

APPENDIX F: LEA ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT COORDINATION BETWEEN LEAS, HEAD START, AND OTHER EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

Conducting a Self-Assessment at the LEA

The MOA Toolkit LEA Self-Assessment is one of four tools that early childhood leaders at LEAs can use to guide the process for developing the support, commitment, and ongoing engagement for developing a powerful Partnership Agreement⁵² that:

- Improves the availability of services;
- Improves the quality of services; and
- Supports children’s transition.

The LEA Self-Assessment tool is framed around three (3) critical phases in the successful implementation of a Partnership Agreement. They are:

Visioning and Stakeholder Engagement to Support the Agreement

This phase occurs prior to developing the agreement but should be sustained throughout the entire process, especially during the phase when the agreement is being implemented.

Defining the Components of the Agreement

This phase refers to the negotiations between the LEA and the Head Start or other early childhood programs serving the attendance areas of the LEA’s elementary schools. It defines the components of the agreement (e.g., data and record transfer; coordination of services; curriculum/instruction; family engagement) and the mutual activities as well as responsibilities by each party, including how the agreement is being monitored and enforced.

Measuring Success and Monitoring the Implementation of the Agreement

This phase starts as soon as the agreement has been approved and signed by the parties. The monitoring process and enforcement are integral to the MOA. Measurement of the partnership’s success can be delegated to an independent evaluator or jointly conducted by the parties through internal data management systems. It is highly recommended to measure the success of the three aforementioned major goals, i.e., improving availability and quality of services, and supporting the transition of children from Head Start or other early childhood programs into public schools.

Conducting the LEA Self-Assessment

The LEA Self-Assessment intends to gauge the relationship between the LEA and the Head Start and other early childhood education partners in how both parties support the development of local agreements. This Self-Assessment may want to follow the lead of the SEA and the state Head Start

⁵² Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) and Partnership Agreement are used interchangeably.

association in case such an agreement was developed. The agreement at the state level will set the stage for developing an MOA that will serve as the framework for the local Partnership Agreements.

It is recommended to take a long-term view on establishing a firm foundation for the partnership. The Partnership Agreement will hold each party accountable, but the visioning and stakeholder engagement phase will focus on goals and purposes of developing the agreement. If the LEA is interested in forming an agreement with Head Start in addition to other early childhood partners (e.g., Preschool Development Grant recipients), it is recommended that the LEA develop the MOAs separately, due to the special circumstances of each party.

The Self-Assessment can be completed by the two parties (i.e., the LEA and the Head Start partner or other early childhood programs) separately or it can be done jointly. If it is being completed separately make sure to compare the information and determine the critical points, i.e., those rated as high risk, that need to be addressed during each of the three phases. The Self-Assessment consists of leading statements, responses to the statements, and how to rate the risk level for each of the statements. The risk levels range from “high” (1) to “low” (3). The underlying rubric defines:

“High” (1) as “Conditions of high complexity or previous failures;”

“Moderate” (2) as “Conditions that are already in place but not fully developed;”

“Low” (3) as “Conditions that have a proven and successful track record.”

The determination at what risk level each of the items might be is based on the prior experience and overall assessment of the buy-in or lack thereof by many or all stakeholders on creating a formal Partnership Agreement. Here is an example:

Phase 1: Visioning and Stakeholder Engagement	Response (entered by the LEA and/or the Head Start or other ECE partners)	Risk Level (1 to 3)
<i>LEA leadership is committed to supporting a formal Partnership Agreement</i>	State ESSA plan includes reference to formal LEA agreement with Head Start (and other ECE partners)	3
<i>Head Start program is committed to supporting a formal Partnership Agreement</i>	MOA was discussed with LEA in response to the Head Start Act of 2007 but was not developed	1

Note: Determining the risk level does not equate with the position of any of the parties. It only refers to prior or current conditions.

Each statement should be answered by itself. However, as the Self-Assessment is being completed, the responses and risk levels may either support or mitigate other statements. For instance, in the example above, the reference of the formal agreement in the ESSA plan might actually reduce the risk level for the Head Start programs’ conditions to develop formal Partnership Agreements.