



Foundations for Fostering Partnerships in Head Start and Early Head Start



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Program Management and Fiscal Operations

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Introduction

Foundations for Fostering Partnerships in Head Start and Early Head Start

All grantees create and foster partnerships. The Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) require programs to establish ongoing collaborative relationships and partnerships with community organizations. Through these connections, programs are able to take an active role in promoting coordinated systems of comprehensive early childhood services to eligible children and families in their community ([45 CFR §1302.53\(a\)-\(b\)](#)). Grantees commonly partner with different types of organizations and institutions, including child welfare services, public school systems, and non-Head Start early care and education programs.

Partnerships can provide great benefits. These include expanding innovations, streamlining services, maximizing funding and resources, and most importantly, increasing benefits for children and families. Each partnership is unique, reflecting the community, available resources, and presenting needs. Developing partnerships takes time and involves trust, relationship-building, careful planning, ongoing assessment, and periodic evaluation.

This resource, *Foundations for Fostering Partnerships in Head Start and Early Head Start*, provides foundational concepts to help deepen grantees' understanding of the core issues that impact partnerships.



Partnership Tip: Potential Partners

Possible partners include:

Private and Nonprofit Sectors	Public Sector
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child care providers• Community service providers• Parents• Heads of neighborhood associations and community organizations• Philanthropic foundations, national and community• Employers• Union leaders• Banks• Community Development Corporations• Chamber of Commerce president or chief executive officer (CEO)• Hospital CEO or department head• University leaders• United Way executive director or volunteers• Religious leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public school principals, superintendents, teachers• Parent-Teacher Association representatives (PTA)• School board members• Mayor and council members• Governor and state representatives• Directors of county and state departments and agencies• State Child Care Administrator• Police chief and officers• Head of city parks and recreation departments



Stages of Partnerships

Foundations for Fostering Partnerships in Head Start and Early Head Start

Each partnership is unique. Sometimes, as a partnership is developing, it follows predictable stages that, when navigated skillfully, contribute to success. These stages are not unlike traditional phases where the development of a strong relationship encounters struggles as the partners learn more about each other and work to build trust and respect. The stages listed below may serve as a guide for organizations. They provide examples of how partnerships evolve from beginning relationships to having enhanced levels of communication, collaboration, commitment, and partnership.

Stage 1 | Non-Partnering: The Singles Stage

A small group of individuals representing different programs, organizations, or other entities come together to discuss their programs and ways to enhance services to children and families.

Stage 2 | Pre-Partnering: The Searching Stage

The program representatives reach out to include other community members working with families and children. They talk often about their common goals and (less often) about the practices and philosophies of their respective programs and their perceptions of one another.

Stage 3 | Active Partnering: The Courtship Stage

Members consolidate into an ongoing working group. They agree on a unifying theme and make a joint commitment to work together. To build greater trust and ownership, they share more detailed information about their programs and the children and families they serve. Based on this information, they create a shared vision of an enhanced service delivery system, what it would look like and how it would work. They develop a mission statement and a set of goals to guide their future actions. Establishing shared leadership and responsibility, they set basic ground rules for working together and develop ways to support and advance partnership planning.

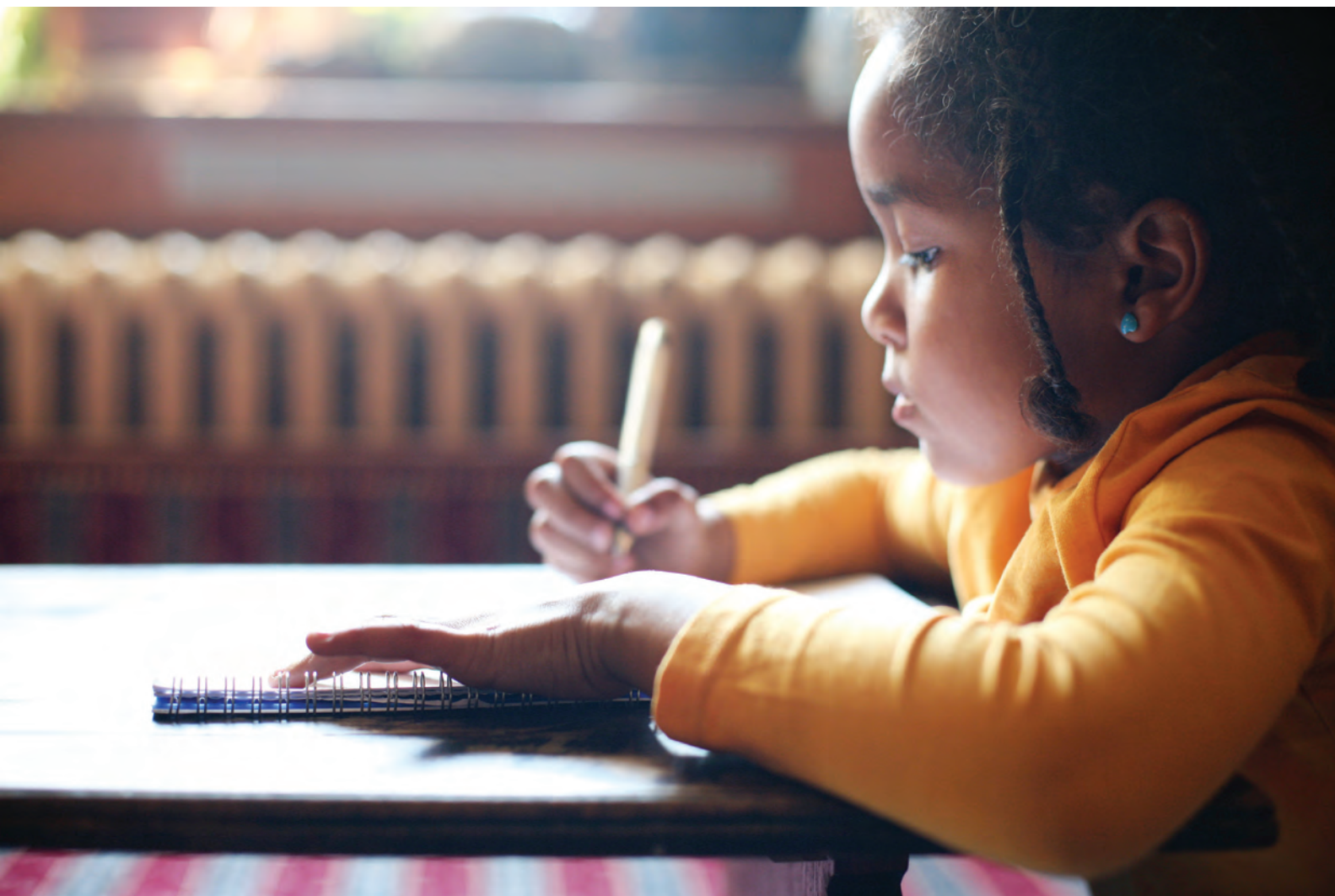
Stage 4 | Consolidated Partnering: The Bonding Stage

