



SHAPING THE PARTNERSHIP: AN ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

The Assessment Checklist will assist partners in identifying skills, developing strategies, and strengthening the results of the partnerships. This checklist should be completed with all actively involved partners. The tool consists of six sections and, at the end of the sections, an action plan is provided to prioritize next steps.

- I. Planning and Developing the Partnership;
- II. Communicating, Decisionmaking, and Negotiating in the Partnership;
- III. Managing the Partnership;
- IV. Leading the Partnership;
- V. Assessing and Stimulating Continual Improvement of the Partnership; and
- VI. Partnering with the Greater Community.

Directions: Read the statements below on Planning and Developing the Partnership and use the checkbox to determine the status of the partnerships.

	Not Yet Addressed	Under Discussion	Finalized	Action Steps
Section I: Planning and Developing the Partnership				
Articulate with your partners the partnership's goals and needs; set priorities and timelines in the partnership agreement or contract				
Clarify and commit to writing down the responsibilities of each partner, the governing body, and the Policy Council or Committee so that each group understands its distinct roles and points of intersection				
Schedule adequate time for partnership planning and development meetings				
Develop conflict resolution and impasse procedures for the partnership				
Use all viable funding sources to enhance the partnership's services				
Ensure that financial allocations for partners are fair and adequate to enable partners to meet new expectations and deliver heightened services				

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Identify and clearly communicate the financial and staff resources your program will contribute to the partnership initiative				
Create a link between technical assistance and partners' development or training				
Involve all partners in establishing and implementing a systematic, meaningful annual program self-assessment				
Ensure that partners are kept informed of and are able to implement all federal, state, and tribal requirements				
Use community and family assessment data to develop a comprehensive approach to working with families				
Agree on desired outcomes and outcome measures for children, families, and staff and include these in the partnership agreement				
Build in support for partners' efforts to build a highly qualified & skilled staff				
Assist partners in implementing effective supervision systems for their staff members				

	Not Yet Addressed	Under Discussion	Finalized	Action Steps
Develop effective ways to involve other Head Start managers, specialists, and staff in supporting the partnership and in building its capacity				
Work toward individualizing the partnership's design and services to meet the changing needs of the community's families				
Ensure that parents served by all partnering providers actively contribute to shaping the partnership initiative				
Section II: Communicating, Decisionmaking, and Negotiating in The Partnership				
Allow ample time for partners to discuss the agreement and negotiate all major issues, including the financial aspects of the partnership				
Ensure that each partner's and your own program's staff members are aware of and understand the partnership's purpose, goals, structure, and plans				
Hone negotiation and communication skills and maintain a commitment to strengthening relationships with each partner and to the partnership's continual improvement				

	Not Yet Addressed	Under Discussion	Finalized	Action Steps
Support and stimulate participatory decisionmaking with staff members, families, the community and state level policy leaders.				
Promote heightened communication between governing bodies and the Policy Council or Committee as it relates to the partnership and its initiatives				
Assure that parent groups, the Policy Council or Committee, and governing bodies receive timely information so they can make informed decisions				
Use sound communication skills to proactively resolve differences and to avoid escalation and conflict among partners, staff members, and parents				
Ensure that parents have a voice in hiring qualified staff members with appropriate skills, knowledge, and beliefs about children and families				
Articulate and include the partnership's process for engaging in shared decisionmaking in the partnership agreement				
Shepherd decisions as they move through the approval processes to avoid unnecessary bottlenecks and delays				

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Guide the development of written procedures for resolving internal disputes, community complaints, and impasses				
In providing feedback, state observations about each partner's operations in a specific, nonjudgmental manner				
Fully utilize technology to maximize communication, information sharing, and decisionmaking among the partners				
Establish systems for soliciting information about children's and families' interests and needs; use this data to guide decisionmaking about the partnership's design and services				
Create an environment of openness and questioning to stimulate continual improvement				
View diverse opinions and conflict as a stimulus for positive change				

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Section III: Managing the Partnership				
Foster among all partners a culture that values continual improvement, building in management supports for each partnering provider				
Work productively and cooperatively with key leaders of each partnering provider				
Meet regularly with the partnership team (no less than twice monthly) and contribute to the team's efforts				
Engage in partnership meetings in a constructive, efficient, results-oriented manner				
Promote and support an integrated service delivery model in the partnership				
Recognize that partners' skills and capacity are built by delegating tasks to them				
Call on and utilize the expertise of all partners, as well as internal and external consultants, to build capacity within the partnership				
Refer regularly to the written partnership agreements or contracts to guide the partnership initiative				

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Review and revise partnership plans at least annually and engage each partner's staff and the participating parents in revisions				
Keep abreast of Head Start, state, tribal, and other regulations, information, and materials that affect the partnership				
Assist partners in developing, instituting, and using effective management information tracking systems to achieve accountability, and use technology to assist in this effort				
Ensure that partners have systems for maintaining orderly and confidential records				
Regularly review written requirements to ensure compliance with federal, state, tribal, and local regulations				
Participate in developing Head Start and other grant applications and work plans and ensure that partnership issues are addressed				
Schedule adequate time during each week to support the partnership				
Recognize and regularly talk about the strengths of each partnering provider				

