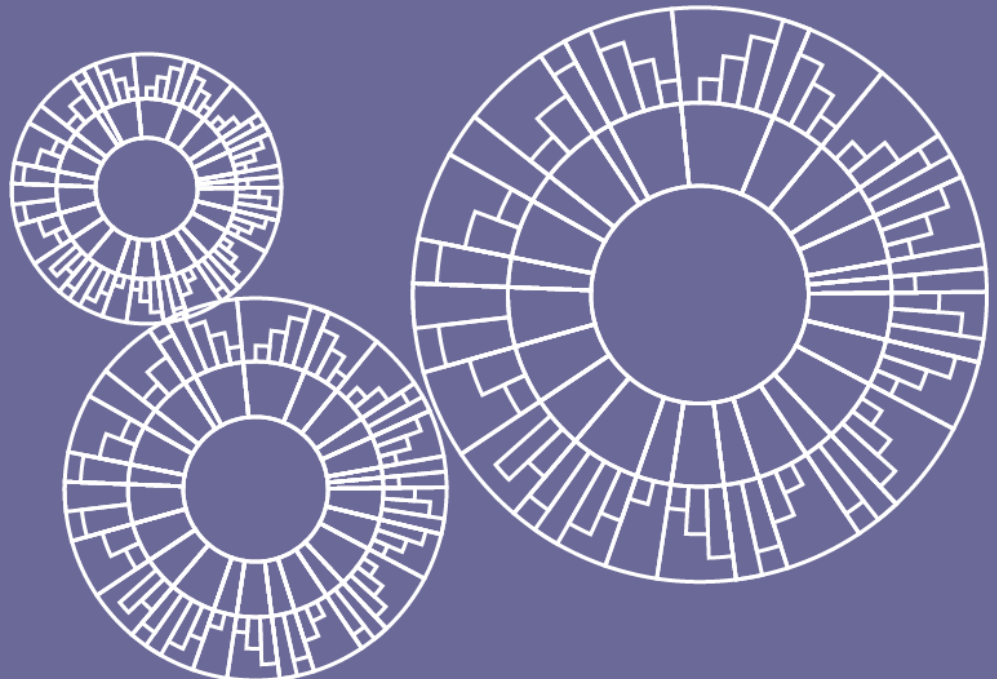


Partnering for Community Resilience

SOUTH AFRICAN CASE STUDIES



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Introduction

Proactive companies are recognising the strategic relevance of community resilience to their short- and long-term success. Community resilience is a positive dynamic between social, economic, and ecological systems that ensures community wellbeing and effective responses to shocks and disruptions, such as fires, droughts, or economic crises.

Yet, enhancing community resilience is a complex undertaking given that it involves a host of inter-related system elements, all of which implicate diverse role-players. To respond to this complexity, proactive companies are establishing innovative partnerships with local governments and other role-players to pursue shared resilience objectives.

When contemplating partnering for community resilience, important questions emerge for managers. For instance, how should you determine the scope of your involvement; how do you identify partners; and how can you, as the corporate partner, best contribute?

To support you in these efforts, this guide shares five in-depth case studies of companies engaging in partnerships for community resilience in South Africa:

- The community partnerships by Santam, a short-term insurer, focused on risk reduction in the Eden District (Western Cape Province) and the Ehlanzeni District (Mpumalanga Province);
- The water stewardship efforts of Woolworths, a food and clothing retailer, in the Ceres area in the Western Cape Province;
- The local economic development efforts of AngloGold Ashanti, a gold mining company, in eMalangeni District in the Eastern Cape Province; and
- The town restoration efforts of Nedbank, a retail bank, in Magaliesburg in Gauteng Province.

In this guide, we distil the key lessons from these case studies for corporate managers who are planning or implementing partnerships for community resilience. We expect these lessons to be useful for other participants in such partnerships, too.

The guide is structured around five guiding questions, as illustrated below. The first step is to identify a community or geographic area of focus and begin to explore its needs. Questions two, three, and four are part of an iterative cycle of identifying a strategically relevant and feasible objective, relevant partners, and the company's tangible contribution. The final question focuses on assessing the partnership's impacts and opportunities to continuously improve. Continuous, inclusive dialogue with diverse stakeholders underlies each of these steps.

Explore

Where should we focus and what are the needs?