Focusing on a specific geographic area, partners begin to design a partnership structure that incorporates the elements of their shared vision. They discuss resources and explore ways to support the partnership's goals. They make concrete decisions about design and staffing. As

they work with regulatory and funding agencies and other community programs, the partners are united in their goals. They also develop strategies, systems, and interagency agreements to put their plans into action. Together, they begin to implement the partnership structure, including the governance structure where applicable, knowing that some things will work well and others will need more consideration.

Stage 5 | Going to Scale: The Commitment Stage

Partners are thoroughly committed to ensuring the partnership fully benefits those it is designed to serve, advances the capacity of all staff, and achieves positive, measurable outcomes for all children and families. They regularly address opportunities and review issues of concern as they occur, working together to reach the best possible resolution. They learn from experience and build on what works well. The partners apply their sound evaluation and communication systems to help them pinpoint where change is needed, make necessary mid-course adjustments, and assess outcomes.



Characteristics of Successful Partnerships

Foundations for Fostering Partnerships in Head Start and Early Head Start

Successful partnerships¹:

- Communicate regularly, openly, honestly, and transparently
- Have a shared purpose and clear goals that drive collaboration
- Build trust as the foundation of effective relationships that drives engagement and leads to results
- Aim to achieve positive results and regularly measure their progress
- Engage families as equal partners and include them when developing programs and services
- Are broad-based and fully include a diverse group of key stakeholders from the beginning
- Generate greater public and private support by engaging powerful champions, (e.g., prominent organizations, elected officials, local celebrities, etc.) to advocate for the goals of the partnership
- Establish clear governance structures that define partner roles and responsibilities
- Establish and adhere to a set of ground rules that guide the partnership in its work
- Are flexible, adopt an innovative mindset, and adapt to changing conditions and resources
- Cultivate teamwork, enabling the entire group to benefit from the partners' collective strengths and contributions
- Identify and settle conflict swiftly and creatively resolve challenges
- Understand and work through the five stages of partnership development
- Work to maintain momentum and stability while sustaining the group's impact over time

As partnerships are being developed, it is important to remember a few basic assumptions that will help the group develop more smoothly. An early key to success is making sure that, from the beginning, all partners share the same vision and mission and agree to the anticipated results. This mission can be used as a focal point to remind partners of the value and importance of the work ahead. While partnerships are not simple or easy, developing and following these basic strategies will help keep the partnership on track.

Partners benefit by considering the following basic strategies when working together:

Share a Vision

- Determine a shared vision of quality the partnership can commit to and revisit this often.
- Establish principles for action² and a shared philosophy and mission. These provide a solid foundation and focus for the partnership and can be the determining factor if misunderstandings occur.
- Identify and regularly assert the benefits of the partnership for children and families and for each partner, including why working collaboratively matters.

- Start small. Set realistic expectations for progressing toward the vision of quality. Remember that systemic change is a long-term process.
- Create opportunities for everyone involved to feel successful.

Communicate

- Create and sustain a spirit of openness, flexibility, transparency, and confidence about the partnership.
- Decide how and when partners will communicate, exchange information, and address emerging issues.

For more information about communicating, see Communications.

Work at It

- Establish a team identity that defines the partnership's values (e.g., trust, respect, integrity, empathy, inclusion, and communication) and guides how the group will work together.³
- Commit to all aspects of the partnership (e.g., vision, expectations, financial obligations, legal requirements and standards, systems, resources, etc.).
- Educate all entities and parties about applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.
- Define success and what it would look like, document progress, celebrate accomplishments, and apply what the partnership has learned to future work.
- Remember that successful partnerships create mutual benefits. This requires ongoing connecting, expressing, and communicating.

Clarify Expectations

- Begin by developing a common understanding of, and agreement with, the funding expectations. Place particular emphasis on the roles and accountability of all parties in ongoing monitoring; for example:
 - What needs to be monitored and by whom?
 - What relevant data needs to be collected, how often, and by whom?
 - How is the data aggregated and analyzed?
 - What is the process for responding to issues and making course corrections?
 - How and with whom are results shared?
 - What is the process for identifying and replicating promising practices?
- Develop a detailed, written legal agreement with clear, measurable expectations tailored to the partnership's specific needs. Borrow from others' agreements only as applicable to the partnership. Seek legal counsel throughout the agreement development.
- Put all expectations in writing (e.g., who does what, how, when) and specify expected outcomes for all parties.

