

National Quality Improvement Center on the Privatization of Child Welfare Services

Strategic Planning Regarding Public/Private Partnership in Child Welfare: Lessons Learned from Five States

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The process of helping states to examine the challenges that face them and plan for how the partnership between their public and private agencies can be leveraged to improve system, organizational, practice and client outcomes in child welfare is a demanding one. The QIC PCW would like to thank the groups of individuals who devoted their time to being a part of this process from start to finish.

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We would be remiss to not also acknowledge the courage and foresight of the public and private agency leaders and policy makers from the states of Michigan, Nebraska, North Carolina, Texas and Washington for undertaking the task of examining their partnership and planning to move forward in a positive way to better serve children and families. This work and what we have learned from it may serve as a model for others.

Findings from a Five-State Strategic Planning Session

Impetus for the Public/Private Partnership Strategic Planning Session

The complexity of child welfare work has increased over time. Public child welfare efforts to expand resources and improve care for children, youth, and families have increasingly involved partnering with private child welfare agencies to provide services such as recruitment of foster and adoptive homes as well as in-home, basic foster care, and residential care services. In all states, the public and private sectors currently play important roles in the child welfare system. As public agencies continue to contract out more services, developing a strategy for building strong public/private relationships will become integral to achieving improved child welfare outcomes.

The National Quality Improvement Center on the Privatization of Child Welfare Services (QIC PCW) was funded by the Children's Bureau to promote knowledge development regarding public/private partnership. Throughout the five-year study, one of the ways in which the QIC PCW has supported learning and information exchange among public and private child welfare agencies is through four National Summits on Public/Private Partnership (for example, see Martin-Galijatovic, Collins-Camargo & Hall, 2010). The Summits have allowed public and private child welfare leaders to engage in facilitated roundtable discussions on such topics as creating a shared vision, developing sustainable partnerships, using technology to advance the field, and contracting for quality services. While these Summits have increased recognition of the importance of strategically developing and maintaining public/private partnerships, they have not provided sufficient time for individual states to develop a clear plan about how they could bring back and apply lessons learned to the current partnerships within their own systems.

In response to ongoing state requests for more in-depth technical assistance around building and maintaining a strong public/private partnership within state child welfare systems, the QIC PCW sponsored a two-day strategic planning session for five states. These five states were selected through a competitive application process. Once selected, each state was asked to identify ten public and private child welfare agency representatives as the core group responsible for the development and/or enhancement of each state's public/private partnerships (PPP). During the two-day strategic planning session, the QIC PCW provided facilitation and technical assistance specific to the needs of each state so that child welfare leaders could return to their states with a concrete and sustainable plan for improving their system's PPPs.

Application and Selection Process

In November 2010, the QIC PCW asked states to declare their intent to apply for the opportunity to take part in the Public/Private Partnership Strategic Planning Session and then posted the Request for Applications (RFA) on the QIC PCW listserv in early December with a January 2011 deadline for submission. The RFA required respondents to provide a brief overview of their current state PPP; an assessment of their areas of strength and areas requiring improvement; as well as team members' short and long term goals for within their state. Each state was also asked to identify 10 public and private agency representatives who would attend the session. Public representatives could include child welfare leaders as well as judicial or legislative representatives. Private representatives were primarily drawn from directors of private child welfare agencies within each state. The QIC PCW emphasized the importance of equal representation from the public and private sector to both the selection process and the development of a successful PPP improvement plan within each state.

Eighteen states submitted an application to participate. Three experts in child welfare PPP were selected to review the applications independently of the QIC PCW Project Director and Manager. An application scoring rubric was provided to each reviewer so that applications could be ranked. The top five scorers were selected to attend the Strategic Planning Session.

Description of State Partnerships

As part of the application process, each state described their current PPP, how the planning session would assist them in moving their partnership forward, an assessment of the strengths and needs of their partnership, and their partnership's short- and long-term goals. Below, a brief summary is provided concerning the status of each state's partnership at the time of their application to the QIC PCW two-day strategic planning session as well as each public and private agency representatives' goals for the session.

Michigan

The Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) has a long-standing partnership with its private agencies in sharing the responsibilities of caring and supervising children and youth who are placed in out of home care in licensed foster care settings, independent living programs, and residential treatment. More than half of all children in foster care are placed in private foster care and independent living programs while 98% of the children in residential settings are supervised directly by private agencies. The strength of Michigan's public and private partnerships has ebbed and flowed over the years as the state has worked together

with private agencies on program and contract development, licensing, training and policy implementation. While the ten identified public and private agency representatives were preparing to attend the strategic planning session, a new state administration was being assembled. This new administration, in addition to addressing the deficiencies identified in the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), is also now operating under a Consent Decree. In order to meet the requirement of the Consent Decree, public agency leadership in Michigan has expressed a commitment to rebuilding current PPPs and using them to advance systemic reform on many levels.

In preparation for the strategic planning session, each sector was asked to identify a few general goals for attending the session. Three common goals of Michigan's public and private agency partners for the strategic planning session were 1) creating a shared vision for how the partnership needs to change and a framework that can guide future communication and work together; 2) clarifying the roles and responsibilities of each sector and identifying their strengths in order to improve the partnership; and 3) addressing issues related to contracting and procurement of contracts.

Nebraska

Nebraska's child welfare delivery system and PPP changed dramatically in July 2008 when the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) contracted with five lead agencies for the provision of in-home and safety services for clients. Under this new arrangement, the number of contractors directly responsible for providing services dropped from over 100 to 5. These five contracts also sought to encourage exceptional contractor performance by providing financial incentives directly tied to contractors' achievement of outcomes linked with child and community safety, permanency and well-being. Later that year, a plan was created to expand lead agency contracts to include limited service coordination for child welfare clients. In January 2011, as a result of the Family Matters Reform initiative, two private agencies received contracts to provide case management of the children and families in two of the five service areas in Nebraska. The goals of Families Matter Reform include fewer children becoming state wards, more children served in family settings, and achievement of more timely permanency objectives. Since January 2011, the public agency has been under significant scrutiny by legislators while also re-structuring agency leadership to support these reform efforts. A legislative audit (LR 37) was also being conducted by the Nebraska Health and Human Services Committee at the time of the Strategic Planning Session. This audit was to review, investigate, and assess the effect of the child welfare reform initiative which the Department began implementing fully in July 2009.

Common goals of Nebraska's PPP included in the application to participate in the strategic planning session were to 1) develop a larger framework in which to define their

partnership which will bring other partners to the table; 2) create a focus on family-centered practice and evidence-based practice; 3) identify system challenges through a shared vision of reform; 4) design a communication plan through which they can effectively communicate the shared vision, especially to the frontline staff; and 5) develop a strategy through which they can engage partners who did not ask for reform (privatization) so they can move forward.

North Carolina

North Carolina has a state-supervised, county-administered child welfare system. Although North Carolina has a long history of PPP dating back to the origins of the state's child welfare system, there is a wide variance among the counties regarding the types of outsourced services provided by private agencies, such as parent support services, family preservation, case management, adoption and residential care. In recent years, privatization efforts of core services emerged in the IV-E Waiver demonstration pilot counties as North Carolina worked to use federal dollars more effectively to improve outcomes for children in care. In March 2009, the Division of Social Services (DSS)/Private Provider Quality Workgroup met to develop recommendations and discuss policy, programmatic, cultural and fiscal changes to enhance outcomes of care. This workgroup was made up of DSS leadership, Benchmarks (a 105 year-old statewide alliance of private providers), and The Duke Endowment (a primary grant funder of non-profit private providers for more than 70 years). This workgroup selected one western NC and one eastern NC county to pilot PPP programs. The purpose of these pilot programs was to test the effect of privatized services on outcomes for children in care. Identified services included foster parent recruitment, retention, licensing and training, Child and Family Team facilitators, and kinship coordination.

North Carolina's public and private agency participants identified a number of desired outcomes for the strategic planning session, including: 1) create a solid foundation for the partnership; 2) design the partnership's structure, membership, and roles and responsibilities; 3) clarify the external and internal partnership's communication plan; 4) identify the elements of a strong, unifying vision for the partnership; and 5) describe what success will look like for the partnership.

