

USER GUIDE

NCCP Pathways Project & Tools

PATHWAYS TO EARLY SCHOOL SUCCESS

Building Local Capacity

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pathways.nccp.org



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PROJECT OVERVIEW

As a society we want young children to experience high-quality early education and health care, and for families to have the supports necessary to care for their children. In fact, the evidence shows that the early childhood years are a time of significant growth and learning, both of which are influenced by biology and the environment (Shonkoff, Boyce, & McEwen, 2009; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Children who have high-quality early experiences are better equipped to take advantage of learning opportunities in kindergarten, which in turn means they are more likely to get off to a strong start in school and maintain a positive achievement trajectory that is linked to academic success in third grade (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001; Schorr & Marchand, 2007). However, children who are at risk for poor outcomes due to life circumstances such as poverty typically do not have high-quality early experiences, and this is related to poorer achievement and well-being.

The Pathways to Early School Success: Building Local Capacity project (also known as Pathways) was designed to help community-based early childhood coalitions support young children and their families, so that children get off to a strong start in school that will help them succeed in the early grades and beyond. To accomplish this, the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) Pathways Team works with early childhood coalitions on improving the linkages within and between systems, strategic planning, and community outreach. We focus on strategic planning in the areas of health and mental health, early childhood care and education, and family support. Findings from the Pathways project were used to inform the development and refinement of the NCCP Pathways analytic tools that can be used by community-based coalitions to build capacity and to update and successfully implement strategic plans.

The NCCP Pathways Team conducted a pilot study in two communities in Virginia and field-tested the tools in socio-demographically diverse communities in New York, Kansas, Minnesota, Colorado, California, and Oregon.

The NCCP Pathways project was initially funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

NOTE: For the purposes of this project we use the word “coalition” as an all-encompassing term that refers to early childhood coalitions, councils, or other groups that work within a community on early child systems building and service delivery.

Pathways includes a set of tools that coalitions use to conduct community needs assessments, monitor their progress, and develop and implement evidence-based strategic plans to support young children and their families. Further, as part of the Pathways strategic planning process, coalitions provide support to early childhood programs within the community such that the coalition facilitates capacity building for programs and the early childhood system.

This User Guide provides background information on the tools and instructions to administer them.

Theory that Guides the NCCP Pathways Project and Tools

The NCCP Pathways tools are based on the Pathways theoretical framework (Schorr & Marchand, 2007). This framework and the related tools provide evidence-based guidance for coalitions that want to work toward accomplishing the six Pathways goals, which support healthy development and learning. Importantly, the Pathways goals have been linked to improved school readiness and academic success by third grade. Lisbeth Schorr and Dr. Jane Knitzer were central to the conceptualization of the initial Pathways project.

The Pathways Goals

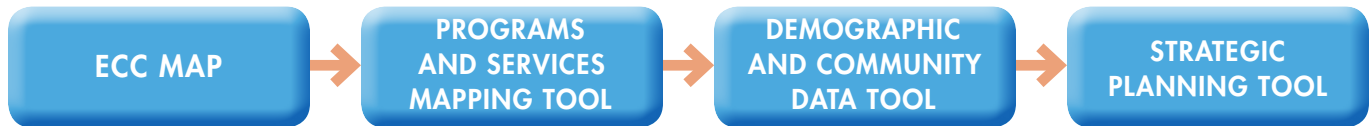
1. **Healthy, Well-timed Births** including high-quality prenatal care, family planning, and programs aimed at reducing teenage parenthood.
2. **Health and Development on Track** including high-quality child health care, early detection of developmental delays, and the prevention of child abuse and neglect.
3. **Supported and Supportive Families** including programs that increase parenting capacity and literacy skills, treatment and follow-up for parents with substance abuse, mental health, or domestic violence, helping families build financial stability, and safe and stable neighborhoods.
4. **High Quality Child Care and Early Education** including high-quality early education and child care programs, linking early learning programs to child care to health/mental health, substance abuse, and developmental services.
5. **Continuity in Early Childhood Experiences** including curricula and expectations for early childhood learning aligned with K–12 learning expectations, providers of early education, health/mental health, social services, and K–12 schools connected with each other and families.
6. **Effective Teaching and Learning in K–3 Classrooms** including conditions that produce and maintain effective teaching and learning (for example, professional development for teachers) and trusting relationships exist within schools and between communities.

