



Capacity Building Self-Assessment Tool*

Capacity Building: The Ways to the Means

For the purposes of this tool, capacity building is defined as the process through which individuals, groups of people, and organizations obtain, strengthen, and maintain the capabilities they need to set and advance goals toward chosen early learning priorities. Capacity is the means to plan and achieve organizational goals, and capacity building describes the ways to those means so that stakeholders can lead sustained improvements over time. Capacity building is ultimately focused on empowering individuals, leaders, organizations, and systems so that they can generate positive change in early learning opportunities and outcomes on behalf of communities, children, and families.

Readiness for Change

An essential ingredient for capacity building is transformation. For an activity to meet the standard of capacity building as described in this tool, it must bring about transformation that is produced and sustained over time. Transformation of this kind goes beyond performing tasks. Instead, it is more a matter of changing mindsets and attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, creating readiness for change can be a critical component of both initiating and scaling up your capacity building practices within your organization. “Readiness’ is defined as a developmental point at which a person, organization, or system has the capacity and willingness to engage in a particular activity” (SISEP & NIRN, 2013, p. 1). It is not static. “Readiness for change’ is something that needs to be developed, nurtured, and sustained.” As you move through the assessment process of this tool, discuss the potential changes with your team or group. Be thoughtful and sensitive to individual perspectives. Ask yourself, “What challenges would be faced while trying to make these changes? If these changes are not made, what impact would that have? What impact might that have on what we are trying to achieve?”

Self-Assessment Purpose

The *Capacity Building Self-Assessment Tool* aims to highlight capacities within and surrounding your organization, system, or any project or initiative you are launching to improve your early childhood system. In this assessment tool, there are 5 dimensions and 23 subdimensions of capacity that can help you identify the specific capabilities you want to change to improve your organizational capacity, your organizational effectiveness and efficiency,

* The self-assessment tool in this document is based on the McKinsey Capacity Assessment Grid, which was created by McKinsey & Company and published in *Effective Capacity Building in Nonprofit Organizations* (2001), which was produced for Venture Philanthropy Partners (www.vppartners.org). It is adapted, reprinted, copied, and distributed with the permission of Venture Philanthropy Partners.



or your leadership and staff capacity. As you identify which capacities are currently in place and which gaps need to be addressed, your priorities for capacity building will become clear. The self-assessment tool allows any group or organization to identify strengths and challenges with regard to planning and achieving specified goals. Identifying areas of strength, areas of challenges, and progress made is crucial for ensuring success with whatever it is your organization is trying to advance or improve.

Self-Assessment Use

The dimensions and sub dimensions outlined in the following matrix provide a high-level overview of key capacity areas for your group or organization to consider. The self-assessment tool may be used in whole or in part, depending on what makes the most sense for your organization or system. Where you begin and the order in which you proceed within the tool will depend on your organization's most pressing needs. Some groups may start with creating or strengthening engagement and partnerships. Others may be ready to build knowledge and skills for systems thinking and better address a priority. It is likely that some of the capacity dimensions will be more helpful to you than others. Use caution when choosing your areas of improvement; it is more prudent to do less initially. There is a glossary of some of the terms at the end of the tool for your reference. There is also a resource section to point you to other tools useful for building capacity within the dimensions.

Instructions

1. Use this self-assessment tool to provide a better picture of your organization's strengths and challenges.
2. Select the people you want to assess your organization. This self-assessment tool is meant to be completed as a collaborative process within your group or organization. When done thoughtfully, the assessment process can yield important insights about your organizational fitness, help ensure commitment to capacity building from your staff or board, and serve as a useful conversation starter for how you will further develop your means for planning and achieving your goals.
3. Complete the self-assessment tool individually or as a group. It may be helpful to see individual responses before you work together as a group to complete the self-assessment. Review the dimensions of the tool first (culture and climate, engagement and partnerships, financial resources, infrastructure, and knowledge and skills) so that you can determine which areas are most integral to achieving your goals. You may select all of the dimensions or a subset of the dimensions.
4. Once you have determined the dimensions you want to focus on, please review the benchmarks and come to a consensus about your organization's level of capacity for each subdimension.
5. Use the check boxes to rank your current level of capacity for each subdimension. Keep in mind you are trying to rank on a continuum of basic, moderate, or high level of capacity.
6. Summarize and analyze your findings (p.14).
7. Share the findings and determine implications for action. Develop plans for needed change.



DIMENSION 1: Culture and Climate

Organizational culture and climate consist of shared values, norms, attitudes, and perceptions that influence how people in an organization behave. An agency’s priorities, leadership commitments, and staff motivation reflect its culture and climate. For new programs and practices, an agency’s culture and climate may affect how people accept and support change.

While people often use the terms “culture” and “climate” interchangeably, Charles Glisson, a leading researcher in this area, makes the following distinction:

- ◆ **Organizational culture** refers to the shared behavioral expectations and norms in a work environment. This is the collective view of “the way work is done” (Glisson, 2015).
- ◆ **Organizational climate** represents staff perceptions of the impact of the work environment on the individual. This is the view of “how it feels” to work at the organization (e.g., supportive, stressful) (Glisson, 2015).

