***Employer Engagement Best Practices for AWS re/Start Collaborating Organizations***

Connecting AWS re/Start learners with job opportunities is a vital part of the AWS re/Start program as higher rates of job placements can be achieved through dedicated and intentional employer engagement activities. A well-developed approach ensures that COs build meaningful, long-term relationships with employers, aligning job outcomes with industry needs. This document will help you to identify best practices and actionable resources to enhance these engagements effectively. This guide provides insights into the following aspects of employer engagement best practices:

[Mindset – Establishing and cultivating an employer-oriented mindset 1](#_Toc187335100)

[Roles and processes – setting up your organization for success to engage with employers 2](#_Toc187335101)

[Defining the right messaging to position AWS re/Start graduates 2](#_Toc187335102)

[Ways to build a strong network of engaged employers 3](#_Toc187335103)

[Event formats to connect AWS re/Start learners with employers 3](#_Toc187335104)

[Tool recommendations and mechanisms to facilitate effective employer engagement 5](#_Toc187335105)

##### Mindset – Establishing and cultivating an employer-oriented mindset

COs need to adopt a mindset that views employer engagement as an integral part of their AWS re/Start program. Just as training prepares learners with essential knowledge and skills, prioritizing employer engagement ensures those skills translate into real job opportunities, making it equally important for the program's success. The placement phase is an essential part of the journey, which should start on day one of becoming a CO and not only at the end of a cohort. That said, it’s important to emphasize that creating employer connections isn’t solely the responsibility of the CO; learners should also be empowered to take on this task.

The success of AWS re/Start is measured through placement rates. The expectation of AWS re/Start is for COs to achieve an overall placement rate of 75% of their trained learners. Continuous improvement through feedback from employers, funders, and AWS re/Start graduates helps refine programs and adapt to industry needs for lasting impact.

A good potential employer can be identified by their strong demand for cloud skills and their capacity to hire at scale on an ongoing basis. Ideally, they should demonstrate a commitment to developing talent by providing graduates with opportunities for growth, continuous learning, and support throughout their journey, fostering a long-term partnership that benefits both parties.

##### Roles and processes – setting up your organization for success to engage with employers

Employer engagement should be embedded in the daily operations and functions of a CO. Integrating this focus ensures that building and maintaining employer relationships becomes a consistent and strategic part of your organization.

A centralized CRM system is helpful for managing relationships and maintaining consistent communication. It helps to track interactions, follow-ups, and partnership details, ensuring consistent communication and efficient collaboration across the team.

Moreover, if different functions inside the CO exist, cross-team collaboration between employer engagement, program delivery, and career support teams ensures alignment and adaptability to market demands.

##### Defining the right messaging to position AWS re/Start graduates

Effective employer engagement relies on clear and compelling messaging that positions AWS re/Start graduates as job-ready and valuable hires. Messaging should highlight unique program strengths while recognizing that local differences may require tailored approaches. The following key aspects should be considered when defining the right messaging to employers. Note that detailed program messaging templates such as input based on the AWS re/Start co-messaging framework or (employer) flyers can be accessed under the resources section in the AWS re/Start CO Portal. Also, it is recommended to take a look at the [AWS re/Start website](https://aws.amazon.com/training/restart/).

* Highlight unique value propositions: Emphasize what makes the AWS re/Start program and its graduates stand out, such as specific skills, real-world training experiences, or certifications that align with industry needs. In terms of specific skills, AWS re/Start graduates are to demonstrate capabilities, which are mapped out in the SFIA Skills Profile, a resource shared to COs at inception of the collaboration.
* Showcase graduate readiness: Position graduates as prepared to add immediate value, supported by examples of hands-on projects, internships, or practical exercises they have completed.
* Consider emphasizing transferable skills: Highlight that many learners bring valuable prior experience, such as additional degrees, work experience, or language skills, which complement their newly acquired training. This showcases the graduates' adaptability and potential to contribute in various roles.
* Use data and success stories: Include statistics on graduate employment rates, feedback from past employer partners, and success stories that validate the program’s effectiveness and impact.
* Emphasize employer benefits: Clearly outline how partnering the CO can help employers meet their hiring needs more efficiently.

##### Ways to build a strong network of engaged employers

Building and maintaining strong relationships with employers is crucial for AWS re/Start COs to facilitate job placements and ensure long-term success. Establishing these connections needs to be approached strategically to create a resilient network that supports learners and aligns with industry needs. Below are key activities that can help build and sustain strong employer relationships, ultimately forming a robust network.

* Building strong relationships with key contacts: Develop and maintain personal relationships with key points of contact at employers, such as HR managers or department heads. This personal connection enhances trust, ensures smoother communication, and opens the door for ongoing opportunities.
* Regular communication and updates: Keep employers informed about program developments, learner achievements, and upcoming events through newsletters or periodic updates. This keeps the organization top-of-mind and reinforces the value of the partnership.
* Employer roundtables and feedback sessions: Organize regular roundtable discussions or feedback meetings to understand employer needs and gather input on program improvements. This engagement shows a commitment to mutual growth and collaboration.
* Joint workshops and training sessions: Collaborate with employers to co-host workshops or training sessions that are beneficial for both learners and the employer’s staff. This fosters a shared commitment to skill-building and aligns the training with real industry needs – see more potential formats under event formats.
* Recognition and appreciation initiatives: Acknowledge employer contributions through certificates, social media shout-outs, or featuring them in success stories. Showing appreciation helps solidify relationships and encourages continued collaboration.
* Consistent follow-ups and check-ins: Maintain regular check-ins after placements to receive feedback and ensure the employer’s satisfaction. This also opens the door for discussing potential future hires or continued partnership opportunities.