For more information about creating partnership agreements, see Negotiations and Agreements.

Reach Out

- Reach out to the community to create more support for the partnership and access additional resources.
- Seek advice from internal specialists, particularly legal and financial specialists, and as many training and technical assistance (T/TA) resources as possible for all aspects of the partnership.
- Articulate the partnership's goals to federal and state officials.
- Network with, and learn from, colleagues who have experience with similar partnerships.

Partnership Tip: Organizational Readiness

When you are about to become involved in a partnership, first determine your organizational readiness.

Considerations include:

- Why are we thinking about partnering? Are we ready?
- How will this help our program support children and families?
- Do we have a current and comprehensive community assessment?
- Have we analyzed the community assessment to determine what is really needed?
- Are we the most appropriate agency to provide the services needed by our families?
- What is the partnership model or structure that best fits our families' needs?
- Who are our potential partners? Are they ready?
- What do our partners have to offer us? What can we offer them?
- Who benefits the most from the partnership? Is there a mutual benefit?
- Do we have buy-in from the leadership of our organization? Have the governing body/ Tribal Council and Policy Council been involved in discussions?
- Do we have the organizational capacity?
- Do we have the financial or fiscal infrastructure to manage this partnership?
- Have we developed a funding and a cost allocation plan?
- Have we researched all types of funding? Have we talked to our peers about their successes and challenges in leveraging resources?
- What do we do if we aren't successful in leveraging other funds?
- Are we clear in our values?
- What regulations may be a challenge to meet?
- Have we built in a monitoring and tracking strategy?
- Do we have a plan for conflict resolution?
- Who will sign the final partnership agreement?

Shaping the Partnership: Key Planning Steps

Foundations for Fostering Partnerships in Head Start and Early Head Start

A number of key steps are recommended when planning a partnership that includes sharing resources and managing funds from different sources.

Step 1 | Bring Key Stakeholders Together and Initiate the Partnership Process

At the outset of any serious planning effort that may lead to establishing a partnership, it is essential to bring identified stakeholders together as early as possible. Include representatives and organizations that provide relevant services and encourage their active participation in dialogue and planning from the beginning. Early engagement of potential partners will foster good will and enhanced prospects for success over the long run. Carefully consider ways to involve family representatives in the partnership; these are your ultimate consumers of services and primary beneficiaries.

The partners can initiate the partnership process by establishing ground rules for working together, brainstorming the vision, and reaching consensus on goals for the early childhood partnership. These discussions are essential to formulating agreed-upon broad strategies and next steps for the partnership. Whenever appropriate, the partners may seek endorsement of their agreed-upon approach from state and local political leaders and major funding sources.

Step 2 | Conduct Community Assessment

The community assessment describes the community's strengths, needs, and resources, and the diverse needs of the families who may receive services. It also takes into consideration the community's history, economic and political scene, and challenges. In short, it is a systematic process for analyzing the gap between services currently provided through the program and existing community service providers, as well as the vision and goals established by the newly formed partnership in Step 1. The community assessment also provides baseline information for carrying out Steps 3–8. The process for conducting the assessment, or reviewing and updating an existing assessment, not only results in critical information, but can also strengthen the partnership. Other benefits of a well-designed and implemented community assessment include:

- Documenting needs and gaps in services
- Identifying potential resources
- Informing the partnership's vision, goals, and strategies to meet the needs of children and families in the community
- Building consensus and buy-in for supporting those identified needs

- Expanding opportunities for partnering with other community resources
- Identifying benchmarks to measure progress

Step 3 | Develop the Partnership Structure

Partnerships can build on existing program structures or form under a new structure that better meets the needs and goals of the partnership as informed by the community assessment findings, requirements of funding sources, and available resources and funding. The partnership structure is typically formalized through a business contract, memorandum of agreement (MOA), or memorandum of understanding (MOU). If the partnership is forming as part of another sponsoring organization such as a state-level department or agency, that governance structure must align with the HSPPS and the Head Start Act. Regional program specialists can be conferred with in these instances.

Step 4 | Identify Funding Sources

Each partner will come to the table with different resources for funding the activities of the partnership. Sometimes additional resources are needed to achieve the identified goals. It is helpful for each partner to identify the specific fiscal resources they can contribute and to familiarize themselves with the policies or rules of each potential funder as they relate to supporting partnerships. In particular, pay close attention to whether any funding sources require match or in-kind contributions.

Step 5 | Develop the Budget

The partnership's budget is an essential part of planning and fiscal operations. Because partnering around resources involves carefully and intentionally accounting for the budgets of two or more programs, fiscal planning for partnerships is far more complex than budgeting for a single agency. Budget development for partnerships may also require coordinating additional services (e.g., health, facilities, or training) that may be provided "in-kind" and not monetized in the usual way. Collaborative budget models are likely to be shaped by the following factors:

- Who are the partnering agencies at the community level?
- Where is the service provided and who is providing the service?
- What are the principal funding sources?
- Why was the partnership undertaken and what program goals are the partners seeking to achieve?

