Early Care and Education
Developing Partnerships

Partnerships with other organizations can benefit your center in many ways. They can be a source of direct as well as in-kind support, help generate community goodwill, serve as a referral source and feeder for new students, and enhance the range of services available to the families your center serves.

✓ **Local businesses.** Consider joining your local business association or chamber of commerce. Many companies welcome the chance to support local charitable efforts. Is there a small business willing to sponsor a yearly scholarship or provide funds for specific classroom supplies? What type of in-kind support is available from a local graphic designer, print shop, carpentry/repair business, computer consultant, or paper supply store? Would any of the groups “loan” an employee to help set-up your financial system or develop a marketing plan? The possibilities are endless. Take the initiative and ask.

✓ **Churches.** Consider enlisting the support of local churches and/or congregations with outreach programs in your particular community (suburban churches, for instance, seeking to support urban neighborhoods). Beyond the potential for a financial donation from the church itself, in what ways can a relationship be developed between the congregation and your center? Could members volunteer at your center on a regular basis? What avenues exist to keep members informed about needs and opportunities at the center, either through a mailing list and/or presentations at meetings and special events? While these types of partnerships take longer to cultivate, they can be well worth it.

✓ **Other service providers.** Your center doesn’t operate in isolation. Who else is serving your community, and in what capacity? Being familiar with these resources not only helps facilitate referrals, it can also open up the possibility for joint projects and other shared services. These, in turn, can help your center save money or generate new sources of income. A joint literacy project with a new immigrants association, for instance, might have a higher chance of grant funding than two separate but overlapping projects. Or perhaps a shared-space arrangement would make sense for you and another service provider, such as an on-site job search support program for parents while their children are at the center. When done right, these types of partnerships can be a win-win for all involved.

✓ **Parents.** Lastly, don’t forget to tap the resource with the closest vested interest in seeing your center succeed – parents. How could you most effectively utilize their skills and expertise? What other connections do they have that could benefit the center, either personally or through work? These types of connections can prove invaluable as your center seeks to develop new and ongoing sources of support.

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