##### Event formats to connect AWS re/Start learners with employers

Developing various event formats is essential for connecting learners with employers, as it creates opportunities for direct interaction and relationship building. These formats not only showcase learners' skills and readiness but also give employers the chance to engage with potential talent in dynamic and meaningful ways.

* Hackathons: Competitive events where learners collaborate to solve real-world problems posed by employers. These events showcase learners' skills and allow employers to observe their problem-solving and teamwork capabilities.
* Job fairs: Organized events where multiple employers set up booths to meet with potential job candidates. Learners can explore various job opportunities, network, and gain insights into different companies.
* Hiring events: Targeted events where employers meet with pre-screened candidates for interviews and potentially make job offers on the spot. These events streamline the recruitment process for both learners and employers.
* Mentoring opportunities: Programs that pair learners with industry professionals for guidance and advice. Mentorship helps learners understand industry expectations, develop their skills, and build professional connections.
* Lunch speaker sessions: Informal gatherings where employers or industry leaders share their career stories, company culture, and insights during a lunch break. These sessions provide inspiration and foster dialogue between learners and employers. Such sessions can be baked into the curriculum plan as well as serve as standalone events.
* Shadowing programs: Opportunities for learners to spend a day or more with an employee at their workplace. This format gives learners a first-hand look at daily tasks, company culture, and industry practices.
* Workshops: Interactive sessions led by employers on specific skills or topics relevant to the industry. These workshops help learners enhance their practical knowledge and engage directly with company representatives.
* Onsite/online company tours: Guided tours of a company's facilities, either in person or virtually. This format allows learners to gain an understanding of the work environment, operations, and company culture.
* Panel discussions: Events where a group of employers or industry experts discuss current trends, challenges, and opportunities in the field. Learners benefit by hearing multiple perspectives and engaging in Q&A sessions.
* Networking nights: Casual evening events that encourage open conversation and networking between learners and employers. These can foster connections that may lead to internships or job opportunities. Such networking events can be organized through the [AWS Community](https://aws.amazon.com/developer/community), namely [AWS Community Builders](https://aws.amazon.com/developer/community/community-builders) or [Meetup](https://www.meetup.com/).
* Project-based collaborations: Partnerships where learners work on short-term projects provided by employers, either individually or in teams. This simulates real work scenarios and allows employers to see how learners apply their knowledge.
* Resume and interview prep sessions: Interactive events where employers offer feedback on learners' resumes and conduct mock interviews. This prepares learners for the job search process while giving employers a preview of potential candidates.
* Employer-led Q&A sessions: Dedicated time for learners to ask employers questions about company expectations, industry trends, and career paths. These sessions build transparency and trust.
* Skill demonstrations: Learners present or demonstrate specific projects or skills to employers, showcasing their competencies in a practical setting. This can be part of a demo day or standalone presentations.
* Internship and co-op programs: Structured programs where learners work with an employer for a set period, gaining hands-on experience while the employer evaluates potential talent.

##### Tool recommendations and mechanisms to facilitate effective employer engagement

Employer engagement consists of various activities, both inside every CO but also when interacting with employers. This can become complex, which is why a set of different tools may help support these efforts. Some tools can handle and combine multiple activities in one place, so it’s essential for each CO to identify the right mix that best suits the needs and engagement approach.

* CRM systems (e.g., Salesforce, HubSpot): Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems help organizations track interactions with both learners and employers, manage contact details, monitor engagement, and maintain a centralized database of relationships.
  1. Salesforce offers for NGOs the socalled [The Power of Us](https://www.salesforce.com/company/power-of-us/) program, which includes 10 free licences per organization.
* Social networks (e.g., LinkedIn): A professional networking platform that allows organizations to connect with employers, showcase their graduates’ skills, and source job postings.
* Event management tools (e.g., Eventbrite): Platforms that help plan and manage events like job fairs, hackathons, and workshops both in-person and virtually.
* Email marketing platforms (e.g., Mailchimp, Constant Contact): Platforms for creating and managing targeted email campaigns to communicate with employers, share program updates, and highlight graduate achievements.
* Job posting platforms (e.g., Indeed, Glassdoor): Websites where job listings can be posted and employers can be sourced for potential partnerships.
* Alumni management software (e.g., Graduway, Almabase): Tools designed to help organizations stay connected with alumni, track their career progress, and facilitate continued interaction between graduates and employers.
* Online survey tools (e.g., SurveyMonkey, Google Forms): Platforms for creating surveys to gather feedback from employers about their experiences and satisfaction with the training program and placements.
* Engaging recruitment partners or placement agencies: These organizations can support COs by connecting learners with job opportunities through their extensive networks and expertise.
* Leveraging services like [AWS Marketplace](https://aws.amazon.com/marketplace) or [AWS IQ](https://iq.aws.amazon.com/): Such services enable reaching in and connecting with AWS customers and partners.
* Tapping into opportunities to connect with AWS account teams and attend AWS partner events: Building relationships with AWS account and partner teams could open doors to new employer engagement opportunities, especially as they may hire individuals with an AWS skill set.

COs are encouraged to use this practical guide as a foundation and bring their own ideas and insights to the table. It is recommended to discuss this with your regional program manager in order to tailor your employer engagement approach that aligns with your unique strengths and local needs.