Step 6 | Decide Program Management Issues

While partnerships can leverage significant resources to support services for children and families, they can also pose significant program management challenges for staff and families. For this

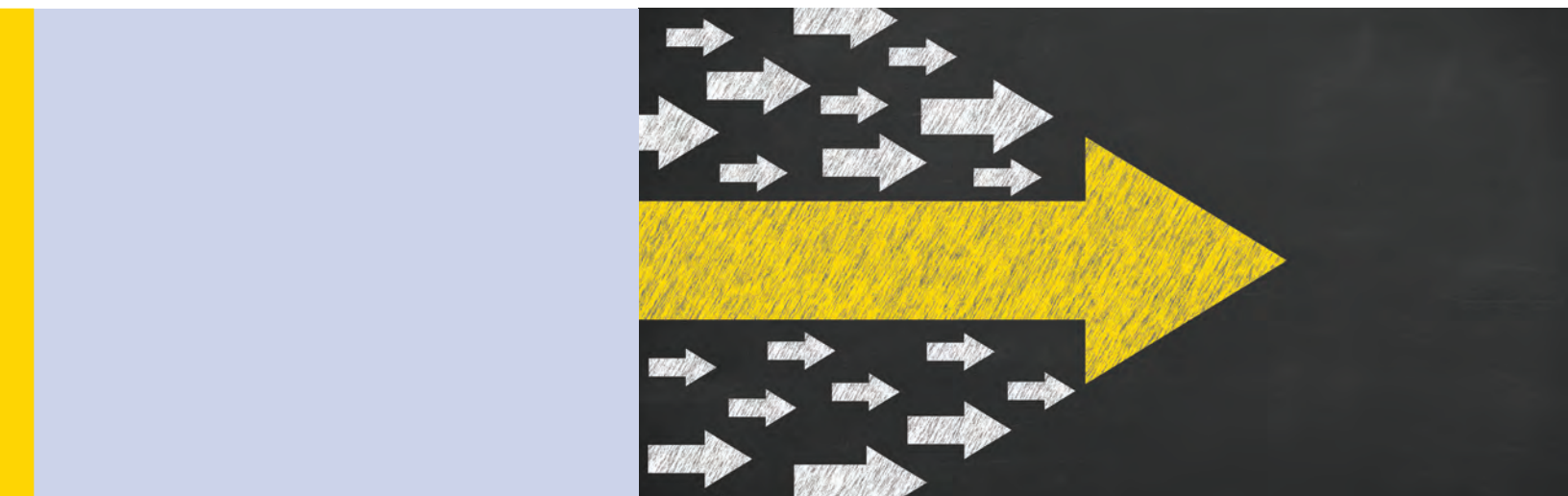
reason, partnerships are strongly advised to formalize all collaboration with programs and community providers—and, as appropriate, state or regional agencies and programs—through an MOA or other mutually acceptable formal document that outlines in detail who is responsible for providing what program services and the resources that will be used for those purposes. Throughout the life of the partnership, the memorandum can serve as a critical resource for clarifying and resolving issues such as staffing, training, or use of facilities. At the partners' discretion, detail can be added to the formal agreement over time, although a legal contract might eventually be developed to further formalize the partnership's structure and expectations of each partner.

Step 7 | Arrange for Accounting and Reporting, with a Priority Emphasis on Cost Allocation

While not all partnerships will develop a cost allocation plan, a majority will need to do so. In this context, cost allocation is a systematic way of sharing costs among programs that are jointly involved in delivering programming at the community level. Typically, the cost allocation plan accounts for major program costs, including personnel, facilities, nutrition, and transportation. Cost allocation is also an important aspect of strategic planning and budgeting, with program administrators working closely with fiscal and accounting specialists to ensure critical programming decisions are informed by the cost allocation plan. Ultimately, the planning process incorporates both program and fiscal considerations.

Step 8 | Evaluate

Partners will need to determine how well the partnership is working to assure accountability and effective use of resources, as well as to develop plans for the next phase of collaboration. The most important feature of the evaluation is to assess the value of the program investment in terms of benefits for children and families. Partners can use data to estimate the cost savings to the community and state resulting from improved outcomes for program participants. Evaluation is a key consideration in the ongoing [planning cycle](#) and in the design of the community assessment.



Communications

Foundations for Fostering Partnerships in Head Start and Early Head Start

The Communication Plan

Effective communication is planned communication. For a partnership, both external and internal communication is critical. The communication plan details the different formal and informal ways partners are expected to communicate openly and frequently with one another, as well as with other stakeholders and the public. Through the process of developing the communication plan, the partners will ideally come to agreement on specific, measurable formal and informal communications goals. They also will identify target audiences and consider what tailored messages would best resonate with those audiences. All of that will be combined into a detailed communication plan that will guide outreach efforts and success.

Plans often focus on internal communication, which is essential to the ongoing success of the partnership. External communication also needs planning, from the initial stages of the partnership and throughout its development and implementation. Social media, such as Twitter, can be used in the early stages of a partnership to reach out to other possible partners that may offer beneficial services or resources. Social media can also be an ongoing, effective means to gain visibility in the community, access more resources, and advertise any partnership events (e.g., fundraising). Giving careful consideration to the social media messages the partnership creates can yield impactful results.

Informal modes of communication are often used to build personal connections. This is the kind of communication that happens when individuals share information with their partners and as they report back to their own organizations. By contrast, formal communication, such as written reports or action plans, tends to focus more on decisions and actions. Because formal communication documents often require time and effort to write, produce, and distribute, it is essential that the partners understand who is responsible and come to an agreement about what to communicate, how often, and in what format. Communication plans support effective communication, keeping partners focused, involved, and accountable.