Texas

As with all states, Texas depends upon private providers care for children and youth placed in foster care, with shared public and private responsibility for assuring these children and youths' safety, permanency and well-being. However, challenges related to public-private decision-making, communications, coordination and cooperation exist. In the late 2000s, these challenges ultimately led to a crisis in available placement options for children in the state foster care system. This crisis was the impetus for a renewed commitment by public

and private agency (i.e. residential care providers) leaders to collaboratively reform the state's foster care system. In the fall of 2009, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) Public/Private Partnership (PPP) was developed. The Texas DFPS PPP is currently comprised of 26 members appointed by the DFPS Commissioner and represents various stakeholders including foster care alumni, the Texas judiciary, child and parent advocates, foster care providers, DFPS staff, and foster care/provider associations. Meetings are co-chaired by public and private agency leaders. In 2010, the PPP began the important work of guiding the redesign of the Texas Foster Care System. This workgroup also provided recommendations for the development of the Request for Proposals (RFP) system through which foster care service contracts are procured.

At the time of the Strategic Planning Session, DFPS was engaged in the procurement process, which seriously limited the topics open for discussion by public and private representatives at the Session. However, both public and private agencies were focused on their partnership work and shared common goals for the Strategic Planning Session. Much of the vision, structure and communication plan was already in place; therefore, a logical next step for the Texas group was to focus on one of their common goals: plan for the long-term work of the partnership. It was also important for participants to continue to build trust among partners and learn lessons from other state PPPs.

Washington

Although cross-sector partnership has taken many forms in Washington State, it was only in response to the Washington State Legislature's 2009 passage of a PPP-focused bill (2SHB 2106) that partnership efforts began on a structured, statewide level. 2SHB authorized the creation of the Transformation Design Committee (TDC), which was to focus its efforts on improving child welfare outcomes through a phased implementation of performance-based contracting. The TDC was comprised of 24 members representing the Children's Administration (CA), Attorney General's Office, Governor's Office, two national experts on performance-based contracting, the union, four service providers, and birth and foster parents and foster youth. In meeting the legislative requirements, the CA chose a lead agency model in order to meet the diverse service needs of the children, youth and families across different service delivery areas. The Request for Proposals (RFP) went out in early 2011. It was planned that lead agencies would be selected and announced in the spring 2011 and contracts would be in place by June or July 2011. However, the union filed a lawsuit to stop the procurement process, and the court ruled in favor of the union immediately prior to the Strategic Planning. While the state team was at the Strategic Planning Session, legislators began work to clarify language so the CA could continue with the procurement process.

Consequently, a number of participants were unable to attend, and the work of the strategic planning group was hindered somewhat.

Prior to attending the Strategic Planning Session, Washington set a number of goals they wanted to achieve, including to: 1) solidify their common vision and sense of shared responsibility and accountability; 2) develop strategies for inter- and intra-communication (including the media) to support partnership work; and 3) define the future state of the PPP.

Strategic Planning Approach

For the current strategic planning session, the QIC PCW devised a process in which each state team of public and private agency leaders was led by a lead facilitator and co-facilitator. The lead facilitator provided expertise in the strategic planning process as well as experience in working with diverse groups. The lead facilitator also had the primary responsibility of researching the state's history and current PPP status prior to the event. The co-facilitator provided expertise on cross-sector partnership models and offered information when needed throughout the strategic planning process. A note taker was also assigned to each group to record key topical areas as well as group processes.

Prior to the event, QIC PCW staff held conference calls with facilitators to provide role clarification as well as additional information for each state (i.e. application, CFSR results and key contact information). Each facilitator team also held pre-meeting conference calls with representatives from the state in order to understand the status of the current PPP and team member goals. Lead facilitators then created individualized agendas for each state's two-day session; these were shared with each state team prior to the strategic planning session.

QIC PCW staff provided facilitators and note takers with a number of documents to make the strategic planning sessions run uniformly across state teams: An Approach to the QIC PCW Strategic Planning on Public/Private Partnership Process, Guidelines for the Facilitators, Guidelines for the Note takers and a template for the state's Public/Private Partnership Strategic Plan. Note takers were provided standardized note taking templates (See Appendix).

To set the tone for the event, a panel of public and private agency leaders from two states presented their PPP challenges, successes, and importance for working in partnership. The meeting was organized around three working sessions in which each state team worked through the planning process. Although each state approached the work in each session differently, the intent was to keep each state focused and moving at generally the same pace so they could report out to the larger group regarding the progress being made following each session.

Although each group was unique, the three working sessions followed a general format. Session 1 included an exploration of the goals for the strategic planning process, an agreement on the duration of the plan they would be creating, discussion of the challenges and barriers associated with achieving the goals, and identification of strengths and opportunities that could be leverage as they moved forward. Session 2 focused on exploring potential objectives, activities or tasks to be included in the plan for each goal in the strategic plan. Teams were encouraged to discuss administrative structures and communication plans to support the work of the partnership. Session 3 was designed to finalize the strategic plan. Objectives and tasks were to be fine-tuned to make sure they were measurable and that a process was established for assessment of the progress throughout the duration of the plan. At the end of the second day, each state team created a working strategic plan to take back to their state.

The Strategic Plans Developed

The structured format to be used by the teams included traditional categories: goals, objectives, tasks/activities, timeline and parties responsible. Not all states completed all of these items. The plans developed tended to focus on a shorter term, such as 90 days or 6 months. One state developed only one goal with three objectives, while the other four states each established three goals with 2-3 objectives and multiple tasks for each. Most states did not have enough time to establish timeframes and responsible parties for all objectives and tasks. In all states some aspect of the plan involved a process for developing a longer-term implementation plan with additional stakeholder involvement. Three states expressly had goals/objectives related to improving outcomes and accountability. Three included a detailed communication structure, both for within the partnership and in some cases with external stakeholders. Three states focused on establishing a steering committee or some sort of infrastructure for the partnership, and the other two referred to improving the functioning of the pre-existing structure.



Assessment of the Effectiveness of the Strategic Planning Process Experience

Pre and Post Strategic Partnership Survey Results

Prior to the event, team members were emailed a brief survey in which they were asked to individually and anonymously assess the status of their partnership and the potential for the process to yield a positive result prior to the beginning of the first session. Participants were given the opportunity to complete this pre-survey prior to the beginning of the planning session if they had not already done so.

Participants were then asked to answer a number of questions again at the end of the strategic planning process. Completing this set of questions before and after the strategic

planning event allowed for identification of change over time in participants' perceptions in key areas.

Respondent Characteristics

<i>Table A1. Distribution of respondents on state strategic planning teams</i>		
State	Number	%
Michigan	9	21%
Nebraska	10	23%
North Carolina	9	21%
Texas	10	2%
Washington	5	12%
Total	43	100%

<i>Table A2. Types of organizations represented</i>		
Organization type	Number	%
State public child welfare agency	16	37%
Some other public organization (e.g. legislature, family court)	4	9%
Private nonprofit child welfare agency	17	40%
Other private nonprofit organization (e.g. federation of private child welfare agencies)	6	14%
Other type of organization	4	9%
Total	47	100%

Respondent experience

On average, respondents had been in their current positions for 5.45 years (min 0, max 23, median 3.5) and had been involved with the child welfare system for 20.07 years (min 1, max 41, median 18.5).

Preparation for meeting

Respondents generally indicated that they between "Some time" to "A lot of time" to their state's public/private partnership and that they had "Some discussion" with other state team members about their state's public/private partnership (see Tables A3 and A4 for a state-by-state breakdown of responses).

<i>Table A3. Time devoted to state's public-private partnership within each state</i>					
	Very little time	A little time	Some time	A lot of time	A considerable amount of time
Michigan	0	1	2	4	2
Nebraska	0	0	0	3	7
North Carolina	1	2	3	2	1
Texas	0	3	4	3	0
Washington	0	0	3	0	2
Total	1	6	12	12	12

Table A4. Extent of discussion with other state team members in last month					
	Very little	A little	Some	A lot	A considerable amount
Michigan	1	1	4	2	1
Nebraska	0	2	1	2	5
North Carolina	1	2	5	1	0
Texas	0	0	9	1	0
Washington	0	0	2	2	1
Total	2	5	21	8	7

State Strategic Planning Team

This section of the survey had two objectives: First, to evaluate factors that might impact collaboration success within participating state teams; and second, to determine whether the strategic planning meeting had a significant impact on these factors.