For managers, a first step is to clearly define a geographic area in which community resilience is strategically relevant, and to explore the social and ecological dynamics in that area. Focusing on a particular geographical area is important because resilience is determined by local context, and because it helps you identify the right partners.

Often a partnership for resilience arises because a business has identified risks or opportunities for its own business within communities in which they operate or those of their suppliers or customers.

Because enhancing community resilience is a complex ambition, you should take time to explore the needs of the focal area. This involves conversations with diverse role-players to consider questions such as:

- What are the key social and ecological trends in this area, and how do they affect different stakeholders?
- What are the different perspectives and priorities for change in the area, and what resources and constraints do different actors have?

Our case study examples show the importance of working with other organisations in this exploration process:

During the 2000s, [Santam](#) managers noted growing insurance claims from customers in the Eden District in South Africa's Western Cape Province due to fires and floods caused by extreme weather events, the intensity and frequency of which were increasing due to climate change. They decided to focus attention on this area but they realised that they had no obvious response to growing climate risks. So, they embarked on a process of exploring the area in a collaboration with social and natural scientists to better understand why risks were increasing in the area and what might be done in response.

Managers at [Woolworths](#) realised that water security is becoming an increasing risk for the company's suppliers of fresh produce, and studies showed that this is especially so in the Ceres valley and surrounding areas in the Western Cape Province, where many fruit suppliers are located. Working with WWF-SA and a number of other partners, the managers initially worked with farmers to explore ways to increase these farms' water efficiency. This work showed that many farmers are already implementing sophisticated water efficiency measures and that the bigger problems are elsewhere, beyond the farm boundaries. In conjunction with farmers and others, Woolworths managers thus explored the area to better understand water risks at a catchment level.

At [Nedbank](#), managers realised that their success in enrolling and maintaining customers in small towns depended on the towns' economic and social prospects. The town of Magaliesburg, about an hour's drive from Johannesburg, was emblematic of this. It relied on agriculture and tourism, but these sectors had been weakening and businesses in the town were struggling. Managers thus focused on this town and they explored the area with the support of a community development organisation, Ranyaka, to better understand how they might support community resilience.

[AngloGold Ashanti](#) has had a long history of supporting local communities in the Eastern Cape Province, from where many of the companies' migrant workers have traditionally come. This has been an important signal of the company's commitment to these workers and their families, and it has also become important due to the South African government's expectation that mining companies contribute to local economic development in so-called labour-sending areas, which are often characterised by severe poverty and unemployment. They identified a particular area, the eMalangeni District of the Eastern Cape Province, as particularly important and engaged in comprehensive discussions with various local role-players, including the local government and traditional leaders, to better understand how they might contribute to the area.

Focus



What is a strategically relevant, yet feasible objective?

Building community resilience might involve a wide variety of objectives and corresponding initiatives, but it is important to focus your involvement on an objective that is both strategically relevant to your company and effectively achievable given available resources.

Identifying a clear, strategic motivation for your partnership, rather than a philanthropic one, often helps generate more commitment and resources from within your organisation. Thus, clarifying strategic relevance is also important so you can explain to your partners why your company is involved.

The partnership objective also needs to be feasible, so that you can agree on tangible actions in conjunction with your partners and recognise progress from working together. The key is to identify something that you can do together with others that will have far-reaching benefits for the community and for your company. This will depend on your business and the local context, so there are no “off the shelf” solutions. Our examples illustrate how these case study companies went about trying to focus their objectives.

Finally, there is a risk that when you identify a partnership objective that is aligned to your company’s strategic priorities, this may give rise to a focus on particular stakeholder groups at the expense of other groups and thereby affect the equitable nature of partnership impacts. The Santam case illustrates an example of this risk and how it was dealt with, as described below.

For [Santam](#) managers, a possible response to growing insurance claims from customers due to fires and floods in the Eden District might have been to increase premiums, but this would have had negative impacts on customers, the local community, and the business. They therefore sought ways to reduce or mitigate these risks.

From their discussions with scientists, they came to an important conclusion: While little could be done about the extreme weather events, there are important “proximate risk drivers” that determine whether such weather events result in loss of lives or property. For instance, the proper maintenance of a town’s drainage system plays a crucial role in whether or not a rainstorm results in a damaging flood, and the effectiveness of emergency response teams influences whether lives or assets are lost in this flood.

