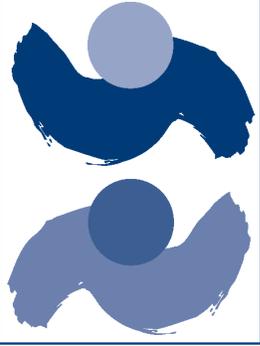


# The Child Care Partnership Project

## Public-Private Partnerships: Lessons for Success



U.S. Department  
of Health and  
Human Services  
Administration for  
Children and Families  
Child Care Bureau





# Acknowledgments

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# The Child Care Partnership Project

The Child Care Partnership Project (CCPP)<sup>1</sup>, a joint effort of The Finance Project, the National Governors' Association, and the Families and Work Institute, has created a knowledge base and a series of tools and materials to support and nurture public-private partnerships for child care. The CCPP has focused on a new breed of partnerships, each being unique in its membership and structure, but sharing the following characteristics:

- bringing together representatives from governmental entities or quasi-governmental bodies (that derive their authority from a federal, state, or local governmental entity) and private-sector organizations (e.g., business, philanthropy, parents);
- requiring each partner to contribute time, money, expertise, or other resources to the partnership;
- being driven by a shared agenda of common goals or objectives; and
- sharing decision-making and management responsibilities among the partners.

Based on structured interviews with 65 partnerships that cover a wide range of initiatives (business-driven, school-age care, transportation, provider training, etc.) and discussions with numerous partnership leaders, the project has developed a rich knowledge base on what partnerships are doing, how they are meeting their goals, and elements common to success. Using this information, the project has created a wide range of tools and materials to support both public and private partners as they develop partnerships to improve outcomes for children and families. These materials include:

- Profiles of Public-Private Partnerships;
- In-depth Case Studies on Successful Partnerships;
- Fact Sheets on Innovative Approaches;
- An Employer Toolkit Template for Engaging Business Partners;
- A Guide to Successful Public-Private Partnerships;
- A Guide to Involving Parents in Partnerships;
- A Guide to Measuring Results for Partnerships;
- A Partnership Self-Assessment Tool;
- A video on Engaging the Business Community;
- A PowerPoint presentation to accompany the Guide to Successful Partnership; and
- A PowerPoint presentation on Business Involvement.

All of these tools and materials are available in both printed and electronic forms and can be downloaded from the project Web site at [www.nccic.org/ccpartnership](http://www.nccic.org/ccpartnership). For printed copies, contact the National Child Care Information Center at 1-800-616-2242.

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<sup>1</sup> The Child Care Partnership Project, which ended on September 30, 2000, was funded by the Child Care Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



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# Introduction

Addressing the need for high quality, affordable child care is undoubtedly a daunting issue for parents, employers, and policy makers. High quality care is expensive and state and local policymakers, parents and providers are forced to make difficult tradeoffs between affordability, accessibility and quality. When viewed on a broad scale, the issues and challenges may seem overwhelming and impossible to solve. However, a number of state and local initiatives being implemented across the country offer hope that positive changes are possible. These efforts illustrate the importance of public- and private-sector stakeholders coming together and sharing resources and expertise to expand the availability of affordable, quality child care. While each partnership is unique in its membership, goals, and approaches, the experiences of existing partnerships point to some key principles for success.

Over the past three years, staff from the Child Care Partnership Project have interviewed and met with hundreds of partnership leaders. Each of these leaders shared key lessons that they learned in their experiences building effective public-private partnership projects. This publication includes ten broad lessons that represent a compilation of their insights and ideas. Each lesson includes a few strategies and examples of how partnership leaders have used the strategies to move a partnership toward its goals. More detailed information about each of the examples mentioned can be found in the Child Care Partnership Project Profiles and Case Studies.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The profiles and case studies for the Child Care Partnership Project on-line at [www.nccic.org/ccpartnerships](http://www.nccic.org/ccpartnerships).



# Lessons Learned

## ☛ *Plan and Prepare*

Successful partnership leaders agree that thorough planning at the outset of an initiative is well worth the time it requires. It helps to avoid mistakes or limit their damage; build and strengthen relationships among partners; maintain focus and keep the big picture in view; and convince funders, politicians, the public, and other critical groups of the dedication of the partners and the viability of the initiative.

**Find a window of opportunity.** Before launching any broad initiative, survey the political and economic landscape for obvious sources of support and opportunities. In Florida, child care advocates noticed that the majority of families on the waiting list for child care worked for a small number of large companies in the service industry. They used this information to engage the executives of these companies in the *Child Care Executive Partnership* and to advocate for better child care policy. Likewise, *Oregon's Child: Everyone's Business* took advantage of momentum created by the launch of the national "I Am Your Child" campaign to jumpstart its own efforts to increase public awareness of the importance of supports and services for young children and their families.