The Pathways Cross-cutting Ingredients

The NCCP Pathways tools also draw on the Pathways Cross-cutting Ingredients (Schorr & Marchand, 2007), which are critical to the effective design and implementation of any early childhood initiative. These ingredients include: **Accessibility** (making sure that families can access programs); **High-Quality** (making sure programs are as comprehensive as necessary); **Effective Management** (explicit principles are articulated to guide decision-making); **Results Orientation** (results that funders and the broader public value are used to gauge program effectiveness); **Connections to and Across Services and Supports** (programs take responsibility for creating an effective early childhood system); **Community Engagement and Social Networks** (residents participate and provide input for strategic planning); **Sustainability** (coalition members develop alliances at the local, state, regional, and national levels, and there are on-going efforts to identify funding); and **Funding** (funding investments are made on terms that ensure programs are high-quality).

Overview of the NCCP Pathways Tools

Below is an overview of the process for completing the Pathways tools. Later sections in the User Guide provide more detail about the rationale behind the tools and instructions for completing them. Although coalitions may not finish each tool before starting to work on a subsequent one, we recommend that coalitions follow the sequence shown below.



ECC MAP – Early Childhood Coalition Monitoring and Assessment of Progress Tool

- **Purpose:** Assess and monitor coalitions’ clarity of vision, data linked to the vision, and involvement of key stakeholders.
- **Result:** Coalitions will have a better understanding of their vision, goals, and involvement of stakeholders.
- This tool should be completed annually.

Programs and Services Mapping Tool

- **Purpose:** Map early childhood (formal and informal) interventions in the community in order to assess strengths and needs.
- **Result:** Coalitions will have a comprehensive list of interventions in their community that will help them identify gaps in programming and assist in strategic planning.
- This tool should be updated annually.

Demographic and Community Data Tool

- **Purpose:** Identify available data and data sources in the community.
- **Result:** Helps coalitions identify and select shared indicators and outcomes, which are essential for strategic planning.
- This tool should be updated annually.

Strategic Planning Tool

- **Purpose:** Guide the development and implementation of an evidence-based strategic plan that addresses outcomes and indicators that are in need of improvement.
- **Result:** Provides coalitions with a step-by-step guide for outcome(s).
- This tool can be used repeatedly as coalitions work to address outcomes that are in need of improvement.

NCCP PATHWAYS TOOLS

Early Childhood Coalition Monitoring and Assessment of Progress Tool (ECC MAP)

Background on the Tool. The Early Childhood Coalition Monitoring and Assessment of Progress Tool (ECC MAP) is designed to help coalitions assess and track their progress in building effective early childhood systems. Specifically, the ECC MAP assesses and monitors coalitions' clarity of vision, specificity of goals, involvement of stakeholders, and whether these components have been translated into a long-term strategic plan.

The ECC MAP supports coalitions in the following ways:

- helps coalitions to better articulate their vision and goals and whether the vision is linked to measurable outcomes;
- provides information about coalition functioning and where the coalition is in the process of building an effective early childhood system;
- tracks progress on coalition functioning and stakeholder engagement efforts; and
- generates ideas for strategic planning.

To accomplish these goals, the ECC MAP measures progress in five areas: (1) coalition history and background; (2) coalition vision; (3) data use to measure progress towards the coalition's vision; (4) internal relationships; and (5) external relationships.

- **Coalition history and background** – This section examines how long the coalition has been in existence and how long coalition members have been involved.
- **Coalition vision** – This section assesses whether a coalition has a shared understanding of the coalition's purpose and goals for the future – both of which are important for guiding a coalition's short- and long-term work.

Box 1. Examples of Vision Statements

- “The vision of the Early Childhood Initiative is to make our community the best place for our youngest children to grow, thrive and reach their full potential.”
- “To maximize the healthy social-emotional, intellectual, language, literacy and physical development of young children, ages 0-8 in Clifford County.”

