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Partner Pathways

Project Management Sales Project

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I. Executive Summary

Statement of the Problem

As the **7th largest DECA chapter** in the world with over **700 members**, Marjory Stoneman Douglas (MSD) DECA depends on local business partnerships and fundraising in order to operate efficiently, as our chapter **spends around $185,000 per year** on events such as competitions and career preparation. Recently, while maintaining a consistent quantity of partners, we've seen several long-term sponsors step back, creating funding gaps we've had to fill with new businesses. Last year alone, **67.5% of partners were not retained**. Strengthening relationships with existing partners is crucial—when they stay engaged, our students, partners, and community all benefit.

Project Scope

The primary purpose of Partner Pathways is to provide a sustainable **network of business partners** that helps to bridge the gap between educational ambition and economic reality. Moving beyond the standard model of "transactional charity" (where relationships end at the point of sale), this project fosters long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships between MSD DECA and the local business community.

Central to this initiative is our **Mock Shark Tank**, which transforms passive sponsorship into an interactive educational experience. By engaging partners as mentors and judges rather than just donors, we provide students with high-stakes opportunities to develop essential entrepreneurial skills while offering businesses **tangible return on investment** through public recognition and direct engagement. Ultimately, Partner Pathways aims to turn one-time donors into active, **recurring investors**, ensuring that financial constraints never hinder a student's ability to compete and succeed in DECA.

Project Goals & Evaluation of Key Metrics

P **ioneer 35 Business Partnerships**

Our Partner Pathways outreach generated **45 partnerships, exceeding our goal of 35**. Utilizing a tiered sponsorship model, we secured meaningful community investment. These partnerships deliver essential funding, valuable internships, and mentorships for developing future leaders.

Secured **45** active business partners

A **chieve $15,000 in Profit**

We surpassed our **$15,000 profit goal** by reaching an impressive **$17,888**. Partnerships contributed $8,350 led by ten Diamond Sponsors. Our coupon book initiative generated $9,538 in profit, providing essential funds for competition travel and professional development.

Generated **$17,888** in net profit

T **hrive with 90% Partner Retention**

Prioritizing relationship building over transactions ensured long-term sustainability. Our mid-year survey showed that **91% of partners plan to renew their sponsorships.** This strong retention highlights our immersive engagement strategy, fostering deeper connections through events like the Shark Tank and the Competition Prep Night, turning sponsors into active stakeholders.

Achieved a projected **91%** partner retention rate

H **one 85% of Members' Professional Skills**

We surveyed participants after the Shark Tank Prep Sessions to evaluate Partner Pathways as a business incubator. Results showed experiential learning delivers measurable growth: **90% reported significantly more confidence** in skills like sales and networking, while the remaining 10% noted steady progress.

90% of participants reported significant growth in professional skills

Schedule and Execution

Build Project Team and Communication Network — August 2025

- Determined roles needed
- Promoted and advertised officer positions for students
- Hosted an interest meeting to explain the project's goals
- Released applications and reviewed responses
- Assigned roles and responsibilities
- Conducted weekly check-ins to track progress, coordinate tasks, and address challenges

Retaining & Engaging Business Partners — September 2025 - February 2026

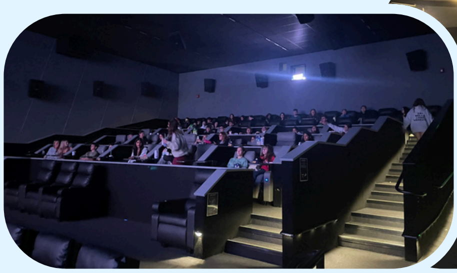
- Collaborated with Paragon Movie Theater to host a movie night for our school's DECA chapter
- Organized chapter-wide social for members to engage with Cecile's Italian Ice
- Hosted Shark Tank in partnership with the Parkland Chamber of Commerce
- Directed competition prep nights for the Florida Career Development Conference with business partners as judges

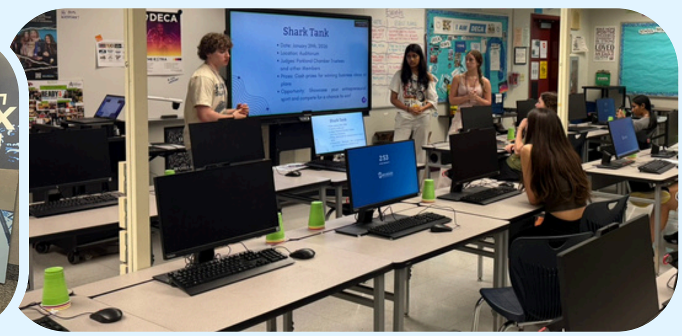
Obtaining Business Partners — August 2025-September 2025

- Reached out to previous business partners
- Cold called and emailed prospective partners
- Utilized a tiered partnership structure to provide flexibility
- Finalized commitments, added data into spreadsheets, and confirmed partner support
  - 45 partners total
  - $8,350 in contributions
- Prepared our teams to begin working on our promises (social media shoutouts, getting logos for chapter t-shirt)

Alternative Profit Streams — October 2025

- Launched SaveAround Coupon Book fundraiser initiative
  - 713 books sold
  - $17,825 in sales revenue
  - $9,538 in sales profit





S

- Membership of previous business partners
- Experienced advisors to aid in oversight
- Founders serving as President and Executive Vice Presidents
- Internal communication

W

- Limited time to execute events
- Limited budget
- Inexperienced committee
- Communication challenges with committee members

O

- DECA's positive reputation
- Large chapter to get involved
- Students' personal connection with local business owners

T

- Dependence on businesses for funding
- Time conflicts with other chapter projects
- Limited student participation
- Businesses' busy schedules
- Prior experience running Shark Tank Pitch Night

Budget Snapshots

Partner Pathways 2025-2026		
	Projected	**Actuals**
Revenue Coupon Books Business Partners	$26,275	$26,175
Expenses Coupon Books Shark Tank	$10,600	$8,288
Profit	$15,675	$17,888

Note: Figures may not sum exactly due to rounding.

