



Opportunities Exchange

SELECTING YOUR ALLIANCE HUB

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After you clarify what services the Alliance will offer, you are ready to select an organization to serve as the Alliance Hub. While some Alliances start planning with the Hub already identified, it can be helpful to determine the services list first and go through a process of selecting the partner organization most prepared to offer support at your identified scale and depth.

There can be more than one Hub identified. Some Alliances choose to share leadership across organizations with one organization offering business leadership services and another focusing on pedagogy. Many different kinds of organizations have successfully served as Alliance Hubs. We've seen all of the following succeed in the role:

- A large, successful, child care program that has achieved quality and sustainability through good management and economies of scale.
- A resource and referral agency or other child care intermediary organization that has experience with functions such as child care subsidy billing, professional development, mentoring, food program management, etc.
- A local non-profit with experience in ECE, such as a United Way.
- A back-office or property management organization with strong expertise in billing, accounting, maintenance, HR, and related administrative functions.
- A community or family foundation with strong connection to the local ECE community and a willingness to play a deeper role in operations.
- A human services agency whose mission "connects" to ECE (e.g., early intervention services, adult education agencies, etc.).

A Hub should NOT expect to generate profit for their organization by operating an Alliance. The Hub is a legal and administrative structure that enables services at scale so that participating providers can share the cost of both business and pedagogical leadership and generate savings (in both time and money) that can be reinvested into classrooms. Because of the investment and funding required, becoming a Hub should only occur if the overall objective is mission-related: to help participating providers build their capacity to offer sustainable, high quality care.

We have observed that, regardless of previous experience, successful Hubs have most or all of the following key characteristics:

- **Mission Driven**
Wants to work with other ECE organizations and sees this as part of their mission rather than as an opportunity for increased funding.
- **Leadership and Market Credibility**
Trusted leader in the community, or able to quickly build trust among providers and funders.

Tools to Support You In This Section

- [Sample RFQ questions for selecting your Alliance Hub](#)



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- **Access to Providers**
Knows the provider community well and has the capacity to reach and successfully engage providers in the Alliance.
- **Financial Reach and Stability**
Has sound management capacity, with dedicated and skilled fiscal management staff and experience using technology for billing, data collection, and overall fund management.
- **Access to a Variety of Funding Streams**
Already has, or is able to tap, multiple funding streams.
- **Innovation**
Leadership, board, and staff are open to new ideas and approaches, willing to “think outside the box,” and experienced in developing promising new approaches to old problems.
- **Commitment to Excellence**
Leadership, board, and staff are willing to do the internal and external work needed to raise the bar on quality service delivery.
- **Entrepreneurial**
Leadership embraces an entrepreneurial way of thinking and uses this entrepreneurial energy to effectively engage the staff and board.
- **Risk tolerance**
Leadership, board, and staff are willing to take risks and the organization is stable enough to launch a new endeavor that may not pay for itself in the short term.

IDENTIFYING A SUCCESSFUL ALLIANCE HUB

The single most important contributing factor to a Hub’s success is the organization’s ability to lead change—to transform, alter, or switch from old ways of thinking about the child care sector and old ways of doing business. There are other characteristics to look for—detailed below—but it is mission critical that the Hub is comfortable with, and excited about, change, growth, and innovation in the sector.

Embedded within the questions below are the leadership characteristics most likely to result in change: expertise within the organization; support (from the Board and staff leadership) for experimentation and automation; and strong communication skills. If you have already selected a Hub, these questions can help sharpen your thinking about how they will step into the role. If you do not yet have a Hub in mind, these questions can help identify organizations to approach.

TRACK RECORD

- Does the organization have the internal infrastructure to fully execute the Alliance Theory of Change?
- Does the organization regularly explore new ways to achieve its mission?
- Does the organization have experience designing and implementing new programs, services, and projects?
- Does the organization have experience with a significant change management process internally? How about working with stakeholders externally to solve a long-standing problem?
- Is there an internal focus on infrastructure change and improvements?
- How frequently is technology upgraded and are internal systems modified within the organization to support efficiency and effectiveness?
- How often is the phrase “that’s how we’ve always done it” used as an answer to the question “why?”

MISSION MATCH

- How would serving as a Shared Services Hub help achieve the organizational mission?
- How readily do staff and leadership (including the board) see the connection between the mission of the organization and the need for a Shared Service Alliance in your community?

TRUST

- What evidence is there to suggest that the organization has capacity to build



the trust that will allow providers to feel safe and supported in making changes to their business?

- Does organizational leadership believe that an Alliance framework is a viable way for providers to improve their sustainability?
- How will the organization ensure staff receive the training and resources needed to perform Shared Service Alliance work effectively?

Some Alliance design teams choose to go through a formal application process to select a Hub. While you do not have to do this, if you choose to, we recommend including your design team, funders, and at least a couple of child care providers in the selection process. We have drafted a sample set of application questions you can use and adapt to solicit proposals [here](#).

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

As you select an Alliance Hub, it's important for all partners to be clear about roles and responsibilities. While the governance structure will be unique to the specific needs and context of your community, we recommend taking time to think collaboratively about policies and develop Memorandums of Understanding to clarify roles regarding launch and ongoing work. Questions to consider include:

- Who will perform what tasks?
- What is the timeline for assigned work?
- What information/data will be shared among partners and how?
- How will decisions be made—through a contract, as a collective, as board members, etc.? And, how will member providers weigh in on decisions? 