A coalition's vision statement will answer the question, “Why are we here?” Further, it will represent the coalition's purpose even if the community's political, economic, or social contexts change. The vision statement should do the following: provide clarity about the coalition's purpose, describe the outcomes that the coalition aims to effect, explain the coalition's goals for the future, and be engaging and memorable. This statement is typically one or two sentences. Examples of vision statements are listed in Box 1.

Discussion questions about the coalition's vision statement might include (Derived from Bryson & Alston, 2011):

1. What are the coalition's core values and guiding beliefs?
2. If a vision statement currently exists, what is it? What does it say about why the coalition exists and what it hopes to accomplish?
 - What are the service and program needs that the coalition can address by implementing targeted strategies?
 - What is the coalition's role in addressing these service and program needs?

- **Data used to measure progress toward the coalition’s vision and goals** – This section examines whether a coalition has tied measurable indicators and outcomes to its vision.
- **Internal relationships** – This section measures coalition communication and decision-making processes, and how well the coalition membership reflects the socio-demographic diversity found within the community.
- **External relationships** – This section examines the involvement of key, external stakeholders who support the coalition’s work.

Directions for Completing the ECC MAP

Coalition members will complete the tool by selecting the response that best matches their belief about the coalition’s status or performance. Coalition members may find that no one response exactly matches his/her belief and in this case the coalition member should select the response that most closely matches his/her belief about the coalition’s status or performance.

The ECC MAP includes two types of questions:

- **Multiple-choice questions.** For these questions, coalition members should select the response that best describes their beliefs about the coalition’s work.
- **Five-point scale questions.** For these questions, coalition members should select the number on the scale that corresponds to their belief. (1) No evidence exists in the specified area, (2) Very little evidence exists in the specified area, (3) Some evidence exists in the specified area, (4) Growing body of evidence exists in the specified area, and (5) Well-developed evidence exist in the specified area.
- For some questions, there is space for coalition members to write additional details about their beliefs regarding the coalition’s work.

After Completing the Tool. After all participating coalition members complete the ECC MAP, aggregate results will be available and the coalition coordinator can facilitate a discussion about the clarity of vision among members, specificity of goals, and key stakeholders that are engaged in the coalition’s work. This discussion should occur with the full coalition, be used to guide strategic planning, and efforts to improve coalition functioning. The ECC MAP should be completed on an annual basis so that the coalition can monitor progress toward achieving their goals. ECC MAP discussions are a starting point for strategic planning and will help orient the coalition to dynamics that can be improved (for example, members’ knowledge of the vision), stakeholder engagement, and gaps in strategic planning (for example, coalition vision linked to measurable outcomes). Completing the Programs and Services Mapping Tool and Demographic and Community Data Tool are important next steps as the coalition identifies an outcome(s) that they will address through the development and implementation of an evidence-based strategic plan. Coalitions should keep in mind that using the Pathways tools may help them identify multiple outcomes where improvements can be made; however, it is unlikely that all outcomes can realistically be improved at once. Thus, we recommend coalitions identify a manageable number of outcomes that they would like to address first (e.g., focus on one or two outcomes).

Programs and Services Mapping Tool

Background on the Tool. The Programs and Services Mapping Tool is designed for coalitions to map formal and informal interventions in their community using the six Pathways goals. This will help coalitions assess strengths, which they can build on as well as gaps in early childhood and family interventions. Additionally, having a centralized location for community resources improves families' access to services (Epps & Jackson, 2000).

Directions for Completing the Programs and Services Mapping Tool

This tool should be completed as part of a collaborative process and it is important that the full coalition participates in the completion of the tool. Information collected for this tool includes:

- **Program Name** – Include both the national name of the program (Parents as Teachers) and the local program name (Parents and Children Together), if they are different. Coalitions should keep in mind that some key stakeholders may be more familiar with the national names of programs, and thus these names should be included in the list. If the program goes by an acronym, please include the full name the first time the program is listed.
- **Goal(s) and Description** – Describe the primary goals of the program and the services offered.
- **Capacity** – Describe whether the program is able to serve all eligible children and families in need of the program (for example, is there a waiting list?).
- **Eligibility** – Describe who is allowed to participate in the program (for example, age, income, family status requirements).
- **Quality** – Describe whether the program adheres to a specific quality standard (for example, NAEYC accreditation, fidelity of implementation tool).

