



PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS: GETTING STARTED AND PRINCIPLES FOR SUCCESS

How to Get Started

State policymakers should consider taking the following steps to lay the foundation for an effective and sustainable public-private partnership.

Learn from other States

State policy leaders can draw on other States' experiences and lessons learned to inform their leadership and partnership design so that it can best serve their State's needs.

Engage executive leadership

Encourage the convening of state, local, public, private, and philanthropic leaders to highlight the importance of early childhood investments and issue a call to action. This can be accomplished via a special conference or invitational meetings, commissions, councils, or task forces. For instance, a task force may be commissioned to review existing governance structures and current investments in early childhood, both public and private. The results can inform discussions about the possible role, structure, and purpose of an early learning partnership as well as the process for getting started.



Identify public, private, and philanthropic resources and expertise that could contribute to an effective partnership

It is advantageous to seek broad-based participation from a variety of sectors and include key stakeholders from the start of the partnership process. Potential participants may include leaders from the following sectors: academia, community and civic organizations, business, early childhood professional organizations, health and medicine, law enforcement, philanthropy, and unions as well as representatives from other government partners such as child welfare, higher education, human services, juvenile justice, K-12 education, and public health. Public-private partnerships are most effective when they are able to draw from a broad range of perspectives, resources, and expertise. As such, partnerships can gain broader public and private support for their efforts by engaging the unique constituencies that each partner represents and supports.

Involve powerful champions who can make the partnership goals visible to the public

Successful partnerships require leaders from all sectors who can act as change agents by clearly communicating the goals of the partnership to a wider audience and building a broad base of support.

Formalize state commitment to the partnership

To achieve this, some States have enacted legislation to codify the creation of the public-private partnership, while others have enacted partnerships through executive order. States can also formalize

support by including funding for the partnership in the state budget.¹

Determine the partnership's authority and governance structure

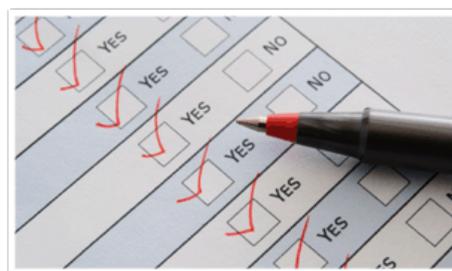
Some States have created public-private partnerships from the ground up and sometimes through the establishment of a new bipartisan 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Other States have housed partnerships within one or more existing nonprofits. Nonprofit status not only allows partnerships to accept public and private funding and obtain tax-exempt status, it also protects the partnership's members and directors from personal liability. For such partnerships, an executive board is required to attain nonprofit status. Establishing an executive governing body with diverse stakeholders, whether to establish a nonprofit or not, helps the partnership withstand inevitable changes in political leadership and can help maintain momentum and focus for the work.²

Principles for Success

Successful public-private partnerships follow similar principles that guide and support their endeavors.

Begin with a clear vision and an action plan

Partnerships should define goals at the outset in order to ensure clarity among partners, achieve desired results, keep the work on track, and help guide the partnership through obstacles and challenges.



Build accountability into the workplan and regularly measure progress

Evaluation is critical not only to satisfy accountability requirements, but also to communicate the value of investments and foster a culture of continuous improvement. Effective evaluation systems set clear expectations about an initiative's intended outcomes and what is to be measured. Effective evaluation strategies also incorporate multiple evaluation approaches (such as implementation studies, indicator tracking, and impact studies) and build capacity within communities to measure progress.

Develop a communications plan for sharing results and keeping stakeholders informed

Developing and using an ongoing communications plan is essential for effectively sharing outcomes and lessons learned with stakeholders such as legislators, the media, funders, communities, and parents. Keeping stakeholders informed about the partnership's work will help maintain momentum for the work and ensure continued support and interest.

¹ For examples of how States have formalized state partnerships and governance structures, see National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices (2008). *Partnering with the Private and Philanthropic Sectors: A Governor's Guide to Investing in Early Childhood*, Washington D.C. Retrieved from http://www.nga.org/cms/home/news-room/news-releases/page_2008/col2-content/main-content-list/title_public-private-partnerships-key-for-early-childhood-success-new-nga-report-says.html.

² Ibid.

Involve families and account for their needs and preferences when developing programs and services

Families are the ultimate consumers of early education and care services. For services to be successful, they must address families' needs and be culturally and linguistically appropriate. Involving families in the design and assessment of initiatives will ensure that the partnership's work continues to abide by its goals and vision.



Define partner roles and responsibilities and set ground rules that guide the partnership in its work

To keep order and discipline, it is important to define the various roles that partners will play and to confirm that all the partners understand and accept these roles. Partnerships should also set mutually agreed-upon ground rules for doing business from the outset. Such ground rules might include how partners define and measure success, conduct meetings, communicate with each other, communicate with the public or media, and make decisions.

Enable all partners to benefit by drawing on their strengths and contributions

Each partner brings different strengths, expertise, and resources to the partnership. Maximizing use of these attributes will facilitate working relationships among partners and allow them to do what they do best.

Work to maintain momentum and sustain the efforts over time

The most successful partnerships plan from the beginning for how they will maintain momentum and sustain their efforts. Planning for financial sustainability, celebrating successes, and creating a sense of shared ownership and collective purpose increase the likelihood that partners will remain involved over the long run.

Remember that public-private partnerships are about more than just raising and leveraging private funds

Public-private partnerships work best when they do not focus exclusively on the private sector's financial capacity. Partners bring myriad resources, perspectives, and expertise to the table. For instance, private sector leaders can use their stature, connections, and business savvy to shape public policy in ways that government agencies and community organizations may not be able to accomplish.

For more information about public-private partnerships and how they can be instrumental in bolstering state early learning initiatives, see the full range of topics included on this topic, available at <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/state-systems-specialist-network>:

- *What is a Public-Private Partnership and Why Do They Matter?;*
- *Making the Case for Business Community Involvement;*
- *Making the Case for Government Involvement;*
- *Making the Case for Philanthropy Involvement;*
- *Summary of State Profiles of Successful Public-Private Partnerships for Early Learning;* and
- *Individual State Profiles of Successful Public-Private Partnerships for Early Learning.*

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