

APPENDIX E: STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS CHECKLIST

In launching a three-branch approach, states can use several strategies to build the infrastructure for lasting success:

Strategy 1:
Develop a shared vision and common goals, and continue to expand it as you form core, implementation and extended teams and bring on additional stakeholders.

- Hold at least one meeting specifically devoted to developing a high-level vision for children and families in your state.
- Use the readiness assessment and strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats (SWOT) analysis to assess the current landscape in your state and organize your thoughts based on wants and needs for cross-branch collaboration.
- Consider a separate vision statement for each branch of government that feeds directly into the common vision and goals of the three-branch approach.
- Solicit feedback from state advocacy or advisory boards that include current or former foster youth, foster parents, kinship caregivers and birth parents.

Strategy 2:
Diversify team membership. Think beyond the “usual suspects” (i.e., those who typically engage in collaborative efforts).

- Ask legislators to identify legislative staff to join the implementation team.
- Invite judicial representatives from various court agencies, including Court Improvement Program staff, to join.
- Create written succession plans to handle turnover.

Strategy 3:
Staff the initiative. Designate a project manager to coordinate the initiative.

- Find a local philanthropic organization to fund the position, or pool funding from all three branches to hire a full-time project manager.
- Assign a portion of a government agency staff person’s time to managing the project.
- Divide project management responsibilities among the three branches. For example, one staff person could schedule meetings, another could develop agendas and a third could take minutes.
- Consider identifying a volunteer, intern or social work student as a project manager, meeting planner or note-taker.



Strategy 4:
Build
relationships
within and
across
branches.

- ❑ Schedule an informal get-together with colleagues outside the office, such as for lunch, dinner, coffee or early breakfasts, to become acquainted.
- ❑ Hold monthly meetings, with no formal agendas or notes, to work through barriers, challenges and obstacles to coordination and collaboration for children and families.
- ❑ Use existing meetings, task forces, town halls, listening sessions, summits, statewide conferences, coffee talks and other convenings to talk about the three-branch approach.
- ❑ Develop several Microsoft PowerPoint presentations, short briefs or talking points with clear messaging that describes the three-branch approach.

Strategy 5:
Formalize
collaboration.

- ❑ Establish formal memorandums of understanding among agencies and across the three branches on working together as a three-branch team.
- ❑ Develop a formal public awareness plan to ensure that community members; families; local providers; county child welfare office staff; and local stakeholders in health, mental health, education and law enforcement are aware of the three-branch approach and initiative goals.
- ❑ Host joint press events, and participate in each branch's social media outreach efforts.



Strategy 6:
Clearly understand the role of each branch, and make cross-branch meetings relevant to all team members.

- ❑ Set up regularly scheduled meetings for all teams and work groups, with agendas and specific, agreed-upon roles for all branches.
- ❑ Schedule all meetings far in advance, and be respectful of legislative and judicial schedules.
- ❑ Always provide food and coffee; ask local philanthropic organizations to pay.
- ❑ Hold meetings and listening sessions throughout the state, not just in the state capitol.
- ❑ Core, implementation and extended team members in each branch of government should consider participating in presentations or meetings at each other's state and local conferences and meetings.
- ❑ Use the statewide strategic plan to clearly define team structure and roles in addition to clearly stating the overarching goals and objectives, data indicators interim benchmarks, implementation and oversight strategies, timelines and staff responsible for tasks.
- ❑ Disseminate the strategic plan widely across the state, and briefly review it at all gatherings.

Strategy 7:
Clearly define and inventory existing outcomes, trends, programs and initiatives.

- ❑ Hold core, implementation and extended team sessions specifically devoted to sharing and examining data on state- and local-level child welfare outcomes, performance and trends.
- ❑ Inventory existing programs and initiatives around the state, and identify gaps in services that affect desired outcomes.
- ❑ Allow time for participants to present on programs in their communities at local convenings.





**Strategy 8:
Formally
research the
issue.**

- Connect with local universities, think tanks, national organizations and advocates to learn about the latest research and best practice in other states.
- Hold regional and local listening sessions, joint hearings or other public forums to learn about the issue and its impact on children and families.
- Gather research, studies, reports and plans such as the state's Child and Family Services Review for information.
- Allow foster parents, birth parents, kinship caregivers and foster youth to provide their unique experience and insight into the state's child welfare system.
- Enlist the aid of social work students or interns in conducting this research.
- Contact the National Conference of State Legislatures for 50-state legislation.

**Strategy 9:
Build on
existing
cross-branch
collaborative
structures.**

- Include existing cross-branch collaboratives such as children's cabinets, children's caucuses, statewide children's advisory groups or task forces and the children's ombudsman.

**Strategy 10:
Seek easy
wins to
continue
momentum
and
enthusiasm.**

- Be sure to include easy wins in the interim benchmarks in the strategic plan.
- Open each gathering of the core, implementation and extended teams with acknowledgements.
- Provide certificates of appreciation or other awards to highlight efforts.
- Easy wins can include good attendance at monthly meetings; making regular presentations to colleagues; presenting at branch-specific summits; stakeholder participation in local, regional and statewide three-branch events; and acknowledgement of the three-branch initiative at various events and gatherings across the state.
- Identify accomplishments relevant to all three branches of government.
- Provide recognition of some kind to active members of the initiative; this recognition can include certificates, small plaques, formal awards ceremonies and news releases.