**Build on existing resources and avoid reinventing the wheel.** Look to other partnerships, programs, and initiatives for useful models and infrastructure. The *Indiana Child Care Fund* used the existing infrastructure of the Step Ahead Councils, created to coordinate children and family policy at the local level, to organize local partnerships to address local child care needs. In Colorado, decentralization

of state funding down to the county level produced a wealth of programs and services that address local needs but lack coordination with statewide efforts. *Educare Colorado* created a map of all the elements and services in existing statewide programs, such as *Ready to Succeed* and *First Impressions*, to show how this new initiative will build upon—rather than duplicate—local services. *Educare* sees part of its system-building work as trying to support effective existing programs and working with others to help make them more effective.



**Create a business plan.** *The San Francisco Child Care Facilities Fund* found that a business plan lets contributors know where you are and where you are headed, giving them a sense that things are under control and making them more likely to remain involved. Partners will have a better understanding of the challenges and strategies to address them, which will help to avoid unexpected disappointments and engage everyone in finding the most effective ways to proceed. Though your plan may be revised over time, everyone will have a common picture and thus be able to put their energy toward reaching your goals. Take advantage of expertise from business partners in developing business plans.

**Set realistic deadlines.** Factor in challenges, complications, and setbacks when developing a timeline. It takes time to build relationships and develop consensus among partners, and missed deadlines can negatively affect stakeholder confidence in a partnership. For example the *Delaware Early Success* partnership, an effort to create a coordinated statewide early care and education system, engaged in planning for five years before implementation. During the long planning period, partnership leaders were able to engage the range of public and private stakeholders necessary to create lasting change, conduct an assessment of the current early care and education resources, receive expert consultation on how to create a system of early care and education, agree upon a shared vision, and obtain the commitment of public and private resources to make it happen. Leaders of *Delaware Early Success* believe that the long period of planning was well spent in setting the stage to make significant improvements in early care and education systems statewide. Partnerships that are smaller in scope and scale require less planning time, however leaders of partnerships of all sizes agree that progress frequently takes longer than anticipated.

**Dedicate staff to coordinate the work of the partnership.** When possible, have a dedicated staff person who knows the issues and has the time to build and nurture the partnership. Even if staffing needs change over time, as the partnership expands and contracts, it is essential to dedicate staff at the beginning to get the partnership off the ground. *The Coalition for Valley Families*, a broad partnership working to improve social service delivery in the Rio Grande Valley, Texas, found that designating staff to focus solely on the partnership makes it a priority. Without clear designation of staff commitment, too many existing responsibilities can compete for partners' attention and slow the progress of the partnership.

## Engage Strategic Partners

Partnerships are most effective when they are able to draw from a broad range of perspectives, resources, and expertise; are sensitive to the diverse cultures in their community; and are responsive to community needs. By involving diverse stakeholders—such as law enforcement, faith community leaders, pediatricians, and senior citizens—partnerships can gain broader public and private support for their efforts through the constituencies that each partner represents and supports. Participants from the public sector, businesses, nonprofit organizations, local communities, parents, and providers all bring different skills, expertise, and insights to the table. The challenges are to find partners that reflect the diversity of stakeholders in the community and to weave their assets together into a partnership in which everyone is fully engaged and supportive.

One of the most important roles that leaders in all sectors can play is recruiting additional partners. Here, the motto is simple: It is always easier to preach to the converted. Robert Wehling, senior vice president, Procter & Gamble, offers the following suggestion: “You have higher odds if you find someone who’s already leaning your way and get them to do more.”

**Recruit top-level leadership.** Any successful partnership requires strong leadership from respected and committed partners. Governor Lawton Chiles and the Board of the *Child Care Executive Partnership* have provided this commitment in Florida. Similarly, *Success By 6*<sup>®</sup> (*SB6*) *Boston* recognized the influence of high-level CEOs, presidents, superintendents, and others when creating its Leadership Council. Such top-level leaders are effective messengers, particularly in the statehouse. Top-level leadership is also critical at the community level. The *Employers'*

*Child Care Alliance* began as a group of human resource managers and quickly found out that without buy-in from the CEOs—the ultimate decision makers—it was very difficult to move an agenda.

