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Cases of Integration

Community Action
&
Head Start

Community Action & Head Start

Cases of Integration

2018

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Introduction

The purpose of this publication is to share the insights from Community Action Agencies (CAAs) that successfully and proactively integrated their Head Start programs into the overall management and operations of their CAAs. Community Action and Head Start share a common history as federally-funded programs founded in the mid-1960's with the goal of improving the lives of low-income individuals and families. Today, the Community Action network includes over 1,000 CAAs that receive federal Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funding along with multiple other federal and state grants to operate a range of programs and services based on local community needs that address the root causes and conditions of poverty. Head Start, which is operated by a variety of grantees, targets preschool children of low-income families with a comprehensive program to meet their emotional, social, health, nutritional, and psychological needs.[1] Over the years, Community Action and Head Start have worked closely together to achieve their shared mission of breaking the cycle of poverty and moving individuals and families towards self-sufficiency. Approximately 50.4% of CAAs run a Head Start Program and 32.7% run Early Head Start. [2]

Head Start programs are critical pieces of the menu of services CAAs offer to low-income families. However, like many multi-service organizations, CAAs regularly face the challenge of effectively integrating and managing a wide variety of programs with their own unique regulations, target populations, and operational activities. This challenge is notable with regards to the Head Start program because of Head Start's:

- Strong brand identity,
- Shared governance structure between the Head Start Policy Council and CAA board,
- Extensive program requirements, and
- Typically large budget that is often a substantial portion of a CAA's overall funding.
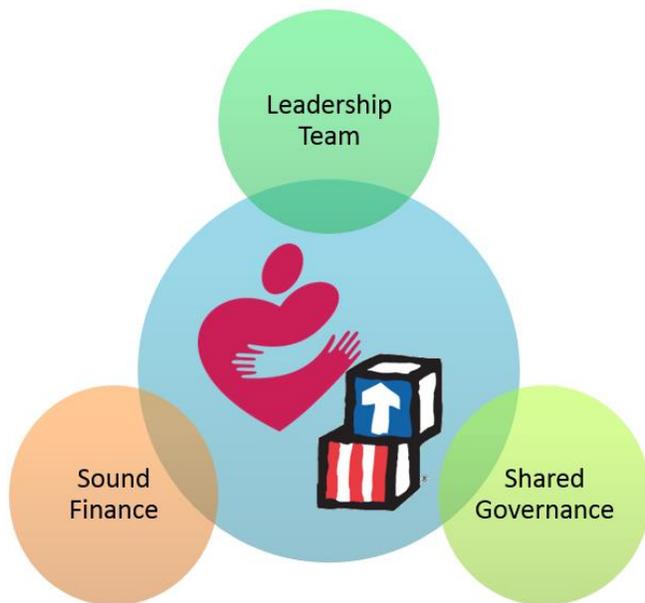
For some CAAs, these complexities result in the Head Start program operating in a "silo" that can lead to a lack of coordination and clarity about governance and leadership roles, impede the development of a clear strategic direction for the organization, and even trigger conflict over issues of authority and decision making.

The introduction of the CSBG Organizational Standards with its organization wide focus highlighted the effect that "silo" structures can have on the health and sustainability of a CAA. The Standards underscored the need for agencies to holistically address issues of management and operations. Furthermore, the

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[1] National Head Start Association website, About Us:
https://www.nhsa.org/about-us/mission-vision-history
[2] 2016 CSBG Information Survey. These percentages are taken from IS data on the number of CAAs that reported receiving Head Start and Early Head Start funding as provided by NASCSP. See pages A-23-1 and A-23-2 for aggregate state funding amounts.
https://nascsp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2016-annual-report_final_01-17-17_full.pdf

"silo" structure impacts a CAA's ability to cohesively implement integrated service delivery strategies, including "two generation" approaches that build on Head Start's long tradition of providing services to both children and their parents.

Upon consultation with CAPLAW and Office of Head Start, the National Community Action Partnership surveyed key stakeholders in the Community Action Network to identify cases of successful integration of Head Start programs into a CAA. These case studies highlight the importance of program integration and provide CAAs with promising practices of how to strengthen their governance, leadership, and financial operations.