Subdimensions	Benchmark of Capacity: High Level in Place	Benchmark of Capacity: Moderate Level in Place	Benchmark of Capacity: Basic Level in Place	Current Capacity Level and Notes
1.a. Establishing leadership behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A common set of basic beliefs and values exists and is widely shared within your organization. ◆ Beliefs provide members a sense of identity and clear direction for behavior. ◆ Beliefs embodied are timeless and stable across leadership changes. ◆ Beliefs clearly support the organization’s overall purpose and are consistently harnessed to produce impact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A common set of basic beliefs is held by the majority of the organization team. ◆ Beliefs provide members with a sense of identity. ◆ Beliefs are aligned with the team’s purpose and are occasionally harnessed to produce impact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A common set of basic beliefs exists in some groups within your organization but is not shared broadly. ◆ Values may be only partially aligned with organizational purpose or rarely harnessed to produce impact. 	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> Basic Notes:



Subdimensions	Benchmark of Capacity: High Level in Place	Benchmark of Capacity: Moderate Level in Place	Benchmark of Capacity: Basic Level in Place	Current Capacity Level and Notes
1.b. Embedding equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Shared knowledge and understanding of equity practices exists <u>and</u> are widely used within your organization. ◆ The team provides clear direction on equity practices, such as the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Equity assessment of policies and practices (ongoing); and ■ Equity goals within the strategic plan. ◆ The process for seeking, distributing, and using resources is based on equity goals; your organization is accountable for equity goals and empowered to uphold goals. ◆ Your organization has multi-sector partnerships and relationships with communities affected by inequities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Shared knowledge and understanding of equity practices is held by majority of staff and leadership within your organization. ◆ Knowledge of equity provides members with a sense of how to value team members' and stakeholders' differences and how to address disparities. ◆ Equity efforts may be only partially aligned with your organization's purpose or only rarely harnessed to produce impact on goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Shared knowledge and understanding of equity practices exists within some part of your organization but is not shared broadly. ◆ Equity efforts may be only be partially aligned in your organization's purpose or only rarely harnessed to produce impact on goals. 	<p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/>Moderate <input type="checkbox"/>Basic</p> <p>Notes:</p>
1.c. Sharing and understanding of common vision and goals throughout the organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A clear, specific, and compelling vision is articulated, as well as a deep understanding of what your organization aspires to achieve. ◆ Common vision and goals are broadly held, including between partners and stakeholders. ◆ Common vision and goals are consistently used by your organization to direct actions and set priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There is clear and specific understanding of what the organization aspires to become or achieve. ◆ A common vision and goals are held by many within the team and sometimes used to direct actions but not shared widely with partners and stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There is a somewhat clear vision or specific understanding of what the organization aspires to become or achieve. ◆ Vision and goals Lack specificity or clarity. ◆ Vision and goals are held by only a few; or they are "on a poster on the wall" but rarely used to direct actions or set priorities. 	<p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/>Moderate <input type="checkbox"/>Basic</p> <p>Notes:</p>



Subdimensions	Benchmark of Capacity: High Level in Place	Benchmark of Capacity: Moderate Level in Place	Benchmark of Capacity: Basic Level in Place	Current Capacity Level and Notes
<p>1.d. Setting expectations to accommodate and sustain change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There is a common team approach to change and change management, which may include practices that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ secure buy-in and align individual behavior and skills with the change; ■ are truly shared and adopted by all members of the organization’s leadership; and ■ are actively designed and used to clearly support overall purpose of the team and to drive performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There is a common team approach to change and change management exists within some part of the organization’s leadership, which may include practices that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ secure buy-in and align individual behavior and skills with the change; and ■ are adopted by many people within the organization’s leadership. ◆ Practices are aligned with the team’s purpose and occasionally harnessed to drive toward impact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There is not a common approach to change or change management by the team. 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> Basic</p> <p>Notes:</p>
<p>1.e. Valuing performance throughout the organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Leadership highlights and promotes each member’s contribution (social, financial, and performance). ◆ Use of performance data in day-to-day processes and decisionmaking is embedded in comprehensive performance thinking and team analysis. ◆ Key elements of performance is constantly referred to in team meetings, including agendas and discussions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Individuals within the leadership of the organization contribute toward the project’s impact, and important decisions about projects are based on performance thinking and analysis. ◆ Key elements of performance are regularly discussed at meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ At times, important decisions for the organization are embedded in comprehensive performance analysis and thinking by the leadership team. 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> Basic</p> <p>Notes:</p>

DIMENSION 2: Engagement and Partnerships

Engagement and partnership consist of collaborative relationships within the organization and with external partners, stakeholders, families and community, and cultural groups to support early learning systems and inform improved practices. Productive relationships involve building trust, seeking feedback, and actively collaborating toward shared objectives. While organizational engagement and partnership often require structures to facilitate collaboration (e.g., interagency agreements), the structures are part of infrastructure dimension. This second dimension features the resulting relationship and collaboration between the partners.