**Create a solid business case to recruit private sector partners.**

Help business leaders see how investing in child care leads to economic development, which leads to a healthy business climate. Put expectations and results in terms they will understand. Show the bottom-line cost savings, economic gains, and other indicators that speak to the impact of quality care on their business. Indiana developed a toolkit to help local child care partnerships make the business case to engage local business partners. The Child Care Partnership Project adapted this and several other toolkits to create a toolkit template for engaging business partners and a PowerPoint presentation to help partners make the business case.<sup>2</sup>

**Seek involvement before funding.**

Many partnership leaders stress the importance of initially asking potential partners to become involved in developing solutions to child care challenges, rather than initially seeking funding. Once partners are engaged in developing a vision and planning partnership activities, they will more likely be willing to invest resources to make the vision of the



partnership a reality. Partners are also more likely to remain involved if their contributions go beyond funding. For example, the *Maryland Child Care Resource & Referral Network* began when business leaders came together to assess Maryland's child care delivery system and develop a proposal for improving it. Once the group had developed a proposal for a statewide resource & referral-system, business leaders agreed to raise one third of the \$7 million needed to implement the plan, and the state agreed to contribute the rest.

**Involve parents and help them do the talking.** Boston's *Parents United for Child Care (PUCC)* supports parents as the best advocates to identify and communicate their child care needs. Legislators want to hear from their constituents, principals want to hear from the parents of

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<sup>2</sup> The Child Care Partnership Project Employer Toolkit Template and PowerPoint presentation are available on-line at [www.nccic.org/ccpartnerships](http://www.nccic.org/ccpartnerships) or from the National Child Care Information Center at 1-800-616-2242.

their students, and media representatives want to talk to “real” parents. *PUCC* provides parents with the tools and opportunities to talk about and address their child care needs. Parents need a chance to define their own agenda and the role they want to play in public policy. Don’t just listen to parents; help them do the talking. Another important reason to listen to parents is that they are the consumers of partnership services. In preparing to open its new 24 hour/7 day child care facility, leaders of *Atlanta’s Inn*



*for Children* learned the hard way that parents looking for weekend and overnight care prefer to leave their children at home or close to home. This partnership now seeks out parent voices on a regular basis to ensure that services are responsive.

**Engage national partners.** Partnerships with national foundations and organizations have helped keep the momentum going in Rhode Island and have brought invaluable technical assistance into the state. The Annie E. Casey Foundation’s National Kids Count initiative, Carnegie Corporation’s Starting Points project, the Danforth Foundation’s Policymakers Program, and the Governor’s participation in the National Governors’ Association Children’s Task Force have all contributed to the effectiveness and credibility of *Rhode Island Kids Count*, a local social policy organization established in 1994. As a result, *Rhode Island Kids Count* has been able to quickly establish itself as a local expert on child care issues and neutral convenor of stakeholders from the public and private sectors. Their work has contributed to major policy gains for children in Rhode Island, including 1998 legislation that doubled the dollars for early childhood education in the state.

**Engage local partners.** At the local level, numerous partners are working to build stronger communities. Look to less likely allies, such as housing corporations and transportation providers, who are also working to support families. By engaging leaders from the banking, housing, and architecture industries, the *Brandeis Redevelopment Corporation* was able to develop an affordable housing complex with on-site child care in a community that desperately needs both.

Leaders of the *Brandeis Redevelopment Corporation* found these unlikely allies make great partners, each bringing different but complementary skills, knowledge, and resources to the table.

**Use recruiting methods that play to the motivations of different partners.** Each partner will have different motivations for participating. Learn what motivates partners and use this as a recruiting tool.

- **Cultivate prestige to attract top leadership.** Florida's *Executive Child Care Partnership* requires that board members be appointed by the Governor, which elevates the prestige of the positions and draws attention to their work.
- **Encourage businesses to recruit other businesses.** The Cinergy utility company in Indiana volunteered to convene meetings of employers in the large rural areas that contain few large businesses, knowing that businesses are more likely to get involved when invited by their peers. Cinergy was motivated by the impending deregulation of electricity and recognized this activity as a way to become more visible in activities at the community level.
- **Tailor the message.** The *C.H.I.L.D.R.E.N. of Northcentral Arkansas* partnership found it was most successful in attracting business partners with professional-looking literature that stressed the bottom-line benefits of adopting family-friendly policies.
- **Host site visits.** Some partners need to learn about the issue before they make a commitment to the partnership. *Babyland Family Services, Inc.*, was able to develop fruitful relationships with key supporters by inviting them to visit its sites and letting the programs speak for themselves.
- **Generate public attention that gives partners credit.** Some partners will become involved to improve community relations. *Success By 6*<sup>®</sup> *Boston* publicly recognizes legislators for their support, and targets this publicity to legislators' most important audience: the voters.