Survey items were primarily drawn from the Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory (Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001) and focused on evaluating respondents' perceptions of the following six categories:

- 1) **Environment**, such as the geographic location and social context within which each state team was operating;
- 2) **Membership characteristics**, including the skills, attitudes, and opinions of individuals within each state team, as well as the culture and capacity of the organizations represented on those teams;
- 3) **Process and structure**, such as the management, decision-making, and operational systems within each state team and of the organizations represented on those teams;
- 4) **Communication structures**, specifically the channels used by public and private partners to send and receive information, keep one another informed, and convey opinions to influence each other's actions;
- 5) **Purpose**, consisting of respondents' impressions of the reasons for the development of these state planning teams, the result or vision sought, and the specific tasks or projects necessary to accomplish specified goals;
- 6) **Resources**, including the financial and human 'input' necessary to develop and sustain each state team's efforts.

All survey items used 1-5 Likert scales, with values of "1" indicating poor ratings in a given category and values of "5" indicating the highest possible rating in a given category. Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey (2001) indicate that scores of 4.0 or higher in a category are indicative of partnership strength, scores of 3.0 to 3.9 represent borderline areas requiring discussion, and scores less than 2.9 reveal serious challenges to partnership success that should be addressed.

Environment. In this category, respondents were asked to evaluate the history of collaboration or cooperation between public and private child welfare agencies within their state, whether their team was viewed as legitimate leaders within the community, and whether their collaborative group was operating in a favorable political or social climate.

On average, respondents scored their state team's environment as 3.46 out of 5. Within each state, scores varied from 2.6, indicating a serious concern with the environment in which the state strategic planning team was operating, to 4.0, representing a team strength (see Table B1). Environmental factors are generally not under teams' control. Therefore, it is not surprising that the strategic planning meeting did not have a significant effect on respondents' ratings of their team's environment (average 3.54 out of 5).

Table B1. Average State Team Ratings of their Environment (Baseline)						
	1 (Low)	2	3	4	5 (High)	Mean
Michigan	0	0	1	7	1	4
Nebraska	0	4	5	0	0	2.6
North Carolina	0	0	3	5	1	3.8
Texas	0	0	2	7	1	3.9
Washington	0	1	2	2	0	3.2
Overall						3.46

Membership characteristics. This category captured the extent to which respondents felt there was mutual respect, understanding, and trust between public/private partners; that an appropriate cross-section of members from each participating stakeholder was included on the state strategic planning team; that collaboration was in each participating organizations' self-interest; and the extent to which public/private partners were able to achieve compromise on important issues.

On average, respondents scored their state team's membership characteristics highly: 3.74 out of 5 (minimum of 3.3, maximum of 4.29; see Table B2). This rating improved to an average of 3.84 out of 5 after the strategic planning meeting; however, this difference was not statistically significant.

Table B2. Average State Team Ratings of Membership Characteristics (Baseline)						
	1 (Low)	2	3	4	5 (High)	Mean
Michigan	0	0	3	4	2	3.79
Nebraska	0	1	5	2	1	3.30
North Carolina	0	0	4	3	2	3.67
Texas	0	0	1	7	2	3.88
Washington	0	0	0	2	3	4.29
Overall						3.74

Process and structure. This category captured the extent to which management, decision-making, and operational systems were conducive to PPP success. Specific domains evaluated included (a) the extent to which participating organizations shared a stake in both

process and outcome of the collaborative effort; (b) whether there was partnership representation and involvement from multiple layers within each organization; (c) the extent to which the team was flexible about how it was organized and accomplished its work; (d) whether clear roles and guidelines were established; (e) partners' ability to adapt to changing conditions; and finally, (f) whether the strategic planning team was pursuing an appropriate pace of development, i.e. not pursuing an agenda beyond its capacity.

Prior to the strategic planning meeting, respondents rated their process and structure an average of 3.37 out of 5, indicating a need for additional discussion and clarification. The two-day strategic planning session appeared to have a significant impact on process and structure factors: After the meeting, respondents rated their process and structure an average of 3.67 out of 5, a statistically significant improvement ($p < 0.01$). This post-meeting score reflected equal or higher ratings in this category from all participants except two from Michigan.

Table B3a. Average State Team Ratings of Process and Structure (Baseline)

	1 (Low)	2	3	4	5 (High)	Mean
Michigan	0	0	7	2	0	3.22
Nebraska	0	1	8	0	0	2.83
North Carolina	0	1	3	2	2	3.48
Texas	0	0	1	9	0	3.78
Washington	0	2	3	0	3	3.60
Overall						3.37

Table B3b. Average State Team Ratings of Process and Structure (Post)

	1 (Low)	2	3	4	5 (High)	Mean
Michigan	0	2	0	7	0	3.61
Nebraska	0	0	8	1	0	3.09
North Carolina	0	0	3	6	0	3.85
Texas	0	0	1	9	0	3.89
Washington	0	0	2	0	3	4.06
Overall						3.67

Communication structures. In this category, respondents evaluated the extent to which there was open and frequent communication between public/private partners, and established informal relationships and communication links between members of the state strategic planning teams.

Prior to the strategic planning meeting, respondents rated their communication structures an average of 3.62 out of 5. The two-day strategic planning session had a significant, positive impact on strategic planning team communication structures: After the meeting, respondents rated communication structures an average of 3.88 out of 5 ($p < 0.01$).

Table B4a. Average State Team Ratings of Communication Structures (Baseline)						
	1 (Low)	2	3	4	5 (High)	Mean
Michigan	0	1	5	2	1	3.36
Nebraska	0	0	6	3	0	3.24
North Carolina	0	0	4	5	0	3.59
Texas	0	0	1	7	2	4.14
Washington	0	1	0	3	1	3.8
Overall						3.62

Table B4b. Average State Team Ratings of Communication Structures (Post)						
	1 (Low)	2	3	4	5 (High)	Mean
Michigan	0	1	1	7	0	3.6
Nebraska	0	0	4	4	1	3.58
North Carolina	0	0	1	8	0	3.96
Texas	0	0	1	6	3	4.2
Washington	0	1	0	2	2	4.12
Overall						3.88

Purpose. Respondents were asked to evaluate the extent to which team goals and objectives were realistically attainable and clear to all participating public/private partners; the extent to which public/private partners had the same vision and expected outcomes; and the extent to which the state strategic planning team’s mission and goals differed from those of respondents’ organizations.

Prior to the strategic planning meeting, respondents scored an average of 3.77 out of 5 in this category. This was one of the highest baseline ratings of any of the six categories, and in general, a perceived strength for most of the state strategic planning teams. The two-day strategic planning session improved respondents’ ratings of purpose even more: After the meeting, the score rose to an average of 4.20 out of 5 ($p < 0.001$) and was reflective of improved ratings from all but two participants from Michigan.

Table B5a. Average State Team Ratings of Purpose (Baseline)						
	1 (Low)	2	3	4	5 (High)	Mean
Michigan	0	0	5	4	0	3.56
Nebraska	0	0	4	5	0	3.45
North Carolina	0	0	4	5	0	3.65
Texas	0	0	0	9	1	4.14
Washington	0	0	0	3	2	4.24
Overall						3.77

Table B5b. Average State Team Ratings of Purpose (Post)						
	1 (Low)	2	3	4	5 (High)	Mean
Michigan	0	2	0	2	5	4.05
Nebraska	0	0	2	6	1	4.05
North Carolina	0	0	1	4	4	4.26
Texas	0	0	0	8	2	4.22
Washington	0	0	0	1	4	4.63
Overall						4.20

Resources. Finally, respondents were asked to assess the extent to which their state strategic planning teams had (a) adequate funds to accomplish their goals; (b) adequate “people power” to accomplish their goals; and (c) skilled leadership necessary to make the PPP a success.

In general, respondents rated adequacy of funding the lowest out of any category: Average baseline ratings in this area were only 2.29 out of 5, a score indicative of serious concern. Unsurprisingly, participant ratings of funding availability did not change significantly over the two-day strategic planning session.

“People power” was rated somewhat more favorably, with an average score of 3.27 out of 5. While this score did improve over the two-day strategic planning session to 3.46 out of 5, the difference was not statistically significant.

Of the three types of resources measured, respondents rated leadership the most highly, with an average score of 3.98 out of 5. The two-day strategic planning session resulted in a small but significant increase in leadership ratings, which rose to an average of 4.17 out of 5 ($p < 0.05$).

