



## LAUNCH A THREE-BRANCH INITIATIVE

After those in state government have discussed with other state government representatives, child advocates and local philanthropic organizations whether this approach will work in the state, the next step is to walk through the stages of launching a successful three-branch approach: (1) identifying the issue or outcome to be addressed through the approach, (2) creating the core team, (3) investigating factors that contribute to the problem or desired outcome, (4) building the solution, (5) creating a strategic plan to address the issue or accomplish the desired outcome, (6) implementing the strategic plan, and (7) tracking progress toward the goals and adjusting the strategic action plan based on that progress. These stages are not necessarily chronological and may occur simultaneously. In addition, three-branch approaches do not need to be ongoing efforts. In some cases, they are short-term projects that dissolve when they have achieved their goals; in other cases, three-branch approaches require the active, ongoing, long-term participation of all three branches of government.

### The Three-Branch Approach in Oregon

In 2018, Oregon’s Senate Committee on Human Services established a three-branch work group to address policy, budget and communication needs related to implementation of the 2018 federal Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First). This effort, spearheaded by the committee chair, who was also the state team lead for Oregon’s 2016-2017 Three Branch Institute on Improving Child Safety and Preventing Child Fatalities, aims to identify actions Oregon can take to meet the requirements of Family First.






## Stages of a Three-Branch Approach

### Stage 1: Identify the issue.

- Identify an issue that should be addressed systemically.
- The issue should be compelling to all three branches and amenable to system-level change. (This could be an issue that one branch has already identified but not been able to address on its own.)
- The core, implementation and expanded teams will expand on the issue.

### Stage 2: Create the core team.

- With buy-in from one branch secured, reach out to the other two branches for their commitment to participate on the core planning team (e.g., contact legislative leadership — the speaker of the house and the senate president — to ask them to nominate members, seek out legislative staff to participate in the effort).
- The core team should include staff from each branch who understand the issue and are committed to developing, implementing and monitoring the strategic plan.
- Core team members should have decision-making authority within their branch and ideally be able to remain involved throughout the initiative.
- The core team should identify a team lead to serve as the team's point of contact (POC), be responsible for coordinating activities and remain involved throughout the initiative.
- The core team is responsible for clearly delineating the roles and responsibilities of team members.
- Core team members can identify a neutral, third-party organization to facilitate core, implementation and extended team meetings; monitor development and implementation of the strategic plan; assist in conflict resolution; hold all branches accountable; and generally move the work forward.
- This facilitator could be from a university child and family services research or training program; a local foundation; a policy think tank; a local consultancy; or another well-respected, independent entity.



---

**Stage 3:  
Identify  
the desired  
outcome.**

- The core team identifies the desired outcomes, which should be timely and relevant to the state's children and families.
- The desired outcome should be relevant to and shared by each branch and clearly benefit from an intentional three-branch approach.
- The outcome could be connected to emerging federal legislative and funding opportunities.

---

**Stage 4:  
Investigate  
the factors  
that affect  
the desired  
outcome.**

- The core team recruits and engages the implementation team, which can consist of additional members of the executive branch (human services, health, education, criminal justice, public safety, workforce and behavioral health), the legislative branch and the judicial branch; children, youth and families; CBOs; providers; practitioners; and frontline staff, to build a holistic understanding of the issue.
- The core and implementation team members educate themselves on the current system, challenges, other proposed solutions and system-reform efforts.
- The core and implementation teams identify key questions to be answered, the data sources for those answers and how to access and interpret the data.
- Both teams examine services across the state and map existing efforts; review existing policies, processes and standards; and continue to collect and share relevant data and findings.

---

**Stage 5:  
Build the  
strategies that  
will achieve  
the desired  
outcome.**

- The core and implementation teams recruit and engage the extended team, which can consist of advocates and constituents, child welfare agency supervisors and staff, business leaders and other private-sector representatives, legal representation and members of the faith community.
- All teams identify evidence-based and promising practices, including best practices from other states.
- All teams convene key stakeholders (through joint legislative hearings, town hall meetings, roundtable discussions, regional listening sessions) to build a common understanding of the problem and a joint commitment to the solution.



**Stage 6:  
Create a  
strategic plan.**

Together, the core, implementation and extended teams create a strategic plan that clearly articulates:

- The vision and mission of the approach.
- Clear, realistic and measurable goals and objectives.
- Actionable, high-impact strategies for achieving goals.
- Benchmarks to measure and track progress toward achieving identified goals.
- Team members responsible for implementing strategies.

**Stage 7:  
Implement  
the strategic  
plan.**

- Create issue-specific work groups made up of members of the core team, implementation team and extended team to implement elements of the strategic plan.
- Throughout implementation, the core team should meet periodically to assess progress, address challenges and communicate needs.

**Stage 8:  
Track, monitor  
and adjust.**

- The core team closely monitors progress toward meeting benchmarks and goals according to the established timeline.
- Consider whether to modify the strategic plan based on recent assessments and unforeseen consequences.
- Commemorate small victories as benchmarks are met or obstacles are overcome.