

Leadership Learning Journey

LEADERSHIP LEARNING JOURNEY GOALS

We usually talk about the goals of this kind of work in the three ways listed below:

1. Create shared knowledge among the leaders participating across early childhood systems regarding the inequities young children, their families, and communities face.
2. Understand and appreciate the contributions, perspectives, directives, and responsibilities of multiple partners in the early childhood system.
3. Build and increase capacity for shared action within the early childhood systems to advance positive outcomes for children and families in each state.

For you specifically though, we'd describe the goal as: Get to know (or get to know better) a (potential) partner so that you have some understanding of the partner's goals, challenges, efforts—and how those relate to yours—so that you can increase communication, coordination, and collaboration to better benefit young children and families.

Guidance for Setting Up the Journey

Clarify what you hope to learn and your goals for the visit. Consider how to frame why you are asking for this opportunity and what you hope to gain.

Selection: Select a state-level leader in a different system, e.g., health care, maternal and child health, child welfare, early care and education, Early Intervention, WIC, TANF, etc. that relates to your equity challenge. Part of your leadership learning journey could be joining that leader in a visit or meeting with his or her service/program managers or direct service providers.

- What information and data (quantitative and qualitative) will you use to select the leader and system?

- What does this information make you curious about?

Visit Length: We recommend that the journey be a day-long visit that offers a diversity of experiences and includes time for shared reflection. The visit could be a series of experiences not on the same day, but no visit should be fewer than three hours.

Journey Questions

Determine the questions you have for the leader ahead of time.

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Here are questions you may want to consider:

1. What is the leader's area of responsibility, authority, and/or influence?

To understand this, you might want to probe on:

- Federal and state resources available to the leader.
- Activities for which the leader is responsible in relation to the early childhood services, supports, and/or resources his/her system provides.
- Types of decisions s/he is accountable for making.
- Opportunities s/he has to influence others (e.g., through committee meetings, interdepartmental activities, or partnerships) and activities or work that affects children, families, and/or communities over which s/he has direct authority.
- Decisions, issues, or areas over which the leader does not have direct administrative authority but does influence by consulting others.
- The primary decision-makers needed to advance program, policy, budget, or systemic change to reduce racial inequities.
- How these decision-makers work across sectors and with advocates to influence policy or build systems.

2. What are the leader's goals?

You might explore:

- The goals of the leader and the leader's position related to all young children, their families, and

communities—the universal goals.

- The goals of the leader and the leader's position that are aimed at addressing inequities. Does the leader/agency/position have a clear equity goal(s)?
- The leader's relationship to any strategies that involve targeting resources and opportunities to young children and their families that have historically faced barriers to opportunity. Does the leader have authority or influence over any equity strategies?
- Any recent, significant change the leader was part of creating or implementing to benefit children and families.

3. What tools and information does the leader use/have to inform decision-making?

You might explore:

- Qualitative and quantitative data used to inform decision-making.
- What makes the leader able (or often not able) to influence early childhood policy, programs, initiatives, and budgets. What some successes and challenges in using information and position to inform decision-making have been.

4. Who are the intended beneficiaries of the leader's work?

You might explore:

- Population(s) for which the leader seeks to provide primary benefit.
- Geographic area of intended impact.
- Involvement of the intended beneficiaries in the definition of goals, design of solutions, etc.

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5. What characteristics of the young children, families, communities, or workforce will the leader's work/role impact?

You might explore:

- Socio-economic status.
- Racial/ethnic/language composition.
- Geographic characteristics (e.g., urban, rural, and community resources).

Follow-up Visit

Share the learning: When both you and your partner have conducted your Leadership Learning Journeys, we encourage you to meet with your cross-systems group and share what you learned.

Post Visit Reflections Questions That You Will Submit

We will provide a quick, easy way for you to submit your responses through a survey.

1. Whom did you meet with? Why?
2. What was the diversity of experiences you had during the leadership learning journey?
3. What did you learn? For example:
 - What opportunities and access to resources do they offer families?
 - What do they wish they could offer families?
 - Are there some opportunities being offered that families aren't accessing? Discover possible reasons. Are they aware of barriers to awareness, affordability, accessibility, availability, accommodation, and acceptability?
 - How does the state system you shadowed seek to benefit families?
4. Did you identify areas of shared interest in your equity challenge?
5. What insights did you gain for cross-system efforts?
 - Are there any unintended consequences for how the state system you shadowed works?

Summative Reflections for the Portfolio

Your reflections on the following questions don't need to be submitted at the end of your visit, but please keep them in mind as you participate in the Leadership Institute. Each experience should build upon earlier insights. These reflections could be included as part of the portfolio.

1. How did the Leadership Learning Journey inform your thinking about your equity challenge and the work you want to do?
2. What did you learn about who has authority, e.g., who makes decisions about which services are offered and how they are delivered, and the process for making changes?
3. Did you gain any insights into your relationship to the information you heard? How do your resources and potential to act or influence others relate to the focus of the leader you visited?
4. Did you gain any insights into what a cross-systems team could do that you or the leader you visited cannot do as easily or as well on your own?
5. How does this experience relate to other aspects of your health equity work? Do you see connections with other HOPE activities that you have already accomplished? Are there ways you see this journey informing the ones you will be doing?
6. What are you still curious about?

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