Approach

The case studies in this publication are based on interviews with Executive Directors/CEOs and Head Start Directors from the following CAAs:

Nonprofit:
- South Plains Community Action Association, Inc. (SPCAA) – West Texas
- Inter-Lakes Community Action Partnership (Inter-Lakes CAP) – Eastern South Dakota
- Utah Community Action (UCA) – Salt Lake City, Utah
- Greater East Texas Community Action Partnership (GETCAP) – East Texas
- Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo (CAPSLO) – Central Coast, California

Public:
- Amador-Tuolumne Community Action Agency (ATCAA) – Central Sierra Region, California
- Metropolitan Action Commission (MAC) – Nashville, Tennessee

The interview questions focused on areas of concern triggered by the "silo" structure that were identified through discussion with Office of Head Start (OHS), CAPLAW, and CAA leaders. The questions targeted ways in which CAAs developed processes, structures, and actions to successfully facilitate integration of Head Start programs into their CAAs. The examples detailed in this publication are not a one-size-fits-all approach, but rather reflect different ways that CAAs have addressed the issue of integration. As a result, these practices are intended to be starting points for discussion and may be adapted based on an organization's unique needs, operational structure, and capacity.

Promising Practices

Common themes and practices that promote integration emerged from the case study interviews and are organized under the following three principles:

1. Share Knowledge across the Organization
2. Align Organizational Structures and Processes
3. Promote the Shared Mission and Direction of the Organization

The discussions under each principle walk through the challenges faced, the promising practice implemented, and the importance of taking actions to foster integration.

1. Share Knowledge across the Organization.

Sharing Knowledge

+Create an internal resource book for all staff to reference eligibility and program information

+Add a virtual training option for staff in multiple locations to increase training opportunities

+Encourage staff to show their expertise and train each other

+Send Head Start policy council and CAA board members to the same conferences and trainings

+Develop a mentorship program between board and policy council

+Hold intentional cross-program training retreats

Silos limit the sharing of knowledge and information which in turn hinders a CAA's capacity to provide more integrated services and can lead staff to identify more with their program rather than the larger organization. Effective CAAs are typically those with staff, boards and Policy Councils that understand the full range of services their CAA provides and work as a team across programmatic boundaries. Such integrated efforts support a Head Start "two generation" model and contributes to the development of a common identity as a single organization.

Use Staff Meetings and Cross-Program Training

Cross-training was consistently mentioned as an important ongoing process to encourage integration. South Plains Community Action Agency (SPCAA) provides one example of this practice in action. The agency holds in-service trainings with staff drawn from different programs and provides regular updates to staff on all programs. In addition, SPCAA developed a booklet[3] for staff that includes information on each program's eligibility requirements and necessary documentation for intake. Taken together, these practices help staff understand and collaborate with programs across the agency.

Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo (CAPSLO) ties together organizational processes and requirements by keeping all staff aware of changes related to funding requirements and agency operations. CAPSLO also holds regular meetings that involve all staff which result in the sharing of information and promote a shared sense of organizational identity. With a staff of 1100, virtual meetings have become a solution when in-person gatherings are not feasible.

CAPSLO's Executive Director, Elizabeth Steinberg, is also particularly intentional about cross-program training for all leadership positions, especially those that connect and coordinate with Head Start. Moreover, all staff attend brief virtual or in-person trainings as significant issues or changes occur. This includes topics such as the Office of Management and Budget's Uniform Guidance, Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) Next Generation, and the CSBG Organizational Standards. CAPSLO recently engaged staff in an informal crosswalk of the CSBG Organizational Standards and the Head Start Performance Standards to explore how the entire organization can work together to ensure overall compliance. Staff from Head Start and other parts of the agency sat down together to discuss how to coordinate on activities and create efficiencies while ensuring the agency met the overall requirements for both sets of standards.

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[3] Additional resources and examples are available at https://communityactionpartnership.com/search-page/?fwp_1=head-start

CAPSLO specifically spends significant time and effort to make sure all staff are informed about each other's programs. CAPSLO has an Employee Council comprised of 15 staff (which intentionally does not include managers and supervisors) from different programs to promote information sharing and collaboration across the organization. They rotate department meeting locations so staff are exposed to the organization's various programs. During these meetings they discuss the internal referral process and teach each other about their programs. One example of how the council promotes learning across programs is a cheat sheet they developed that lists the agency's different programs and eligibility requirements to assist staff in referring customers to other agency programs.