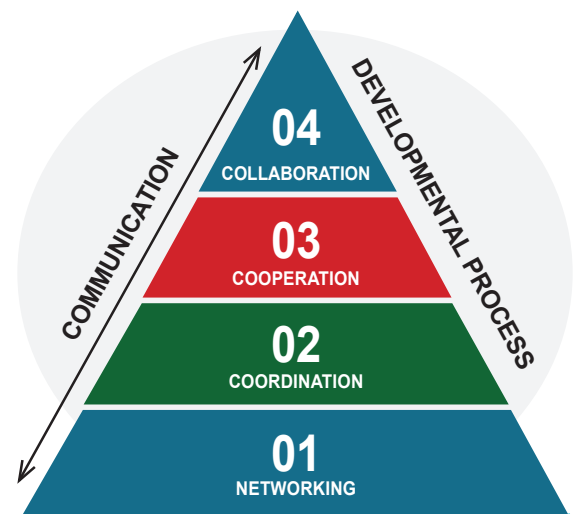
When developing the partnership's communication plan, consider how critical communication is in building trusting relationships, establishing work processes, and anchoring teams. During the early stages of development, in-person meetings are usually essential. However, because members of a partnership are not usually sharing the same physical space, the group needs to be intentional about building communications systems that save time, build connections, and advance the desired results. The partnership may want to explore the feasibility of using a virtual communications system such as Google Docs (a repository for key documents), Slack (designed to unify an entire team's communications and workflow), Smartsheet (a virtual project management system), or Zoom

(online conferencing and training platform), to name only a few available platforms. If no one system is able to meet all the partnership’s communications needs, the group can set priorities and find the system that best meets those needs within their available budget. It is likely that the partnership will need to employ more than one system to meet different needs. Planning for regular, open, and shared communication, and then ensuring open communication is maintained by key decision-makers and the implementation teams, is essential in helping sustain and energize the partners, keeping their momentum going to reach the partnership’s intended outcomes.

A strong communication plan will detail a wide range of tools and processes, as well as the purpose of each tool, and which partner will be responsible for that method. Common communication tools include meeting agendas and minutes, agency reports and newsletters, email, social media, websites, fax, video and audio conferencing, webinars, presentations, community bulletin boards and newspapers, radio and television, community meetings, and events. Be sure to track the effectiveness of these tools to understand which methods are most effective at reaching the internal or external target audience and to minimize duplication of effort.

Collaboration Pyramid

This visual illustrates the overarching importance of communication as organizations move from networking to true collaboration, following the five stages described earlier. Communication enables partners to develop and implement cross-partnership strategies, effectively describe their work to individuals and groups outside the partnership, and assess the impact of both program and communications methods to determine what is and is not working or needs to improve. Communication can be written, verbal, non-verbal, or virtual; the need for all types increases and becomes more intense at each level of the collaboration pyramid.



Developed by the QUILT (Quality in Linking Together) Project, through a partnership with the Community Development Institute, the Education Development Center, and the National Child Care Information Center. QUILT was funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2002. Adapted from Kagan, S. L. (1991). *United we stand: Collaboration for child care and early education services*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.; Winer, M., & Ray, K. (2003). *Collaboration handbook: Creating, sustaining, and enjoying the journey*. St. Paul, MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

Negotiations and Agreements

Foundations for Fostering Partnerships in Head Start and Early Head Start

To ensure families and children receive what they need from a partnership, partners need to come to collaboration with a sincere interest in working together and contributing their strengths. This is the attitude that will enable the partners to successfully negotiate the features of the partnership and their role within the group. Program leaders must clearly articulate what they can bring to the partnership, as well as understand what their partners can offer.

Negotiating is a skill we all practice, but a craft at which few of us truly excel. Wisdom from the field has yielded the following 10 techniques that can help advance partnership negotiations and produce desired results.

10 Points for Successful Negotiations

1	Honor the relationship. In addition to the process of negotiating, priorities include developing relationships with partners, including honest communication and trust. This can lead to long-term mutually beneficial partnerships and higher quality of services to children and families.
2	Create a negotiation environment that encourages innovation. Partnership options expand when partners employ brainstorming techniques and “outside the box” thinking. When partners can respond to new ideas and be open to the unexpected, they find unlimited opportunities to take a fresh look at their practices and beliefs about serving children and families.
3	Be realistic and open-minded. Partners are more likely to follow through on their commitments and less likely to circumvent the negotiation process when they jointly establish the agreement. Sometimes a neutral, external facilitator (e.g., a technical assistance provider) can help to ensure negotiations are realistic and advantageous to all. Consult with the program’s legal and financial advisors before finalizing the agreement.
4	Recognize that each partnership is unique. Each partnership needs to be structured to meet the needs of the community and those involved. Although there may be an interesting and successful early education partnership in a nearby community, the same or similar model may not work for the community being served by the partnership. Build the partnership’s foundation based on community assessment data and the partners’ strengths and needs.

5	<p>Engage in active listening. Focusing on what others say, both actual words and underlying meaning, will position the partners to better understand each other's needs and develop an agreement based on those interests. Active listening, and more so, generative listening, are important to forging stronger, more long-lasting relationships.</p>
6	<p>Know your bottom line. Think about what is needed and possible alternatives to the ideal outcome. Be clear about what you are and are not willing to concede before the negotiation, and the consequences of taking a fallback position. Also, evaluate the other partners' potential options beforehand. In negotiation, it is important to think several moves in advance and anticipate each partners' needs.</p>
7	<p>Know the difference between <i>positions</i> and <i>interests</i>. <i>Interests</i> involve a focus on the motivation for partnering. <i>Positions</i> display when partners set forth a goal or need (and sometimes are unwilling to compromise). <i>Interests</i> form the building blocks of lasting agreements.</p>
8	<p>Come prepared to commit resources. Any request to take on greater responsibility must be accompanied by an offer of resources. Approach this issue with an earnest commitment to supporting the goals and needed services. Resources can take the form of funding, staff, materials, supplies, transportation, and facilities, often in combination. An adequate commitment of funds and other resources demonstrates dedication to and full support of the partnership and its goals for children and families.</p>
9	<p>Take a fresh look at practices and standards. Use the negotiation process to address areas of needed improvement, such as increased family support, staff development activities, and facilities. Existing practice needs to be examined: Is this truly the practice that needs to be adopted by all, or is there a new way to meet standards? Set short-term realistic goals, while at the same time being aware of the partnership's goals.</p>
10	<p>Allow sufficient time for partners to work out the details. Remember the negotiation process is not a one-time meeting that results in a partnership agreement. Partners often need several, if not many, meetings to develop an agreement that reflects everyone's needs and capacities and provides sufficient detail to ensure the partnership goals are reached successfully. Conducting a review of the partnership agreement (at least annually) and adjusting features of the agreement as needed will increase the partnership's flexibility, and, by extension, strengthen services for children and families.</p>