## **Build Strong Partner Relationships**

Once the partners are assembled, the success of any initiative hinges on the strength of the relationships among the partners. When diverse sectors come together, differences in organizational cultures, expectations, resources, and other factors can sabotage efforts to build strong relationships. An effective leader will ensure collaboration and encourage understanding of the differences in managerial cultures and rules among the programs. Educating partners about differing organizational procedures can alleviate mistrust and anxiety among participants from the private sector, nonprofit organizations, and public agencies.



**Involve key stakeholders from the beginning.**

Stakeholders must be involved early in the process if they are to become invested in the outcomes. When members join the partnership late, they miss out on the process of establishing the vision and goals and the relationships that result from such shared work. While it is difficult to know in advance who all the stakeholders will be, taking the time to identify and engage as many key stakeholders as possible early on will save time in the long run. Leaders of the *Indiana Child Care Fund*, an initiative that provides state funding to local teams of public and private stakeholders to improve local child care resources, can testify to the importance of engaging stakehold-

ers early. They have found that it is critical to engage both public and private sector stakeholders early in the process if individuals from both sectors are going to play a lasting and substantive role in the partnership.

Encourage partners to be clear about how they benefit from being involved from the beginning. When partners see the pluses for themselves, they are more likely to remain committed to an initiative for the long-term, and everyone benefits. In the case of the *San Francisco Child Care Facilities Fund (CCFF)*, the city is involved because the city needs more child care slots. The Miriam and Peter Haas Fund has long supported programs to increase quality care for 2- to 5-year-olds. To be successful in reaching this goal, the foundation recognizes the need for facilities to house those services. Providian Financial Corporation, a third partner, wants to be better known in San Francisco, which is headquarters for the company. To help accomplish this goal, it is using its Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) contributions to support the Fund.

**Build on existing relationships.** The *Texas Work and Family Clearinghouse* funded three established employer coalitions to serve as mentors for new coalitions and to build a network among the coalitions. The *Clearinghouse* found that face-to-face meetings and conferences are necessary to build strong partnership relationships. *Oregon's Child: Everyone's Business* successfully built upon the strong collaboration that existed within the state's early childhood community. Several initiatives funded by private foundations and state and federal government to improve early care and education preceded the campaign and helped build the infrastructure for a partnership around this issue.

**Build trust.** Networks are effective when the participants trust each other and value each other's advice. As the “new kid on the block,” *Rhode Island Kids Count* needed to work hard to build trust with key constituencies that had been working these issues for a long time. By sitting down with everyone involved in children's issues in the state and listening carefully to their concerns, the organization began to develop a trusting relationship with a wide variety of players. From the beginning of their work on the *Kid's Count Factbook*, for instance, they were careful to include members from state data offices in the development of the data. They were also mindful of the fact that existing children's advocates might be resentful of the resources they obtained to produce the *Factbook*. By providing advocates and policy makers with data that strengthened their work, and by remaining objective about the information they provided, *Rhode Island Kids Count* quickly developed the trust they needed to move forward.

**Encourage frank communication and joint decision-making.**

*Missouri Caring Communities* found that establishing regular channels of communication, distributing new information in a timely manner, developing a common language, and having regular meetings of stakeholders could foster effective communication and relationship building. Likewise, working over a large geographic area, with many different kinds of partners (state, local, and families) necessitated well-established communications channels for the *Good Beginnings Alliance* in Hawaii to keep its multifaceted agenda moving forward. Once relationships have been established, they act as a springboard for expanded collaboration.

## **Establish Clear Goals and a Strategic Agenda**

Consensus around goals serves as both the glue that holds a partnership together and the rudder that directs its actions. If all partners are involved in defining the goals and agenda, they are more likely to remain enthusiastic about the work that lies ahead. Collectively defining goals gives all partners ownership and increases the likelihood that they will stay committed over the long run. If all of the partners are committed to the same goals, then they are better equipped to negotiate the inevitable differences of perspective and opinion that arise as they work together. Likewise, if the goals are held firm, the partnership can be flexible in how they are accomplished, which will help the partnership evolve in the face of political, economic, or other changes.

**Find the common ground when creating goals.** Identify the overlapping priorities among partners and build on this common ground. *The Ohio: Ready to Learn* partnership evolved out of an interest in developing a larger daytime audience by the Ohio Educational Television Service, an interest in improving the quality of family child care providers on the part of the Ohio Department of Human Services, and an interest in widely disseminating information and training on the part of libraries, resource & referral entities and other community organizations.

By joining together these partners created an initiative, which uses public television as a platform to provide training and information about quality early care and education and which responds to the priorities of all of those involved.