Table B6a. Average State Team Ratings of Funding (Baseline)						
	1 (Low)	2	3	4	5 (High)	Mean
Michigan	0	4	3	0	0	2.43
Nebraska	4	1	2	1	0	2.00
North Carolina	1	1	3	0	0	2.40
Texas	0	4	5	1	0	2.70
Washington	2	2	1	0	0	1.80
Overall						2.29

Table B6b. Average State Team Ratings of People Power (Baseline)						
	1 (Low)	2	3	4	5 (High)	Mean
Michigan	0	1	1	4	1	3.71
Nebraska	1	5	3	0	0	2.22
North Carolina	0	1	2	3	0	3.33
Texas	0	1	2	5	2	3.80
Washington	0	1	1	3	0	3.40
Overall						3.27

Table B6c. Average State Team Ratings of Leadership (Baseline)						
	1 (Low)	2	3	4	5 (High)	Mean
Michigan	0	1	0	3	4	4.25
Nebraska	1	0	3	5	0	3.33
North Carolina	0	0	1	6	2	4.11
Texas	0	0	2	6	2	4.00
Washington	0	0	0	3	2	4.40
Overall						3.98

Expected Outcomes and Specific Impacts of the Two-Day Strategic Planning Session

Sections C and D of the survey measured the extent to which respondents felt the two-day strategic planning session influenced their perceptions of whether the state strategic planning team could successfully achieve desired objectives in relation to their state's public/private partnership. Respondents were asked to rate the team's expected achievement of outcomes in 19 different areas of relevance to public/private partners, including topics such as the development of goals that would be acceptable to public and private stakeholders, the development of shared systems (e.g. accountability, contract monitoring, performance metrics, QA/QI, and evaluation), strengthening the continuum of services available to children and families, and developing a system that would result in improved outcomes for both public/private agencies and the families they serve.

In general, respondents had positive perceptions of their state strategic planning team's ability to achieve desired goals, with an average rating of 3.85 out of 5 at baseline. The two-day strategic planning session had a significant positive influence on respondents' perceptions of their team's ability to achieve these goals: After the session, ratings rose to 4.21 out of 5 ($p < 0.01$).

Table C1 provides a breakdown of respondents' perceptions of the extent to which their team made progress in each of the 19 specified areas over the course of the two-day strategic planning session. In general, respondents indicated that they made the greatest progress in developing trusting relationships between participating agencies (3.89 out of 5) and shared ownership over the initiative (3.80 out of 5), and that they made the least progress in developing shared QA/QI and/or evaluation systems (2.15 out of 5).

Table C1. Extent of Team Progress During the Two-Day Strategic Planning Session (1 Low – 5 High)	
Content Area	Mean (Std Dev.)
Developing goals that are acceptable to public and private stakeholders	3.50 (1.04)
Developing shared expectations and roles for public and private agencies	3.28 (1.20)
Strengthening public/private agency partnerships overall	3.73 (0.99)
Developing shared ownership over the initiative	3.80 (0.99)
Developing trusting relationships between currently-involved agencies	3.89 (0.93)
Developing plans to outreach to currently-uninvolved stakeholders	3.66 (1.09)
Developing shared strategies for addressing implementation challenges	3.28 (1.13)
Developing a shared system of accountability	2.78 (1.14)
Developing a contract monitoring system	2.28 (1.06)
Developing performance metrics that are acceptable to key stakeholders	2.20 (1.09)
Developing a shared quality assurance/quality improvement system	2.15 (1.08)
Developing a shared evaluation system	2.15 (1.14)
Developing a shared communications plan for public and private agencies	3.39 (1.22)
Developing a detailed start-up and transition plan to ensure successful implementation	3.02 (1.11)
Strengthening the continuum of services for children and families	2.83 (1.15)
Developing a system to provide needed supports to children and families	2.80 (1.20)
Developing a system that improves outcomes for children and families	2.93 (1.16)
Developing a system that improves outcomes for the public child welfare agency	2.95 (1.18)
Developing a system that improves outcomes for private child welfare agencies	3.00 (1.16)

General Participant Perceptions

The survey also included one qualitative question in which participants were invited to provide feedback regarding the strategic planning process and recommendations for improvement. Responses to this question were minimal, in which the majority provided generally positive comments regarding the experience. Two particular themes bear notation for use in future strategic planning processes. The first involved the quality of facilitation. Comments ranged from the very positive (such as a statement that the facilitators were “very respectful, candid and pushed us at the right pace to air out issues and develop a plan.”) to more negative in which one participant state that their facilitator’s lack of skills contributed to

their group not addressing hidden agendas, which was seen as key to building trust among the partners. These differing responses underscore that a high level of skill is necessary to facilitate a process such as this, and selection of individuals to serve in this role is a critical decision. The second theme regarded the time provided for discussion. A number of participants wanted more time, allowing the group to go deeper into some of the issues their partnership was facing. One participant indicated it would have been beneficial to have more time for networking among states.

Findings and Lessons Learned about the Strategic Planning Process from Qualitative Analysis of Session Notes

As has been described, each state team was assigned a notetaker to record the general discussion, as well as their observations regarding the process on a laptop computer. Qualitative analysis of these notes was conducted to glean themes which might be useful to other states as they engage in a similar process. Two researchers developed a preliminary set of codes prior to the analysis. The preliminary codes reflected the outline for each session that had been developed prior to the strategic planning meeting. The team members separately coded state notes and the reviewed agreements and disagreements on codes in order to develop an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability.

For the purposes of this report, the findings from the qualitative analysis of session notes are organized into three sections: Strengths and Challenges in the State Child Welfare System Impacting the Partnership; Lead and Co-Facilitator Strategies; and Challenges and Facilitators of Group Process. During analysis attention was paid not only to the frequency with which a theme was observed but in which of the three successive planning sessions the theme found to assist in understanding the developmental nature of the strategic planning process.

Themes will be listed in order of frequency, with the number of observances noted in parentheses. It should be noted that without transcripts it is not possible to determine with certainty that a theme did not occur additional times but were not written down by the notetaker. The length of the notes document for each session was fairly similar across states for the same period of time, so a comparable level of detail can be assumed. In order to enable the reader to interpret the commonness of themes in comparison to each other, the number of times a theme was observed in the notes is indicated in parentheses after each. However the exact number of times a particular theme occurred cannot be assumed by the number of observances listed for each. This should be considered a close approximation. For many themes illustrative quotes are taken from the session notes. If a theme is not provided it is because a brief, clearly illustrative example was not available. If more than one is offered, it is because they exemplify key variations within the theme. These are notes taken by the

notetaker and may or may not be direct quotes from the participant, however, other than in the Facilitator Strategies section the quotes refer to state team dialogue.

Strengths and Challenges in the Child Welfare System

During Session 1, facilitators were asked to probe regarding strengths within the state's child welfare system the team members believed could be drawn upon as well as the challenges which impeded the process of the partnership. The strengths and challenges listed below were specifically identified as such by the participants in the teams. During analysis they were categorized into the themes below.

Strengths

- The most frequently noted strength was existing partnerships (7). This was mentioned in three states. References to partnership members included not only public and private child welfare agencies, but also universities, the courts and foster parents.

We have come so far in the last 1.5 to 2 years. A lot of focus on the partnership, the children improving, quality and building capacity. A lot of positive energy. There has been more change in a positive direction during this time period in child welfare than we ever had.

- Consensus about goals and objectives (5) was found in 2 states.

The Public/Private Partnership made decisions based on consensus, and everybody signed off on the final product. We consequently went to the legislature with a united voice, advocated and lobbied, and we had no rate cuts as a result.

- Existing leadership (3) was noted in two states.
- Usable data/Evaluation Capacity (3) was noted in two states, occurring in Sessions 1 and 3.

[The] Reaching Excellence and Accountability in Practice [initiative] started in 2009—restructuring ... the technical assistance model. [They] created self-assessment tools that replaced the CFSR and PIP assessment tools based on the system of care model, looked at 15 indicators (shared vision) that they can pull data on, and piloted programs in eight counties. Public and private meet and share their data and having dialogue about the data.

- Existing communication structures (3) was identified as a strength by individuals in 2 states in 2 states in Sessions 1 & 3.
- Policies and procedures in alignment and function (2) was found in two states.

Challenges

While strengths were specifically elicited in Session 1, challenges were more likely to be noted across all sessions, and were noted with much greater frequency and variance.

- The most frequently noted challenge was communication breakdown (31) which was mentioned in all states across all sessions. It should be noted that specific communication processes or structures were identified as strengths in two states (above) but this does not negate the magnitude of times challenges in communication were reported by states.

The draft RFP looks very different from what we initially talked about. Where did the gap between where we were and what it turned out to be come from? The gap was a lot larger than what I and other providers had in mind. How did the gap get so wide?