> *"A lot of time and effort go into making sure, especially all leadership positions, are trained on not only Head Start, but all agency programs – from the Chief Financial Officer to Planning to Operations and even the Executive Director - because they all touch parts of Head Start."*
>
> *-CAPSLO Executive Director, Elizabeth Steinberg*

Executive Director Elizabeth Steinberg noted that the Pathways to Excellence program was beneficial to the process of bringing staff together to create a more unified agency. Pathways is a self-directed organizational development process based on the Standards of Excellence adapted for the Community Action Network from the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, an internationally recognized program that identifies organizations with exemplary records of management and operations. Agencies participating in Pathways conduct a rigorous self-study process that involves benchmarking their performance against the Standards of Excellence and then submitting the results for peer review by a panel senior CAA managers who identify their strengths and opportunities for improvement. The Pathways process encourages CAAs to take a 360 degree view of their performance and helps staff from different programs learn together about their organization as a whole. Pathways brought together staff from different parts of CAPSLO as part of their self-study, which promoted joint learning, sharing of management practices across programs, and the development of stronger staff relationships.

Some organizations also have staff attend board and Policy Council meetings to facilitate communication and build relationships. For example, Inter-Lakes CAP has all program managers attend board meetings to present program reports and answer questions. Written program reports are made available to board members prior to the meeting, which gives members an opportunity to prepare thoughtful questions for program managers.

Take Action

A collaborative activity to support sharing of information across programs is to ask for staff volunteers to provide short informational sessions during staff meetings or similar opportunities. Topics might include eligibility requirements, typical services provided by the program, and discussion of referral processes.

Meeting regularly to promote understanding of how each program's work fits together can improve collaboration and promote a shared sense of identity as a single organization. For example, Utah Community Action realized through joint staff meetings that multiple departments were applying for the same grants.

Conduct Co-Trainings/Orientation for Board and Policy Council

CAPSLO holds a joint training every October for their board and Policy Council. Members of the two bodies come together to learn about topics such as:

- Head Start History & Philosophy
- Governance of Head Start Programs & Community Action Agencies
- Head Start Performance Standards
- Leadership Issues Related to Head Start & Community Action
- General Updates on Head Start & the Community Action Agency

CAPLSO worked with a consultant to develop a *Governance Matrix* that educates the board and Policy Council about the approvals required by each party. This allows both bodies to understand their shared roles and responsibilities. Policy Council and board leadership are intentionally sent to conferences together to receive important state, regional, and national updates. Policy Council members are mentored by their board counterparts and both board and Policy Council orientation includes tours of the Head Start centers and other agency program offices so members understand program level operations.

Greater East Texas Community Action Partnership (GETCAP) sees joint trainings and orientations as a way to establish an environment where board and Policy Council members listen to and respect each other. Orientation stresses the importance of shared governance and includes the leadership team who send a clear message about the role and importance of both bodies. While the Policy Council and board must work together on many decisions, both parties understand that the buck stops with the board. Clear and consistent communication on this point helps ensure the roles of each are clearly defined. GETCAP also prioritizes joint training between their board and Policy Council. Every three to four years, they hold an intentional board and Policy Council training retreat.

2. Align Organizational Structures and Processes

Programmatic and organizational integration begins with a strong leadership structure that institutes promising practices relating to staffing, client intake, pay scales, office structure, and governance to better align overall organizational structures and, by doing so, increase an organization's sustainability and effectiveness. CAAs with Head Start programs that operate in silos often establish internal functions, such as human resources and finance, on a per program basis rather than organization-wide. Such arrangements can impede communication, lead to programs developing their own identities, and result in conflicts over staffing, financial, and leadership decisions.

Align the Leadership Structure

Amador Tuolumne Community Action Agency (ATCAA), a public CAA, attributes their connection of Head Start with the overall CAA in significant part to the leadership team model they employ. One way this is model is carried out is through program directors and other leadership positions, such as finance, coming together for regularly scheduled meetings with the Executive Director. This helps build relationships and coordinate across bureaucratic boundaries. In addition, the Head Start Director and Executive Director intentionally designate time to work together to forge a close, trusted relationship. Shelly Hance, recently retired Executive Director, explains that this structure helps organizational leaders see programs from different perspectives, identify ways

to work together, and build collaborative relationships by creating an intentional space that supports positive communication.

