



Opportunities Exchange

RECRUITING MEMBERS TO THE ALLIANCE

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Alliances recruit members in many ways. Sometimes a group of providers initiates the creation of a Shared Services Alliance and in that instance, they self-select into the group and form the initial cohort. More often than not however a third party entity serves as the catalyst for an Alliance and in that instance founding member providers will need to be selected and recruited.

As you plan for member recruitment, keep in mind that success is most likely when all members of the Alliance embrace and are excited about change. We suggest keeping the following guidelines top of mind when building a recruitment strategy:

- Participating programs/providers must be open to operating differently than they have in the past, including a willingness to change business practices, and possibly reduce administrative positions (in the case of centers) and/or trust someone else with administrative functions for the first time (in the case of family child care).
- Trust among and between members and the Hub must be present or quickly built. To ensure meaningful business leadership and coaching, Alliance members will need to feel safe sharing financial information and enrollment data.
- Provider members and the Hub should share core values around the importance of program quality and business sustainability.

WHO TO RECRUIT

You will have identified the “ideal provider participant” during Theory of Change development. Now it’s time to get even more concrete and think specifically about who, exactly, you want to invite to join the Alliance. It is completely fine to start small. Engaging 3-5 enthusiastic providers is fine. The Alliance can expand as experience and confidence grows.

You may have relationships with providers who are ready to join the Alliance. You may need to market yourself and build new provider relationships via community partners. In either case, remember that success hinges on building capacity and commitment among everyone involved—from Alliance leaders to Alliance members—to change the way they operate.

Many factors and characteristics contribute to the likelihood of a provider experiencing success through membership in an Alliance. As you think about who to recruit for the initial Alliance cohort, it may be worthwhile to spend time in honest conversation with potential members. We have included a sample screening tool you can adapt to meet your needs, including the following questions:

- How comfortable are you sharing data about your program?
- Are any of your current operating procedures particularly challenging? Or not working optimally for you?

Tools to Support You In This Section

- [Sample marketing materials & value propositions](#)
- [Sample provider MOU](#)
- [Sample provider intake form](#)



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- Do you believe there can be a better way to operate the business?
- Are you committed to continuous improvement in your efforts to offer quality services to children and families?
- How comfortable are you—or would you be—using data to make new business decisions? For example, reviewing enrollment trends to revise classroom staffing and size; implementing late fees to help reduce bad debt; and changing to a new food vendor if it was more cost-effective.
- If Shared Services is successful you will likely need fewer administrative staff in your program. How many administrative staff do you currently have and what roles do these individuals play? (Listen deeply for how comfortable the provider might be with the idea of downsizing administration staff in order to shift revenue into raising classroom teacher wages. Also consider the possibility that member providers might have employees who could be tapped as Alliance staff or consultants. Thus, joining an Alliance becomes a growth strategy for staff vs loss of a job.)

As you fine-tune your membership criteria, keep in mind that you will share the risks and rewards of operating your Alliance with the members you choose. If they succeed financially, your Alliance is likely to succeed as well. If member providers continue to struggle financially, the drain on the whole Alliance could be significant. Take the time to map out who will most benefit from, and resonate with, your Theory of Change.

MARKETING YOUR ALLIANCE

Developing your Value Proposition

While establishing membership criteria is important, an Alliance Hub must also clearly articulate a value proposition—the explicit benefits to the member providers—in order to spark interest. Remember that most providers are overloaded and stressed out, so you need messages that resonate with them and speak to key pain points.

A value proposition focuses on what services the members receive and what benefits they can enjoy as a result of joining the Alliance. The screenshots (left) from a Shared Service Alliance Hub clearly articulate the Value Proposition.

Taking the time to get a VERY clear and compelling value proposition that communicates what you will do for providers in easily understandable plain language is extremely important if you want to catch provider attention. We also recommend setting up a simple website (or page on your existing website) that serves as a landing page for providers to learn more about the Alliance. If you plan to offer services in multiple languages don't forget to translate your web materials and value proposition and ensure providers can access information about you in the language in which they most comfortably read.

Recruiting Members

Once you are clear about the parameters around provider membership and have a compelling value proposition in place, it's time to recruit members. You will need a solid provider recruitment strategy based on membership goals. Providers may need to hear from you and your partners multiple times before agreeing to join the Alliance. Recruitment strategies that we have seen work include:

- Strong web presence with clear information about the Alliance and its value to providers.
- Person-to-person recruitment where Alliance staff and/or partner organizations reach out directly to providers to invite them to join.
- Information sessions hosted by the Alliance Hub and partner organizations to share the value proposition with providers and invite them to get more information or join.
- Social media marketing—Facebook, Instagram, etc.—that drives providers to the website and invites them to join.
- Email blasts and newsletters from the Alliance Hub and partner organizations letting the providers know about the Alliance and its value.

Spend more time engaging with teachers, children, and families. Let us tackle the administrative tasks.

As the director of a child care center, your responsibilities are vast. But your resources are likely limited. The Richmond Area Shared Service Alliance, or RASA, enables centers like yours to focus on activities - such as teacher development, family engagement, and center quality - that are essential to your mission...and your passion.

You're the backbone of your organization. But, you're wearing (way) too many hats.

In addition to your educational and leadership responsibilities, being a center director often involves facility management, resolving personnel issues, payment collection, system troubleshooting, and many other administrative tasks. **It's not sustainable!** Directors who are spread too thin experience:

- High staff turnover
- facilities in disrepair
- teachers with limited development opportunities
- feeling stressed and totally overwhelmed



Outreach strategies should be tailored to what makes the most sense for your community, keeping in mind how the people you are trying to reach prefer to communicate and are used to receiving information.

Onboarding Members to the Alliance

As you think through the recruitment process, you will need a plan for how you will onboard members into the Alliance. This will vary depending on the specific services and strategies you offer.

For example, if you are starting with boosting use of CCMS your onboarding plan and strategy will look different than if you have chosen to focus on standing up a substitute pool for member providers. But no matter where you start, you must have a plan for orienting providers to the new services.

Most Alliances have providers sign a MOU that articulates roles and responsibilities of both the Hub and the members. We have an example in the tools for this section. MOUs can be formal or informal, but we recommend preparing a written document that helps the Alliance Hub and the provider members understand they are beginning a formal partnership with one another. 