- Lack of stakeholder commitment to reform, involvement or alignment with vision (24) was also observed in all states across all sessions. This took an array of forms including the vision for the partnership was not shared among all stakeholders, or that key stakeholders were left out of the process. Judges, attorneys, legislators and field staff were specifically mentioned.

We have to be in agreement about our vision and core philosophy. I don't think we all have the same philosophy. We have to do this first, and then take it out to the judges and county attorneys.

Although private providers have made progress, state employees have entrenched more, and there is more push back. They have not made the progress the private sector has. If you are in fear of losing something, it is hard to get excited regarding what you might gain.

- Mistrust and relationships with core partners (12) was mentioned as a challenge in all states across all sessions. Mistrust was described in a variety of ways, including stemming from a history of poor communication, lack of inclusive decision-making, lack of thorough planning, and poor relationships between the sectors.

There is a history of saying that certain people/groups will be involved in decision making, then [the public child welfare agency] makes decisions without those people. Thus, this brings about or continues the culture of distrust.

There are now some credibility issues among some of the privates, where those who weren't on the PPP are implying that those who were on the PPP may be trying to feather their own nests. How can we represent those who are not around the table today?

- Lack of consensus (8) was observed in 4 states across all sessions. Examples included lack of agreement regarding a unified system of care, frontline case management responsibilities, and what is needed to move the partnership forward.

Right now, there is NO STRATEGY.

- Unclear governance structure for the partnership (7) was seen in 3 states, in Sessions 2 and 3. State participants noted that there are often multiple groups without clarity on how the system functions together. In addition a lack of infrastructure to support the partnership was seen as a challenge.

[There is] confusion about "who" is part of the PPP and how do we take it from here—there are 15 million groups who meet. [Who] has oversight over this partnership? Do we need a new group? Add on to an existing group? ...We need to decide how to build a strategy instead of being reactive.

- Lack of usable data (6) was observed in 4 states during Sessions 1 & 2. Variations on this theme included lack of shared databases, mistrust of existing data, and data overload.

Currently [the state has] a data system that includes multiple systems of data but no one trusts the data; they don't know what data is pulled to get the data they have; they need a system analyst—someone who is watching all the "gauges" so they can alert those who need to know that things aren't functioning as it needs to ... Can there be reports that can be gotten rid of? [Could this be a] quick win? There are way too many reports.

- Lack of leadership (6) was a challenge in 3 states and mentioned in all sessions.

Stable leadership [is needed] in both the public agency and the lead agencies. There is a need to reduce uncertainty regarding commitment.

- Lack of implementation/follow through with plans (5), which was found in 2 states, was noted in sessions 2 & 3.

[The state] has had initiatives and meetings in the past that were designed to address the issue of public and private partnerships. These initiatives started well but ended with little change in the communication structure between public and private.

- Lack of shared accountability (5) was observed in 3 states across all sessions.

Historically, there is a dynamic that it is easy to target [the public agency] and others can hide behind them—we've got to have a community, and collective ownership.

- Lack of performance measures (4) was a challenge seen in 3 states and noted in sessions 1 & 3.

Accountability – how does each side hold the other side accountable in a meaningful and sustainable way – [This] was a question posed by both public and private agencies. . . Both sides agreed that performance based contracting is in its infancy. [There is] no direct link between how agencies perform and how they get paid.

- Need for policy analysis and revision (4) was observed in three states in Session 1.

State statutes and Department policy runs counter to success of reform—[we] need analysis/proposals developed—[It] needs to be best practice.

Effective Facilitator Strategies

One of the questions addressed in the analysis concerned the facilitator strategies that were especially useful in moving the state teams forward in their process, both prior to the strategic planning meeting and during the event. The following themes emerged regarding this question.

- The facilitators for all state teams used prioritizing (7) as a method of assisting the state teams to identify one, two, or three key issues to address rather than being overwhelmed by the immensity of the challenges that states face during system change. This strategy was used in all three sessions.

The group discussed the urgency of issues and was asked to identify two or three issues. The group talked about the lack of a framework to make things happen, or a structure in which to move forward and implement a plan.

What is the critical next step tomorrow when you get home?

- Focus on infrastructure (7) was a strategy used in four states and in all three sessions. This strategy involved asking questions that led the state team to think about and consider what type of organizational framework would work best for the partnership that was being developed.

[The state needs] clarification about the structure of the partnership. Do you want subcommittees? Do you want people to take lead on certain areas and report back or is it one large group?

[The state needs] clarification on a solid communication strategy. What are talking points you want to go back with? How often? Who does it? What venue? How do we come to the table collaboratively without giving up power?

How do we effectively work together in any process whether it is communication, developing standardized tools, etc.?

How can we use this structure and move forward? [The] facilitator drew diagram of environment (took picture with phone)

- Facilitators for all state teams used some type of visioning process to build group consensus about goals (6). The strategies for visioning were quite diverse including asking questions about vision, underlying assumptions and/or values, making a definitive statement about the group's vision based on what had been heard, and asking the group to describe their desired future state. This strategy was used primarily in the first session.

This is what I'm hearing: "Inclusive cross-system partnership that drives toward improved quality of family and child well-being".

Set of questions asked by another facilitator:

What are values that underlay this partnership? What do you value in the work you do with families? What do you value in the work you do with each other?

- Providing examples from other states and recommending experts on specific topics (6) was a strategy used by facilitators for all state teams. These examples were raised in response to specific issues, questions, and needs that had been identified either in the pre-work or during the sessions.

[The facilitator] provided overview of strategic planning process in IL; [a facilitator] shared some info about [the Child Welfare Advisory Committee in Illinois]; Questions [were asked] around involving judiciary—they are invited to some of our committees but do not show up. Why? [The facilitator] suggested that they may not feel like it is worth their time or that they don't need to be privy to the kinds of information being discussed in the group.

[A facilitator] shared a research-based collaborative planning process (i.e. establishing regular structures for communication and conflict resolution; public agency actions build trust; develop strategies to minimize fear; learn from what we do well and what we need to improve; agreed upon system goals; reliable verifiable data; [and] contract negotiation).

- During the first session, three of the team facilitators referenced the pre-work (3) that had occurred with the state teams. For two states, the pre-work had been fairly extensive: separate calls had occurred with the facilitators, one call with the state representatives, and another call with the providers. The strategy of reviewing the results of the pre-work with the team during the opening session was a good segue into the development of agreement about the purpose of the strategic planning meeting.

Discussion [occurred] about previous phone calls with public and private agencies [who would participate in the planning process]. Facilitators discussed a summary of the calls and the reason for having two separate calls (i.e., the importance of hearing the concerns but not keeping them “secret”). Themes from the calls [were] reviewed by the facilitator.

- Another theme that emerged during the first session in three states was the use of various strategies by the facilitators to build trust (3) among the team. The primary strategy was leading a discussion about setting ground rules for what would take place, such as agreement to a “code of silence” meaning that what was discussed during the session would stay within the session.
- The facilitators in two states spent time reviewing the challenges to achieving the public-private partnership goals (2). For example, one group identified issues regarding communication such as time constraints, planning taking place without

ongoing communication, conflicting messages, myths that were not addressed, and reaching agreement on key terms such as the role of case management.

Challenges and Facilitators of Group Process

Analysis of notes from each state session revealed an array of conditions and activities that either impeded or promoted the state teams' ability to make progress in their planning.

Challenges

- Overly broad focus/confusion regarding the purpose of the event (21) was observed in three states across all sessions. Some states tended to concentrate on large, commonly discussed topics on the child welfare system or CW outcomes rather than focusing on the specific partnership. There was at times a lack of comfort with the need to spend time talking about partnership and infrastructure related to it. In one of these states, this was exacerbated by some of the participants not having seen the application submitted, which left these individuals without clarity concerning what they were to accomplish at the event. This theme was most frequently observed in Session 2.

[The state had] difficulties focusing on the public/private partnership and not focusing on how we are going to do our [agency's day-to-day] work. Individuals in the group seem to want concrete action steps in how they will accomplish their work. Group is very much struggling with global goals and objectives and the idea that we are here to work on the partnership.

This reform has been underway for too long to go back to [our state] and announce that you are doing a "redesign". You've got to get legislators ... on board with what you are doing. Would the Governor allow you to even redesign your system? [The] group really didn't like the word "redesign". [We] can't be 2/3 of the way on the journey and just now get out a map.

- Key stakeholders not present (9) was noted in three states (although the majority of occurrences were in one state) across all sessions. Groups discovered that key people (e.g., county directors, labor union, judges, and legislators) who should be a part of this discussion were not there, impeding their planning and necessitating additional work when they returned home.