CAPSLO's Executive Director, Elizabeth Steinberg, explains that integration starts with leadership emphasizing the importance of aligning organizational structure. Even though CAPSLO's Head Start programs comprise half the agency, they are treated like all other programs on the organizational chart. What CAPSLO leadership does for Head Start, they do for all other programs. For example, the agency has an administrative assistant in each county that provides support to all programs. In addition, each program has two finance meetings each month with the CFO, accountants, and the budget planning team to ensure all are provided with adequate support and fiscal oversight.

At Inter-Lakes Community Action Partnership (Inter-Lakes CAP), the Executive Director or Head Start Director routinely attend front-line staff meetings to ensure a family receives the right resources or services. In more challenging situations, the direct presence of leadership can help smooth the inevitable barriers that exist between program boundaries and speed access to a broader range of resources to help families.

Aligning Structure

+Implement a centralized intake system to support collaboration across programs

+Target families enrolled in Head Start for referral to other agency programs, such as employment and housing

+Apply COLA raises to all staff in the agency, not just Head Start staff

+Co-locate Head Start staff and other program staff in the same facility

+ Have Policy Council members serve on the governing board and vice versa

+Establish a central finance department to oversee all program finances

Centralize Intake for Services

The centralized intake process implemented at Inter-Lakes CAP is one way the CAA integrates its operations. Community Service workers take all applications for the different programs and refer customers internally, across the agency's full range of programs, to provide more comprehensive services. This enables overall program integration and collaboration in a number of ways. For example, a Head Start teacher may work with a housing caseworker if a child has unstable housing. Creating work processes that enable staff from different programs and managerial levels to work together more seamlessly brings a broader perspective to problem solving, helps staff learn about each other's programs, and fosters a culture of collaboration. This approach also helps create a common identity and sense of mission across staff in different parts and levels of the organization by enabling them to directly work together on a routine basis.

CAPSLO integrates intake processes through their data management efforts. The organization developed a universal intake form for their data tracking system so there is "no wrong door" to seek services from the CAA. A family that comes in to their system through the Energy/Weatherization program can be seamlessly referred to Head Start for their young child and Adult Day Services for their aging grandmother because program eligibility is determined at the "front end" of a single intake process. This integrated system also helps the organization create an unduplicated count to better track program outputs and provide more integrated services to improve outcomes for children and families.

Metropolitan Action Commission coordinates services between Head Start and other programs that work with the same family. The Head Start Parent Involvement Coordinator works directly with the CSBG Workforce Unit to integrate services. Both Head Start and CSBG staff enter data into a common agency database, share information, and make referrals for clients across multiple programs. Another example of how this process works is the MAC4JOBS program. MAC4JOBS is a workforce development initiative that provides participants the opportunity to plan a career path that will lead to gainful employment in high demand industries. The program targets families with children enrolled in the CAA's Head Start and Early Head Start programs to maximize outcomes for the whole family. Staff time and resources are maximized through streamlined data management and referral processes that improve collaboration across programs.

Align Salaries

The alignment of salary structures supports the broader goal of program integration. Program specific salary structures can create division among staff and decrease the sense of equity in the organization's culture. CAPSLO noted the importance of having an organization-wide salary structure rather than different scales for each program. Executive Director Elizabeth Steinberg reflected on her time as Head Start Director for the CAA by stating, "The only impasse I faced as a Head Start Director, is I didn't think it was right that cooks for Head Start were paid differently than cooks for other programs." Therefore, as Executive Director, she implemented an organization-wide salary structure to create a common identity and sense of equity among staff.

"We don't have Head Start staff, we have Inter-Lakes Community Action Partnership staff"

– Cindy Dannenbring, Inter-Lakes CAP Executive Director

Likewise, Inter-Lakes CAP gives COLA raises to all staff when they are federally released for Head Start. When this occurs, it is leadership's responsibility to factor the increase into all program budgets. It can be a financial challenge, but such increases improve agency morale and feelings of equity. There is no simple financial formula to make such a policy work, but rather it requires the commitment of leadership to balance issues of salary equity with other competing agency priorities. Each program is responsible for allocating within their budget for this increase so that similar positions across the agency are equally paid. Executive Director Cindy Dannenbring uses this practice to highlight the message that all staff are part of the same organization.