- **Contact Information** – Include the program phone number, address, and website.

We recommend that coalitions assign a member or sub-committee the responsibility of completing each section of the tool. Typically, coalition members who are most knowledgeable about programs and services related to a Pathways goal are best suited to work on that section. With this in mind, we suggest that coalition members first provide information for the programs for which they are most knowledgeable and then give feedback on other listings. Given the collaborative nature of this tool, there may be several drafts of the tool before the coalition arrives at a final draft. Your coordinator will assist with incorporating completed program information into the final draft of the Programs and Services Mapping Tool.

After Completing the Tool. The information collected as part of the Programs and Services Mapping Tool will be helpful in identifying the areas where the community has existing capacity upon which to build as well as priority area(s) that are in need of improvement. This information should be used to inform completion of the Strategic Planning Tool, which is discussed later. Also, once the coalition has a final draft of the Programs and Services Mapping Tool, we recommend that it is made accessible to members in the broader community. Findings from this tool will be useful to coalition members and other service providers who want to help their clients navigate the early childhood and social service system. Due to the changing nature of programs, we recommend updating this tool annually.

Demographic and Community Data Tool

Background on the Tool. The Demographic and Community Data Tool is designed for two primary reasons. First, it will help coalitions identify indicator data collected in their communities that can be used to monitor and track progress as part of strategic planning. Second, it will help coalitions assess the level of risk for adverse school and developmental outcomes among young children and families in their community.

Coalitions can then compare this risk information to the Programs and Services Mapping Tool responses and determine if the availability and intensity of services meets the needs of young children and families in their community. This type of community-level data is important in determining how best to target resources and plan to achieve goals for children's school readiness and overall well-being.

The indicators suggested in this tool are organized by the six Pathways goals and provide a starting point for assessing which indicator data are currently collected in the community. The data collected for this tool will be gathered from a variety of sources.

Directions for Completing the Demographic and Community Data Tool

The Demographic and Community Data Tool starts by asking for basic demographic information on young children and their families in the community, and then asks for information according to the six Pathways goals (Healthy Well-timed Births, Health and Development on Track, etc.). In each section, the tool includes four columns:

- **Indicator:** The first column, "Indicator," lists the data element for which information is requested.
- **Source:** In the second column, "Source," coalitions should list the source of the indicator data. For some indicators we have provided suggested data sources. However,

these sources may not be applicable in all communities; thus, we encourage coalitions to list additional data sources that exist in their communities. When listing sources that have acronyms, please include the full name of the source as well as the acronym. It is also important to keep in mind that monitoring trends in indicators requires that they are collected on a regular basis. Thus, it is important for coalitions to identify data sources that are routinely collected and made available.

- **Data Available:** In the third column, "Data Available," coalitions will record the quantitative data.
- **Notes:** The fourth column, "Notes," is a place for coalitions to list any special circumstances about the indicator data. For example, data may be only available for certain segments of the population (children from low-income families), and coalitions will note that information here. Additionally, it is possible that communities collect indicator data that are not listed here. There are blank rows included at the end of each section for your coalition to record additional indicators and related information.

Suggested sources for indicator data include:

- Birth records
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov/>
- Child Care Resource and Referral data
- Child Care Subsidy records
- Child Trends Data Bank <http://childtrendsdatabank.org/>
- Child Welfare records
- Common Core of Data, U.S. Department of Education <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/>
- Community Health Status Indicators <http://www.communityhealth.hhs.gov/homepage.aspx?j=1>

Suggested sources for indicator data continued:

- Department of Corrections records
- EZAPOPOP – Easy Access to Juvenile Populations
<http://ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezapop/>
- Head Start and Early Head Start, Administration for Children and Families
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/>
- Head Start Program Information Reports
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/mr/pir>
- Kids Count Data Center
<http://datacenter.kidscount.org/>
- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Accredited Program Search
<http://www.naeyc.org/academy/accreditation/search>
- National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC), Accredited Provider Search
http://nafcc.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=390&Itemid=89
- National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS)
<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/>
- U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS)
<http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>
- Police records
- State Department of Public Health
- State Department Administering Part C of IDEA (Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities ages 0–3 years)
- State Department Administering Part B of IDEA (Assistance for Education of All Children with Disabilities ages 3–22 years)
- School Accountability Report, Elementary and Secondary Education Act
- School District Records and Surveys
- VitalStats
<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/VitalStats.htm>