Understanding the Difference

Revenue: Our **actual revenue was only marginally lower than our projected revenue** ($100 difference), illustrating that our initial understanding of our member count for coupon books and our estimated monetary business partner contribution was right on point. Although we majorly exceeded our Pioneer goal with 45 business partners (instead of the planned 35), our total revenue did not increase majorly because many large contributors (diamond partners) gave us **value-in-kind donations** which did not contribute to our revenue figures, rather they lessened expenses for the overall DECA Chapter.

Expenses: Our actual **expenses were approximately 20% lower than estimated** coming in at $8,288 (a $2,312 savings). This can mostly be attributed to negotiations with coupon book company (SaveAround) to give the chapter a bulk discount in the form of 50 free books. On top of that, the Chamber of Commerce generously offered to cover the price of awards for the Shark Tank event.

Totals & Impact: Because we managed to reduce expenses, while hitting our revenue targets, our final profit was **$17,888** (approximately $2,200 higher than expected). This additional profit goes straight back to the chapter to allow us to subsidize travel and other event costs.

Monitoring and Controlling

Schedule
- Google Calendar
- Google Sheets
- Timelines

Budget
- Google Spreadsheet
- Team and Advisor Check-ins

Project Quality
- Monitoring Recruitment
- Tracking Participant Readiness
- Advisor Feedback

Recommendations for Future Projects

1 Broadening Target Market

To promote diversity and broader community involvement, participation should extend beyond MSD DECA members, including other school organizations. Additionally, a middle school-based competition would introduce students to entrepreneurship early, build future DECA members connections, and strengthen participants' skills for future events.

2 Expanding Outreach Techniques

To boost both fundraising success and community connections, future initiatives should involve all DECA members in business outreach, not just the leadership team. Offering incentives for members to leverage personal and family networks can motivate broader participation and strengthen the chapter's overall financial foundation.

3 Increasing Positions and Departmental Focus

The current leadership model depends too heavily on a few founders, causing concentrated workloads. Expanding the team with specialized officer roles aligned to key project functions—such as sponsorship outreach, event planning, and marketing—will improve efficiency, distribute responsibilities, and strengthen overall productivity.

II. Initiating

A. Statement of the Problem

As the **7th largest DECA chapter in the world with** over **700 members,** Marjory Stoneman Douglas (MSD) DECA acts as a co-curricular powerhouse, preparing students for college and careers. However, this scale comes with a **massive financial burden.** Our annual operating costs include over **$108,000 for State Competition (CDC)** and **$38,000 for the International Career Development Conference (ICDC)**.

Over the past couple of years, we noticed a problem: many of our long-term partners stopped participating. That left gaps in funding that we had to fill with new businesses. With nearly **$200,000 spent per year,** these gaps make it harder for us to give every member the full DECA experience.

States Cost	ICDC Cost	Membership Cost
$108,117	**$38,402**	**$19,860**

We realized that keeping partners involved is just as important as bringing in new ones, because when businesses feel connected to our chapter, everyone benefits: students, partners, and the community alike. Without a system in place to **foster the growth** of these relationships the chapter **risks losing partners** each year. This directly threatens our ability to continue to **subsidize costs** and provide the **real world experience** that define our chapter's mission.

B. Project Scope

Purpose

Partner Pathways is designed to strengthen **long-term relationships** with local businesses while **securing funding** to support our DECA chapter. We wanted to give students **real, hands-on experience** with event planning, marketing, networking, and professional communication. At the same time, we wanted our partners to see the impact of their support, interact with our members directly, and feel like an active part of our chapter. Through events, social activities, and collaboration, we aimed to create experiences that benefit both students and partners.

Rationale

Standard fundraising often relies on **one-time transactions:** selling a product, thanking the consumer for the sale, and moving on. What separates Partner Pathways from other sales projects is that a sale is not the end goal; rather, we aim to **create relationships** that will have a **lasting impact.** As any good salesperson knows, a good sale is not a one-time transaction, it is a sale with returning customers, and that is our end goal with this project.

By focusing on **retention** and **mutual benefit** we ensure our partners feel valued and connected to our chapter and our mission. We strive to turn **passive donors** into **active community members** who benefit students, the chapter, and the community

Without the ability to heavily **subsidize these costs,** the reality is many talented hardworking students would not be able to pay the expenses to travel and compete, simply because they cannot afford the trip.

"The currency of the 21st century is not money, but trust and reputation."
- Charles Schwab

Expected Benefits

For Our Students

We created Partner Pathways to provide students with hands-on experience, mentorship from professionals, and opportunities to develop leadership, teamwork, and entrepreneurial skills. By engaging directly with business partners through **events**, **competitions**, and **networking activities**, our members gain **real-world insights** that complement their classroom learning and help prepare them for future careers.

For Our Partners

Our business partners benefit from Partner Pathways by mentoring emerging leaders, engaging directly with students, and strengthening their connections to the local community. Through participation in events and guidance of student teams, they have the opportunity to give back, share professional expertise, and **establish lasting relationships with future professionals.**

For Our Chapter

Our DECA chapter benefits from **increased funding for programs, events, and competitions,** enabling more efficient operations and expanded opportunities for all members. Partner Pathways helps our chapter maintain **sustainable growth,** organize **high-quality events,** and provide resources that ensure every member can participate fully in DECA activities. All together, this helps ensure fiscal need will not prevent a qualified student from competing.

III. Planning and Organization

A. Project goals

P

Pioneer 35 Business Partnerships

Our acquisition goal focuses on expanding our network through direct, targeted outreach. We will identify and contact local and regional businesses using cold emails and personalized proposals that outline the tangible benefits of partnership. These benefits include logo placement on chapter T-shirts, promotional shoutouts across MSD DECA's social media platforms, and invitations to exclusive chapter events. By offering meaningful visibility and engagement opportunities, we will secure **35 new business partners by 12/31** and strengthen our chapter's presence in the community.

A

Achieve $15,000 in Profit

Our financial target of **$15,000** will support competition travel, professional development resources, and chapter operations. To achieve this, we will utilize two revenue streams:

- Partnership Contributions from the **35 business partners** we acquire
- Coupon Books, a new independent fundraising initiative designed to generate profit without relying on business sponsorships

This diversified approach ensures stable and sustainable funding throughout the year.