The managers realised that they might be able to influence such risk drivers and that doing so would benefit both their customers and their business. However, there was the possibility that the company’s efforts to reduce fire or flood risks for insured customers may transfer such risks to uninsured, poor communities. Such possible unintended consequences were considered explicitly and the Santam managers ensured that their efforts were focused not only on their clients but also on vulnerable communities. The feasible objective was therefore to identify and address the key risk drivers that increase disaster risk for all communities in the Eden District.

Based on their initial explorations, managers at [Woolworths](#) decided they needed to address water risks at a catchment level in the Ceres area, as this would have important benefits for their suppliers, the local community, and the company. Yet there were a host of issues, trends, and actors that were playing a role in catchment management in the area. In discussion with some of these actors, Woolworths managers identified the spread of alien plant species that consume much more water than indigenous plants (and they also cause greater fire risks) as a particularly important factor. A focus on eradicating alien vegetation in the Breede River catchment became the feasible objective targeted by the partnership.

[Nedbank](#) managers sought to enhance social and economic development in Magaliesburg, which would also improve the company's marketing prospects in that area. But this might involve a plethora of possible approaches. The managers discussed this with Ranyaka (a community development organisation) and realised that targeted interventions could catalyse locally driven initiatives to rejuvenate economic development. Establishing such local working groups became the feasible objective for the partnership.

[AngloGold Ashanti](#) managers realised that there were a multitude of ways to support economic development in the eMalangeni District, yet they needed to find something that addressed local needs and was also amenable to corporate support. In discussion with local role-players, they agreed that they could help facilitate a large-scale maize growing project on a specific piece of fallow land as a feasible objective with benefits for the local community and the company.

Partner



Who do we need to work with, and how?

Enhancing community resilience requires targeted, coordinated action that recognises the interconnected nature of economic, social, and environmental systems. Such interventions are often beyond the ambit of any single organisation or sector. Building resilience requires collaboration across business, government, civil society, and academic sectors.

Having at least an initial definition of the partnership objective helps in identifying who to bring to the table. That said, identifying and committing to a focus for the partnership necessarily involves all of the partners – so there is generally some iteration between identifying the right partnership objective and the right participants.

While there are a variety of role-players that might be involved, the most relevant partners are those that are best placed to help achieve the particular objective(s) of the partnership. The important thing is to bring together a set of partners whose resources and capabilities best complement each other – like pieces of a puzzle. These contributions need to be clearly identified and committed in a partnering agreement.

There may be a temptation to involve many partners to access diverse resources and to be inclusive, but this would also increase the complexity of the partnership. Our case studies suggest that it helps to keep resilience-building partnerships relatively small and focused.

It is also important to recognise that the negotiations involved in developing and adapting a partnering agreement are often tricky. Business, government, civil society, and academic role-players bring different ways of thinking and doing to the table, so it may take some time for their representatives to get to know and trust each other. This process is helped along by three practices of successful collaborators described in the Embedding Project's Guide on Leadership for Effective Partnering.

Let's take a look at how the case study companies identified their key partners.

Santam managers realised that numerous organizations are involved in addressing local risk factors, such as land cover and drainage systems. But the single most important organization at the local level is the district municipality's Disaster Risk Management (DRM) agency, which has a statutory responsibility to reduce risks (e.g., through flood mapping and preventing inappropriate building in flood areas), as well as managing disaster response. However, these agencies often struggle to live up to their responsibilities, given financial and human resource constraints. Santam managers realised that the Eden District DRM agency should be the main partner in their quest to reduce disaster risks in the area. They agreed on a Memorandum of Understanding that outlined the objectives and partners' responsibilities in the partnership, though they recognized that things may change over time.

Woolworths managers learnt that various government agencies, as well as farmers, their associations, and NGOs, are involved in attempts to reduce invasive alien vegetation, but they often fail to keep pace with the spreading plants. Fortunately, WWF-SA and their local partners were already putting efforts in place to better coordinate the diverse role-players. Woolworths identified WWF-SA and their local network as key partners that they wanted to support to achieve their shared objective. This was facilitated by the fact that Woolworths already had an overarching partnership with WWF-SA to address environmental issues in key supply chains.