Subdimensions	Benchmark of Capacity: High Level in Place	Benchmark of Capacity: Moderate Level in Place	Benchmark of Capacity: Basic Level in Place	Current Capacity Level and Notes
<p>2.a. Establishing and maintaining relationships with stakeholders (e.g., state agency partners, advocates, providers, parents, and oversight groups)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The organization has built, leveraged, and maintained strong, high-impact relationships with variety of relevant parties (state and federal government entities as well as those from the for-profit and private sectors). ◆ Relationships are deeply anchored in stable, long-term, and mutually beneficial collaboration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The organization has effectively built and leveraged a few key relationships with some of the project’s relevant parties. ◆ Some relationships are not fully developed. ◆ Some relationships may be precarious or not mutually beneficial. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The organization is in the early stages of building relationships (e.g., limited communication and no defined structure or planning) and collaborating with agency partners, families, providers, and other stakeholders vital to the organization’s work. 	<p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/>Moderate <input type="checkbox"/>Basic</p> <p>Notes:</p>
<p>2.b. Establishing and sustaining local community presence and involvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Your organization is widely known within communities in the state and is perceived as actively engaged and extremely responsive. ◆ Many members of the communities are actively and constructively involved in your organization efforts (e.g., implementing goals). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Your organization is reasonably well known within communities within the state and is perceived as open and responsive to community needs. ◆ Community members are constructively involved in management efforts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Your organization’s presence is somewhat recognized and is viewed neutrally by communities. ◆ Some members of larger communities are constructively engaged. 	<p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/>Moderate <input type="checkbox"/>Basic</p> <p>Notes:</p>



Subdimensions	Benchmark of Capacity: High Level in Place	Benchmark of Capacity: Moderate Level in Place	Benchmark of Capacity: Basic Level in Place	Current Capacity Level and Notes
<p>2.c.Implementing formal feedback loops as part of stakeholder engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Your organization has a formal feedback loop in place that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ provides opportunities for families and providers to engage in leadership and inform decisions; ■ ensures effective lines of communication among service providers, administrators, policymakers, and other professionals across sectors regarding goals and policies; ■ uses available data and assessment systems to reach out and inform stakeholders about project efforts; and ■ measures stakeholder engagement and, in particular, parent and provider engagement with decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Your organization has some elements of a feedback loop in place that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ connects with families and providers; ■ has some lines of communication among service providers, administrators, policymakers, and other professionals across sectors regarding their goals and policies; and ■ is beginning to measure stakeholder engagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Your organization has started to plan the necessary elements of a feedback loop to authentically engage parents, providers, and stakeholders in a more formal process to inform decisionmaking. 	<p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/>Basic</p> <p>Notes:</p>
<p>2.d.Mobilizing and motivating stakeholder</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Stakeholders most affected by the project see the work as inspiring and motivating. ◆ Stakeholders are authentically engaged in taking action. ◆ Meetings are held regularly at convenient times for stakeholders and are well attended. ◆ Your organization has the ability to mobilize a broad range of stakeholder groups into specific action. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Those with potential to be most affected by the project are knowledgeable and likely to be engaged. ◆ Meetings are held regularly and are generally well attended. ◆ Your organization has the ability to motivate a segment of stakeholders to mobilize. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Those with potential to be most affected by the project have some knowledge of the work. ◆ Meetings are held regularly to inform but attendance varies widely. ◆ Your organization has the ability to motivate a small core group of stakeholders. 	<p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/>Moderate <input type="checkbox"/>Basic</p> <p>Notes:</p>



DIMENSION 3: Financial Resources

Financial resources consist of the tangible assets that support your organization, programs, practice improvements, and service delivery. They encompass adequate and stable funding, staffing, budget materials, the authority to direct or redirect funds, and the capacity to raise capital or advocate for increased resources.

Subdimensions	Benchmark of Capacity: High Level in Place	Benchmark of Capacity: Moderate Level in Place	Benchmark of Capacity: Basic Level in Place	Current Capacity Level and Notes
3.a. Maximizing revenue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Your organization has identified and mobilized sufficient resources—within limited budget realities—from across the team and other partner organizations for the project to maximize impact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Your organization has identified possible sources of funding and other resources from partner organizations. ◆ Your organization has access to expertise to coordinate (pool) or integrate (blend or braid) funding for maximum impact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Your organization has started to have discussions about leveraging and coordinating resources for funding the project and maximizing impact. 	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> Basic Notes:
3.b. Managing finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There are very solid financial plans and management in place. ◆ There are continuous updates regarding finances. ◆ The budget is integrated into full operation. ◆ Use your financial plan as a strategic tool. ◆ The financing plan reflects your organization’s needs and objectives. ◆ There are well-understood divisional project budgets within the overall budget. ◆ The performance-to-budget is closely and regularly monitored. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There are solid financial plans in place. ◆ Your organization is regularly updated regarding finances. ◆ The budget is integrated into operations. ◆ Financial plans reflect organizational needs. ◆ Solid efforts are made to isolate project budgets within the central budget. ◆ The performance-to-budget is monitored regularly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Your organization has limited financial plans and financing is rarely discussed. ◆ The budget is used as an operational tool. ◆ The budget is used to guide/assess financial activities. ◆ There is some attempt to isolate project budgets within the overall budget. ◆ The performance-to-budget is monitored periodically. 	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> Basic Notes:



DIMENSION 4: Infrastructure

This dimension consists of the systems, protocols, and processes that give structure to the organization, support its key functions, and embed routine practice. This includes the policies and operating procedures that guide practice and build a shared understanding of how to advance early learning opportunities and outcomes. Infrastructure also includes an agency’s systems for operations—from human resources, training, supervision, and ongoing communication systems to data, evaluation, and continuous quality improvement systems.