It will be challenging to “take back” [to our state] the action steps derived from this meeting. There is a consensus that some practitioners who are not “at the table” will not be open to the identified action steps. There are some parties who need to be “at the table” that are not present. This may make it challenging to “get things done”.

This group—only—cannot create the vision—it needs a commitment from the Governor, Legislature, Judicial; we’ve got to have a structure with all of these key people AT THE TABLE—we have to jointly advocate for these stakeholders.

- Lack of consensus (7) was observed in three states (although again, the majority of occurrences were in one state) across all sessions. Some of this focused on the type of goals that should be developed; other on the role of the PPP and how it should function.

[A provider] really wants to create a group that can make decisions—don’t want to spend time on policy, manuals, etc. Want to spend time on making strategic planning decisions.

- Mistrust (2) emerged in two states in Sessions 2 & 3).

Facilitators

- Detailed focus (20) was observed as a facilitator of group process in all five states (although in one state it was only noted once) across all sessions, although mostly in Sessions 2 & 3. This was demonstrated through the teams being focused on detailed tasks to be undertaken. Two states revisited the proposal submitted to the QIC PCW to help focus the work. Examples of tasks discussed involved engaging others at home by convening meetings and/or utilizing different communication strategies.

One member recognized the group as an “implementation team” that will be tasked with developing a foundation for future group work, and ... move on to see where and how the group should function initially, including [how the] agency needs to “vet” the recommendations of the implementation team.

Good discussion and clarity about creation of the ... Steering committee—who is going to be on it; want the first few meetings facilitated to create and finalize that shared vision and finalize an implementation plan; need to really determine roles and responsibilities and have written “rules” and expectations.

- Intentional consensus building (18) was found in four states across all sessions. Groups emphasized engaging in dialogue to determine in which areas they could achieve consensus, which appeared to promote progress toward the plan.

The team discussed the overall goal of “walking away with a plan” and there seemed to be general consensus on the importance of public and private agencies having a communication framework for continued dialogue.

Consensus to move forward on: Create a structure—especially for decision making; need to finalize WHO makes the final decision—there are many, many committee meetings that take place without authority to really move forward—We should take note of what we are doing and re-organize, we could be more efficient as long as we have the decision-making structure and a coordinated effort is in place.

- Clear articulation of goals and objectives (17) occurred in all five states across sessions, but mostly observed in Sessions 2 and 3. Many examples of states beginning with and returning to clear statements of goals and objectives enabled the states to make progress in developing and agreeing on their plan.

“High-level” Goals: 1. Look at working on the communication structure between public and private. 2. Going to create a framework/mechanism for the ongoing exploration of issues and will come up with a suggestions for this framework. 3. Mutual accountability between public and private agencies.

- Member commitment to act (14) was found to be a facilitator in four states across all sessions. This involved the group as a whole or individual members making statements committing to take specific action when they return home and/or affirming their willingness to play an active role in implementation.
- Evidence of and appreciation for the need for shared vision (15) was found in all states across sessions. This was mostly discussed in Session 1, and typically centered on working together to serve clients and promote child and family well-being.

Both sides were ambitious in what they thought could be achieved by this meeting – both sides want to capture a vision for a continued healthy and sustainable partnership. The consensus is that there is now an administration in place that can make this work possible and there is an “open door” to make the public/private partnership possible.

The group spent time on working on a “vision” statement of the group. The group derived and agreed on a mission statement that came from [an existing] document: “Improving [the state’s] Child Welfare system” – “A vibrant and viable public and private sector network, working on concert, is in the best interest of [the state’s] children and families”

- Leadership (7) was noted in three states in Sessions 2 and 3.

Member talked about the dynamics of leadership and the need for this group to lead on the issues of fixing this relationship.

- Identification of quick wins (7) was found in four states in Sessions 2 and 3, although primarily in the latter. Examples involved strategies for activities to be implemented immediately back home to begin to experience some success within the partnership.

Suggestion that they have “listening tours” to get their feedback—let them yell at us, then try to get as many quick-wins as possible. If it is something you can do right then and there, that will immediately start to re-build trust.

- Discussion of shared accountability in the partnership (5) was a facilitator in four states across all sessions.

What we want in the state is [for] everyone [to be] on the same team to get the outcomes (public and private) and that it not just be the [public agency’s] responsibility.

- Report out on group process and accomplishments to all states (3) was a facilitator in 2 states in all sessions.

Hearing some of the other states (the “report out”), helped the group come up with new ideas and come to a new focus related to the public/private partnership.

Discussion

This QIC PCW sponsored event, in which five states concurrently worked through a strategic planning process focused on cross-sector partnership development, provides some insight into the challenges and opportunities facing states in designing and implementing their PPPs. Yet these results are not generalizable to all states. Survey results indicated that participating states were spending a fair amount of time on their partnership prior to attending, although their ratings of the environment in which their partnership was operating was just over neutral. The findings are

also limited by the circumstances each state experienced at the point in time the event occurred. Timing was in itself a challenge for some states in the form of an active procurement period, a lawsuit and a legislative audit. These circumstances were not predicted at the time the applications were submitted or when the states initially conceptualized how they would use this opportunity. Nevertheless, a number of themes may be of benefit to the larger field based on this five-state study.

Findings from the participant survey generally indicated that most participants perceived positive gains as a result of the process. Statistically significant improvement was noted pre- to post-test in four areas. The first area of improvement was in process and structure, including roles and responsibilities, flexibility and adaptability, and the pace of the development of the partnership. Increased ratings of communication structures were found. Ratings of the purpose of the partnership also improved. These items assessed the extent to which goals and objectives were realistic, stakeholders had a clear sense of purpose, and shared vision and mission were present. Significant improvements were also found in leadership resources.

Participants reported progress in a number of areas during the strategic planning process, particularly those most closely linked to the purpose of the event. The highest rated areas of improvement were in the development of trusting relationships as well as shared ownership of the initiative. Less progress was perceived in areas that were beyond the scope of the event and/or the goals established by states for the process, such as development of shared quality assurance/improvement systems, evaluation systems, and performance metrics. It would be important for further study to assess the extent to which public/private teams can effectively use strategic planning retreats to plan around these and related topics. However, this limited form of evaluation does suggest that participants perceived the current strategic planning process to be beneficial.

Unfortunately, we have no data to assess outcomes beyond the two-day strategic planning session, such as the extent to which participating states experienced improved functioning within their PPPs or in their ability to work together to address the challenges facing their child welfare system. Because the QIC PCW's funding was drawing to a close during the session itself, it was not possible for the QIC PCW to conduct this sort of data collection in the months following the event. However, the effect of strategic planning sessions on long-term PPP outcomes remains an important area for further research. Did the trusting relationships and shared ownership developed during the process serve to better enable these individuals to translate this into improved inter-organizational relationships? Are state representatives able to gain buy in from stakeholders who were not a part of initial plan development? Do organizational, practice and client outcomes improve? Follow up calls with

some of the states indicated that they were facing significant challenges in moving forward, particularly in the circumstances that inhibited their discussions during the process—including lawsuits, changes in established leadership, and delays in the procurement and contracting processes—which may impact cross-sector communication as well the likelihood for sustained implementation in alignment with the strategic plans sketched out during the current event.

Useful lessons were learned from analysis of notes on the process that states underwent. These lessons may help guide other states that choose to invest in enhancing partnerships between public and private child welfare agencies. Some of these are as follows:

- States at different stages in the development of their partnership often experience similar **challenges in their child welfare system that present barriers in their partnership development**, such as communication breakdown, not having necessary stakeholder commitment, lack of consensus, mistrust, and lack of a clear governance or infrastructure to support the work. Many of these themes also arose during the National Summits on Public Private Partnership, and potential strategies for addressing them can be found in the proceedings of these events published by the QIC PCW.
- The strategic planning process itself was hampered by a number of challenges, some of which may be minimized through effort taken prior to the event. The groups tended to **stray away from focus on their partnership to attempting to address the larger issues facing their child welfare system**. In fact, some groups seemed to experience some discomfort with the fact that they needed to expend effort on working together as though collaboration should occur without attention being paid to it. In the human services, people must interact with each other to do their work; but attention to how that process can be facilitated may be less common. Some participants seemed confused about the purpose of the event, not understanding that the plan was to focus on the PPP itself. In some cases, the application had not been completed together, so some individuals did not come to the event fully informed. States entering into a process such as this should take pains to ensure all participants understand and are committed to spending this time for this shared purpose. This work should take place based on the assumption that a strong PPP will be better able to address systemic challenges and ultimately improve the overall child welfare system.
- The group of individuals that come together to develop the strategic plan must be very carefully chosen. Group process was at time challenged by **not having key**

stakeholders at the table. Limited QIC PCW funding necessitated restricting each state delegation to 10 individuals. This is an artificial limitation that could be handled more flexibly in other circumstances to allow representation of critical organizations or individuals. However, group processes could also have been deterred by an overly large group. Care should be taken to: 1) carefully select participants to ensure the most important voices and interests are represented; 2) communicate the purpose and process of the event to the broader stakeholder community; and 3) develop a strategy for engaging broader discussion and buy in after the plan is drafted.

