



Partnership Basics: Strategies for Creating Successful Partnerships

As partnerships are being developed it is important to remember a few basic assumptions that will help the partnership journey flow more smoothly. A key to success is beginning early in the process to make sure all partners share the same vision and mission and understand the anticipated results. This mission can be used as a focal point to remind partners of the value and importance of the work that is ahead. Partnerships are not simple or easy, however, when basic strategies are developed and followed the process has a stable foundation to keep it on track. Included in this document are strategies for consideration that partners can address as they work together.

Share a Vision

- Establish a shared philosophy and mission—it provides a solid foundation for the partnership.
- Return to your shared mission when you and your partner clash.
- Identify and assert the benefits of the partnership for children and families and for each partner.
- Link the partnership to an overall commitment to and vision of quality and repeat this often.
- Start small. Set realistic expectations for change. Remember that systemic change is a long-term process.
- Create opportunities to feel successful.

Communicate

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

Work at It

- Commit thoroughly to all aspects of partnership—expectations, financial obligations, legal requirements and standards, systems, resources, etc.;
- educate all entities and parties about federal, state, and local laws and regulations;
- build an atmosphere in which you can apply what the partnership has learned to future work; and
- remember that successful partnerships create mutual benefits, but they also require mutual compromise and sacrifice.

Clarify Expectations

- Develop a detailed, written legal agreement with clear, measurable expectations tailored to your partnership's specific needs. Borrow from others' agreements, but resist short-cuts and seek legal counsel throughout the agreement development; and
- put all expectations in writing—who does what, how, when, and expected outcomes for all parties.





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 resources as possible for all aspects of the partnership;
- articulate your partnership's goals to federal and state officials; and
- network with colleagues who have experience with similar partnerships.

Considerations

- Why are we thinking about partnering?
- How will this help children?
- Do we have a current and comprehensive Community Assessment?
- Have we analyzed the Community Assessment to determine what our families really need?
- Are we the agency who should and could provide the service needed by our families?
- What is the model or structure that best fits our families' needs?
- Who are our potential partners?
- What do we have to offer our partners?
- What do our partners have to offer us?
- Are we ready?
- Do we have the buy-in from the leadership of our organization?
- Do we have the organizational capacity?
- Do we have the financial or fiscal infrastructure to manage this partnership?
- Have we developed a funding plan? 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?
- Should we charge parent fees?
- Are we clear in our values?
- What regulations will be problematic?
- Have we built in a monitoring and tracking strategy?
- Do we have a plan for conflict resolution?
- Who will sign the final partnership agreement?

Photos courtesy of the Partnership Center.

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