Subdimensions	Benchmark of Capacity: High Level in Place	Benchmark of Capacity: Moderate Level in Place	Benchmark of Capacity: Basic Level in Place	Current Capacity Level and Notes
<p>4.a. Creating a high-functioning organization that includes a plethora of experience and skillset</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There is diverse representation in staff—they are from a variety of fields of practice and have functional and program content-related expertise as well as experience thinking and operating at both a strategic and systemic level. ◆ Staff members are highly motivated to invest in learning about the organization and addressing its issues. ◆ Staff members have an outstanding commitment to the organization’s vision and success; they meet in person regularly (including subcommittee meetings), there is good attendance, and they achieve results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There is good diversity among staff, including their fields of practice and expertise. ◆ Staff have a diverse skillset and experience. ◆ Staff have a good commitment to the organization’s success, vision, and mission. ◆ Staff have regular, purposeful meetings that are well planned, have consistently good attendance, and that achieve results, including occasional subcommittee meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There is some diversity among staff, including their fields of practice. ◆ There is a lack of a diverse skillset among staff and leadership and only a moderate commitment to the organization’s vision and success. ◆ Staff have regular, purposeful meetings that are well planned and during which attendance is good overall. 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> Basic</p> <p>Notes:</p>
<p>4.b. Establishing high-functioning interagency planning and implementation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There is constant and seamless integration between staff and leadership within your organization; they work together effectively on planning and implementation. ◆ Relationships are dictated by project planning and implementation needs (rather than hierarchy or politics). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Staff within your organization function together effectively; they share information and resources and work together on planning efforts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Interactions between the different areas of your organization are generally good or somewhat effective in planning efforts. 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> Basic</p> <p>Notes:</p>



Subdimensions	Benchmark of Capacity: High Level in Place	Benchmark of Capacity: Moderate Level in Place	Benchmark of Capacity: Basic Level in Place	Current Capacity Level and Notes
<p>4.c. Developing and using a strategic plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A strategic plan is used extensively to guide the organization's decisions. ◆ Strategic planning exercises and revisions are carried out regularly. ◆ There is regular progress reporting on strategic plan execution and revisions as needed. ◆ Sustainability planning is routinely incorporated as part of the process. ◆ There is efficient use of external, sustainable, highly-quality resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Staff have the ability and tendency to develop and refine concrete, specific, and realistic goals. ◆ There is some internal expertise on strategic planning or access to relevant external assistance. ◆ Strategic planning is an activity occurring on a near-regular basis. ◆ Sustainability planning is included in strategic planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The team intends to develop a high-level strategic plan but has not written or updated such a plan. 	<p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/>Moderate <input type="checkbox"/>Basic</p> <p>Notes:</p>
<p>4.d. Using performance management and continuous quality improvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There is a high-functioning performance team and a well-developed comprehensive, integrated system (e.g., PDCA cycle; balanced scorecard) used for measuring performance and continuous quality improvement, including modifying activities. ◆ There is a small number of clear, measurable, and key performance indicators. ◆ Social impact is measured based on evaluation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There is a performance team in place, performance is measured, and progress is tracked in multiple ways, several times a year; there is no formal continuous quality improvement system in place. ◆ Stakeholder input is a part of the performance process, as well as other social, financial, and organizational activities. ◆ There are some performance indicators but an evaluation is missing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There is a performance team in place, and performance is partially measured and progress is partially tracked. ◆ The organization regularly collects quality data on activities and outputs but lacks data-driven impact measurement. 	<p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/>Moderate <input type="checkbox"/>Basic</p> <p>Notes:</p>



Subdimensions	Benchmark of Capacity: High Level in Place	Benchmark of Capacity: Moderate Level in Place	Benchmark of Capacity: Basic Level in Place	Current Capacity Level and Notes
<p>4.e. Ability to influence high-level decisionmakers and policymaking</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Your organization proactively and reactively influences other decisionmakers and policymaking relevant to the project in a highly effective manner, on state and national levels. ◆ The organization is always ready for and often called on to participate in substantive discussion and at times initiates discussions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Your organization is fully aware of its potential to influence other key decisionmakers and policymaking and is active in relevant discussions at the state or national level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Your organization is aware of its potential to influence high-level decisionmakers and policymaking. ◆ There is some readiness and skill to participate in higher-level policy discussion. 	<p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/>Moderate <input type="checkbox"/>Basic</p> <p>Notes:</p>
<p>4.f. Using organizational structures and processes to function effectively and efficiently in critical areas, such as communication, decisionmaking, and planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There is a robust, lean, and well-designed set of processes (e.g., communication, decisionmaking, planning) in place in all areas to ensure effective and efficient functioning of the organization. ◆ The organizational processes are widely known, used, and accepted, and are key to ensuring the organization's full impact. ◆ There is continual monitoring and assessment of processes and systematic improvements made. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There is a solid, well-designed set of processes in place in core areas to ensure the organization's smooth, effective functioning. ◆ The organizational processes are known and accepted by many and are often used and contribute to increased impact. ◆ There is occasional monitoring and assessment of processes, with some improvements made. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There is a basic set of processes in place, such as communication, decisionmaking, and planning; however, processes are known, used, and accepted by only a portion of the team. ◆ There is limited monitoring and assessment of processes, with few improvements made in consequence. 	<p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/>Moderate <input type="checkbox"/>Basic</p> <p>Notes:</p>
<p>4.g. Developing, aligning, and integrating a system of support for children, families, and early childhood programs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There is a clear set of integrated cross-sector expectations and monitoring systems for early childhood programs and professionals so that services and practices reach common goals on behalf of children and families. ◆ Early childhood program policies and activities build on one another rather than contradict or duplicate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There are clear and aligned expectations for early childhood programs and professionals so that services and practices reach common goals on behalf of children and families. ◆ Work has begun to reconceptualize programs so that there is an integrated vision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ There are well-designed programs, monitoring, standards and policies, which are effectively implemented. However, they were conceptualized and are delivered as stand alone, often contradicting or duplicating other similar programs. 	<p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/>Moderate <input type="checkbox"/>Basic</p> <p>Notes:</p>