Nedbank managers might have worked with a multitude of stakeholders to support local community development in Magaliesburg. Instead, they recognised the benefits of working with Ranyaka, a community development organization that focused on fostering local initiatives for community development. Ranyaka had a conceptual approach, experience, and existing networks in the local community that might be leveraged by Nedbank's support.

AngloGold Ashanti managers engaged in a consultative process involving the local district municipality, land-owners, and others to develop a shared vision for how to develop community land through maize cultivation. They also realised that additional agricultural skills would be necessary, as well as a guaranteed customer for the maize – they therefore involved SAB Miller (which later became part of AB InBev), as they could provide an offtake commitment and they also had an existing program to support emerging farmers.

Commit



How can our company make a tangible contribution?

The prior questions all help you to define the corporate contribution that your company can make that will lead to a tangible difference. By developing a thorough understanding of the current efforts currently underway in the focal area, they can be augmented, rather than undermined. Negotiating the partnering objective and developing a partner agreement will help you clarify how your corporate contribution best complements the resources and capabilities of your partners.

It is important to think expansively about what resources and capabilities your business can bring to the table. There may be a temptation for your partners to foreground your financial contributions as the primary, or even the only, contribution from your business. This could represent a missed opportunity because there are often other important resources that a business can provide, such as knowledge or networks (as illustrated in the examples below).

It is also important to consider whether your contribution might replace or pre-empt the statutory responsibilities of government. This may be a problem if it erodes the accountability of the relevant department or agency. A business contribution is likely more effective and legitimate if it complements rather than replaces government responsibilities. In our case studies, companies either worked in conjunction with the government in achieving shared objectives (e.g., Santam) or provided complementary resources that served to make the government more effective (e.g., Woolworths).

The outcomes of these conversations will depend on the local context and the company in question. Corporate contributions to partnerships for community resilience may vary widely. Our case studies suggest that in some partnerships, the corporate partner provides a very specific input, and this is often funding to support another intermediary actor (see the Woolworths and Nedbank examples below). This is the more likely approach when the key required resources or capabilities exist outside the company.

Alternatively, the company may become more involved in a “hands-on” way, offering a broader array of inputs to the partnership, such as knowledge and management skills (as in the examples of Santam and AngloGold Ashanti). This is more likely the case when the company has rare and valuable resources or capabilities that are important in addressing a gap in existing efforts.

Santam initially focused on providing the Eden District DRM agency funding to build its capacity to manage disaster risks. For instance, this included the provision of equipment and training to local firefighting departments. It also included support for “catalytic projects,” such as providing the funds to pilot an automatic message board along one of the main roads in the area to help demonstrate its benefits in order to justify its inclusion in the municipal budget. As the partnership progressed, a broader spectrum of corporate contributions emerged, with a focus on knowledge and networks. The partnership realised that the company had a rare and valuable resource that could help the DRM agency: risk assessment data, including digital elevation and flood models. This data could strengthen not just the DRM agency’s disaster response, but could also help reduce risks by influencing the municipality’s land use plans. Santam also contributed by connecting the DRM agency personnel with national meetings and programs on effective disaster risk management.

AngloGold Ashanti also developed a more “hands-on” approach to supporting agricultural development in the eMalangeni district. Over and above providing funding for crucial infrastructure, such as fencing, it took responsibility for project management and for ensuring that key role-players, such as AB InBev, stayed on board. This project management function made good use of expertise situated within the company and also helped address a key gap in previous efforts to foster agricultural development in the area, especially because of the diversity of local role-players, whose ongoing support and cooperation was required to achieve the desired outcome.

[Woolworths](#) demonstrated a different approach in its partnership to address water risks in the Breede catchment. Working with WWF-SA and its local partners, Woolworths managers recognised that a lack of coordination and trust between local actors was hampering alien vegetation clearing efforts. To overcome this, the company funded a four-year position dedicated to pooling resources from diverse sources and to improving coordination and trust between key role-players, including between farmers and government agencies. The company's involvement is thus largely limited to providing this funding, with WWF-SA and its local partners playing a more active role in supporting the local coordinator on a day-to-day basis.

Like Woolworths, [Nedbank](#) opted for a more indirect role, based on the recognition that the community development organisation Ranyaka had the knowledge, experience, and networks that would help galvanise local initiatives to enhance local economic development in Magaliesburg. Its main contribution has thus been to support Ranyaka in implementing a structured process, in which local role-players are supported to develop context-relevant social and economic development initiatives. Nedbank managers do participate in some of the local workshops that are organised as part of this process, but they do not play a prominent facilitating role.

