

## Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs)/Collaborative Agreements

An MoU or collaborative agreement outlines expectations and guidelines for working together in a partnership. It is co-authored by individuals representing the agencies involved.

This document provides guidance for creating formal agreements between state deaf-blind projects that will be working together on collaborative activities.

There are a range of benefits to formalizing collaborative work:

- It helps guide partners in negotiating and reaching agreement about what the work will entail.
- By clearly defining outcomes and activities, it increases the likelihood that you will achieve your desired end results.
- By clearly defining how partners will work together, it decreases the chance of misunderstandings and failed efforts.

The sections below describe typical elements of MoUs. Clear, written descriptions of each will help you create agreements that lead to sustainable and achievable shared work. All elements should be mutually agreed upon and there should be enough detail for the agreement to serve as a guiding document for the work of the partnership, even with staff turnover.

Participants should be aware of requirements (e.g., related to financial commitments) of their respective agencies that govern these types of arrangements.

### **Purpose**

Describe the overall purpose of the collaboration. What is the problem or issue and how will it be addressed?

### **Ways of Working Together**

Outline the processes you will use to work together. Collaborative work frequently fails due to unclear processes for making decisions and managing work that involves shared, and at times overlapping, tasks and responsibilities. See [Changing Systems: Moving](#)

[Beyond Child-Specific Technical Assistance](#), pp. 13-15, for suggestions on managing collaborative activities.

Components include:

- Management structures
- Decision-making protocols
- Mechanisms for communicating
- Technology usage (e.g., housing materials, video conferencing, webinars, collaborative work spaces, learning platforms)

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

List the roles and responsibilities of the participating state deaf-blind projects and their personnel. Clarity about roles helps participants understand their responsibilities, holds them accountable for their commitments, and limits duplication of effort.

It's possible that you may add additional state deaf-blind projects (or new staff from projects that are already involved) after the MOU has been signed and the work has commenced. Outline expectations for adding new projects or staff (e.g., whether you would allow activities to be adapted) to avoid misunderstandings.

## **Activities and Outputs/Milestones**

Describe the activities you will conduct in a fair amount of detail, including steps within each activity. It takes a lot of work to iron out all the details at the outset, but comprehensive early planning makes it much more likely that you will be successful.

Also describe anticipated outputs, such as materials produced, number of people served, or number of trainings provided. This will help you establish milestones that can be used to track progress in implementing activities.

## **Other Potential Partners**

Identify other likely partners. Although not signers to the MOU, other agencies and individuals will be involved in your collaborative activities. These include:

1. Recipients of the TA (e.g., schools, agencies, parent organizations).
2. Organizations and individuals who will help you implement activities (see [Changing Systems: Moving Beyond Child-Specific Technical Assistance](#), p. 8, for suggestions on partnerships).

You may not know when you develop the MOU who all of the partners will be, but include as much detail as possible.

## **Outcomes and Evaluation**

Define the desired outcomes of the work and how you will evaluate them:

- What changes will you expect to see for TA recipients (e.g., improved knowledge and skills; increased fidelity of implementation of instructional practices; adoption of new policies)?
- What benefits do you expect the collaboration to have for the participating state deaf-blind projects (e.g., financial savings; ability to reach more families, service providers, and students)?
- How will the outcomes be evaluated (e.g., survey, interview, observation)?  
Choose evaluation methods carefully. Evaluation can have a significant impact on time and fiscal resources. Be sure to balance what you need and want to collect with your available resources.

## **Timelines and Duration**

Establish timelines for each activity and for the duration of the collaborative agreement. The duration will vary depending on the intensity of the work. Some may be planned for a single year, while others may require several years.

## **Resource Commitments**

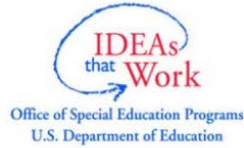
Determine the resources that will be provided by participating state deaf-blind projects:

- Time and staffing
- Financial
- Other (e.g., technology platforms, materials)

This area will likely require work with each participant's home agency to determine mechanisms and requirements for such things as shared funding, budgeting, and subcontracts.

## **Signatures**

The document should be signed and dated by all participants.



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