We recommend that coalitions assign a member or sub-committee the responsibility of completing a section of the tool. Typically, coalition members who are most knowledgeable about programs and services related to a Pathways goal are best suited to work on that section. For example, a demographer would be responsible for completing the section on Demographic Characteristics of Young Children and Their Families; two coalition members who work at the county health department would be responsible for completing the section for Goal #1: Healthy, Well-timed Births; and so on. Breaking up the tool into manageable pieces increases the likelihood that it will be completed accurately and in a timely manner. After the responses are filled in, other coalition members can offer feedback.

After Completing the Tool. After completing the Demographic and Community Data Tool, the coalition will be able to identify data and data sources in the community. This is a vital part of the strategic planning process. In addition to indicator data that are currently available, the coalition will have a better sense of data that are not collected, but would be helpful in understanding the needs of young children and their families. For example, coalition members may have anecdotal evidence that the number of homeless families with young children has increased, and as such a need for more services exist. However, it will be difficult to state the seriousness of the problem and the changes in families' situations without indicator data. Identifying data that are currently collected as well as data that are not collected will advance the coalition's work by helping to track progress where data exist and raise awareness about where data development needs to take place. This tool should be updated annually.

Strategic Planning Tool

Background on the Tool. The purpose of this tool is to guide coalitions in the development and implementation of an evidence-based strategic plan using data and findings from the ECC MAP, Programs and Services Mapping Tool, and Demographic and Community Data Tool. The full coalition should participate in the strategic planning process so that there is buy-in and support to implement the plan. The Pathways Strategic Planning Tool includes concrete steps that a coalition uses to guide and track their progress on addressing outcome(s) and indicator(s) that are in need of improvement. The strategic plan includes outcome and indicator data to be used in conjunction with an Implementation Planner and Timeline. This format makes it possible for coalitions to track the strategic planning progress over time. This tool serves as a template that can be used repeatedly for strategic planning in priority areas that are in need of improvement. In addition to strategic planning for the identified outcome(s), the NCCP Pathways Team recommends that all coalitions simultaneously work on a strategic plan to engage stakeholders. More information on engaging stakeholders is included at the end of this section.

The Strategic Planning Tool helps coalitions:

- **Reach consensus on and identify measurable outcome(s) that will be addressed.** Coalitions will likely identify several outcomes that are in need of improvement, but we recommend only one or two outcomes as the focus of initial strategic planning. This allows the coalition to maximize their resources.
- For example, using the NCCP Pathways tools, a coalition might identify high-quality prenatal care for all families as the outcome that they want to effect. Data and information collected from the ECC MAP, which emphasizes the coalition's vision and stakeholder relationships, and the Programs and

Services Mapping Tool, which might show limited capacity in existing prenatal services for low-income pregnant women. The coalition would need to come to consensus that this is the outcome they will effect through the development and implementation of their strategic plan.

- **Select indicator data for measuring progress and providing continuous feedback to the coalition.** A coalition, for example, might use the percentage of expectant mothers who receive high-quality prenatal care as the indicator to measure their progress on implementing activities that have the potential to influence the outcome. The Demographic and Community Data Tool provides guidance about selecting indicator data.
- **Establish specific evidence-based and/or promising activities or strategies for implementation, responsibilities of coalition members, and a timeline for the work.** Using the above mentioned example about the limited capacity of existing prenatal services to accommodate low-income pregnant women, an activity or strategy might consist of 1) outreach and broad-based public information campaigns developed for and by diverse stakeholders and 2) building case management capacity so that expectant mothers are connected to medical services. Implementing these activities have the potential to improve low-income pregnant women's access to high-quality prenatal care.