Learn



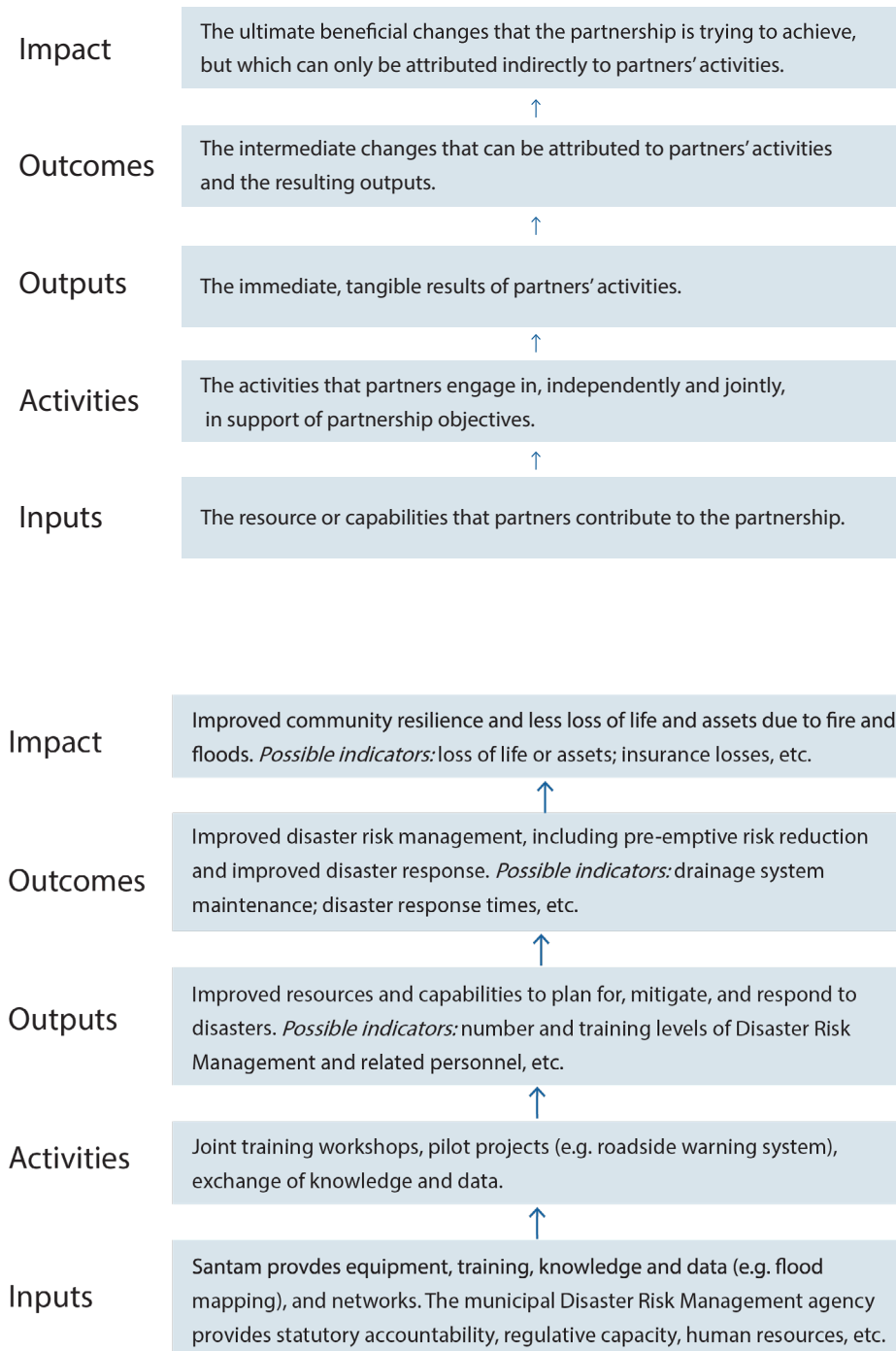
How do we assess impacts in order to improve?