T

Thrive with 90% Partner Retention

Our goal is for **90% of business partners** to express intent to continue their support into the next year. While "Pioneer" is about getting partners through the door, "Thrive" is about making them want to stay. We will achieve this by fulfilling every partnership promise and providing consistent value through immersive engagement. Exclusive events like the **Shark Tank Pitch Night, Paragon Partner Social,** and **Competition Prep Nights** allow partners to see their impact firsthand, engage with students directly, and become a vital part of MSD DECA's story.

H

Hone 85% of Members' Professional Skills

The foundational goal of Partner Pathways is to serve as a real-world business incubator for our members. Every activity is an opportunity for experiential learning in professionalism, entrepreneurship, and fundraising. By participating in the **Shark Tank** and learning from partners during **Competition Prep Nights** our members will gain invaluable, resume-building skills in sales, marketing, and project management that will prepare them for success in college and their future careers.

B. Human resource management plan

Project Managers

Responsibilities

- Establish goals and ensure activities support initiatives
- Delegate tasks and coordinate team efforts efficiently
- Foster and maintain strong relationships with business partners
- Monitor timelines, assess impact, and make improvements.

Skills

- Leadership
- Organization
- Communication
- Problem-Solving
- Adaptability
- Time Management

Shark Tank Event Support (Committee Members + DECA Officers)

Skills

- Coordination
- Communication
- Time Management
- Teamwork

Responsibilities

- Assist in setup, scheduling, and event flow
- Provide logistical support during the event
- Help manage participant interactions and judge/mentor coordination
- Create a welcoming and professional atmosphere for all attendees

Business Partner Recruitment Team (Committee Members)

Skills

- Networking
- Collaboration
- Strategic Planning
- Engagement

Responsibilities

- Provide mentorship and business insights to students
- Actively engage with student teams during events and activities
- Help recruit judges and mentors for the Shark Tank event
- Promote project events through their networks

Fundraising/Marketing Team (Committee Members)

Skills

- Community Engagement
- Goal Orientation
- Creativity
- Communication

Responsibilities

- Track donations and financial progress
- Develop and implement fundraising campaigns
- Foster engagement through targeted communications
- Manage social media and digital campaigns
- Design promotional materials

MSD DECA Advisors

Skills

- Advising
- Event Oversight
- Strategic Input
- Professionalism

Responsibilities

- Offer advice on project planning and execution
- Provide logistical and administrative support
- Help navigate DECA rules and procedures
- Ensure events align with chapter and organizational goals

C. Schedule

i. Milestones

1. Partnership Acquisition (Aug - Sep)

This initial phase is dedicated entirely to achieving our **Pioneer** goal. The team will execute a **proactive outreach campaign** of **cold emailing** and **direct contact** to secure our **35 new business partners**. Success in this milestone provides the essential network and a significant portion of the profit required for the rest of the year. This phase is about building our community from the ground up.

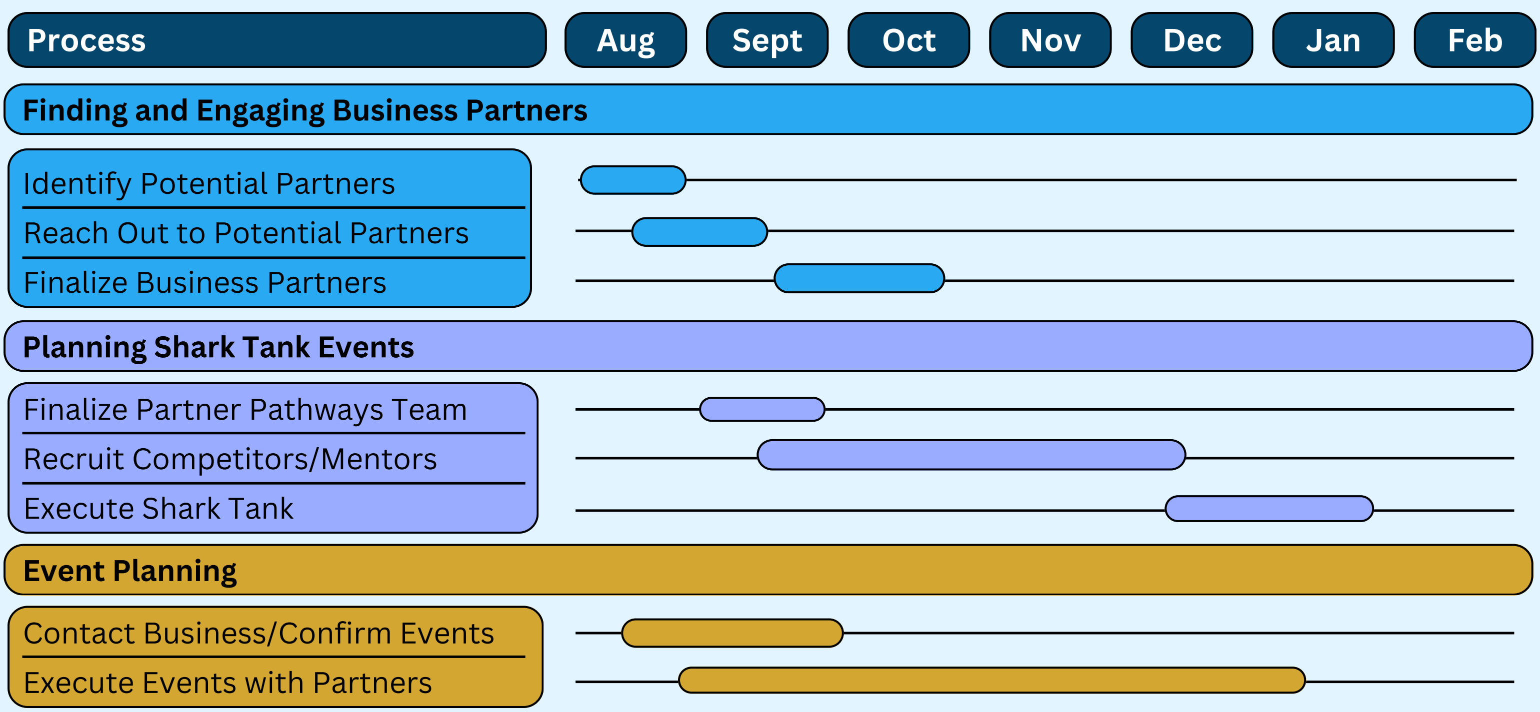
2. Profit Diversification (Oct - Nov)

This milestone centers on generating profit through **direct-to-community sales.** This includes a **concentrated sales blitz for our coupon books.** This phase is critical for achieving our **Achieve** goal by creating powerful profit streams that are separate from our direct sponsorships.