DIMENSION 5: Knowledge and Skills

Organizational knowledge and skills consist of the essential expertise and competencies needed to perform your organization's early learning work. Think of this as the organization's know-how. For each level of an organization, this will look different. At the frontline, this may include understanding and application of effective practices, decisionmaking, performance tracking, and cultural competence. For managers and administrators, it may include knowledge and skills related to leadership, systems thinking, management, critical analysis, policymaking, workforce development, and change management.

Subdimensions	Benchmark of Capacity: High Level in Place	Benchmark of Capacity: Moderate Level in Place	Benchmark of Capacity: Basic Level in Place	Current Capacity Level and Notes
5.a. Using systems thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The organization has the ability to see the whole ecosystem. ◆ The organization has the ability to help groups of people see the larger system so they can build a shared understanding of complex problems. ◆ The organization has the ability to foster reflection and creativity and generative conversations. ◆ The organization has the ability to examine its thinking, see the underlying assumptions that can be carried into any conversation, and appreciate how mental models may limit staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The organization has a clear understanding of the whole system but is not yet moving groups of people to a shared understanding of complex problems. ◆ The organization has the ability to reflect and think creatively and test assumptions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The organization understands the concept of systems thinking but has not had the opportunity to practice in settings with a group of people. 	<p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/>Moderate <input type="checkbox"/>Basic</p> <p>Notes:</p>



Subdimensions	Benchmark of Capacity: High Level in Place	Benchmark of Capacity: Moderate Level in Place	Benchmark of Capacity: Basic Level in Place	Current Capacity Level and Notes
5.b. Incorporating a distributed leadership perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The organization is able to set new directions through a distributive leadership model, empowering others to lead jointly and manage. ◆ The organization is able to shift the group focus from reactive problem solving to cocreating the future. ◆ The organization is artful at helping people move beyond just reacting to problems to building positive visions for the future in a joint approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The organization understands the concepts of a distributed leadership perspective, such as leading and managing from multiple places within a system and not just from formal designated leadership positions. ◆ The organization empowers others to share leadership. ◆ The organization has practiced in real-life situations but is not yet able to move groups beyond reacting to problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The organization understands the concepts of a distributed leadership perspective, such as leading and managing from multiple places within a system and not just from formal designated leadership positions. ◆ The organization empowers others to share leadership. ◆ The organization has not had very many opportunities to practice in real-life situations. 	<p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/>Moderate <input type="checkbox"/>Basic</p> <p>Notes:</p>
5.c. Using strategic thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The organization possesses keen and exceptional ability to synthesize complexity. ◆ The organization makes informed decisions in ambiguous, uncertain situations. ◆ The organization develops strategic alternatives and identifies associated rewards, risks, and actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The organization quickly assimilates complex information and is able to distill it to core issues. ◆ The organization welcomes ambiguity and is comfortable dealing with the unknown. ◆ The organization sometimes or often develops robust strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The organization is able to cope with some complexity and ambiguity. ◆ The organization is able to analyze and periodically generate strategies. 	<p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/>Moderate <input type="checkbox"/>Basic</p> <p>Notes:</p>
5.d. Executing the work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The organization has an extremely capable set of individuals who bring exceptional implementation skills. ◆ The organization is culturally competent, reliable, loyal, and highly committed to the project's success and to making things happen. ◆ The organization often goes beyond call of duty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The organization has a capable set of individuals who bring complimentary skills to the organization. ◆ The organization is culturally competent, reliable, and committed to the project's success and to making things happen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The organization has a capable set of individuals, but they do not have all the skills or abilities necessary for the project's success. 	<p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/>Moderate <input type="checkbox"/>Basic</p> <p>Notes:</p>



Subdimensions	Benchmark of Capacity: High Level in Place	Benchmark of Capacity: Moderate Level in Place	Benchmark of Capacity: Basic Level in Place	Current Capacity Level and Notes
5.e. Valuing equity and diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The organization has widespread knowledge and skills for equity and diversity practices, such as the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Work groups or staff positions in place to implement equity policies; ■ Ongoing training and dialogue among staff and management to help make cultural competency and equity a part of standard operating procedures; ■ Staff accountable for activities that support equity policies; and ■ Data tracking those who are benefiting from services and those who are not. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The organization has shared understanding for equity and diversity policies, but they are not fully implemented. Some practices that may be in use are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Work groups or staff positions in place to implement equity policies; ■ Ongoing training and dialogue among staff and management to help make cultural competency and equity a part of standard operating procedures; ■ Staff accountable for activities that support equity policies; and ■ Data tracking those who are benefiting from services and those who are not. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The organization has shared awareness of equity and diversity but practices are not in place. 	<p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/>Moderate <input type="checkbox"/>Basic</p> <p>Notes:</p>