- Several factors seemed to facilitate group progress. Two factors were closely related: **focusing on details, and the clear articulation of goals and objectives.** When teams were able to be task-oriented and practical they were able to make critical decisions leading ultimately to a strategic plan. Along with this was **intentional consensus-building.** Some teams took time to poll the extent of agreement, and work to achieve consensus in critical places. Another factor involved personal responsibility. **Individual member commitment to act** seemed to move the process along, perhaps promoting more wide-spread personal investment and avoiding stalemates. Finally, the **presence of shared vision,** and the recognition that it was important for the team to establish it, kept teams on the same page and may help the sectors remember that they are both committed to and responsible for system improvement.
- A number of strategies used by facilitators seemed to contribute to keeping teams on the path to plan finalization. It is likely that because the task at hand was so encompassing, facilitators found it useful to get groups to **prioritize.** Focusing on **infrastructure,** such as a communication plan or decision-making structure for the partnership, assisted in addressing some of the challenges the groups had identified. Some facilitators used a **visioning** process to help the group gain consensus and remind them of similar goals within each sector and their inter-connections. Finally, those facilitators with subject-matter expertise were sometimes able to provide **examples from other states** which the team could use to stimulate brainstorming and demonstrate potential solutions.

Given that in all states both the public and the private sectors play an important role in the provision of services to the child welfare population, it stands to reason that systems could benefit from setting aside time to discuss cross-sector opportunities and challenges and to set up a strategy for that working relationship to function effectively in the provision of services. Many states seem to be coming to the realization that this planning process should be formalized, and that there should be a collaboration structure and communication process

to facilitate this work. The fact that 18 states applied to participate in this strategic planning process is an indicator of the need for this sort of process. As resources dwindle and the call for accountability and outcome achievement increases, this need may grow if unaddressed.

The strategic planning process implemented by the QIC PCW is not unique in its fairly traditional assessment of challenges and strengths, and the development of measurable goals, objectives and tasks. Its contribution to the field, however, is in the nature of the focus: namely, public/private partnership in child welfare and, by extrapolate, in other related health and human service fields.

The data collected and experience gained by the QIC PCW through the Summits on Public/Private Partnership aided in structuring a process that was designed to handle the challenges that this sort of work can present. The relationship between the sectors is complicated because despite their desire for partnership, public and private agencies are bound together through a complex web of contractual relationships. Negotiation of this business relationship with very different constraints, structures and strengths regarding the provision of complex services to multi-problem families is very challenging. It can at the same time be fraught with the specter of historical events, mis-communication, and blaming as well as mutual respect, long-term interpersonal relationships and deep commitment to the work and the families served. This planning process can be contentious and emotional, or invigorating and renewing.

For these reasons a number of strategies were purposefully employed to bring public and private stakeholders together: The use of a lead facilitator with strong facilitation skills with diverse groups and a co-facilitator with expertise in ; conducting pre-event calls with state team members to help the facilitation team prepare and clarify the purpose and process to be followed; a format of three work sessions, with report outs by all states and breaks in between; and, use of technology in the form of a laptop and LCD projector so that the plan using a structured format could be written, reviewed and revised in real time, and the teams could return to their home states with a plan in hand. Not all of these strategies worked as well as planned for all states. However based on the data collected, their potential is supported. This is only a first step, as ongoing research into whether engaging in such a planning process yields not only positive perceptions from participants but concrete outcomes in the weeks and months afterwards.

References

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Appendix

An Approach to the QIC PCW Strategic Planning on Public/Private Partnership Process

The State Teams will have 3 two hour sessions with which to achieve their work at the session itself. Many of them have overly ambitious goals for what can be achieved at the event as opposed to what they may want to achieve through their partnership over the next year or two. In addition, some of the teams included goals in the application are more goals for the child welfare system than goals for moving the partnership forward (so that they can work together on those broader child welfare outcomes). With this in mind it seems the facilitators may want to bring the states through the following general structure for the three sessions. Some states may be able to move through each piece more quickly than others so this is a general process to consider. Each facilitator team will need to adapt this to the needs and priorities of the state.

Note takers will be taking detailed notes on laptops on content and process (without attributing comments to individuals) for analysis later, and the notes would be available for review by facilitators if questions arise or between day one and day two. Flipcharts will be available for facilitators to use in bringing states throughout the process. The QIC PCW would like the facilitators to create the final plan during Session 3 on a laptop, and they can use an LCD projector to make review and revision possible by all team members during the process. An optional format will be provided for facilitator teams to use or revise as they and the state see fit.

Session 1

In addition to introductions and an overview of the process, session I will include:

- Exploration of and decision-making regarding the *goals of the strategic planning process over the 2 days within the context of the goals they have for their partnership over the next one-two years*. This may involve starting with the short and longer term goals they submitted in their application (we will have this in their packets because this is where the states started. None of these are probably going to be what the states negotiate to focus on in the process itself. This should be updated with the takeaways that the facilitators gained from the public and private calls they did with their state, which are likely more evolved and highlight places where common ground can hopefully be achieved between the sectors (It is likely that for all states these lists of takeaways are different—either because of very different priorities and perspectives of the two sectors or simply because of the way they are generated. It gives them something to start with. In order to achieve this task they will need to discuss the

feasibility of the short term goals for the day and a half process. Some of them really are more appropriate for the plan for the next year or longer.

- There will need to be agreement on the *duration of the plan* they will be creating during the event (such as one year, two or three years).
- Part of this first session would need to be discussion of *challenges/barriers associated with achieving the goals*. Facilitators may need to find a way to draw out some of the issues they heard during the calls if they don't get mentioned by team members.
- Also a part of this is identification of *strengths and opportunities* they can leverage as they move forward (I am relying on a traditional SWOT analysis here—it is logical).

Session 2

It is likely that some states will not have completed all of the tasks listed in Session 1 and will need to complete those. This session will focus on the beginnings of development of the strategic plan.

- The key process for this session would likely be identification of *objectives, activities or tasks* to be included in the plan for *each* goal in the strategic plan.
- The team may want to identify *responsible parties and time lines* for each of these here too, or this could wait until Session 3 when these are more finalized.
- Facilitators should put emphasis on clear objectives related to developing or refining an *administrative structure for the partnership* that will be sustainable beyond leadership changes, a *communication plan*, and a process for *decision-making*. The team will need clarity on what kind of decisions will be made by the partnership (such as in the Illinois CWAC structure) and what will be the purview of the public agencies or the privates.
- If it hasn't already been settled, there needs to be clarity on *roles and responsibilities* established here. Although roles will have no doubt come up in the first session, they may need to get into the meat of objectives and tasks before this really must be hammered out.

Session 3

This session will need to yield a finalized product for the state to build upon when then return home—a formalized plan—even if it is for a process for developing a longer term strategic plan for the partnership.

- It seems to me that after having the night to sleep on it—and the networking time with colleagues—The teams will need to *revisit in detail the objectives, and activities or tasks* here and formalize them in a typical plan format with timelines and responsible parties for individual tasks. For example if a state wants to research models of performance based contracting—how will they accomplish that together over the next

year? If they have a goal of revising the procurement process, what will it take to achieve it? If they have a goal of the partnership working collaboratively to improve CFSR outcomes (but not a goal of improving CFSR outcomes—see the difference?) what structure and communication plan will facilitate this happening?

- Attention will need to be paid to *making sure the objectives are measurable and a process is established for assessment of the progress throughout the duration of the plan.*
- Also, *how specifically will the barriers identified in session 1 be addressed?*
- Focus on *accountability to proceeding with the plan* after the event is important. In Session 3 we should establish *very clear next steps for putting the plan on the ground after they return home.*

To assist in getting the final plan down we will provide a table that the facilitator team can use to plug in the plan as it is being developed and revised, and an LCD projector so it can be seen by all to enable review and revision (We will not have screens available so we may have to be creative with using flipchart paper on the walls as makeshift screens).

