



TA Collaborations

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BACKGROUND

This paper highlights several current collaborative activities of the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC). There are many specific examples of TA collaborations that take place on a regular basis; the seven examples presented here were selected to represent different types of collaboration. The descriptions were developed for the OSEP/OESE Leveraging Resources Meeting, Washington, DC, April 13-14, 2010 and were included in handouts at the “Improving Early Learning” Workgroup sessions at that meeting.

There are multiple reasons for deciding to collaborate with other TA organizations, and the purpose or reason dictates the nature of the TA and the types of activities undertaken. Collaborations may be broad based with multiple purposes (e.g., ECTA Consortium, OSEP TA Priority Teams), tailored for a multi-state event (e.g., Inclusion Institute), designed for a particular state around a specific topic (e.g., Expanding Opportunities), focused on many dimensions of a specific topical area (e.g., NECTAC–ECO Partnership and NECTAC–NPDCI Partnership), or conducted to focus on TA planning in general (e.g., NECTAC–RRCP-DAC Partnership).

Collaborative TA needs to be intentional so that it is meaningful and results in the specific outcomes it was designed for. Regardless of the type of collaboration, the intent is always to leverage TA resources and to improve quality and effectiveness of TA for the benefit of clients, i.e., state systems that support positive outcomes for young children, birth through five, with disabilities and their families.

There are other benefits realized from working together with other TA organizations. Mutual lessons learned about collaborative TA lead to refined approaches to TA planning and delivery. Additionally, study and evaluation of the process and outcomes of such TA collaborations contribute to the field of TA.

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EARLY CHILDHOOD TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CONSORTIUM

- <http://www.ectaconsortium.org>

The purpose of the consortium is to increase communication and coordination among various early childhood TA projects working intensively with states to avoid duplication, share knowledge, and improve delivery and impact of TA.

Who benefits	States' systems, programs and services for young children (birth to five) and their families are targeted for improvement so that all children participate, are engaged and are supported in their communities.
Collaborative Activities	NECTAC convened this group in 2003 and has maintained it for eight years. Consortium members communicate by regularly scheduled calls and in person as opportunities present themselves. Members contribute and update information about their activities that is maintained on the consortium website. Workgroups are formed as needed to focus on areas of common interest.
Collaborative Partners	<p><u>Funded by US Department of Education</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC) • Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL) • National Personnel Development Center on Inclusion (NPDCI) • The National Early Childhood Outcomes Center (ECO) • National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness • Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers • Regional Resource Center Program (RRCP) • Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children (TACSEI) • National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders <p><u>Funded by US Department of Health and Human Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center (NCCIC) • Center on Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) • SpecialQuest Birth to Five • National Infant Toddler Child Care Initiative @ ZERO TO THREE • Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (SECCS) Grant Program • National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health
Benefits of Collaboration	There have been multiple benefits of this collaborative effort. TA projects have teamed in providing TA to states, bringing their own perspective and resources which has enhanced state progress. Additionally, projects have worked together to develop similar processes for state selection, planning and evaluation. The end result has been better processes, greater efficiency, and more consistency working with states, reducing their confusion about the services of multiple TA agencies.
Challenges of Collaboration	Everyone is incredibly busy with their own project responsibilities so finding the time for this extra work has been challenging. We would benefit from financial and/or technical support.
Lessons Learned	It takes time and effort to collaborate effectively but it is definitely worth the effort. It is built-in staff development for TA project staff. The commitment of members is key for success. Having the opportunity to meet in person at least annually has worked well for members to get to know each other, develop trust, and explore mutual interests.
Next Steps	This collaboration is intended to be ongoing. In the future, projects may choose to apply jointly for new projects or share staff as is currently being doing in several cases. Stronger collaborative work in states is anticipated.

Information provided by: Martha Diefendorf

OSEP TA PRIORITY TEAMS

- <http://www.nectac.org>
- <http://www.rrfcnwork.org>
- <http://spp-apr-calendar.rrfcnwork.org/>

Priority Teams are convened by Regional Resource Center Program (RRCP) and National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC). Teams have core members from the TA projects and resource people from OSEP and other OSEP TA&D projects. The priority teams focus on developing national TA resources to address states' needs to improve performance on targeted Annual Performance Report (APR) indicators.