**Set realistic goals.** Setting reachable goals early on builds momentum and keeps partners positively engaged. For example, *Success By 6<sup>®</sup> Boston (SB6)* has been successful in lobbying and working with legislators because it has prioritized and limited its agenda to a few key items, such as home visiting programs and increased funding for child care subsidies. *SB6* leaders found that legislators tend to be most receptive when realistic requests are made for the state's limited resources. Starting with a broad agenda, the *Early Childhood Professional Development Project (ECPDN)* in upstate New York decided to scale back some of its plans and focus its energy and resources on a few core activities. *ECPDN* staff learned that sometimes it is important to say no, even in the face of pressure to move quickly.

**Do your homework.** Before establishing goals and an agenda, make sure that you have quality information about what the existing child care needs and resources are and alternative options for addressing those needs. In the early days of the *C.H.I.L.D.R.E.N. of Northcentral Arkansas* partnership, the child care task force, composed mainly of business leaders, hired a consultant to ensure that scarce resources were targeted wisely. Members of the taskforce recognized that they did not have the child care expertise or



experience necessary to move forward with developing goals and an agenda. By using an expert to assess child care needs and resources, present best practices, and make recommendations, the task force developed a responsive action plan focused on developing a local resource & referral entity.

## 🐼 *Secure Sufficient and Diverse Funding*

Securing funding is often necessary to recruit partners and gain public and political support for an initiative. Partners are sometimes more willing to engage and contribute to activities in which there is already demonstrated financial commitment from other sources. In addition, confidence in the long-term viability of projects is stronger when there is a clear financial strategy. Diverse funding sources can also help to stabilize a project in the event that one partner falls short of its commitment or funding streams dry up.

**Find money up front.** Mississippi's Department of Human Services committed a designated amount from its federal Child Care and Development Fund to support local matching grants under the *Child Care Partnership Grant Program (CCPGP)*. The state's commitment encouraged new partners to participate in the program, increasing resources for child care on the local level. On the other hand, Washington state's *Child Care 2000 Campaign* was not able to raise all of the funding needed to implement its full program agenda. In response, the program was phased in over time. Leaders of this work felt strongly that the campaign might have had a larger impact if it had been fully funded from the start.

**Start locally.** Many partnership leaders report that it is easier to build a base of support locally and then use that base to establish a track record and leverage state, federal, and national foundation dollars. The *Michigan Child Care Futures Project* found that it was more successful at connecting to the community, gaining support, and raising funds because it builds on the local structure of the existing child care resource and referral agencies. The project finds that local businesses and supporters are more willing to invest *locally* than they are to put their funds into a larger, *state* pool.

**Approach funders strategically.** The *Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Early Childhood Initiative (ECI)* successfully raised funds from a diverse group of public and private entities. Partnership leaders credit their success to focusing on one entity at a time and presenting data on child care needs and a clear plan for programming, expected outcomes, and measurement. In addition to cash support, think strategically about how

to leverage valuable in-kind support, such as expertise and technical assistance. In the District of Columbia, a consortium of banks joined with partners from local government, community development, and the child care community to create *Child Care Works*, a child care loan fund. The expertise of the bankers in lending was just as critical to the success of the project as their \$40,000 contribution to the loan pool.

**Combine existing resources.** Pooling resources is an effective strategy, particularly for generating the capital necessary to build child care facilities. However, it also requires expertise in navigating through the many regulatory and legal obstacles that exist when financing facilities. Look to community development experts such as the *Community Investment Collaborative for Kids (CICK)* to provide assistance in this field. *CICK* is a national initiative that seeks to improve and expand child care facilities through the development of innovative financing strategies for facility construction and renovation. Many communities have community development corporations, which are local intermediaries that can also assist with developing pools of capital for facilities. For example, *Coastal Enterprises, Inc.*, a community development corporation in Maine, developed a project that focuses on supplying child care providers with the funding and training they need to succeed.

## 👉 Establish a Stable Governance Structure

An effective governance structure is essential for the successful management of the partnership. Effective governance structures define the various roles that partners will play and ensure that all partners understand and accept these roles. Because partnerships involve diverse individuals and organizations working together toward shared goals, partners must agree on how they will work together. Ground rules might include how the partners will define and measure success, conduct meetings, communicate with each other, share information, and make decisions. Such mutually agreed-upon guidelines can prevent miscommunication and establish a process in which all partners participate effectively and are respected for their unique contributions. Guidelines also provide a mechanism to resolve inevitable differences of opinion.