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Ensure that partners have sound personnel policies such as recruitment, qualifications, compensation, evaluation and staff development.				
Support partners in their efforts to conduct employee appraisals and develop realistic, measurable professional goals for staff.				
Listen to issues raised by partners and, when feasible, make adjustments to the partnership's operations				
Section IV: Leading the Partnership				
See yourself as responsible for building and sustaining a supportive team environment for the partnership				
Foster the development of a partnership team that collectively holds expertise in all early education content areas				
Promote a team approach and high morale among all partnership players				
Participate as an active and supportive member of the partnership team				

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Develop a spirit of collegiality and cooperation and a greater sense of community in the partnership				
Support the creation of a community early education partnership vision by involving numerous stakeholders				
Create opportunities for ongoing leadership development for parent leaders from all participating partners				
Establish high expectations for all partners and believe that, collectively, the partnership team can improve each provider's services				
Value wellness for yourself and all partners so that all can function at their full potential				
Ensure that the partnership and its families and staff reflect an appropriate racial, cultural, and gender mix				
Establish and work toward high professional and ethical standards				
Draw on topics and best practice in all fields affecting the well-being of children, families, and staff members to stimulate discussion among partners and to create a learning culture for the partnership				

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Promote the view that parents and the community are valued customers				
Stimulate innovation, creativity, and cooperation among partners				
Encourage partners to engage in personal and professional growth activities				
Institute a strong, supportive approach to providing technical assistance to each partner's staff—one that builds relationships that foster trust and openness				
Provide support to partnerships in other communities and share your partnership's successes about lessons learned				
See early education partnerships as a vehicle for creating positive change for children and families in the community, state, and nation				
Section V: Assessing and Stimulating Continual Improvement of the Partnership				
Draw on key data and observations to develop and refine partnership plans with partnering providers				
Establish systems that will help partners achieve shared outcomes for children, families, and staff				

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Familiarize yourself and others in the partnership with program and partnership evaluation tools				
Use team meetings to assess partnership activities and practices and to evaluate progress in attaining outcomes				
Seek and value the involvement of partners' staff, parents, and the community in the annual self-assessment process				
Use ongoing observation and self-assessment, as well as Head Start's federal monitoring process, to evaluate the partnership's effectiveness in achieving standards and outcomes and to stimulate the continual growth of the partnership				
Ensure that systems are in place throughout the partnership to gather and analyze data from numerous sources (for example: community assessment, child assessment, staff evaluations, Head Start's Program Information Report)				
Draw on data sources to evaluate the partnership's effectiveness in addressing the needs of the community, each program, and the staff				

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Communicate your observations and the results of data and document assessment in clear, direct, specific ways and develop with each partner specific steps for improvement				
Build in adequate support from all Head Start specialty area managers and consultants to ensure partnership success				
Document the positive aspects of each partner's operations, as well as those that need improvement				
Consider the NAEYC accreditation process or National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) family child care accreditation as other vehicles to enhance and achieve high quality				
Link partners' self-assessment results to partnership and development priorities				
Adopt a comprehensive view of technical assistance and training that uses all modes of learning, builds providers' competencies, and results in improved practices that benefit children, families, and each partner's staff				
Systematically assist partners in their staff and program training needs and interests				

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Help partners link the design and evaluation of their trainings to their staff performance goals and outcomes				
Section VI: Partnering with the Greater Community				
View membership on the Policy Council or Committee, governing bodies of all partners, and advisory committees as an opportunity to build and sustain collaborations with a wide range of community groups				
Assist each partner in linking with key community agencies and programs				
Involve a wide range of community programs and agencies in assessing community needs and in developing plans to enhance program services for children and families				
Use community assessment and program planning processes to establish collaboration goals and develop concrete action steps				
Consider all possible community collaborations, including those with businesses, to advance the partnership and each partner's services to children and their families				

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Develop written Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) to formalize the link with other community organizations				
Involve people from the greater community in the partnership's annual self- assessment activities				
As a partnership, build solid relationships with local education agencies to create smooth transitions for children and families				
Incorporate staff responsibilities for working with the greater community into the program's position descriptions, where appropriate; make sure that your staff has sufficient time to accomplish community partnership work				
Assist all program decisionmakers, staff members, and parents in acquiring the skills needed to further the development of community partnerships and collaboration				
Annually assess the partnership efforts of your program and staff				
Include community leaders in the program's decisionmaking bodies, and encourage partners to do the same				

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Draw on the power of the partnership to develop new community linkages and to advance early education issues, such as professional development and staff compensation				
Use the power of the partnership to effect systems change, at the community and state and tribal levels, that improves outcomes for children and families				

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