Directions for Completing the Strategic Planning Tool

A collaborative process should be used to complete the NCCP Pathways Strategic Planning Tool because successful implementation is more likely when the full coalition has provided input and there is buy-in. The Strategic Planning Tool includes the following steps:

Step 1: Identify the Outcomes. The first step in this process is to start with a discussion about the outcome(s) that are in need of improvement. An outcome is a measure of the effect of an activity/strategy, intervention, or program. The outcome(s) that the coalition selects should align with the coalition's vision. The coalition's vision represents a long-term goal that it hopes to achieve and the identified outcome(s) are based on these ideals. We encourage coalitions to use the findings from previous NCCP Pathways tools to guide decision-making about the identification of outcome(s) that will be the focus of the strategic planning effort. For example, the ECC MAP findings provide information on your coalition's vision and stakeholder relationships, and findings from Programs and Services Mapping Tool can be used to examine where existing capacity as well as gaps and redundancies in programming exist. The Demographic and Community Data Tool provides guidance about baseline indicator data. It is likely that multiple outcomes where the coalition would like to effect positive change will be discussed. However, this tool is intended for strategic planning for up to two outcomes at a time, but the tool can be used as many times as you wish to address additional outcomes.

Step 2: Select the Outcome(s). In this step your coalition will select up to two outcomes to be used for the current strategic plan.

Step 3: Identify the Indicators. The third step in the Strategic Planning Tool is to identify indicators. An indicator is a proportion that measures a meaningful aspect of a health, education, or social service system. In this step, your coalition will identify up to six possible indicators that can be used to assess the influence of your strategic planning efforts including the activities/strategies that are implemented. You will find that the Demographic and Community Data Tool is especially helpful in identifying indicators that the coalition can use for strategic planning.

Step 4: Select the Indicators. In this step, your coalition will select up to three indicators that will be used for strategic planning. Coalition members should ensure that the indicator data that are selected are appropriate for measuring progress of the selected outcomes, are collected on a regular basis, and will be available to the coalition.

Step 5: Implementation Planner and Timeline.

The fifth and final step is the Implementation Planner and Timeline. In this step, along with consultation from experts in the community and the NCCP Pathways Team, your coalition will identify specific evidence-based activities and strategies aimed at facilitating improvements in the selected outcomes and indicators. After choosing an activity to implement, your coalition will break down the overall activity into manageable, concrete actions, with a corresponding timeline and designated subcommittees or coalition member(s) who are responsible for implementation. For example, to influence the percentage of pregnant women who receive high-quality prenatal care, a coalition might decide develop outreach materials about the importance of prenatal care that also includes information about how and where to access low- or no-cost, high-quality prenatal care. Actions might include: reviewing the research to help with creating an engaging and user-friendly brochure that explains prenatal care and on how to support expectant mothers and fathers, using information from the Programs and Services Mapping Tool to list how to access and where prenatal care is available, creating the brochure, and broadly disseminating the brochure to practitioners, expecting parents, and other central hubs in the community. Each of these actions would be assigned to specific coalition members or subcommittees, the full coalition would decide on a timeline for completion, and engaging external stakeholders in the process would benefit the strategic planning effort. We recommend that sub-committees update the full coalition on at least a monthly basis. Finally, as coalitions work through the NCCP Strategic Planning Tool it is likely that members will think

of multiple activities to initiate. To this end, the Implementation Planner and Timeline can be used multiple times and we encourage your coalition to plan as many activities and strategies as are manageable (see the additional template for the Implementation Planner and Timeline).

After Completing the Tool. After completing the Strategic Planning Tool coalitions will have a step-by-step guide for implementing an evidence-based strategic plan that will address the outcomes that coalition members agreed to work on. In addition to the coalition's expertise and experience, the Strategic Planning Tool draws on data to measure progress and findings from the data can be used by the coalition to inform advocacy and resource allocation.

Successful implementation of the strategic plan is a long-term effort. We have found that, generally, at least a one-year timeline is necessary for complete development, implementation, and some measure of meaningful progress. After successfully implementing the strategic plan for the initial outcome(s), the coalition can use the Strategic Planning Tool again to address additional outcomes that are in need of improvement. The Strategic Planning Tool assists with short-term and long-term projects that the coalition will take on.

Resource for External Stakeholder Engagement.