**Develop written partnership agreements.** Many partnerships create written plans that include the roles and responsibilities of each partner or use written contracts or memoranda of understanding to define roles. Some partnerships build on existing governance structures that are

respected in the community, to avoid creating organizational duplication. Other partnerships create new nonprofit entities or establish temporary blue-ribbon committees, commissions, or advisory boards to guide their work. Three structural cornerstones improved the success of the *Oregon's Child: Everyone's Business* campaign: a memorandum of collaboration that demonstrates the commitment of the top leadership of the partnering agencies; a committee structure that harnesses the energy and ideas of partners by assigning responsibility for completing specific tasks; and the ongoing commitment from key organizations to coordinate the campaign. Similarly, the *Illinois Facility Fund* has found that, in real estate dealings, it is extremely important to solidify partnerships through legal documentation of roles and responsibilities to avoid unnecessary disagreements or setbacks.

**Establish formal procedures.** Standardized governing procedures and administrative tools can help reduce confusion and mistrust among partners who frequently come from very different organizational cultures. Governing procedures and administrative tools can also facilitate effective cross-program collaboration and prevent delays in accomplishing goals. The *Down East Partnership for Children* in North Carolina found that establishing formal governing policies and processes was a critical step in fostering effective collaboration. Their governing policies help the governing body, composed of a diverse mix of business, government, child care, social service, and parent representatives, to move forward when they cannot come to consensus. *Massachusetts Community Partnerships for Children* relies on the state Department of Education to provide standard procedures and guidance to help overcome differences in administrative practices, rules, and culture among the participating programs.

**Clearly define roles and responsibilities.** All partners must have meaningful roles in order to sustain their commitment and involvement. Diverse membership provides a partnership with a broad range of skills and expertise. If tapped effectively, partners can build on each other's strengths and make greater progress together than they could separately. Private-



sector partners, for instance, may be well positioned to lead or convene efforts requiring quick action, such as generating financing commitments or lobbying. Public-sector partners may complement these activities by providing information, convening meetings, and revamping or establishing regulations that support the goals of the partnership. In the *Penn Quarter Partnership*, the Government Services Agency and Marriott International, Inc. have taken on distinct roles based on their resources and strengths. GSA has the financial resources and political clout to sustain the project, and Marriott is able to leverage its status as a major local employer to help attract funds, apply pressure when needed, and give the initiative legitimacy as a work/family solution.

## 👉 **Recruit Powerful Champions**

Success requires champions who act as change agents by clearly communicating the goals of the partnership and building a broad base of support. Champions bring visibility to the partnership by obtaining media attention through public service announcements, press conferences, letters to the editor, and opinion pieces. They can also share information at public events, such as hearings, town meetings, and meetings of related groups or organizations (such as local business chambers).

Governors and other elected officials, and business, law enforcement, health, education, religious, and philanthropic leaders have all been effective champions by using their bully pulpits to promote consensus on partnership goals and to build political will to support or expand successful partnership efforts. Parents are effective champions when they mobilize and speak with a unified voice. Prominent organizations, such as charitable foundations, community service groups, and economic development or planning organizations, also can be effective partnership leaders.

**Involve political leaders.** Political leaders can bring significant attention to any partnership. Former Georgia Governor Zell Miller's high level of personal involvement was essential to the success of his *Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program*. When critics threatened the future of the program, the Governor invoked *The Little Engine That Could* as a symbol of persistence for the Pre-K program, and his persistence paid off. North Dakota Lieutenant Governor Rosemarie Myrdal traveled to California to learn about WestEd's infant/toddler training program before North Dakota received the Bush Foundation grant to establish the *North Dakota Infant/Toddler Enrichment Program*. Her participation in and support

for the training program helped to secure the grant and raised public awareness about the need for the program.

**Engage private-sector executives.** Champions from the private sector can be just as powerful as elected officials in raising awareness and moving an agenda forward. The commitment of Sanford Weill, co-chief executive officer of Citigroup and the original chair of the Employers' Advisory Committee, was instrumental to the *Maryland Child Care Resource Network's* initial development and implementation. He successfully recruited other business leaders to invest time and resources in the project. Business involvement was critical to building political support and accessing state funds. *SB6 Boston* presents business leaders to the public as model community members and supporters of children and families. Good public relations encourages further business support. In addition, *SB6* found that businesses appreciate the opportunity to meet state legislators on the neutral ground of "supporting children," instead of promoting their business interests.

**Find local champions.** Local champions are more likely to make a personal commitment to the partnership. *Hawaii's Good Beginnings Alliance* found that successful change requires strong leadership from local champions who are able to communicate the issues, galvanize the public, and maintain a strong commitment in the face of adversity. The Alliance involves local leaders who are advocates for children in its local Good Beginnings Councils, which play a valuable role in promoting early childhood initiatives in their communities and statewide. Likewise, *Educare Colorado* benefits from the consistent leadership of Doug Price, a retired Denver banker who spends countless hours lobbying elected officials and encouraging Colorado business leaders to support this effort.

