Business-University Collaboration to Advance the Sustainable Development Goals

Workshop overview

On November 10, 2016, the Global Compact Network USA convened sustainability leaders from the corporate and academic sectors at a workshop in New York City on *Business-University Collaboration to Advance the Sustainable Development Goals*. This event was organized in collaboration with the New York University Stern's Center for Sustainable Business and the Principles for Responsible Management (PRME) North America chapter. The workshop was facilitated by Mr. Gregg Fraley.

The purpose of the event was to explore practical methods of collaboration to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, the question we aimed to answer was: What collaborative projects might businesses and universities create to help achieve the SDGs?

The participants of the workshop were from organizations including:

- Baker & McKenzie
- Citi
- CTG Global
- Duke University Nicholas School of the Environment
- Framework LLC
- GE
- Ketchum

- Marsh & McLennan Companies
- Monsanto
- New York University
- Philip Morris International
- Thomson Reuters
- United Nations Global Compact

- University of Colorado, Boulder
- University of Dayton
- VISO Strategies
- Webster University
- Xylem
- Yale University

Structure of the day

1. Ahead of the workshop, participants reviewed preparatory materials to generate collaborative project ideas.
   - Project criteria
   - Potential collaborators
   - Types of collaborations

2. We began the day by creating a visual "mind map" representation of the SDGs to serve as an inspiration for project ideas.

3. Participants added sticky notes with collaborative project ideas, indicating the activity, key actors, and relevant SDGs. We later voted on the most promising of these ideas.

4. Each participant chose one idea and expanded upon it on a written form.
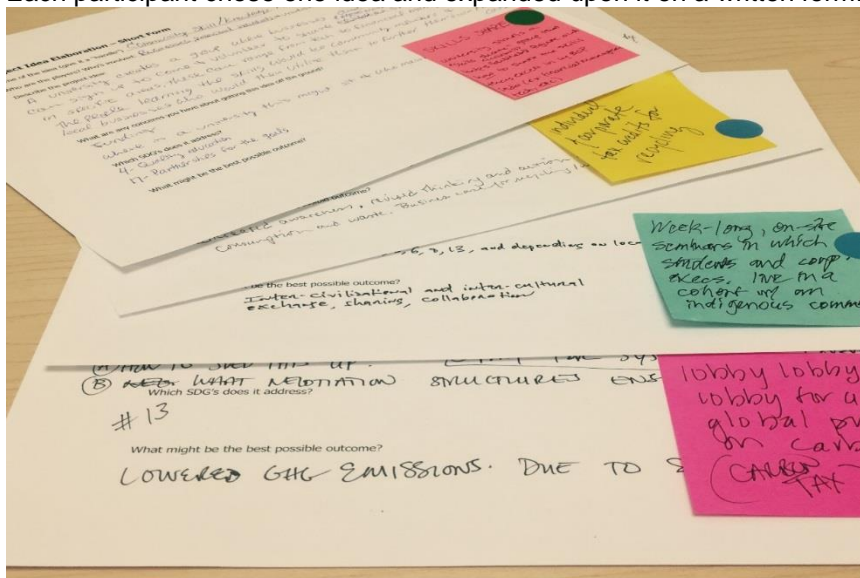
5. Participants formed groups, and shared their ideas. Each group then chose one idea to further refine.

6. A representative of each group presented to the room.

Project ideas

The following are some of the ideas that came out of the workshop:

- **21st Century Capitalism**. A collaborative research and planning project to change the current short-term, quarterly results shareholder value model to one that requires full stakeholder engagement and returning value to society. Some of the steps involved include identifying the key change agents and incentives, building an action plan, and designing a governance/measurement structure, with the goal that regulating entities require ESG and SDG reporting as material. (SDGs: all)
- **Biodiversity Indigenous Immersion Pilot**. A week-long seminar for students and executives in an indigenous community to connect research on the business value of biodiversity to on-the-ground action. (SDGs 1, 2, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17)
- **Community Skills Transfer**. A university manages a group of representatives of local businesses who share their professional skills with students. (SDGs 4, 17)
- **Credits for Change**. A tax credit program that enables companies to employ "takeback" programs to facilitate closed-loop production. A data platform tracks volume, credits transferred, and money saved. (SDGs 9, 11, 12, 17)
- **Humanitarian Pricing Models**. Some industries, such as pharmaceuticals, have priced products at great discounts in least developed countries. Universities and business can work together to develop humanitarian pricing models for other industries, such as agriculture and infrastructure. (SDGs 2, 3, 9)
- **Gender Equality Case Competition**. A case competition to promote gender equality in business. A university hosts the competition, a nonprofit defines the prompt, and a company sponsors the event. Companies then implement a new program, product, or service based on the competition. (SDGs 5, 10, 17, 11, 4, 3, 16)
- **Post-Carbon Jobs**. A company enlists the support of a university to measure the climate impact of the company's jobs. The aim is to develop quality, post-carbon jobs. (SDGs 8, 13)
- **SDG Fellows**. A summer fellowship program for students, in which member organizations provide projects, and PRME and UNGC vet the projects. There are 17 fellows: one for each SDG. Students showcase their projects at a conference, and one/a few are chosen to present at the Net Impact conference. Students develop teaching case studies based on the projects. (SDGs: all)
- **SDG-Motivated Business School Program**. Business schools partner with local business leaders to understand how SDGs connect to business concerns, and to integrate the SDGs into curriculum. (SDGs: all)
- **Social Impact Scholarship**. A year-long scholarship to advanced undergrads or graduated students for research projects that demonstrate a genuine commitment to SDG implementation in their studies and future jobs. A company provides the funding, identification of priority topics, and engagement with the students over the summer; a university provides faculty support and expertise. (SDGs: all)
- **Sustainable Core**. Business school deans require all faculty to teach one class session in a core course on sustainability. The goal is to connect all courses to the broader question of what it means to be a sustainable business. UNGC partners also provide grants to encourage faculty to integrate sustainability into their research. (SDGs: all)
- **The Three-Day CEO Challenge**. CEOs concurrently do a three-day poverty challenge over a weekend. At the end of the challenge, they review lessons learned and actions that they will take. New goals are announced at one of UNGC's major events. (SDG 1)

Conclusion

The *Business-University Collaboration to Advance the Sustainable Development Goals* workshop was a very interesting and productive event. We are grateful to all who participated and helped make it a success.

Our hope is that the attendees or others will make some of the ideas a reality. The ideas that came out of this workshop are not proprietary; they are open for anyone to take it upon themselves to refine and implement them. If you want to implement any of these ideas, discuss collaborations and partnerships more broadly, or learn more about Network USA's activities, please contact us at info@globalcompactusa.org.

If you want to connect with PRME's network of universities in North America, please contact the chair of PRME's North America chapter, Mark Meaney, at mark.meaney@colorado.edu.

About Global Compact Network USA:
Launched in 2007, the Global Compact Network USA (GCNUSA) is the local network chapter of the United Nations Global Compact. Network USA is a non-profit organization that supports U.S.-based entities in:
- Operating in alignment with the Ten Principles of the Global Compact
- Engaging with and advancing the Sustainable Development Goals
- Leveraging their association with the Global Compact and United Nations and its global resource network
- Facilitating and creating opportunities for multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder collaboration

About NYU Stern's Center for Sustainable Business:
Launched in January 2016, the mission of NYU Stern's Center for Sustainable Business is to assist current and future business leaders in developing the ability to tackle environmental and social challenges for their businesses, so they can reduce risk; create competitive advantage; and develop innovative services, products, and processes, while creating value for society. The center works to achieve its mission through curricular offerings, research on pressing sustainability issues, working partnerships, convening thought leaders, and helping students with their careers. www.stern.nyu.edu/sustainability

About PRME:
Launched in 2007, the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) initiative is the first organized relationship between the United Nations and business schools. The mission of PRME is to transform management education, research and thought leadership globally by providing the Principles for Responsible Management Education framework, developing learning communities and promoting awareness about the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. http://www.unprme.org/