School Readiness through Partnerships Project

Project Overview
Boston Children’s Museum was funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to support school readiness through our School Readiness through Partnerships - Museums, Libraries and State Early Learning Systems Project. This project builds on successful work with the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care’s “Race to the Top Early Learning Initiative” to leverage the power of the informal learning community that exists within museums and libraries.

Regional hub leader organizations are the backbone institutions located in each of 9 geographic regions in the state. Hub leaders work across the cities and towns in their region to achieve project goals. The regions are: Western MA, Pioneer Valley, Central MA, Worcester, Metro West, North Shore, South Shore, Cape and the Islands and Metro Boston.

The project’s goal is for hub leaders to serve as leaders in their regions, actively reaching out to local institutions and organizations located in the cities and towns across their region to strengthen and increase collaboration across museums, libraries, CFCEs and community organizations to disseminate content and activities developed through the project. These collaborative efforts will:

- Strengthen and grow the existing museum, library, community organization and early care and education provider network across Massachusetts,
- Build professional capacity to implement high quality informal learning experiences for children across the state,
- Foster family engagement and learning, especially among hard to reach and underserved families

What Are Partnerships
Partnerships are the formal and informal collaborative relationships that exist between hub leader organizations and other institutions that provide opportunities to work together, share information and expertise, leverage resources and engage in project activities including:

- Developing trainings and tools for educators and others working with young children to increase the capacity of museums, libraries and community organizations to implement high quality informal learning opportunities in each of the 9 regions.
- Refining the kits, books and tip sheets developed over many years, and using them to engage educators, parents, caregivers and others working with young children in topics such as STEM, school readiness, and play that will support their role as an educator in the life of a child.
- Designing, prototyping and evaluating new program ideas, activities and materials to replicate and disseminate successful practices in two states in partnership with the BUILD Initiative.

Organizations and institutions which serve children and families can be involved in the project by connecting with their regional hub leader organization. Partnering organizations can benefit by participating in any of the project activities.

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Key Outcomes for Hub Leaders and Partners
Through the regional hub model the project will build relationships to:
- increase organizations’ capacity to serve children and families
- strengthen the regional network by reaching out to organizations engaged in early childhood programming in a variety of community-based settings
- promote the sustainability of family engagement beyond the project

Levels of Engagement
Levels of engagement among partner organizations and institutions may range across a continuum from low to high engagement. This continuum does not imply that one end is better, but rather reinforces the idea that the way partnerships develop, grow and are sustained over time changes due to the varied missions, focus and capacity of each individual organization involved. For purposes of evaluating the work of this project, we are categorizing partner relationships at 3 levels:
- **Low Engagement**: This level of partnership involves sharing project information and resources on an infrequent basis.
- **Medium Engagement (Active Partner)**: This level moves beyond sharing information and resources to include working together on project activities and communicating on a more regular basis.
- **High Engagement (Active Partner)**: This level involves working together on an ongoing basis on project activities as well as on additional individual and collaborative activities that are part of each organization’s programming. Additionally this level of collaboration may involve staff working together or sharing expertise to support both individual and collaborative projects.

Active Partners are those with whom hub leader organizations have medium or high levels of engagement both as it relates to project activities as well as activities that are part of your organizations mission and identified programming.

Evaluation
Boston Children’s Museum will collect data from Hub Leaders, Active Partners, and public audiences to make improvements to kits, trainings, and resources; better understand how Hub Leaders and Active Partners work together; and document best practices and lessons learned. As part of the project’s evaluation efforts, Hub Leaders and Active Partners are expected to participate in annual surveys about their experiences with the project and their relationships with one another. Boston Children’s Museum will share evaluation results, recommendations, and other useful findings so that Hub Leaders and Active Partners can gain greater insight to their work.