Summary of Findings (Notes and Ratings)

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Glossary

- ◆ **Distributed leadership:** This type of leadership focuses on how people complete tasks that involve different people distributed across an organization. This approach is used to determine how leadership works in complex organizations. (Spillane & Diamond, 2007)
- ◆ **Promoting equity:** The process of eliminating disparities that adversely affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater obstacles to participating in quality early learning experiences.
- ◆ **Social impact:** The effect of an activity or investment on the social fabric of the community and well-being of individuals and families.
- ◆ **Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory:** Developed by American psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner, this theory explains how the environment interacts with children to influence how they develop. Bronfenbrenner stresses the importance of studying a child in the context of multiple environments, also known as ecological systems. A child is usually enmeshed in different ecosystems, from the home ecological system moving outward to the school system and then the most expansive system—society and culture. Each of these systems interact with and influence each other to impact all aspects of a child's life. (Psychology Notes HQ, 2013)
- ◆ **PDCA cycle:** The plan-do-check-act (PDCA) cycle is a four-step approach that calls for constant interaction and repetition among the steps to support continuous improvement. This dynamic and deliberate nonlinear process can instill sustainable change.
 - Plan what to do.
 - Do it.
 - Check the results.
 - Act to make adjustments and improve. (W. Edwards Deming Institute, n.d.)

Resources

Capacity Building Organizations

- ◆ **Child Welfare Capacity Building Collaborative**

<https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/>

The Children's Bureau's Child Welfare Capacity Building Collaborative has tools and resources to support your capacity building efforts. The purpose of this collaborative is to help public child welfare agencies, tribes, and courts enhance and mobilize the human and organizational assets necessary to meet Federal standards and requirements; improve child welfare practice and administration; and achieve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children, youth, and families.



- ◆ **State Capacity Building Center**

<https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/centers/child-care-state-capacity-building-center>

The Child Care State Capacity Building Center (SCBC) works with state and territory leaders and their partners to create innovative early childhood systems and programs that improve results for children and families. SCBC focuses on enhancing the effectiveness of programs implemented under the Child Care and Development Fund, improving the quality and supply of infant and toddler services, and advancing the development of early childhood systems.

Capacity Building Resources

- ◆ *Building Capacity in NonProfit Organizations* (2001), eds. Carol J. De Vita and Cory Fleming, published by the Urban Institute, available at http://research.urban.org/UploadedPDF/building_capacity.PDF.

The report aims to advance the ongoing conversation about capacity building, intending to push toward the intersection where research informs practice. This transfer must occur for the work to benefit the field.

- ◆ *Early Childhood Systems: Transforming Early Learning* (2012), eds. Sharon Lynn Kagan and Kristie Kauerz, Teachers College, Columbia University.

In this seminal volume, leading authorities strategize about how to create early childhood systems that transcend politics and economics to serve the needs of all young children. With a combination of cutting-edge scholarship and practical examples of systems-building efforts taking place in the field, this book provides the foundation educators and policymakers need to take important steps toward developing more conceptually integrated approaches to early childhood care, education, and comprehensive services.

- ◆ *The Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide* (n.d.), by the Child Care State Capacity Building Center, Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, available at <https://ecesystemsbuilding.icfwebservices.com/>.

The guide is designed to support professionals planning for, implementing, and sustaining early childhood systems. It supports this work through a multi-dimensional approach, allowing each element to contribute to the effectiveness and sustainability of a systems building endeavor.

DIMENSION 1: Culture and Climate

- ◆ *Equity Toolkit for Administrators* (2010), by the Colorado Department of Education, available at https://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/documents/cde_english/download/resources-links/equity%20toolkit%20final_2010.pdf.

A toolkit to help your organization or community create a plan and action steps to increase more opportunities for equitable education for all.

- ◆ *Leading for Equity: Opportunities for State Education Chiefs, Appendix B: Additional Resources to Support Equity Commitments* (2017), by the Aspen Education & Society Program and the Council of Chief State School Officers, available at <http://www.ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/LeadingforEquityResourceAppendixB02022017.pdf>.



This resource is a bibliography of additional resources for prioritizing equity and setting vision and targets.

- ◆ *Racial Equity Toolkit: An Opportunity for Operationalizing Equity* (2016), by Julie Nelson and Lisa Brooks, published by Government Alliance on Race and Equity, available at http://racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/GARE-Racial_Equity_Toolkit.pdf.

This is a toolkit that can help your organization operationalize equity.

- ◆ *Training for Racial Equity and Inclusion: A Guide to Selected Programs* (2002), by Ilana Shapiro, the Aspen Institute, available at https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/files/content/docs/pubs/training_racial_equity.pdf.

An in-depth review and comparison of 10 racial equity trainings for organizations.

DIMENSION 2: Engagement and Partnerships

- ◆ *The Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide 4: Strategic Relationships* (n.d.), by the Child Care State Capacity Building Center, Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, available at https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/systemsbuilding/sites/default/files/media/SystemsBuildingResourceGuide4_PrintFile.pdf.

This guide addresses building and sustaining strategic relationships in the context of systems building, the value of strategic relationships, and initiating and sustaining strategic relationships. It also provides quick tips and resources.