Facilitators are free to take the draft table for developing the plan and revise it based on their state's preferences. We expect that flip charts will probably be more useful for Sessions 1 and 2. Using a laptop for this process will enable the QIC PCW to get copies of the plans to states quickly after the event.

Guidelines for the Facilitators

(Note takers, please read through this as well)

Each facilitator team will be tailoring the overall approach to the strategic planning process to the status, strengths and needs of each state team. Some key points to remember that we know you already know:

- The focus of this strategic planning partnership is to move the partnership between the public and private sectors forward, by helping them to develop a vision for the collaboration if that does not yet exist and infrastructure to support their work together (administrative structure, communication plan, decision-making process). This is not a plan to reform the CW system, reconfigure their contracting process or roll out a practice model, for example. It is a plan to build/reinforce a partnership in which they can work toward these sorts of activities together with the ultimate goal of improving outcomes for children and families which everyone can agree on.
- The partnership is likely not as far along as some of the team members think (or wish) it is. It will be important to gain some common understanding of where things are and where they want to go. Part of the purpose of the pre-calls you did with the public and private sectors in the state was to get some idea how far apart the sectors are on this, and what some of the “landmines” or sticking points are. You may need to find a way

to bring those out if they don't surface naturally. A way to do this without calling out a team member is to simply state that a lot of states experience "X", is this at all a factor in their state? Most of the challenges they have are not unique.

- The team members were all selected for a purpose, but they may not have all been involved in writing the application or even really understand the purpose of the meeting. We will try to set the stage for that in the opening plenary but you will probably need to assess this.
- The states submitted a competitive application to be here—that is a wonderful sign regarding their openness to moving forward. Their applications were written in November/December and a lot has happened since then. Many of the goals and objectives for the strategic planning session may have changed, or might have originally been less focused on the partnership and more on the system (like improving CFSR outcomes or other pragmatic tasks which are important but they will benefit from the strength of the partnership to achieve after they get home). We knew when the states were selected that some of them would need to be nudged in the direction of partnership.
- After each of the 3 Sessions there is a debriefing in which each state will report to the bigger group (3-5 minutes only) on themes they tackled during the session and what they achieved. It will be important for the group to decide before each report out who will do the speaking for the team (it could be you or a team member). This debriefing is important to enable the different states to get a taste of what the others are experiencing, ideas for their own work, topics for informal networking among states and a sense of overall forward movement. This does NOT need to be based on formal analysis of the notes or anything—it is informal.
- The states need to have a product in their hands at the end of Day 2. This partnership strategic plan will look different across states because of their starting place and characteristics. But we need a concrete, measurable plan that can be inserted into electronic format during Session 3, printed, signed by team members and copied for them to take home. Once the plan is ready near the end of Session 3, save it to the laptop and bring it on a jump drive to the registration desk where we can print it so it can be signed and copied during the final debrief and then distributed to team members.
- The QIC PCW will be scheduling follow up calls with state teams 2-3 months following the planning event to discuss progress on action steps planned, and provide TA as needed. Facilitators are invited to participate but not required. If states feel they need additional assistance in implementing their plan or doing additional planning they may wish to discuss potential funding sources (such as local foundations) to support the partnership work, or the public child welfare agencies can contact the National Resource Center on Organizational Improvement regarding receiving TA on this topic, and work through the referral process through the ACF Regional Office. We have

discussed with the NRC the potential for them using some of our facilitators with experience in public/private partnership work as part of their consultant team.

- Facilitators, please read through the notetaker instructions so you know what they are being asked to do and vice versa.

Instructions for Amending the Strategic Plan Template

The template has been designed to put the plan in a readable format once the team gets to the point of actually generating objectives and tasks. Early brainstorming will likely be better documented on flipcharts by the facilitator team. When the process is at the point of starting to put the actual plan together, one of the facilitators can be typing draft goals, objectives and tasks into the template and the team will be able to see it by using the LCD projector. This will enable a process of revision –hopefully without falling prey to too much word-smithing. The notetaker will also be keeping detailed notes of both content and process (without recording the names of individuals who make individual comments) using a narrative format on a separate laptop.

This template is a simple table created in Word. We have tried to guestimate numbers of goals, objectives and tasks. The team does not need to fill all of it in. If the team only has 2 goals, that is fine. If they have only 2 objectives associated with a goal, fine. The other rows can be deleted. If you need room for more objectives or more activities/tasks new rows can be added.

To add rows: put your cursor in the line directly above where you want the new row to be added. Click to the “Layout” tab on the menu bar. Click on “Insert below”. It will insert as many lines as the number of times you click on it.

In order to make the format easier to read, the rows for goals and objectives have all subsequent column cells merged. If you create a new row for a goal or an objective and want to merge the cells so it looks uniform, highlight the cells to be merged. Click on the “Layout” tab on the menu bar. Click on “merge cells”. If you change your mind, put the cursor in the merged cell, and click on “split cells” and indicate how many columns you want it split into.

To delete rows: Highlight the rows to be deleted. Click to the “Layout” tab on the menu bar. Click on “Delete Rows”.

Be sure you save the document regularly so the work isn’t lost accidentally.

When the plan is finalized near the end of Session 3, bring it on a jump drive to the front desk to be printed. Then, all state team members can sign the document. The QIC PCW then will make copies for each of the team members to take home.

Guidelines for Note Takers

(Facilitators, please read through this and the optional template as well)

The notes you take throughout the three sessions will have two purposes. First, the facilitators may ask to review the notes to get clarification on prior discussion or in preparation for a subsequent session. Second, we will be analyzing the notes to identify themes associated with the process the states go through, and the challenges and strategies these partnerships are working through for future publication. We believe this type of information will be useful to other states, and to the T and TA Network which may be assisting states in doing similar work in the future.

We have provided the facilitator teams with the attached suggested process to move through over the three sessions. This may assist you in organizing your notes, or your process for taking them. We would like you to record as much of the discussion is possible. We will be able to decide what may be important for future use later. We do NOT want you to take note of who says what by individual. Our participants trust us that we will not attribute comments made to individuals. It will be important for either you or the facilitators to remind the team members of this.

We are interested in both the content of what is said, but also your documentation of the process that goes on, dynamics, etc. which might be useful to know. Please label your process observations accordingly. The optional Notetaking Template provides a sidebar which may be useful for recording these observations. One thing to pay attention to is how the dynamics shift from one session to another. What is group interaction like in Session 1, and what is it like in Session 3?

There are a couple of ways we can approach taking the notes for these sessions. In our experience from the Summit Roundtable discussions we have found that to some extent the format for the notes may be a matter of personal style. Some note takers find it useful to be able to have a list of categories/topics of discussion which they can move around in and insert their notes under appropriate topics as the process unfolds. Others find this difficult because the process can be fast-moving, and prefer to just record a long narrative. Then, the narrative can be broken up into the appropriate categories at during the analysis process.

A recommended template is attached, which includes a sidebar for insertion of your observations of group process.

Note takers, please read through the facilitator instructions so you know what they are being asked to do.

Strategic Planning on Public/Private Partnership Note-taking Template

State:_____

Session 1

Goals for the Strategic Planning Process over the Next 1.5 Days

Plan Duration

Strengths and Opportunities in the State and in the Partnership

Partnership Goals to be the Focus of the Strategic Plan

Challenges/Barriers to Goal Achievement be Addressed

Session 2

Strategic Plan Goals for the Partnership

Brainstorming on Strategies: Potential Objectives, Activities/Tasks Associated with Goals (may include responsible Parties and Time Lines)

Roles and Responsibilities of Public and Private Sectors

These topics may be discussed generally or be included in the objectives above

Administrative Structure for the Partnership

Communication Plan

Decision-Making Process for Partnership Activities as They Move Forward with Enhancing the Child Welfare System Together

Session 3

Strategic Plan Objectives, and Activities/tasks, Responsible Parties and Timeline (Facilitators should be inserting the formalized plan into the template using a laptop and LCD projector, however the content of the discussion should be recorded here, including the kinds of revisions the states ultimately make)

Process for Assessment of Progress throughout the Duration of the Plan

Strategies for Addressing Challenges/Barriers Identified Earlier

Next Steps for Putting the Plan into Action (this should include work to be accomplished prior to the 2-3 month follow up call with the QIC PCW)