



WHAT IS A PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP AND WHY DO THEY MATTER?

What is a public-private partnership?

A public-private partnership exists when the public sector—federal, state, local, or tribal officials or agencies—joins with the private sector—families, employers, philanthropies, media, civic groups, or service providers—to attain a shared goal.

Why are public-private partnerships important for state policymakers?

Public-private partnerships have become an increasingly effective strategy for drawing together the resources and know-how that are needed to expand and improve supports and services in a variety of sectors, including school readiness and early learning. Since achieving school readiness for all young children cannot be accomplished by any single entity, public-private partnerships are important.

Partnerships bring together diverse resources, perspectives, and expertise that can:

- Inform state policy priorities;
- Build public awareness of the importance of early childhood development to engage the public;
- Provide flexible and more sustainable funding for locally identified needs, such as improving early care and education program standards, increasing access to health services, or providing professional development opportunities for early childhood practitioners and leadership;
- Build or enhance the state and local infrastructure needed to effectively coordinate a statewide early childhood system; and
- Promote best practices by helping to bring promising models of high-quality programs to scale.¹



These partnerships leverage resources and expertise via coordinated efforts that not only prevent duplication of efforts and ensure efficient use of resources, but also maximize impact on young children.

¹ 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, DC: Author.

Why do partners have a vested interest in participating?

In order to understand how and why partnerships are able to effectively mobilize public and private resources, it is essential to recognize how each prospective partner has a stake in a successful early childhood system and participation in a partnership.

- Families value access to affordable, quality early learning programs that enhance child development, school readiness, and well-being and reflect family and community culture, language, and values.
- Government can benefit from new leadership, technical expertise, creativity, stakeholder investment, advocacy, sustainable financing solutions, and leadership continuity.
- Businesses and employers need high-quality, affordable early education programs to retain productive employees and remain profitable and competitive in a global economy. Quality early learning fosters the positive early childhood development that lays the foundation for a well-skilled and competitive future workforce that is essential for sustained economic vitality and profitability.
- Philanthropies seek new ways to leverage their investments and maximize their impact on communities. Investing in early childhood development aligns with a common, broader philanthropic agenda to promote quality education and, in so doing, support children, families, and communities.
- Education, child care, and health and human service professionals and organizations seek to meet the needs of children and families they serve.
- Community and civic organizations seek strong families and communities and are often looking for the best places to invest in their communities.
- Unions seek quality, affordable, and accessible early education and care settings to safeguard their members' sustained workforce participation. Like employers, unions need high-quality early education to support healthy early childhood development that lays the foundation for human capital. This, in turn, creates a well-qualified future workforce and sustained economic vitality.



The most successful partnerships understand and accommodate these motivations and shape partnership goals and activities to benefit all of the partners.

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>:

- *Public-Private Partnerships: Getting Started and Principles for Success*;
- *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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