Super App - Blueprint Guidance

Blueprint Overview

Question LS2.1 asks that LEAs link to their community network's early childhood blueprint. Ready Start Networks and those networks participating in the Get Ready Cohort are developing blueprints, so LEAs associated with these networks need to link to their completed blueprint here. If your community network chooses not to develop an early childhood blueprint, leave this question blank.

In addition to the Blueprint Guidance, there is also a suggested template and an optional workbook to support blueprint creation.

Early childhood blueprint should include:
- Analysis of network's current state
- Vision statement
- Mission statement
- 3-5 goals on improving access to quality early childhood care and education, with accompanying strategies, resources, and performance metrics

Why do you need a Blueprint?

The Blueprint pillar of this process is essentially a strategic plan. Strategic planning is critical to any organization's success because it sets a vision for the organization's future, establishes agreed-upon goals, and lays out clear strategies to achieve those goals.

This is an activity prioritized by Ready Start Networks, but every community can benefit from creating a blueprint and establishing a mission, vision, and set of goals. A blueprint provides key stakeholders, both internal and external, with an idea of where the organization is going.

How will this plan be developed?

Most organizations find it most effective to set aside dedicated time, typically at least a half day, for strategic planning (called a workshop for the purpose of this document). It may be beneficial for your network's leadership and any relevant staff members to do the same.

As you work through the sections below and brainstorm goals and strategies, keep in mind that your final Blueprint document should follow the general framework provided in the example template. In the end your network will create a Blueprint that is an external, public-facing document you will share with LDOE as well as outside partners and stakeholders.

Who should be involved in Blueprint development?

The development of your Blueprint will be a group effort that will include multiple people's input and multiple drafts of the document. Lead agency leadership and key staff members should ideally be participants in the workshop, with each participant providing input about the document's development through the suggested activities.

Blueprint Guidebook

Analysis of Network's Current State

Begin your blueprint by giving a brief introduction to your community network. The **analysis of current state** should introduce the community network and include its strengths and shortcomings. The LDOE will be providing data kits for each network that include data on quality of seats, enrollment numbers, and kindergarten readiness. Leaders should utilize this data, along with input provided by various stakeholders in your network, to refine an evidence-based list of strengths and shortcomings for your community. As you develop and refine the list of strengths and shortcomings for your community, you should describe the current state of your community's early childhood education structure and needs in the Introduction section of your Blueprint.

Guiding Statements

Vision

A vision statement is key to any organization and will serve a critical role in establishing a strategic direction for your network. A vision statement is the network's vision for its community's future situation that the network will help to create. In other words, if your network achieves all of its goals in 5-10 years, what will the state of early childhood education look like in your community? A vision statement should be aspirational, challenging, serving as an inspiring goal for the future. It should be used for internal motivation and decision-making, to not lose sight of the bigger picture, as well as external branding and communications to key stakeholders and potential funders. The vision statement should be able to communicate your network's end-goal in clear, simple language – this is your "Why?".

Some examples of vision statements from organizations outside of the education field are:

- Habitat for Humanity: "A world where everyone has a decent place to live."
- Alzheimer's Association: "A world without Alzheimer's disease."
- Feeding America: "A hunger-free America."

Networks can complete the "Headlines from the Future" activity in the Blueprint Workbook to help this process. Keep in mind that a vision statement should:

- ✔ Be present tense
- ✔ Describe an outcome
- ✔ Use plain, unambiguous language
- ✔ Inspire and evoke emotion
- ✔ Build a picture of the future

Mission

A mission statement's purpose is to describe the reason for your early childhood community network's existence. It should be used to clarify your network's purpose as well as external marketing and communications to key stakeholders and potential funders. The mission statement should define what the network is doing to achieve its vision statement – this is your "How?".

To allow you to compare vision and mission statements, below are the mission statements from the same organizations whose vision statements were shared earlier:

- Habitat for Humanity: "Seeking to put God's love into action, Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build homes, communities and hope."
- Alzheimer's Association: "To eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health."
- Feeding America: "To feed America's hungry through a nationwide network of member food banks and engage our country in the fight to end hunger."

In addition to the results of the suggested Mission Statement Development exercise in the Blueprint workbook, networks should keep in mind that a great mission statement:

- Is clear and focused, defining your purpose
- Focuses on substance over vagueness, avoiding unnecessary words
- Defines the target "audience" and "region" – who are you serving, and where?
- Avoids language and terms that people outside of the education field would not understand

Goal Development & Prioritization

What is a goal?

A goal is a broad primary outcome. For example, if you were trying to improve your physical health you might set a goal of losing 20 pounds by the end of the year.

All goals developed in this section should be S.M.A.R.T.:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Realistic
- Time-Bound

Goal Development

Your network should aim to develop 3-5 goals that address the shortcomings identified from your community's baseline data. Your goals may be 3-5 year focused. They should be focused on increasing access to quality seats, but there are other elements of improvement of early childhood care and education that can also be addressed in these goals.

Resources

For each goal, you should identify existing resources (financial, human, etc.) that can be leveraged. Additionally, for each goal you should identify whether achieving the goal will require new resources, including additional funding or staff capacity.

Performance Metrics

A performance metric is a measurable gauge of progress toward a goal. Returning to our earlier example, if you were trying to lose 20 pounds by the end of the year, performance metrics you keep track of might be number of pounds lost, number of calories burned in workouts, and number of steps taken in a day.

As you designate performance metrics for each goal, ensure that you have the infrastructure and capacity in place to gather and track necessary data, even if this means simply having a consistent method in place to synthesize and keep track of data that is reported to you by the LDOE.

Prioritization

Because limited resources may prevent you from achieving all goals simultaneously, it is critical to prioritize goals. Goals should be ordered and numbered by priority within your Blueprint.

Strategy Development

What is a Strategy?

A strategy is the approach you take to achieve a goal. Going back to our example from earlier, to accomplish your goal of losing 20 pounds, you might employ the strategy of reducing calorie intake and starting to walk more.

For each goal, your network should develop at least three strategies to support it. Where applicable, your list of strategies should encompass a combination of shorter- and longer-term strategies to ensure that consistent progress is being made towards goals. Your strategies should be clearly stated, specific, and in direct support of your goals.

Strategies should explain to key stakeholders and potential funders how the network will utilize available and future funding.

As you draft your strategies, keep in mind that they should:

- Include both longer- and shorter-term strategies, where applicable
- Be specifically and clearly in support of achieving your goal
- Have an "owner" who will lead implementation