Two Important Agreements: Partnership and Fiscal

Each partnership needs to have a partnership agreement and a fiscal agreement. Although these agreements are unique to each partnership, they often cover similar areas. As a legal document, the agreement protects all of the partners' best interests.

The partnership agreement, for example, typically contains critical information and clarifying details about the partners and how they will work together. It offers general introductory information about the purpose of the agreement, contract period, and partners. Other areas addressed in the partnership agreement usually include scope and services to be provided, roles and responsibilities of each partner, planning and decision-making systems, communications, monitoring and oversight, governance structure (if applicable), and recordkeeping and documentation.

All partnership agreements need to be written out, reviewed, and revised annually as needed. They also need to contain sufficient detail to guide the partnership. They serve as a mechanism by which the partners can assess their participation and follow through on commitments.

To limit the number of pages in the partnership agreement, many programs include an addendum, which is also reviewed and revised annually, that describes how the partnership conducts business. This addendum might serve as an action plan, specifying who does what, when, how, with whom, and for what purpose. It may also contain specific outcome goals and a plan to measure achievement.

The fiscal agreement usually spells out very clearly how and when payments will be made, which partnership expenses are allowable or unallowable, what recordkeeping and invoicing is necessary, and the process for resolving any differences.

Partnership Tip : Sustainability Strategies

Partnerships are unique, complex, and operate in dynamic environments. Though there is not one simple formula to sustain efforts, strategies can be used to help maintain the partnership over time.

Review [Sustainability Planning Framework](#) to identify potential strategies to sustain partnerships.



Next Steps for Implementation

Foundations for Fostering Partnerships in Head Start and Early Head Start

Well done! You have gained a number of insights about forming strong foundations for partnerships that benefit children and families. You are now ready to take the next steps.

- Use the *Foundations for Fostering Partnerships in Head Start and Early Head Start: Partnership Development Checklist* to assess the status of your partnership and identify action steps.
- If you are entering an EHS-CC Partnership, view the *Planning Guide and Organizational Readiness Chart for Early Head Start and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships*.
- Take time to check out the many [EHS-CC Partnership resources](#) that are available on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC).

References

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- 3 Firstenberg, Iris R. and Rubinstein, Moshe R., 2014. *Extraordinary Outcomes*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.



**Foundations for Fostering Partnerships
in Head Start and Early Head Start**

Partnership Development Checklist



Introduction

The ultimate goal of this checklist is to support the effective planning and management of well-designed partnership endeavors to advance quality and services for children and their families.

The checklist identifies key issues to be addressed regarding projects in early care and education that involve multiple partners and funding sources. The questions in each section are often interrelated. Therefore, partners may benefit from addressing each section together. Some partners may use the checklist when the partnership is forming; others might find it helpful in refining the partnership as it evolves. Partners should consider including many of the areas addressed in their written agreements.

Not every question applies to every partnership; however, each question can stimulate awareness and discussion between partners, helping to build a solid understanding and ultimate agreement on the various aspects of the partnership.

Planning and Developing the Partnership	20
Communicating, Decision-making, and Negotiating	21
Developing a Partnership Agreement or Contract	21
Implementing the Partnership Services	22
Recordkeeping and Documentation	23
Managing the Fiscal Components	23
Staffing and Professional Development.....	25
Assessing and Stimulating Continual Improvement	26
Additional Issues You Wish to Track.....	27

Read the questions below and use the checkboxes to determine the status of the partnership. Note action steps as appropriate.	Not Yet Addressed	Under Discussion	Finalized	Action Steps
Section 1: Planning and Developing the Partnership				
a. How will community assessment data be used to tailor the partnership design, services, and decisions?				
b. Have the shared vision (Why would we partner?), mission and performance goals (What will we accomplish?), values, purpose, and direction* (How will it be done and by whom?) been established by and for the partnership?				
c. Which individuals will guide the partnership? Who else will be involved and how?				
d. Has a strategic plan been developed by and for the partnership? Is there a detailed action plan specifying outcomes, goals, objectives, activities, strategies, responsible parties, resources needed, timeline, and evaluation?				
e. What resources (e.g., fiscal, training and technical assistance network (T/TA), advisory committees, consultants) can be brought forward by each partner, and by others?				
f. What are the requirements and processes for involving the governing body/Tribal Council and Policy Council?				
g. Has a process for creating the written partnership plan been developed and is it inclusive of all partners?				
h. Who will be involved in the development and approval of the partnership agreement or contract? How and when will this be reviewed and revised if needed?				
i. How will mutual respect, shared leadership, team building, trust, positive attitudes, transparent communication, and common beliefs and values be established and fostered within the partnership?				
j. Have rules and guidelines for interaction been developed by the partners to ensure solution discovery, creative support of one another, a unified approach, and conflict identified and dealt with swiftly? Have the roles and responsibilities of each partner been defined?*				
k. Has a conflict resolution strategy been adopted by and for the partnership? Have all partners committed to reaching an amicable resolution?*				
l. How will the partnership record and track discussions, decisions, and actions to be taken?				
m. How will the partnership link with the broader community?				