3. Partner Engagement & Retention (Dec - Feb)

This phase is the heart of our **Thrive** and **Hone** goals. Having secured our partners, we now deliver on our promises by hosting our premier engagement events: the **"Shark Tank"** pitch competition and the **Competition Prep Nights.** These events provide tangible value to our sponsors by integrating them into our mission, and they offer invaluable, hands-on learning experiences for our members. The successful execution of this milestone is what transforms a one-time sponsor into a long-term partner.

ii. Timeline to Reach Each Milestone



D. Quality Management Plan

To ensure the successful execution and impact of the Partner Pathways project, we developed **key performance indicators (KPIs)** to measure the success of each of our four core goals: **Pioneer**, **Achieve**, **Thrive**, and **Hone**. These metrics will allow us to monitor progress in real-time and evaluate the project's overall quality and effectiveness.

Measures Goal: Pioneer 35 Business Partners

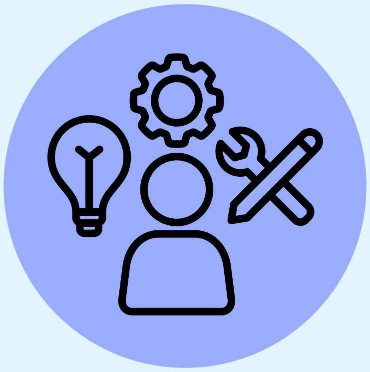
To measure the amount of business partners the Partner Pathways project has secured, we will record each time a business mails us a check and fills out the professional membership form detailing their **contribution amount** and **engagement level.** In order to monitor that businesses are contacted and followed through, we will first email and then call to follow-up to ensure communication is consistent.

Measures Goal: Achieve $15,000 in Profit

Our **sales profit** generated from business partner donations and coupon books will serve as an indicator to measure how effective the project is in raising its predetermined goal.

Measures Goal: Thrive with 90% Partner Retention

In the middle of the year, we will conduct a survey to approximate how we are doing as a benchmark. At the end of the year, **business partners will be surveyed** to calculate the amount that express intent to become a business partner for the following school year. By calculating the retention rate (Retained Partners/Total Partners x 100), our goal can be measured to see if **90% of total members** wish to collaborate for the upcoming year.



Measures Goal: Hone 85% of Members' Professional Skills

In order to measure the impact business partner's involvement had on students, students will be asked to **fill out reflections** at the end of each joint event to see what skills they learned. Additionally, business partners will be asked to **evaluate student's projects** to evaluate their improvements. Measuring this metric from both perspectives, student and business partner, will allow us to see if skills students say they learned were applicable to competition based projects.

E. Risk Management Plan

Potential Risk	Potential Impact	Mitigation Strategy
Recruitment • Lack of responsiveness to outreach • Lack of follow-up in communication from businesses	• Limited funding, forcing us to reduce subsidies • Reduced connections and resources within local community	• Reach out to new businesses (email, phone, in-person) • Contact old business partners from past 3 years • Utilize levels of partner membership with varying incentives (Bronze, Silver, Gold, Diamond)
Logistics • Operational errors during prep for the Shark Tank or on event day	• Parkland Chamber uninterested in collaborating in the future • Lack of motivation for future student participation	• Host a pre-event run through 48 hours prior to actual event • Keep in constant communication with judges, competitors, and mentors • Specialization of roles within the committee.
Participation • Low competitor turnout for Shark Tank • Low student turnout for Competition Prep Nights	• Damages MSD DECA's reputation • Low competition preparedness	• Incentivize students with exclusive diamond rewards • Promote Shark Tank through flyers and presentations in teacher's classrooms • Provide multiple dates for prep nights
Involvement • Conflicting schedules with business partners • Inability to attend workshops and competition prep sessions	• Insufficient practice for competition • Loss of the emotional connection our project hopes to build	• Plan prep nights 3 to 4 months in advance • Offer multiple dates (3 total) available for prep nights • Be flexible and professional at all times

F. Proposed project budget

Partner Pathways Budget 2025-2026	
Sales Revenue	
Coupon Books	$17,500
700 Books @ $25 each	
Business Partner Contributions	$8,750
35 Partners @ ~$250 each	
Total Sales Revenue	$26,250
Expenses	
Coupon Books	$8,750
700 Books @ $12.50 each	
Shark Tank	$1,850
3 Prizes, certificate costs	
Total Expenses	$10,600
Profit	$15,650

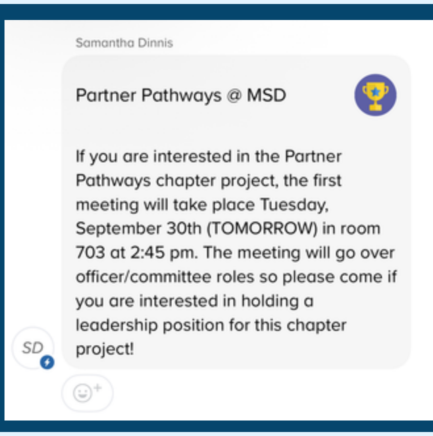
For the coupon books, we looked at past membership assuming we would have around 700 members, we set a realistic goal of selling 700 books. We calculated the $8,750 revenue from business partners by looking at our sponsorship tiers and aiming for 35 partners across the different levels. Finally, for the Shark Tank event, we made an estimate based on a previous conversation with the Chamber of Commerce, helping us reach the expected costs shown above.

IV. Execution

01 Build Project Team & Communication Network

AUG

In **August**, we focused on assembling a dedicated team of DECA members to lead Partner Pathways and we began establishing a communication network. We hosted an interest meeting to generate enthusiasm, explain the project's goals, and highlight opportunities for students to develop skills in planning, partnerships, and leadership.



Members submitted applications for key roles, which were carefully reviewed to identify candidates with strong organizational, communication, and leadership skills. The team was assigned to various roles including Shark Tank event support, Business Partnership Recruitment Team, Marketing, and Fundraising with clear responsibilities and objectives for each officer. After this we spent time with each team discussing our expectations and trained them on how to reach them.