## 🐾 *Assess Progress and Ensure Accountability*

Never underestimate the power of reliable and accurate data. Evidence of positive results can galvanize support for early childhood initiatives. Politicians, business executives, and the public expect full accountability for funds spent on any initiative, and the sooner a partnership begins to measure progress, the faster it can generate and build support.

Progress can be assessed based on the achievement of specific and well-defined outcomes or results as measured by fiscal and performance indicators. Measuring progress toward goals establishes accountability, in both the public and the private sectors, to show that limited resources

are being used effectively. This bottom-line orientation to results is particularly effective in managing a partnership with shared authority and multiple interests.

**Collect data from the start.** The sooner you can show positive results, the more successful you will be in sustaining momentum for your partnership. In North Carolina, after one year of *Smart Start* funding, legislators began calling for a demonstration of results. However, the initial program did not include a process to track the progress of individual children. This led to continuing questions about results, which became a point of struggle among legislators and state policy makers. In response, the North Carolina Division of Child Development created a data collection system to track a variety of indicators for children being served, in order to inform funders and the general public about the scope and impact of *Smart Start*.

**Use data to improve your initiative.** As a management tool, the process of regularly measuring progress and results can provide partnerships with critical information about what is working, what is not, and what changes can help accomplish the partnership's goals. The *Sweetwater Transit Authority Resources (STAR)*, a partnership providing transportation to child care in rural Wyoming, annually surveys residents to determine transit needs, cost, and satisfaction with services. One such survey highlighted the need for more weekend and evening services, which are now available to *STAR*'s users.

**Focus on quality.** In order to succeed in achieving their results, it is essential that partnership leaders pay attention to the quality of services and programs that they are implementing. Partnership leaders warn against overlooking quality issues in an effort to quickly increase the number of slots. The *Allegheny County Early Childhood Initiative*, an



ambitious effort to create early education services for up to 4,000 unserved children, created a careful system for ensuring quality from the start. Their comprehensive quality assurance system is based on standards from the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and requires providers to complete 50 hours of pre-service in order to receive support from the initiative.

## **Build Public and Political Support**

Public and political support are critical to the long-term success and growth of early childhood initiatives. Getting the right messages out to the right audiences can be a challenge, and it is critical that partnerships be strategic in expending their limited time and resources in outreach and promotion. Different messages will resonate with different audiences. The business community may respond more to bottom line cost-benefit information and positive public relations opportunities, while parents and the public may be energized by education and quality issues. Legislators and public officials will react to a range of messages, including education, use of public funds, quality, and accessibility. And the media are likely to pay attention to both positive and negative stories related to early childhood initiatives.

**Be inclusive.** Because North Carolina’s *Smart Start* is “owned” by diverse stakeholders and benefits all families at the county level, the program now has broad-based support for increasing state-level *Smart Start* expenditures. Over the years, there have been many attempts by the legislature to reduce funding and even, at times, to abolish the initiative. Because local citizens have felt a positive impact, they have formed a powerful constituency for *Smart Start*. Karen Ponder, program director of the North Carolina Partnership for Children, sums it up when she says, “This initiative has something to offer everyone. If you want broad support, you need broad benefit.”

**Disseminate data strategically to develop public and political support.** Using data strategically means more than collecting and analyzing it. Data must be continually dissected, discussed and actively disseminated to influence policy decisions in the state. If data are presented in a “user friendly” format and disseminated at the right time, they can have significant impacts on public policy decisions. The *Maryland Child Care Resource Network* has carefully collected data on the supply of child care, the demand for care, the number of families served, and the number of

providers trained, and has done analyses of future child care trends in Maryland. The effective collection and communication of these data to policy makers and the general public is one reason the *Network* has successfully generated the broad public support necessary for statewide expansion.

**Show benefits in concrete terms.** Use statistics and easy-to-read visuals to compare the costs of inadequate early childhood services to what can be saved by providing children and families with the support they need. For example, the *North Carolina Partnership for Children* estimates that once *Smart Start* is fully funded, the total cost will be \$330 million. This breaks down to a cost of \$1,633 per child, compared to a yearly cost of \$20,932 to house a criminal in state prison or \$47,283 for a juvenile delinquent to spend a year in a training school. The *Children's Home Extended Care Program* uses its budget as a tool for lobbying for more state and charitable donations. Staff document costs and demand to show in very clear terms the difference between what is available and what is needed.