We recommend that all coalitions include ongoing strategic planning to engage stakeholders. Stakeholder engagement is an essential part of a coalition's sustainability and community awareness activities. Stakeholder involvement is beneficial because it diversifies the expertise, perspectives, and resources to which the coalition has access. It is important to view engaging stakeholders as a process of cultivating relationships that are mutually beneficial and founded on trust. Thus, The Strategic Planning Tool for Engaging External Stakeholders is included in the NCCP Pathways tool-kit.

The Strategic Planning Tool for Engaging External Stakeholders has five steps: (1) Refining the Message to Stakeholders; (2) Identifying Potential Stakeholders in the Community; (3) Matching Potential Stakeholders with Coalition Members; (4) Creating Informative Materials for Stakeholders; and (5) Planning Activities for Stakeholder Engagement. After completing the Strategic Planning Tool for Engaging External Stakeholders, coalitions will have a step-by-step implementation guide for reaching out to key stakeholders and engaging them in mutually beneficial relationships.

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GLOSSARY

Activity/Strategy

Specific actions that are taken to influence the quality and capacity of local services and supports and to strengthen the linkages within and between systems.

Early childhood coalition

An all-encompassing term that refers to early childhood coalitions, councils, or other groups that work within a community on early child systems and capacity building and service delivery. Early childhood system: An early childhood system refers to the interrelated sectors of health and mental health, early childhood education, and family economic security programs functioning as a comprehensive unit to meet the needs of young children and their families.

Implementation Plan

The Strategic Planning Tool includes a step on implementing a coalition's strategic plan. Specifically, Step 5 (Implementation Planner and Timeline) provides concrete guidance about how to carry out the strategies and activities listed in the plan. This step is essential to the Pathways strategic planning process because moves the plan from a theory of change to action.

Indicator

An indicator is a proportion that measures a meaningful aspect of a health, education, or social service system (e.g., Proportion of 5 year olds whose blood lead levels have been tested by kindergarten entry). Generally, indicator data provide insight about whether an activity or

strategy has been successfully implemented by a coalition. Indicator data is typically collected over a specified period of time that can be compared to another time period. Indicator data can be collected at the neighborhood, county, city, state, or national level.

Mutually beneficial relationship

A mutually beneficial relationship is a relationship where a stakeholder is engaged in the work of the coalition in a way that supports the stakeholder's interests as well as benefiting the coalition.

Outcome

An outcome is a measure of the effect of an activity/strategy, intervention, or program. Progress on the outcome can be documented or measured. The coalition's vision should inform the outcome(s) that it aims to effect. For example, if the vision is that "All young children are healthy," one outcome the coalition may work to influence is "Children's receipt of necessary immunizations by school entry."

School readiness

The concept of school readiness is not exclusively a matter of fostering literacy and number skills but must also include the capacity to form and sustain positive relationships with teachers, children, and other adults, and develop the social and emotional skills for cooperating with others (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, Working Paper #1, pg. 5, 2004). As part of the Pathways project, we also recognize that schools must be ready for children and families, and this dynamic is situated within the context of culture and community.

Stakeholder

An external stakeholder is an individual or organization who supports the work of the coalition. Stakeholders are allies who may choose to contribute resources including funding, advocate on behalf of the coalition, or raise community awareness about the coalition's work and early childhood initiatives.

Strategic plan

The strategic plan is comprised of concrete steps that a coalition uses to guide and track their progress on an outcome that is identified as needing improvement. The strategic plan includes indicator data that are tracked over time and compared to baseline data. Coalitions can identify outcome(s) in need of improvement based on information from the ECC MAP, Programs and Services Mapping Tool, Demographic and Community Data Tool, and their knowledge about the community's needs.

Strategy/Activity

Specific actions that are taken to influence the quality and capacity of local services and supports and to strengthen the linkages within and between systems.

Vision

A vision statement outlines the coalition's purpose and is aligned with its values and guiding beliefs. The vision statement should answer the question, "Why are we here?" It describes the coalition in terms of long-term goals that the coalition sets out to achieve. The vision statement should also reflect the coalition's purpose even if the community's political, economic, or social contexts change.



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