To maintain effective collaboration, the team uses **group messaging channels** and **shared tools** to track progress, coordinate tasks, and address challenges promptly. **Bi-weekly check-ins** helped ensure all members are aligned and aware of upcoming deadlines and priorities. Additionally, the team established protocols for sharing updates and feedback, promoting accountability, and encouraging proactive problem-solving. These systems within our officer team create a strong foundation for seamless teamwork and set the stage for a successful execution of Partner Pathways.

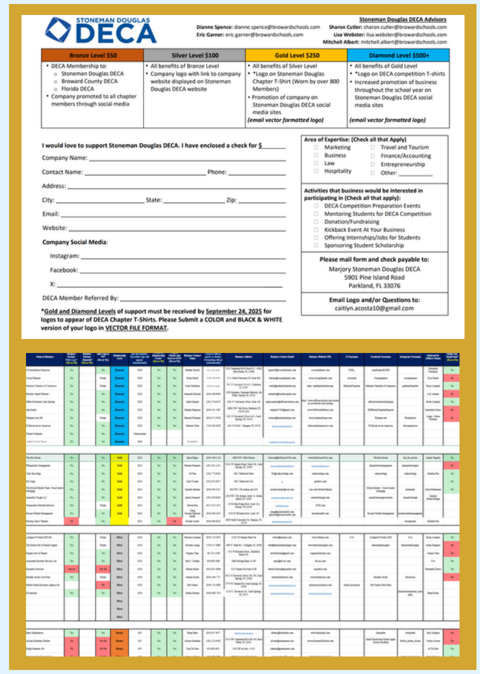
02 Obtaining Business Partners

AUG SEP

1. Outreach Strategy and Execution:

Targeted Outreach: Initial efforts focused on leveraging the chapter's strong local reputation within Parkland and surrounding communities. Many parents and local business owners are familiar with MSD DECA's large size and activities, providing a great starting point.

Multi-Channel Approach: The team employed a combination of cold calling and personalized emails to make initial contact with prospective partners.



2. Call-a-thons: Dedicated call-a-thon sessions were organized on **8/27 & 9/3** to **maximize outreach efficiency**, allowing team members to connect with numerous businesses in a focused timeframe.

Officer Engagement: Each officer was tasked with securing a specific number of partnerships, effectively utilizing their networks and developing crucial communication and sales skills. This decentralized approach broadened our reach significantly.

3. Presenting the Value Proposition:

Tiered Partnership Structure: Potential partners were presented with the **MSD DECA Professional Membership Form,** outlining four distinct levels of support: **Bronze ($50), Silver ($100), Gold ($250),** and **Diamond ($500+).** This tiered structure allowed businesses of various capacities to contribute meaningfully.

Clear Benefits: Each tier offered tangible benefits, clearly detailed on the form. These included DECA memberships, social media promotion to chapter members, logo placement with website links on the MSD DECA site, and prominent logo display on the official chapter T-shirt (for Gold and Diamond levels submitting vector formatted logos by the September 24, 2025 deadline).

4. Securing and Processing Partnerships:

Commitment Process: Interested businesses finalized their commitment by mailing the completed membership form, their check payable to Marjory Stoneman Douglas DECA, and, if applicable (Gold/Diamond tiers), their company logo in the required format to the school address provided. Interested businesses mailed their forms and checks directly to MSD DECA. Upon receipt, the CFO processed payments with the school bookkeeper while the BP team simultaneously logged sponsor details into a master spreadsheet. Finally, we sent confirmation emails to acknowledge receipt and solidify the professional relationship.

5. Partnership Acquisition Results

We successfully secured **45 partners**, surpassing our original goal of 35. While cash donations **totaled $8,350** (slightly under the $8,750 projection), the three "Transactional" partners provided essential Value-In-Kind (VIK) resources which directly reduced our project expenses and balanced the budget. This means we significantly exceeded our goal of 35 partners, highlighting this stage's success. With partnerships secured the focus shifted towards diligently fulfilling the promised benefits for each tier. This includes working with the partners' logos for the chapter shirt, and the social media shoutouts.

Sponsorship Tier	Partners Secured	Contribution Rate	Realized Revenue
Diamond	9	$500	$4,500
Gold	9	$250	$2,250
Silver	8	$100	$800
Bronze	16	$50	$800
Transactional	3	*In-Kind Goods*	
TOTAL	**45**		**$8,350**

03 Retaining & Engaging Business Partners

SEP FEB

1. Paragon Movie Night

On September 8th, we collaborated with Paragon Movie Theaters to host a movie night for our school's DECA chapter. Instead of monetary contributions, Paragon allowed us to invite students, free of charge, to a viewing of Superman. Each **ticket was valued at $14,** with **52 students** in attendance. This event created a direct engagement opportunity with a local business while supporting our mission of fostering engagement so partners can see their impact on MSD DECA firsthand.

2. Cecile's Chapter-wide Social

On **January 14th,** we hosted our social with Cecile's Gourmet Italian Ice. This after-school event where Cecile's brings an ice cream truck to our school and provides free icees to DECA members. Instead of contributing through a traditional partnership, Cecile's supports our chapter by hosting this **interactive event.** With **150 members** attending, each received an **ice cream valued at $4.** The event not only gave students a treat, but also strengthened Cecile's connection to our chapter. This value-in-kind donation **offsets the member engagement costs**, reducing our overall expenses.

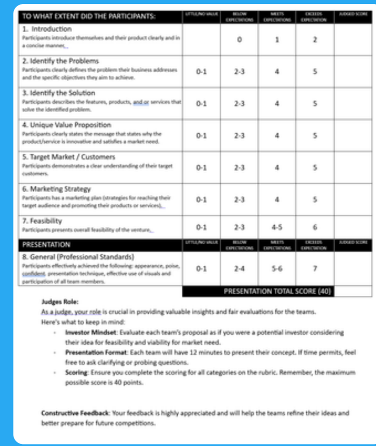
3. Shark Tank

Phase 1 - Logistics and Partnership:

Execution began in October with securing the MSD auditorium for the **event date of January 29th.** We immediately solidified our partnership with the Parkland Chamber of Commerce. This collaboration was vital, as they generously agreed to **provide $1,750 in funding** for **cash prizes,** lessening our expenses in our projected budget, as we planned to pay for it, and to recruit their members as **expert judges.** Through the duration of this project we have planned to have **monthly zoom sessions** to ensure we were on track and on the same page.