Who benefits	All Part C and Part B state administrators and others who are striving to improve performance on the APR.
Activities	Priority teams develop TA resources and make them available nationally. TA teams and OSEP colleagues have regularly scheduled TA calls, facilitated by the RRC Program and the TACC, to share current issues, state needs, TA resources and dissemination of those resources. Teams also house and update the TA resources available to states on the APR Calendar. Priority teams develop and implement action plans and periodically report on their activities to MSIP leadership. NECTAC participates in all six priority teams with relevance to Part C or 619.
Collaborative Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely EI services Priority Team – convened by NECTAC • Early Childhood Outcomes Priority Team – convened by NECTAC • General Supervision Priority Team – convened by MPRRC • ARRA/Fiscal Priority Team –convened by NCRRC • Systems and Improvement Planning Priority Team – convened by SERRC • Early Childhood Transition Priority Team – convened by MSRRC
Benefits of Collaboration	The benefits have included more cohesion across the RRCs, NECTAC and OSEP in understanding OSEP requirements and guidelines, state challenges and available resources related to APR work. The teams are a national resource with targeted topical expertise and resources that all states and other OSEP TA providers can rely on.
Challenges of Collaboration	The challenges include incorporating the work of the Priority Teams into the work scope of all collaborating TA Centers, so that core team members and resource people have time to commit to Team activities. Keeping all stakeholders apprised of team activities and resources is an on-going communication challenge.
Lessons Learned	Aligning the Priority teams work with the Annual TA Plan for NECTAC and the TA Priority Plan for the RRCP is helping to assure that activities are recognized and a part of the projects' on-going work. As teams work in their respective areas, they are quickly developing expertise and a clearer view of national needs and resources that can help states improve performance.
Next Steps	The Priority Teams will continue developing and implementing annual Action Plan activities, based on APR Reviews and related state TA needs.

Information provided by: Joicey Hurth

NATIONAL INCLUSION INSTITUTE: PLANNING & SUPPORT

- <http://www.nectac.org/InclusionInstitute>

The purpose is to leverage resources to conduct the Inclusion Institute to achieve the shared goal of promoting and supporting the implementation of effective early childhood inclusion.

Who benefits	Institute attendees include state and local administrators, TA providers, project faculty, practitioners, and families representing the following sectors: public pre-k, Head Start, child care, early intervention, early childhood special education, family advocacy, higher education.
Activities	Contributions are made by the contributing projects in the form of planning, travel and sharing expertise through presentations.
Collaborative Partners	Ten projects funded by either Department of Education (OSEP) or Department of Health and Human Services (Office of Head Start and Child Care Bureau) partner as primary sponsors and collaborators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC) • National Personnel Development Center on Inclusion (NPDCI) • Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL) • Center on Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) • Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children (TACSEI) • SpecialQuest Birth to Five • National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness • Head Start Center on Inclusion • National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center (NCCIC) • State Implementation of Scaling-up Evidence-based Practices Center (SISEP)
Benefits of Collaboration	NECTAC began the National Inclusion Institutes under a previous cooperative agreement that provided funding to support it. Currently the Institute is financed by registration fees (which are kept low) and in-kind project contributions. The Institute provides projects with an arena for modeling collaboration, in addition to conducting “listening sessions” on emerging topics and meeting dissemination goals related to resources and findings. The Institute provides participants the opportunity to learn about research, resources, models and strategies related to inclusion. In addition, they develop collaborative partnerships across states and communities.
Challenges of Collaboration	The TA projects would benefit from more planning opportunities to ensure that needs of projects are being served by the Institute.
Lessons Learned	Over the 10 years of the Institute, collaboration has been a key ingredient of its success; but this became particularly important when there was no one project with sufficient funds to implement the Institute. The informal collaboration and personal relationships that began years ago have been important in making it possible to work together in such collaborative ways. The collaborative spirit of staff of the projects involved and their expertise has made the collaboration work well.
Next Steps	The collaboration has been in place for many years. We hope that it will continue to grow and strengthen around the Inclusion Institute and with work together in individual states.