Read the questions below and use the checkboxes to determine the status of the partnership. Note action steps as appropriate.	Not Yet Addressed	Under Discussion	Finalized	Action Steps
Section 2: Communicating, Decision-making, and Negotiating				
a. What is the process for communication about the partnership’s development and internal and external goals? Is there agreement about what information is critical to share and when? Remember to look for ways to use technology to enhance communications.				
b. What is the schedule for strategic (decision-making), operational (reviewing performance and making adjustments), and learning (team building and responding to emerging issues) meetings? Allow ample time for discussions and negotiations. Who will be involved?*				
c. What data is being used to inform decision-making and how is this shared among partners?				
d. Has a process for decision-making been adopted by the partnership, (e.g., consensus, majority vote)?				
e. Are there opportunities for staff, parents and others to learn about and give input about the partnership development?				
f. How will parents, staff, and partners, be part of decision-making? How will final decisions be made, and by whom?				
g. Do procedures exist for individuals to voice issues of concern?				
h. Is there a plan in place to support negotiation as needed, such as revisiting and reinforcing behavioral expectations regularly and identifying a mutually agreed upon neutral facilitator or specific process to follow?*				
Section 3: Developing a Partnership Agreement or Contract				
a. Does the partnership agreement or contract state the contractual period, key staff to be involved, communication protocols, and the purpose of the agreement including the vision, mission, values, goals, and intended outcomes of the partnership?				
b. Are the partners’ affiliations and legal status identified?				
c. Are procedures for amendments, renewal, and termination included?				
d. Are the roles of each partner’s decision-making bodies in the contractual development and approval process clearly stated?				
e. What compliance with local, state, and federal regulations and policies needs to be identified and stated in the agreement or contract?				
f. Does the agreement contain conflict of interest statements and prohibited activities?				

Read the questions below and use the checkboxes to determine the status of the partnership. Note action steps as appropriate.	Not Yet Addressed	Under Discussion	Finalized	Action Steps
g. Is a dispute resolution process included?				
h. Are the partnership services and partner roles, responsibilities, and scope of work outlined (e.g., number of children, hours/days of operation, location of services)?				
i. Are responsibilities and expectations for staffing, supervision, monitoring, documentation, reporting, and information-sharing identified and communicated?				
j. What items can each of the partners reserve the right to approve?				
k. How will details of the fiscal agreement be included in the partnership agreement or contract? Have these been reviewed by the partners' financial advisors?				
l. Have priorities and timelines been set and listed in the agreement or contract?				
m. Has the agreement or contract been reviewed and approved by each partner's legal counsel?				
Section 4: Implementing the Partnership Services				
a. How are the services provided by each partner? How are these aligned with the partnership's goals? What steps need to be taken to ensure this alignment continues?				
b. How is the partnership ensuring the delivery of comprehensive, integrated services?				
c. What policies/procedures are needed to support family eligibility requirements?				
d. How will partnership families be identified, recruited, and selected?				
e. Has a streamlined intake process been established?				
f. In what manner will parent engagement and education be supported?				
g. How will cultural diversity and responsiveness, and the needs of special populations be met?				
h. In what way can communication between the partners be more effective? Is the communication plan being followed?				
i. Have the governing body/Tribal Council, Policy Council, and parents been informed and involved as originally intended?				
j. How is the collected data being analyzed and used by the partnership to inform needed adjustments to services and future work?				
k. What is the process for determining if external support is needed and securing this support? Is the T/TA network first in line to call?				
l. Have all staff been engaged in the training needed to ensure requirements and expected outcomes are reached? What ongoing supports from the partnership might be beneficial?				

Read the questions below and use the checkboxes to determine the status of the partnership. Note action steps as appropriate.	Not Yet Addressed	Under Discussion	Finalized	Action Steps
m. Do adjustments need to be made to the partnership agreement to better guide the partnership or services offered? How will this be done?				
Section 5: Recordkeeping and Documentation				
a. Has the partnership determined what information and data need to be tracked and by whom? Have they agreed to using one tracking method to avoid duplication of effort?				
b. What documentation will be used by and for the partnership? (Keep recordkeeping and documentation as streamlined as possible.)				
c. What technology will be used and how? How will staff be trained on its use to ensure consistency and accuracy?				
d. Has a confidentiality policy been established for the partnership, including who will have access to what information? Have all involved staff been trained on confidentiality and signed a confidentiality statement?				
e. What is the process for reviewing and monitoring records, and providing feedback and follow-up support?				
f. What reporting requirements have been determined (e.g., service, progress, fiscal), and how will reports be generated? Who will receive them, and how will they be approved, analyzed, and acted upon?				
g. How will records be stored, accessed, and if appropriate, transferred?				
Section 6: Managing the Fiscal Components				
a. How will the partnership's financial and resource decisions be made?				
b. How will partners familiarize themselves with the policies, standards, or guidelines of each of their funders as pertinent to the partnership?				
c. Which partner will have financial responsibility for which resources? How is this noted in the partnership agreement?				
d. Will the partnership access additional funding (e.g., foundations, businesses)? Who will take the lead?				
e. Are multiple approvals and signatures needed on grant submissions? Whose?				
f. How will all available funding be maximized? How will multiple funding sources be blended?				
g. Are there match or in-kind requirements for any funding sources? If so, how will these be met and how will partners assist in securing them?				
h. What financial reports will be generated by the partnership? By whom, and to whom? Be specific about when and how they will be shared.				