Phase 2 - Recruitment and Mentorship:

Our marketing team launched a campaign to **recruit competitors**, focusing on **senior DECA classes** already developing business plans. By the **November 15th deadline**, we had secured **7 competing teams.** A unique and critical component of our execution was the mentorship program. We connected each competing team with a local business leader or a member of the Parkland Chamber. These **mentors** met with their teams to provide **real-world feedback** on business plans, help refine pitching strategies, and ensure all financial projections were realistic, bridging the gap between classroom theory and practical application.



TO WHAT EXTENT DID THE PARTICIPANTS:	LITTLE/NO VALUE	BELOW EXPECTATIONS	MEETS EXPECTATIONS	EXCEEDS EXPECTATION	JUDGED SCORE
1. Introduction Participants introduce themselves and their product clearly and in a concise manner.		0	1	2	
2. Identify the Problems Participants clearly defines the problem their business addresses and the specific objectives they aim to achieve.	0-1	2-3	4	5	
3. Identify the Solution Participants describes the features, products, and or services that solve the identified problem.	0-1	2-3	4	5	
4. Unique Value Proposition Participants clearly states the message that states why the product/service is innovative and satisfies a market need.	0-1	2-3	4	5	
5. Target Market / Customers Participants demonstrates a clear understanding of their target customers.	0-1	2-3	4	5	
6. Marketing Strategy Participants has a marketing plan (strategies for reaching their target audience and promoting their products or services).	0-1	2-3	4	5	
7. Feasibility Participants presents overall feasibility of the venture.	0-1	2-3	4-5	6	
PRESENTATION	LITTLE/NO VALUE	BELOW EXPECTATIONS	MEETS EXPECTATIONS	EXCEEDS EXPECTATION	JUDGED SCORE
8. General (Professional Standards) Participants effectively achieved the following: appearance, poise, confident, presentation technique, effective use of visuals and participation of all team members.	0-1	2-4	5-6	7	
	PRESENTATION TOTAL SCORE (40)				

Judges Role:

As a judge, your role is crucial in providing valuable insights and fair evaluations for the teams.

Here's what to keep in mind:

- **Investor Mindset**: Evaluate each team's proposal as if you were a potential investor considering their idea for feasibility and viability for market need.
- **Presentation Format**: Each team will have 12 minutes to present their concept. If time permits, feel free to ask clarifying or probing questions.
- **Scoring**: Ensure you complete the scoring for all categories on the rubric. Remember, the maximum possible score is 40 points.

Constructive Feedback: Your feedback is highly appreciated and will help the teams refine their ideas and better prepare for future competitions.

Phase 3 - Preparation and Preliminary Rounds:

To ensure the highest quality presentations for the main event, we executed a preliminary round. Teams were required to submit **3-minute pitch videos by January 12th.** These submissions were evaluated by MSD DECA officers and advisors, who then selected the **top five teams** to advance. We also hosted two "**Pitching 101**" practice sessions, open to all competitors, to help them build confidence and refine their presentations.

Phase 4 - The Culminating Event:

On **January 29th,** we executed the final Shark Tank event. The project team managed all **event-day logistics,** including technology, competitor coordination, and audience management. The **five finalist teams** pitched their business ideas to the panel of judges from the Parkland Chamber. The event was a major success, culminating in the **$1,750 in cash prizes** being awarded to the **top three teams**, fulfilling our mission to fund and foster student entrepreneurship.

Why:

The "Shark Tank Event" was the pillar of our project, designed not for direct profit but for **meaningful partner engagement and retention.** A simple sponsorship is transactional; our Shark Tank was relational. By inviting our business partners to serve as expert judges and team mentors, we transformed them from **passive donors** into **active participants.** This gave them a tangible role and allowed them to witness the direct impact of their support on student development, providing a powerful "Return on Investment" that a logo on a shirt cannot. This active engagement is the engine for our retention strategy, as it builds the genuine, **long-term relationships** that ensure our partners remain invested in our chapter's success.

4. Competition Prep Nights

In preparation for the Florida Career Development Conference, we also conducted three prep nights for DECA members to practice and hone their skills for competition. During these prep nights on 2/11, 2/19, and 2/24, members had the opportunity to present their papers, practice their roleplay skills, and deliver their pitch decks to our business partners to receive constructive feedback. For this event, we reserved our school's media center in early September and contacted business partners 2-4 weeks in advance to offer three possible dates for flexibility. Tables were set up as judging stations for each partner to engage with students and review their competitive skills one-on-one. The event's purpose is to allow members to **gain critical evaluations** of their performance from real world professionals that they can apply to their respective competition events as a means of building confidence, professionalism, and quality within their work. These events play a fundamental role in two of our main goals, **honing our members' professional skills** and **engaging with our partners** to incentivize their return to our chapter next year.

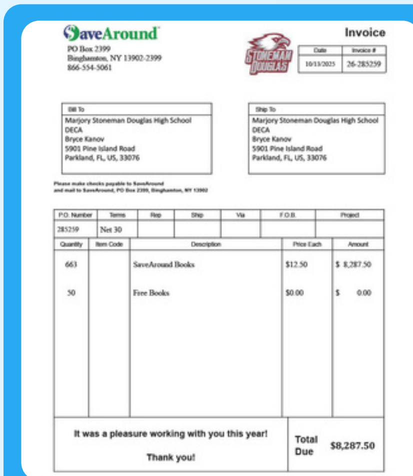
04 Alternative Profit Streams

OCT

Coupon Book Sales

As an alternative way to raise funds for our chapter, while still collaborating with a professional member, our team decided to utilize coupon books for an additional profit stream. In order to meet our goal of reaching **$15,000 in profit**, the executive team ordered **713 books** for each DECA chapter member to sell. During the first week of the school year, our team contacted SaveAround via phone call to figure out the logistics of the order-at what discounted price we could purchase the books, which coupon books we would order based on the stores selection, and to obtain an estimate of how many we would purchase.