- ◆ *The Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide 5: Communications* (n.d.), by the Child Care State Capacity Building Center, Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, available at <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/systemsbuilding/systems-guides/stakeholder-communications>.

This guide addresses the benefits of communicating and engaging with stakeholders, communication plans, making the most of stakeholder meetings, and resources.

- ◆ *Increasing Provider Engagement in Quality Rating and Improvement Systems* (2014), by the Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance (ELC TA) Program through a contract from the U.S. Department of Education, run in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families, available at <https://www.grisnetwork.org/sites/all/files/resources/mrobinson%40buildinitiative.org/2014-10-14%2013%3A25/Increasing%20Provider%20Engagement%20in%20Quality%20Rating%20and%20Improvement%20Systems.pdf>.

As states develop and revise their quality rating and improvement systems, many have focused particular attention and effort on raising provider participation rates. This brief highlights reflections from Indiana, Kentucky, and Washington about how they have increased provider participation in creative and practical ways.

- ◆ *More Than the Sum of Its Parts: Collaboration and Sustainability in Arts Education* (2012), by Thomas Wolf and Gigi Antoni, for the National Guild for Community Arts Education, available at http://nationalguild.org/getmedia/187ae594-917e-47f6-81d7-1fa1226add40/MoreThanSumParts_Full_e-Version4.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf.

This report compiles inspiring examples of thriving partnerships with creative strategies that not only multiply the benefits of arts education but also help sustain partners' work for years to come. There are tools and tips for enabling organizations to more deeply engage their communities; gain access to greater expertise, credibility, and funding; and increase sustainability through collaboration.

- ◆ *Stakeholder Engagement: Tools for Action* (2013), by the Western and Pacific Child Welfare Implementation Center, available at https://www.cssp.org/publications/general/WPIC_DCFS_Stakeholder_Engagement_Toolkit.pdf.

This toolkit is for organizations working to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for engaging and sustaining the input of internal and external stakeholders. This toolkit was developed for implementing stakeholder engagement objectives in strategic plans, however the concepts and materials can be adapted to other child welfare systems and organizations working to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for engaging and sustaining the input of internal and external stakeholders.

DIMENSION 3: Financial Resources

- ◆ *Blending and Braiding Early Childhood Funding Program Toolkit: Enhancing Financing for High-Quality Early Learning Programs* (2013), by Margie Wallen and Angela Hubbard, the Ounce of Prevention, available at <https://www.theounce.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/NPT-Blended-Funding-Toolkit.pdf>.

A toolkit to help you maximize public and private investments in early learning by combining funding from multiple programs.

- ◆ *The Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide 7: Financing Strategically* (n.d.), by the Child Care State Capacity Building Center, Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, available at <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/systemsbuilding/systems-guides/financing-strategically>.

This guide provides an overview of key concepts linking state financing options and systems building. The focus is on defining key state-based financing strategies, providing an overview of practical financial management practices, and reviewing financing forecasting tools.

- ◆ *Financing Early Care and Education: An Annotated Bibliography of Resources* (2016), by Michelle Horowitz, the Center for Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes, available at http://ceelo.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/CEELO_annotated_bibliography_ec_finance.pdf.

This document identifies selected resources on financing early learning.

- ◆ *Putting It Together: A Guide to Financing Comprehensive Services in Child Care and Early Education* (2012), by Christine Johnson-Staub, Center for Law and Social Policy, available at <https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/public/resources-and-publications/publication-1/A-Guide-to-Financing-Comprehensive-Services-in-Child-Care-and-Early-Education.pdf>.

This guide provides state policymakers and advocates with strategies to maximize resources and make policy changes that drive funds, resources, and community partners to child care and early education programs that benefit young children and families. Separate from blending and braiding funding streams at the local or program level, the strategies described in this guide focus on state policy decisions that can facilitate the innovative use of funds, encourage partnerships at the state and local levels, and replicate promising models from other states.

DIMENSION 4: Infrastructure

- ◆ *Applied Strategic Planning: How to Develop a Plan That Really Works* (1993), by Leonard Goodstein, Timothy Nolan, and J. William Pfeiffer, McGraw-Hill, Inc.



This book shows a clear, effective way to identify and implement strategic objectives. Applied Strategic Planning describes organizational culture, integration of operational and functional plans, performance audits, gap analysis, and values clarification.

- ◆ *Community Systems Development Toolkit* (n.d.), by the BUILD Initiative, available at <http://www.buildinitiative.org/Resources/CommunitySystemsDevelopmentToolkit.aspx>.

These resources, tools, and examples support the planning and implementation of activities that cross systems and programs and focus on systemic change. Areas of shared activities work include coordination of resources and referrals and professional development.

- ◆ *The Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide 2: Strategic Plans* (n.d.), by the Child Care State Capacity Building Center, Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, available at <https://ecesystemsbuilding.icfwebservices.com/systems-guides/strategic-plans>.

This guide provides an overview of key concepts linking strategic planning and systems building (i.e., delineating what strategic planning is and why it is important to systems building), strategic planning in a nutshell (i.e., key elements, quick tips for strategic planning, and dangers to avoid in the planning process), an organizational design approach that helps to accelerate the work getting done, examples of statewide and city-specific strategic plans, and resources.

- ◆ *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement*, 4th edition (2011), by John M. Bryson, Jossey-Bass, Inc.