Information provided by: Shelley deFosset and Pam Winton

EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES INITIATIVE

- http://www.nectac.org/~pdfs/pubs/nectac_eval_expopps.pdf
- <http://www.nectac.org/expopps>

The purpose of Expanding Opportunities is for collaborative TA to promote efforts in states to develop and implement systems building plans designed to result in high quality inclusive opportunities for all children and families.

Who benefits	TA is targeted to state leadership teams with representation from Child Care, Head Start, Part C, Section 619, and University Centers of Excellence who work with a broad based stakeholder group from all levels of the system (state administrators, institutes of higher ed and other personnel development systems, local program directors, teachers, providers and family members).
Activities	Interagency TA teams support states to develop plans and strategies to assure that young children with disabilities have access to quality early care and education programs and services in their communities. TA is provided to the state as they implement their plans and evaluate their progress.
Collaborative Partners	Federal agencies support the initiative through the coordinated efforts of their technical assistance (TA) resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC) • Regional Resource Center Program (RRCP) • National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center (NCCIC) • Head Start Collaboration Projects • University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research and Service (UCEDD)
Benefits of Collaboration	TA projects have teamed in providing TA to states, bringing their own perspective and resources, thereby enhancing state progress. Many states are implementing their Expanding Opportunities plans and achieving their intended outcomes. There are many concrete examples of change that are laying the groundwork for increasing the numbers of young children served in a high quality inclusive settings and sustaining changes to their systems.
Challenges of Collaboration	Given the workloads and schedules that TA providers are obligated to, it can be difficult to schedule sufficient time to plan and prepare. It can also be difficult to establish and maintain a reasonable balance of responsibilities among individuals who are accustomed to leading efforts and doing it all. This is something that each TA team needs to figure out.
Lessons Learned	In order to make collaborative TA work, it is important to remain flexible, trust your colleagues' expertise and be willing to relinquish a certain degree of control. We have also benefitted from the results of 2 external evaluations. The findings and recommendations were helpful in refining the process over the years. Being able to work across sectors, the breadth of knowledge and resources available from the TA Teams is so much greater than it would have been from centers individually. Additionally, TA Centers have been able to share responsibilities such as facilitating meetings, hosting webinars and conference calls, synthesizing notes, developing resources
Next Steps	This initiative began in 2005 with 4 states selected for participation in Expanding Opportunities. It is now in the sixth year, bringing the total to 20 states. We hope the four federal agencies will continue offering this opportunity and supporting state team participation in the Inclusion Institute which enhances the states' work. Regardless, the TA Centers involved have had the experience of collaborating in this systems building work, and the relationships already developed can serve as the basis for continued joint TA.

Information provided by: Martha Diefendorf

NECTAC – ECO PARTNERSHIP

- <http://www.nectac.org>
- <http://www.the-eco-center.org>

The purpose of the collaboration is to coordinate the work of two early childhood TA efforts working with states around measuring child and family outcomes to avoid duplication, share knowledge, and improve delivery and impact of TA. Pooled resources support all states in the development of systems for measuring child and family outcomes.

Who benefits	All Part C and Section 619 staff involved in systems for measuring child and family outcomes
Activities	NECTAC and ECO work collaboratively on a weekly basis as the two projects have some overlapping goals and also overlapping staff. There is a shared process of planning and implementing the TA services where leadership is shared across the two projects for planning, implementing and evaluating the TA. Co-sponsorship of TA services by NECTAC and ECO including cross-state TA services such as the annual <i>Measuring Child and Family Outcomes Conference</i> and webinars as well as individualized TA to states including stakeholder group facilitation, COSF training, and other TA.
Collaborative Partners	National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC) Early Childhood Outcomes Center (ECO)
Benefits of Collaboration	The benefits have been great for both the two TA projects as well as for the TA recipients. The shared resources in terms of staff as well as financial have resulted in greater expertise and more dollars to design and deliver TA services than either one of the two projects could have brought by itself. Evaluation of the TA shows that the TA has been high quality, accomplished its immediate outcomes, and resulted in longer term impacts for states.
Challenges of Collaboration	The key challenge has been to distinguish between the two projects. TA recipients may perceive that they are receiving TA from either NECTAC or ECO without realizing they are receiving TA from both. We have been increasingly promoting the partnership to ensure both projects are recognized for their contributions.
Lessons Learned	Having a shared goal (to support Part C and Section 619 programs in implementing IDEA, specifically measuring child and family outcomes) has enabled the two projects to share resources and staff freely. It is essential to have some shared goals in order to expect resources to be shared freely, and it is extremely helpful to share staff.
Next Steps	The partnership will serve as a model for future work.