As in any change or development effort, it is vital to assess progress against your stated objectives. This will help the partners revise their plans, activities, and partnering agreement to ensure continuous improvement and to address possible unintended negative impacts. It is also necessary to transparently report to other stakeholders about the initiative. Local communities need to be both participants and audience in such monitoring efforts.

Monitoring progress is assisted by developing a logic framework that summarises how the partners' inputs or resources and the partnership activities are expected to lead to particular outputs, outcomes, and impacts, each of which can be matched with specific indicators that need to be measured.

Outputs are the tangible, immediate results of project activities. Using the Santam example for illustration, a measurable output might be the number of training workshops for firefighters. The resulting outcome is the enhanced capacity of the local government's Disaster Risk Management agency, which may be measured, for instance, in terms of improvements in firefighters' response times. Finally, the resulting, intended impacts are reduced loss of life or assets due to fires and other disasters.

The following figure provides a generic description of the elements of a logic framework, as well as illustrative examples from Santam's partnership with the Eden District Municipality, including possible measurement indicators.



Mapping and measuring these different layers helps assess both the tangible, direct consequences of partnership activities and the more indirect, ultimate impacts. It also helps elaborate and continuously test the assumptions that link the partnership's activities to its intended impacts.

Monitoring progress is by definition a comparison across time. To enable this, it is helpful to develop a baseline at or near the commencement of the resilience building effort. Measuring and reporting on progress in subsequent years can then compare changes against this baseline.

While such progress reviews should focus on explicit objectives of the partnership, they should also give attention to unintended positive or negative effects.

While such progress reviews should focus on explicit objectives of the partnership, they should also give attention to unintended positive or negative effects. As outlined above, one such possible unintended consequence might be that the company contribution might replace or pre-empt the government fulfilling its statutory responsibilities, so this risk will need to be borne in mind in ongoing monitoring efforts. A second risk is that the partnership efforts have unequal benefits for different groups, so the monitoring process should pay particular attention to partnership outcomes and impacts for vulnerable communities.

Conclusion

This guide provides five key questions to help managers reflect as they initiate, design, and implement impactful partnerships for community resilience. At each stage, these questions are brought to life with a set of case studies to help you see how things unfold in practice. These case studies help demonstrate that with the right planning, businesses can play a proactive and helpful role in supporting community resilience.

Is your company contemplating a partnership for community resilience? Are you currently engaged in one? Either way, reach out to us. We would like to hear about your experiences: community@embeddingproject.org.

Additional Resources

There are a variety of resources on community resilience and related concepts, though many of them develop more specific and technical definitions of resilience than the broad and inclusive approach we adopt in this guide. We recommend a short report, “Applying resilience thinking: Seven principles for building resilience in social-ecological systems,” published by the Stockholm Resilience Centre and available online [here](#).

A guide on “Sustainability through partnerships” is available from the Network for Business Sustainability, [here](#). In addition, there are a range of initiatives that focus on this theme and some of them provide additional resources – see, e.g., The Partnering Initiative.

About the Embedding Project

The Embedding Project is a collaboration between leading sustainability researchers and practitioners undertaking pioneering work on embedding sustainability globally. By facilitating global communities of practice, we gather the best available knowledge and, working with our practitioner members, we create practical assessments, guidebooks and tools that help you chart your company's path to good business.

Our work is anchored in a review of prior academic and practitioner work on embedding sustainability conducted in 2010 for the Network for Business Sustainability that resulted in a framework to guide companies in their sustainability efforts. Our framework charts a portfolio of organizational practices that, together, lead to embedding and highlight the importance of balancing your efforts to deliver on your sustainability commitments while laying the foundation for the changes that will help you become more sustainable.

The initial framework was enthusiastically received by the business community and in response to requests from organizations for more information and guidance on implementation, Dr. Bertels in partnership with the Network for Business Sustainability brought together a dozen leading global companies to form an Embedding Sustainability Working Group to test and refine the framework. Working for three years with global practitioners, the framework has now been refined into a practices assessment tool that charts an organization's maturity and embeddedness.

We invite you and your company to participate in this ongoing research and join other companies leading this effort. The Embedding Project can help you understand your past efforts, identify gaps, benchmark against your peers, prioritize next steps, and provide the guidance to do so. Our partner companies benefit through opportunities to learn from their peers in facilitated and structured processes that explore the topics that matter to you.

To learn more about how the Embedding Project could support you and your company, visit us at embeddingproject.org.

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