After deciding on these factors and following up with SaveAround, our team created an Activities Approval Form to submit to our school for approval of listing the coupon books on the Broward County School District's online E-store and for permission to distribute the books to students. The E-store's automatic tallying features ensured that all of the funds generated from coupon book sales were accounted for accurately and were able to be transferred to our school's DECA chapter directly. Additionally, we created a Purchase Order form to send SaveAround that detailed the quantities, prices, and type of coupon books we intended to buy. In collaboration with our business partner SaveAround, we **secured 663 books at a discounted price of $12.50 each, with 50 books free,** lessening our expenses from our planned budget.


SaveAround
PO Box 2399
Binghamton, NY 13902-2399
866-554-5061

Invoice

Date	Invoice #
10/13/2025	26-285259

Bill To	Ship To
Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School DECA Bryce Kanov 5901 Pine Island Road Parkland, FL, US, 33076	Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School DECA Bryce Kanov 5901 Pine Island Road Parkland, FL, US, 33076

Please make checks payable to SaveAround
and mail to SaveAround, PO Box 2399, Binghamton, NY 13902

P.O. Number	Terms	Rep	Ship	Via	F.O.B.	Project
285259	Net 30					

Quantity	Item Code	Description	Price Each	Amount
663		SaveAround Books	$12.50	$ 8,287.50
50		Free Books	$0.00	$ 0.00

It was a pleasure working with you this year!

Thank you!

Total Due $8,287.50

2026 Broward & Surrounding Areas SaveAround® Coupon Book

By the third week of September, the books were ordered. Once received by the beginning of October, the books were counted and sorted by DECA officers to efficiently distribute the books to each student. We utilized our DECA chapter's membership form to formulate a sign out sheet for members to add acknowledgement that they are participating in the fundraiser. Students sold coupon books for **$25 each** directly to their family, friends, and other members of the community. Our final revenue from this initiative was **$17,825**, with our profit reaching an estimated **$9,538.**

05 Sincere Gratitude

FEB

To secure future renewals, we executed a formal gratitude campaign immediately following our major events. We mailed **hand-written cards** to our key stakeholders (The Parkland Chamber of Commerce and the rest of our partners) to recognize their pivotal role in our financial and educational success. Additionally, we passed on an **impact report** detailing specific statistics of how many students qualified at the state and international level to ensure our partners knew both the fiscal and mentoring impact they have made on our chapter. This final step ensured every partner felt valued, solidifying the emotional connection necessary for long-term collaboration.

V. Monitoring and Controlling

A. Monitoring

To ensure our sales project stayed organized and goal-focused, we set up a system to track our progress with partner communications and revenue goals. We used **weekly updates**, shared **task lists**, and **regular reviews** of all communications to monitor how each part of the project was performing. This allowed us to identify any delays or challenges early and make adjustments to keep everything on schedule. To maintain internal alignment, we held bi-weekly meetings to give and get regular updates. By consistently tracking progress, we were able to stay aligned as a team, prioritize tasks effectively, and maintain strong relationships with our business partners throughout the process. These strategies also helped us ensure that each step of the project, from outreach to event execution, met our standards for quality and efficiency.

Partner Pathways Schedule

8/11 – 9/17 – Obtain business partners
9/8 – Paragon movie night
9/17 – 9/24 – Finalize business partners
9/29 – Interest meeting / leadership form
10/1 – Coupon book fundraiser
10/8 – Decide and finalize officer board
10/6 or 10/8 – Speak in classes about joining Shark Tank / promote on Instagram (DECA and ours) / DECA reminders / senator reminders
10/14 – First Shark Tank competition meeting – open competition form
11/7 – Shark Tank competition form closes (include if participants want a mentor and information about their idea)
11/14 – Competition list finalized (pair participants with a mentor if requested)
12/10 – December social featuring Cecile's
1/5 – 1/9 – Preliminary submission window (top 5 will | continue)
1/13 – Finalize Shark Tank competitors
1/26 – Shark Tank practice session / final logistics run-through
1/29 – Shark Tank

Schedule

To keep partnership outreach and sales activities on track, our team used a shared Google Calendar to keep track of meetings, updates, and important deadlines. This made it easy to see who was responsible for each task. We also used Google Sheets to track progress on partner responses, participation in Shark Tank, and recruiting members for the leadership board. These were reviewed during team meetings and advisor check-ins so we could find any delays and adjust plans as needed. For major activities, like events with business partners, and other chapter meetings, we created simple timelines with steps and assigned tasks to team members. This helped ensure everything was finished on time. Using these tools and regular check-ins kept us organized, minimized confusion, and helped us reach both short-term tasks and long-term partnership goals.

Budget

We monitored our budget using a Google Spreadsheet to keep track of all income and expenses. This included money from coupon book sales, contributions from business partners, and costs for hosting the Shark Tank event, such as cash prizes and certificates. Each expense was entered as it happened so the team always had an up-to-date view of funds. The spreadsheet was reviewed during team meetings and advisor check-ins. This helped us notice any potential overspending or unexpected costs and make adjustments quickly. Before spending money, the team checked that each expense fit within the budget and supported our project goals and initiatives. By keeping clear records and reviewing them regularly, we were able to use resources efficiently, fund important events like Shark Tank, and stay on track financially. We used a two-pronged approach to ensure every dollar was accounted for.

1. **Google Sheet**: This tracked every cent for both revenue and expenses
2. **Advisor Check-ins**: Before purchasing anything, the budget was reviewed and approved by our advisors to ensure we were complying with all school policies regarding spending/earning money.

Project Quality

To make sure our project stayed high-quality, we tracked all major activities. For the leadership board, we carefully monitored recruitment to make sure all members were engaged and ready to contribute. For the Shark Tank event, we are keeping track of **participant readiness**, including who has confirmed their attendance, prepared their materials, and submitted business plans on time. We also gather feedback from advisors and hold regular team check-ins. This helps us spot potential issues early and make improvements to event planning and participant support. By staying organized and reviewing progress regularly, we are making sure both our day-to-day tasks and the upcoming Shark Tank event meet high standards and support the overall success of the project. Additionally, we implemented was reaching out to advisors and partners and asking for feedback. We did this to ensure, firstly, we were upholding a **positive reputation**, and secondly, to **ensure we were on track to reach our goals**.