Read the questions below and use the checkboxes to determine the status of the partnership. Note action steps as appropriate.	Not Yet Addressed	Under Discussion	Finalized	Action Steps
i. Are any new fiscal policies and processes required by the partnership?				
j. How will the partnership consider the Head Start program's cost per child in fiscal negotiations?				
k. How and when will the fiscal aspects of the partnership be discussed with the Head Start federal program specialist and the agency's independent auditor?				
l. How will the partnership be reflected in the Head Start federal grant application budgets?				
m. How will it be determined if a cost allocation plan is needed? If needed, how will it be developed, what will it include, and who will approve it?				
n. How will details of the fiscal agreement address service needs and questions raised during negotiations? How are the partnership's goals supported?				
o. How does the fiscal agreement address:				
• Personnel (e.g., salaries, fringe benefits, substitutes)				
• Facilities (e.g., occupancy, utilities, fees, taxes, maintenance, renovations)				
• Insurance (e.g., indemnification, vehicle, staff, child, facility)				
• Equipment as defined by funding sources				
• Supplies (e.g., consumables and non-consumables)				
• Transportation (e.g., fuel, maintenance, insurance, fees)				
• Staff development (e.g., required training, professional development, certifications)				
• Contracts for additional services (e.g., mental health consultant, health)				
• Continuous program improvement				
• Non-federal match (e.g., cash, in-kind, such as space, services supplies, tech support)				
p. What is the process for reviewing and revising the fiscal agreement?				
q. How will the fiscal agreement address partners' overlapping program and fiscal years?				
r. How does the fiscal agreement address the process and timeline for payments to partners, and how are these authorized?				
s. What conditions (e.g., enrollment, length of agreement, improvements, termination of agreement), if any, are attached to payments?				
t. How does the fiscal agreement address allowable and non-allowable partnership expenses? Do any partnership expenditures require special authorization?				

Read the questions below and use the checkboxes to determine the status of the partnership. Note action steps as appropriate.	Not Yet Addressed	Under Discussion	Finalized	Action Steps
u. What happens to jointly purchased items if the partnership ends?				
v. How will expenditures, revenues, and match be recorded and reported for each entity?				
w. What are the auditing requirements of the partnering entities and how will audit reports be shared?				
The following rows (x–hh) are primarily relevant for Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships, although these issues may be informative for other partnerships as well.				
x. What state or tribal child care funding system is supporting services provided by the partnership? What impact do its regulations and policies have on the partnership?				
y. Which partner will manage the Child and Adult Care Food Program?				
z. Which partner will access and manage the state or tribal child care funding (e.g., contract, grant, subsidy, parent copayments)?				
aa. How will the partnership forecast child care funding revenue, including subsidy and parent copayments?				
bb. What fiscal provision has the partnership made to ensure continuity of care if a child’s subsidy is terminated?				
cc. Will provisions be made for families not eligible for subsidies? If yes, what are they? What services will these families receive?				
dd. What are the parent copayment collection schedules and policies of each partner, if any?				
ee. How will parents be informed of the copayment collection policies?				
ff. How will collected copayments be used?				
gg. In what special circumstances can either partner waive parent copayments?				
hh. Are there any additional fees that might be charged to parents of non EHS-enrolled children (e.g., special activities, transportation, field trips)?				
Section 7: Staffing and Professional Development				
a. What is required of each partner for staffing and staff development? What are the additional staff development needs and how will these be met? Consider what is necessary to orient staff and partners to the partnership.				
b. Do all staff meet qualifications required by each partner or funder? What is the plan, including timeframe, for staff attaining required qualifications?				
c. How can partner and external resources support individual and group training delivery? What internal resources will be used to support training delivery?				

Read the questions below and use the checkboxes to determine the status of the partnership. Note action steps as appropriate.	Not Yet Addressed	Under Discussion	Finalized	Action Steps
d. Is there a system for tracking and supporting overall staff development including required trainings, and individual staff professional development plans?				
e. What is the process for hiring and orienting partnership staff? Is the process being implemented as determined?				
f. Do job descriptions reflect partnership responsibilities to funding streams?				
g. Might compensation issues arise as a result of the partnership? Has a pay scale been developed matching job responsibilities to education and experience? Is it used consistently with all staff members involved in the partnership?				
h. How will staff release time for professional development, planning, and meetings be supported by each partner?				
i. What is the role of the program coach in supporting staff professional development needs? Will the coach and management team join to provide staff with necessary follow-up to trainings to ensure implementation as intended? How is the coach supported by the partnership?				
j. Is there a professional development system in place supporting the ongoing learning and development of all staff members? Has a professional learning community been created to promote peer learning from each other's knowledge and skills, as well as succession planning?				
Section 8: Assessing and Stimulating Continual Improvement				
a. How will practices, services, and follow up be observed and guided? How will stability be maintained while moving ahead?*				
b. What systems will be used for review, ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and reporting of the partnership?				
c. Is there a procedure to review progress against goals and objectives in action plans and modify plans if progress is not happening?				
d. How will progress be shared and celebrated with the partnership, programs, and community?				
e. Has a partnership self-assessment plan been established and implemented?				
f. How does the Head Start planning cycle inform and support the partnership's project?				
g. In evaluating the partnership, what is needed to further develop and sustain it?				
h. What are key ideas and supports needing to be institutionalized? How can these be fully embedded in all partnership systems?				

Read the questions below and use the checkboxes to determine the status of the partnership. Note action steps as appropriate.	Not Yet Addressed	Under Discussion	Finalized	Action Steps
Section 9: Additional Issues You Wish to Track				
a.				
b.				
c.				
d.				
e.				
f.				
g.				

* For more information, see Watkins, Michael D. "Leading the Team You Inherit." *Harvard Business Review* June 2016 Issue. Retrieved from: <https://hbr.org/2016/06/leading-the-team-you-inherit>



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ADMINISTRATION FOR
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