**Engage the media.** The media can be an effective tool in generating support. *Ohio: Ready to Learn* approached public television because of its broad access into homes and the widely respected quality programming it provides. As a result, individuals who generally would not come to government-sponsored training sessions for child care, including grandparent caregivers and stay-at-home moms, are participating. Similarly, *California's Child Care Initiative Project* has effectively cultivated media attention over the years with its mantra, "Don't just throw the graduation party, invite the press!"

## **Maintain Momentum**

Solving the child care challenge through partnering takes a long time. Patience is an absolute necessity, particularly when multiple and diverse partners are involved. Collaborating with different corporate cultures and negotiating competing agendas, schedules, and priorities is hard work. Relationships take time to establish and maintain and must be seasoned with constant communication. There is no silver bullet for easily creating a quality early childhood initiative, but concentrated attention and resources lead to payoffs over time. The awareness and commitment to remain actively involved over time has been, and will remain, a key element for success.

**Take advantage of changing conditions and resources.** This entrepreneurial mindset might involve adapting a partnership's scope to take

advantage of new state or federal funding; creating or developing services in response to a foundation's specific guidelines; or serving a particular population (such as welfare-to-work clients) that is important to public policy makers. Successful partnership leaders consistently credit their success to serendipity or the convergence of several complementary opportunities.



Yet, such opportunities can lead to success only when leaders are able to recognize and take advantage of them. For example, leaders of the *Milwaukee 4-C Early Education and Care Initiative*, which was created in the midst of welfare reform, developed a model child care initiative with careful attention to the needs of low-income, single parents transitioning from welfare to work. Emphasis was placed on developing full-day, year-round early education opportunities, coordination of care for sibling groups and care during non-traditional hours. Their recognition of some of the challenges parents moving from welfare to work were facing helped them to leverage public and private sector funds to implement their model.

***Anticipate growing complexities and expect to learn by trying.***

The Massachusetts Department of Education was willing to shape the *Community Partnerships for Children (CPC)* program as it evolved, rather than impose a single model or strict set of guidelines from the beginning. The evolution of *CPC* included a steep learning curve. Be prepared to handle a lot of questions with no easy answers when establishing a new partnership initiative. Allow the partnership to evolve.

***Keep partners involved.*** Work closely with the partners so that everyone remains involved and excited about the initiative. Go the extra mile for active participation. If key partners are unable to participate in meetings, then change the meeting times or ask the partner to send a designee who can make decisions so that the partnership can proceed. The United Way *Success by 6*<sup>®</sup> Initiative recommends engaging and providing participants with an active role to keep them energized and to remind them how valuable they really are. Creating enjoyable opportunities for partners, such as tours of child care centers and neonatal clinics, can educate partners while also engaging their hearts.

**Plan for sustainability.** Recognize that dedicated staff may be needed to support the partnership, both initially and over time, and plan for sustainability. All three of the *Making the Most of Out-of-School Time (MOST)* sites have undertaken an intensive process to plan for and implement sustainability strategies, guided by the dedicated staff in each city. In a similar way, some partnership leaders are looking at ways to institutionalize their efforts by linking up with well-established local infrastructure, such as the Workforce Development Boards.

**Celebrate successes.** If partners and the community believe that the partnership is making progress, then they are more likely to maintain their support. Structure activities so that partners gain a sense of accomplishment from completing interim tasks, generate media attention whenever possible, and celebrate even the small successes. Early successes can fuel expansion of the initiative. The *Chicago Accreditation Partnership* began with a pilot effort. The success of the small pilot attracted new partners, including the mayor's office, which matched a \$5-million challenge grant to greatly expand the program. In a similar way, the *Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance* selected its pilot site to take advantage of the strong interest by local partners, hoping a quick win would build momentum for replication in other sites.



# Conclusion

There are no easy answers to solving the child care crisis, but numerous efforts across the country are helping to make quality child care more accessible and affordable for our nation's children. What many of these efforts have in common is the reliance on resources and know-how from the public and private sectors. These lessons from partnerships, detailed in this report, help identify strategies that lead to success.

While not every strategy presented here may be appropriate for every public-private partnership for child care, many have broad applicability. Although partners, resources, goals, and challenges will differ, a basic understanding of how individuals operate, what motivates different partners, and what pitfalls can possibly arise should help any initiative get off the ground.

In every partnership, leaders must assess the needs they want to address, the opportunities that are available, and the potential partners that should be involved. But the bulk of the work should be done in partnership with all stakeholders in order to encourage buy-in and support. The time and effort it takes to develop relationships and move an agenda forward are well worth it when a goal is met successfully.

These lessons have demonstrated over and over again that, by bringing together the talent and resources of the public and private sectors, new and creative solutions to the child care crisis will continue to emerge.