Information provided by: Christina Kasprzak

NECTAC – NPDCI PARTNERSHIP

- <http://www.nectac.org>
- <http://community.fpg.unc.edu/npdci>

The purpose of the partnership is to leverage resources (human, technology and financial) and to ensure that the TA and professional development (PD) provided by both projects are consistent and integrated.

Who benefits	PD providers, state agency representatives from child care, Part C, 619, Head Start, pre-k
Activities	Working together on planning and implementing national meetings, webinars, developing products and providing TA to states
Collaborative Partners	National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (NPDCI) National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC)
Benefits of Collaboration	Benefits are multiple (see above). We learn from each other and support each other's efforts. The beneficiaries of the collaboration receive consistent TA and PD.
Challenges of Collaboration	The challenges are around time it takes with busy schedules.
Lessons Learned	Geographic proximity is a plus. Having many joint initiatives (webinars, Inclusion Institute, FPG Strategic Planning Group on PD/Knowledge Utilization) increases our opportunities for collaboration. Respect for each other's expertise and appreciation for the strengths of both projects in terms of focus and personnel are factors that facilitate collaboration. Familiarity breeds solidarity and collaboration. The more we collaborate, the easier it becomes.
Next Steps	Continuing to explore new ways of working together.

Information provided by: Shelley deFosset and Pam Winton

NECTAC–RRC–DAC PLANNING PARTNERSHIP

- <http://www.nectac.org>
- <http://www.rrfcnwork.org>
- <http://www.ideadata.org>

NECTAC TA for each year is informed by the knowledge of client needs as well as the TA resources that RRC and DAC representatives bring to the table at the NECTAC annual TA planning meeting. The resulting Annual TA Plan is coordinated prospectively with the TA Plans of the other Centers, resulting in reduced duplication, increased collaborative TA, and, hopefully, improved delivery and impact of TA.

Who benefits	All Part C and Section 619 state administrators and others from their programs who participate in cross state TA activities.
Activities	For the last two years, representatives from the RRC and DAC have joined NECTAC staff for the NECTAC annual TA Planning meeting. At this meeting, state Part C and Section 619 (ECSE) challenges and priorities are considered in recommending and planning cross state TA activities for the upcoming year. We leave the meeting having developed common ground and a plan of action.
Collaborative Partners	The 3 Centers share clients and have overlapping work scopes in regard to Part C and Section 619 clients: National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC) Regional Resource Center Program (RRC) Data Accountability Center (DAC)
Benefits of Collaboration	The benefits have included a more accurate understanding of client needs and shared costs of TA services and products. We believe the result is higher quality, more efficient TA than NECTAC would have provided alone.
Challenges of Collaboration	The challenges include the timing of the three projects' annual planning (not exactly synchronized), and developing an agenda for the two day TA planning meeting that maximizes use of time and the availability of TA partners. I think the staff know and trust one another enough at this point to enable smooth collaboration. Some kinks remain on occasion with collaborative evaluation, role clarification, and work distribution.
Lessons Learned	The overlap in the three projects' work scopes and clients, and the Project Officers' support contribute to the success of the collaboration. Collaboration works best when projects have shared goals, shared work scopes, and shared clients. Collaboration gets easier as trust and relationships grow across project staff.
Next Steps	The projects work together to implement, monitor and evaluate the collaborative TA activities each year. The partnership will continue as long as the Project Officers support it.

Information provided by: Lynne Kahn

Thank you for your interest!

NECTAC collaborates in a number of TA initiatives in early childhood. For more information about the work of The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, please visit our website at <http://www.nectac.org>

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