B. Controlling

Challenges		Solutions
The lack of responses and slow communication from potential sponsors and business partners, via email, hindered our progress and impacted our intended timelines.	→	We hosted call-a-thons where many officers could call directly helping us expand our outreach and chance of success. This was effective as we gained 12 new business partners as well as retained previous ones
Interest in competing in the Shark Tank was minimal. We targeted seniors because they have to make a business plan for school, but they were overwhelmed with college applications, rendering them unresponsive	→	We reached out to juniors, who were more than willing to put in the extra work to create the business plan. This gave us a total of 7 teams, which is more than enough allowing us to continue with the event
Creating an effective committee was difficult because the students showed initial interest, but upon being reached out to, they did not meet their required deadlines nor respond in a timely manner.	→	We had an in person conversation with those who did not respond, truly emphasizing the benefits, while ensuring they knew they were not being forced into anything. This worked very well, as it led students to consider what they wanted out of this project, and be honest.

VI. Closing the Project

A. Evaluation of key metrics

P

EXCEEDED

Pioneer 35 Business Partnerships

We set out to establish a network of support for MSD DECA, **aiming to secure 35 partners.** We shattered this expectation by **finalizing 45** distinct business partnerships. This achievement verifies the effectiveness of our outreach strategy. By utilizing a tiered sponsorship model, emphasizing mutual benefit, and the call-a-thons, we converted interest into tangible support. These **45** partners provided not only the capital necessary to fund chapter operations but also created student internships and mentorships.

A

EXCEEDED

Achieve $15,000 in Profit

To ensure the financial stability of our chapter, we set an aggressive target of **$15,000 in profit.** By diversifying our revenue streams, we reached **$17,888.** While our Business Partnerships anchored the project with **$8,350** in contributions—driven by 8 Diamond-level partners—our new Coupon Book initiative proved to be a financial powerhouse. Selling **713** books generated **$9,538** in gross profit. Even after accounting for production costs and the **$1,850** allocated for Shark Tank prizes and snacks, the project remained highly profitable.

T

MET

Thrive with 90% Partner Retention

To ensure sustainability, we focused on relationship management rather than simple transaction. Our mid-year survey reflected exceptional results: **41 of our 45 partners (91%)** confirmed they will renew their partnership next year. Crucially, zero partners indicated they would leave the program; the remaining 4 respondents selected "maybe." This high retention rate validates our "immersive engagement" strategy.

H

EXCEEDED

Hone 85% of Members' Professional Skills

To validate Partner Pathways as a business incubator, we distributed a Reflection Survey to all participants following the Prep Sessions in preparation for the Shark Tank. The results confirmed that experiential learning yields tangible results. **90%** of respondents indicated they felt "significantly more confident" in their professional abilities (sales, networking, and project management). The remaining 10% reported that their skill level remained the same, with 0% reporting a decrease or negative experience.

Secured **45** active business partners

Generated **$17,888** in net profit

Achieved a projected **91%** partner retention rate

90% of participants reported significant growth in professional skills

B. Lessons Learned

What Worked Well	Areas of Improvement
Initiating	
Our early goal-setting and the interest meeting helped build momentum from the start. Reaching out to potential partners early gave us a strong understanding of what local businesses valued and made it easier to begin forming relationships. Selecting officers through an application process also helped us build a team with strengths in different areas.	We learned that some leadership challenges with our board emerged early, particularly with communication and follow-through. This caused delays in the first weeks of outreach and planning. In the future, providing a clearer leadership process with expectations and communication guidelines would help officers start strong.
Planning and Organizing	
Our planning tools such as the shared calendar, spreadsheets, and weekly check ins kept the project structured and helped the team stay coordinated. Once roles were clarified, officers handled their tasks more efficiently and the planning phase became more organized overall.	One area for improvement is finalizing timelines earlier. Tasks like preparing materials for Shark Tank would have benefited from more advance planning. Creating a detailed checklist for each milestone could also help prevent small steps from being overlooked.
Execution	
Our outreach efforts were very effective and the call-a-thons helped us exceed our partnership goal. Communication with partners improved throughout the project and our promotional efforts for Shark Tank resulted in strong engagement. Execution strengthened as officers gained more experience.	Some parts of execution, such as Shark Tank recruitment and event promotion, would have benefited from starting earlier. Several steps would have been smoother with more time. Building a more detailed execution timeline would help future teams avoid these challenges.
Monitoring and Controlling	
Our tracking systems helped us stay organized and address issues early, such as slow responses or low event interest. Our meetings and advisor check-ins supported timely adjustments and helped us maintain overall project quality. Budget reviews were consistent and kept our expenses aligned with project goals.	Using several platforms at once sometimes made monitoring less efficient. Grouping tracking into one system would make the process smoother and help prevent missed updates. Gathering more structured feedback earlier in the project would also help identify potential issues before they grow.

C. Recommendations for future projects

Although our project was and is successful, mistakes were bound to occur. Following are a few things we learned and would change if we had the generous opportunity to run this project again:

Broadening our Target Market:
We recommend broadening the scope of engagement by opening participation to students beyond MSD DECA members. Individuals from other organizations like clubs or even school can enhance diversity, foster greater competition, and promote broader community involvement. Additionally, organizing a separate competition for middle school students could introduce them to the fundamentals of entrepreneurship early, giving them a head start before high school. This initiative could also help build connections with future DECA members and strengthen the knowledge of participants for future events.

Expanding Outreach Techniques:
To significantly enhance the project's financial success and community ties, future fundraising initiatives should engage more DECA members in business outreach, rather than limiting the task to the leadership team. We recommend driving participation by incentivizing members to utilize their existing personal and family connections to secure new sponsors. Using this incentive program will motivate more general members to contribute to the financial strength of the chapter.

Increase Officer Positions and Departmental Focus

- The current leadership model relies heavily on a few founders, leading to concentrated workloads. Expanding the team ensures better efficiency and job delegation.
- Create New Specialized Teams: Recruit more student officers by creating additional, specialized teams that align with core project functions to enhance productivity and reduce workload on the founders.
- Maximize Assistance: The goal should be to recruit more student officers to maximize assistance with tasks like sponsorship outreach, activity planning, advertising, and job delegation

VII. Bibliography

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SaveAround Coupon Book (Fundraising): https://savearound.com/products/coupon-book-fundraising
Project Management Resources (General): https://www.atlassian.com/project-management
DECA Direct Online: https://www.decadirect.org/