In this fourth edition, the book provides the most updated version of a strategic planning model and outlines the reasons public and nonprofit organizations must embrace strategic planning to improve their performance. The book offers leaders, managers, and students detailed guidance on implementing the process and specific tools and techniques to make the process work.

DIMENSION 5: Knowledge and Skills

- ◆ “Channeling Change: Making Collective Impact Work” (2012), by Fay Hanleybrown, John Kania, and Mark Kramer, in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, available at https://ssir.org/articles/entry/channeling_change_making_collective_impact_work.

The purpose of this article is to expand the understanding of collective impact and provide greater guidance for those who seek to initiate and lead collective-impact initiatives around the world. It answers the most common questions: How do we begin? How do we create alignment? How do we sustain the initiative?

- ◆ “Collective Impact” (2011) in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, by John Kania and Mark Kramer. The abstract is available at <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/106342660301100104>.

This article argues that the traditional approach of using isolated initiatives to address complex social problems is unlikely to produce system-wide progress. Rather, such issues must be addressed through a collective-impact approach that involves collaboration across systems, sectors, and organizations toward shared goals. The authors outline five conditions of collective success: a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone support organizations.



- ◆ *Comprehensive Early Childhood Systems-Building: A Tool to Inform Discussions on Collaborative, Cross-Sector Planning* (2013), by the Early Childhood Systems Working Group, available at http://www.buildinitiative.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/ECSWG%20Systems%20Planning%20Tool_2014.pdf.
- ◆ *Conceptualizing and Measuring Collaboration in the Context of Early Childhood Care and Education* (2013), by Nina Chien, Amy Blasberg, Paula Daneri, Tamara Halle, Carlise King, Martha Zaslow, Kelly Fisher, and Kathleen Dwyer, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) Research Brief 2013-29, available at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/collaborations_brief.pdf.

This resource describes a study to identify the key components of collaboration in the early care and education field. This brief presents the logic model for measuring collaboration in an early childhood context, explains its core components, and highlights these components by mapping them onto a hypothetical example of collaboration in early care and education. The brief also shares the results of an extensive review of existing measures of collaboration, describes key measurement considerations, and discusses future directions for collaboration research in the field of early care and education.

“The Dawn of System Leadership” (2015), by Peter Senge, Hal Hamilton, and John Kania, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Winter, 27–33, available at <http://watersfoundation.org/systems-thinking/habits-of-a-systems-thinker/>.

This practical article shares the core capabilities of a systems leader who has the competencies to catalyze collective leadership.

- ◆ *Elements of Successful Collaboration: Lessons Learned by the Family Literacy Support Network* (2013), by First 5 LA, available at http://www.first5la.org/files/FLSN_Collaboration_final_11042013.pdf.

In 2002, the Los Angeles County Office of Education was awarded a contract to create and establish the Family Literacy Support Network to support First 5 LA–funded family literacy grantees in building capacity. In this brief, the Family Literacy Support Network identified characteristics that promote strong collaboration, which in turn leads to positive outcomes for programs, communities, and families with young children.

- ◆ “Emerging State Structures: Organizations That Promote Collaboration” in *State Human Services Organization: Strategies for Improving Results* (2006), by the National Conference of State Legislatures, available at <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/systemsbuilding/sites/default/files/media/Emerging%20State%20Structures%20Organizations%20that%20Promote%20Collaboration.pdf>.

This chapter provides information on state efforts to develop collaborative organizations aimed at improving the lives of children and families. It highlights recent trends in collaborative state entities and describes common elements for success. The chapter provides important considerations and examples regarding the purpose, structure, partners, and accountability of collaborative state entities.

- ◆ *Generating and Sustaining Commitment in Community Collaboration* (n.d.), by Darrin Hicks, University of Denver, available at https://www.researchconnections.org/files/childcare/pdf/HicksCollaborativeCommitment_presentation.pdf.

In this resource, the author provides a definition of collaboration and describes three key elements: communication, relationships, and commitment. The article argues that commitment is a key ingredient of collaborative success and describes the various collaboration processes that foster commitment.



- ◆ *Leadership Playbook for Chief State School Officers* (2017), by the Center for Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes, available at <http://www.ccsso.org/resource-library/leadership-playbook-chief-state-school-officers>.
This resource is a primer for what inspirational leadership at a state education agency looks like. It includes basic good management practices as well as detailed descriptions of the types of behaviors and actions unique to inspirational leaders. In addition, there are tips, case studies, resources, and guiding questions that together aim to make these concepts tangible and meaningful for your context.
- ◆ *Rising to the Challenge: Building Effective Systems for Young Children and Families* (2015), ed. Harriet Dichter, the BUILD Initiative, available at <http://www.buildinitiative.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/E-BookChapter1StateSystemsBuildingThroughGovernance.pdf>.
- ◆ “SCARF: A Brain-Based Model for Collaborating with and Influencing Others” (2008), by David Rock, *NeuroLeadership Journal*, 1(1), 44–52.
Neuroscientist David Rock outlines a brain-based model for collaborating well and influencing others.
- ◆ *Systems Building Resource Guide 1: Leadership* (2016), by the Child Care State Capacity Building Center, Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, available at <https://ecsystemsbuilding.icfwebservices.com/systems-guides/leadership>.
This guide shares leadership approaches and issues that are often in play during times of change. The guide covers the following topics: change management, teams and change, governance, decisionmaking, conflict resolution, public-private partnerships, and resources.

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