Internship or talent exchange programs between both companies
- Mentorship opportunities for leadership development

## **Strategic Influence & Policy Advocacy**

- Joint efforts in industry advocacy or regulatory initiatives
- Support in influencing policy or gaining government contracts
- Participation in consortiums or coalitions for collective impact

# PARTNER AGREEMENT

What is important to include in an initial agreement?

- Role of each party
- Timeline
- Communication
- Financials
- Measuring success
- Evaluation
- Conditions of termination



# PARTNERSHIP TEMPLATE

Process: Is there a formal procedure or will this be more of a relational request?

Date:

Prepared for:

Prepared by:

## Partnership Overview

- Primary Objectives:
  
- Strategic Alignment:

## Key Benefits & Value Proposition

For Partner Organization Name:

- 
- 

For Your Organization Name:

- 
- 

## Scope of Collaboration

- Joint Initiatives & Activities:
- Shared Resources:
- Marketing & Visibility:
- Financial or Operational Contributions:

## Partnership Duration & Review Process

- Duration:
- Review & Evaluation:

## Next Steps

- Review and finalize the agreement
- Establish a kickoff meeting
- Assign key stakeholders and implementation teams

## Contact Information

[Your Name]

[Your Title]

[Your Organization]

[Email] | [Phone]

[Partner Contact Name]

[Partner Title]

[Partner Organization]

[Email] | [Phone]

# CULTIVATE

## SUSTAIN A STRONG PARTNERSHIP

A successful strategic business partnership is built on alignment, trust, and shared value. It's more than just a transactional relationship—it's a collaboration designed to drive mutual growth, innovation, and long-term success. To cultivate a strong partnership, both parties must clearly define their goals, leverage each other's strengths, and maintain open communication.

### Question 1

How will you know if this partnership is successful? How is it measured?

### Question 2

How will you communicate with the partner? Regular check-ins, emails, updates, ad hoc? What frequency?

### Question 1

What expectations do you have of the other party?

### Question 2

What are your boundaries in this partnership? Where does your work stop?

# CULTIVATE

## COMMUNICATION & TRUST

Here are some things to consider:

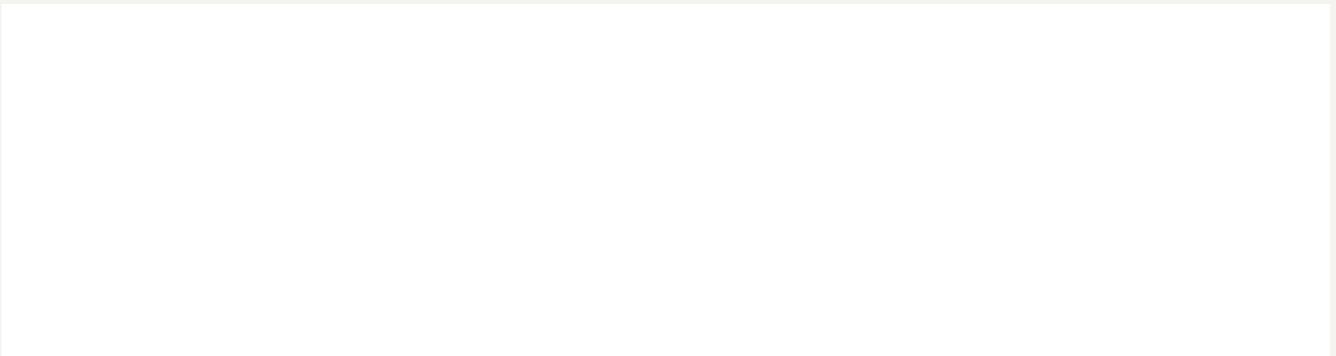
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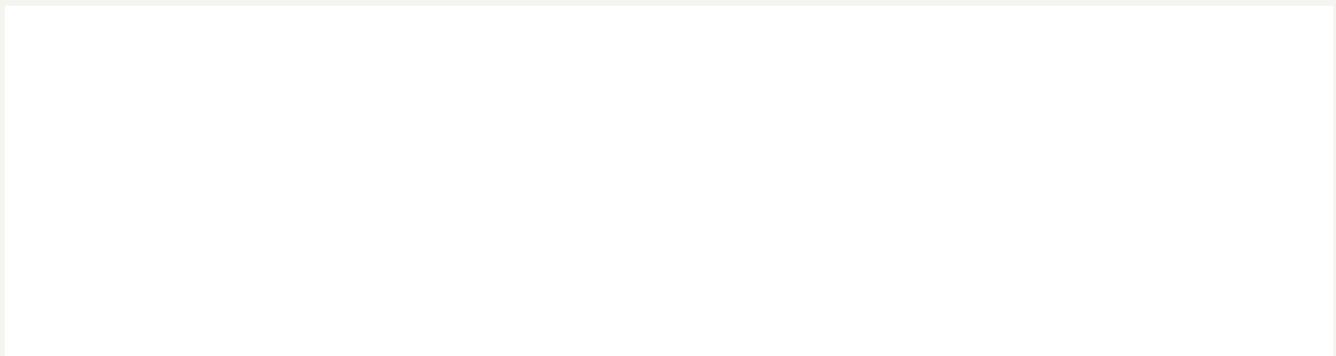
### Question 2

What are your boundaries in this partnership?



### Question 3

How will you check-in to evaluate progress?



# CULTIVATE

## PROBLEM SOLVING & CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Here are some things to consider:

### Question 1

What problems might you anticipate and how will you solve them together?



### Question 2

What happens if one party fails to fulfill their obligations?



# CULTIVATE

## SCALING THE PARTNERSHIP

Here are some things to consider:

### Question 1

How do you imagine this partnership evolving over time?



### Question 2

As your organization grows, what role might this partnership play?



# INSTRUCTOR



## **CHRISTA B. DOWNEY**

Christa B. Downey Coaching & Consulting LLC

**Leadership Coach | Strategic Advisor | Impact Investor**

Christa Downey is a coach, mentor, investor, and champion of mission-driven leaders and organizations working toward a healthier, more equitable, more sustainable world. With over 20 years at Cornell University, she has led teams to high levels of performance and innovation by creating cultures of aligned values and priorities while leveraging individual strengths.

Beyond her work at Cornell, Christa actively builds and strengthens strategic partnerships as an Operating Partner at Chloe Capital, where she supports investment in women-led innovation, and as an Entrepreneur in Residence and Program Manager for Launch NY's ECO Incubator, helping ClimateTech and CleanTech startups scale through funding and mentorship.

Through Christa B. Downey Coaching & Consulting, she partners with visionary leaders and mission-driven organizations to bring their BOLDEST visions to reality, maximize impact, and scale with purpose. Christa is particularly passionate about supporting women entrepreneurs and underfunded founders, helping them secure the strategic relationships and resources needed to scale their businesses and increase their impact.