Co-locate Head Start Staff with Other Program Staff

ATCAA reported that a key to their success with integration was locating Head Start management staff and other program staff in the same facilities. This helped staff build relationships across programs, share resources, and provide more holistic services to families. The co-location strengthened the idea that all staff work for the same organization, share the same mission, and enabled staff to make natural connections through regular interaction.

Over three years ago, Utah Community Action (UCA) began a transition out of program silos. To reinvent the organizational culture, the CAA decided to apply the strong mindset of monitoring, compliance, and continuous improvement fostered by Head Start program staff to other programs to reinvent the organizational culture. Some Head Start staff were moved into other CAA departments to instill their focus on compliance in those programs. For example, the Head Start Health and Family Partnership Manager position was named Chief Operating Officer of Social Services, which also oversaw Housing, Weatherization, food pantries, and the Home

Energy Assistance Target (HEAT) program. This helped create a more uniform approach to compliance and monitoring systems across the organization's different departments.

Focus on Team Building

One of the most corrosive and often hidden effects of program silos is the damage it can cause to trust by a lack of communication, familiarity, and opportunities for collaboration. Trust was noted overwhelmingly in the interviews as a key ingredient to integrating Head Start within the overall CAA. When trust is not present, people do not work well together, important information may be withheld, and the organization's potential for growth is inhibited. Conversely, the benefits of trust within an organization can lead to higher morale, greater productivity, and more collaboration.

Metropolitan Action Commission makes a point to connect staff from different programs with each other through the organization's participation in community events. When asked to attend community functions, the organization takes a collaborative approach where staff attend the events as representatives of the Metropolitan Action Commission, not their individual programs like Head Start or LIHEAP. The teams are comprised of people from each unit within the CAA who display enthusiasm and support for the one-organization concept. Through these events, staff mingle with community members, share information about their programs, and have the chance to interact with each other outside their normal "9-5" roles. As Dr. Cynthia Croom, Executive Director, explains, staff get to know each other face-to-face and collaborate as a team in an environment that builds stronger relationships, trust, and a shared identity.

Create Shared Governance Structures

Interviews with CAA leadership underscored the importance of integrating the governance structures of Head Start programs into the organization as a whole. One key to successful shared governance systems is having members that participate on both the Policy Council and board. Variants of this include having Policy Council members serve as board members or Policy Council members participate on board committees. Keep in mind that the Head Start Act requires grantees to include former or current Head Start parents on the board but does not require the inclusion of Policy Council members.[4] (Note that having a Policy Council member serve on the board is not a guarantee that the member will also be a former or current Head Start parent. Only fifty percent of the Policy Council is required to be comprised of current Head Start parents with the remainder being selected from the community at large which may include former Head Start parents.[5])

ATCAA shares that, for them, integration begins at the top and commitment to this approach from board and Policy Council members is critical to success. The recently retired Executive Director of ATCAA, Shelly Hance, stresses the importance of the Executive Director, Head Start Director, Policy Council Chair, and Board Chair all working together and communicating well to model trust and integration throughout the entire organization. This is accomplished through the board and Policy Council members jointly serving on each body and through visits by board members and the Executive Director to Head Start centers. The Policy Council also reports at ATCAA Board meetings, taking time to talk about topics such as recent field trips or success stories which encourages discussion between the groups.

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[4] See 42 U.S.C. § 9837(c)(1)(B)(iv).
[5] See 42 U.S.C. § 9837(c)(2)(B)(ii).

Inter-Lakes CAP emphasizes the executive leadership's role in establishing a shared governance structure. Executive Director Cindy Dannenbring explains that it is the leader's responsibility to encourage shared governance and transparency about the governance process. As Cindy expresses, "It is the Executive Director's responsibility to reaffirm authority of the Policy Council to the staff and the Board." The Head Start Director also attends both meetings on a regular basis, reinforcing the ties between the program and agency as a whole.

Another way in which the staff, board, and Policy Council can connect and coordinate is through committee structures. At SPCAA, the governing board has seven standing committees. One standing committee is Head Start, which makes recommendations to the full board regarding all Head Start programs. The committee is responsible for addressing Head Start related issues and then reporting recommendations to the board, which in turn coordinates with the Policy Council. This ensures both bodies stay "in the loop" about key issues and decisions. The committees meet five to six times per year and senior staff from both Head Start and other programs attend as well.
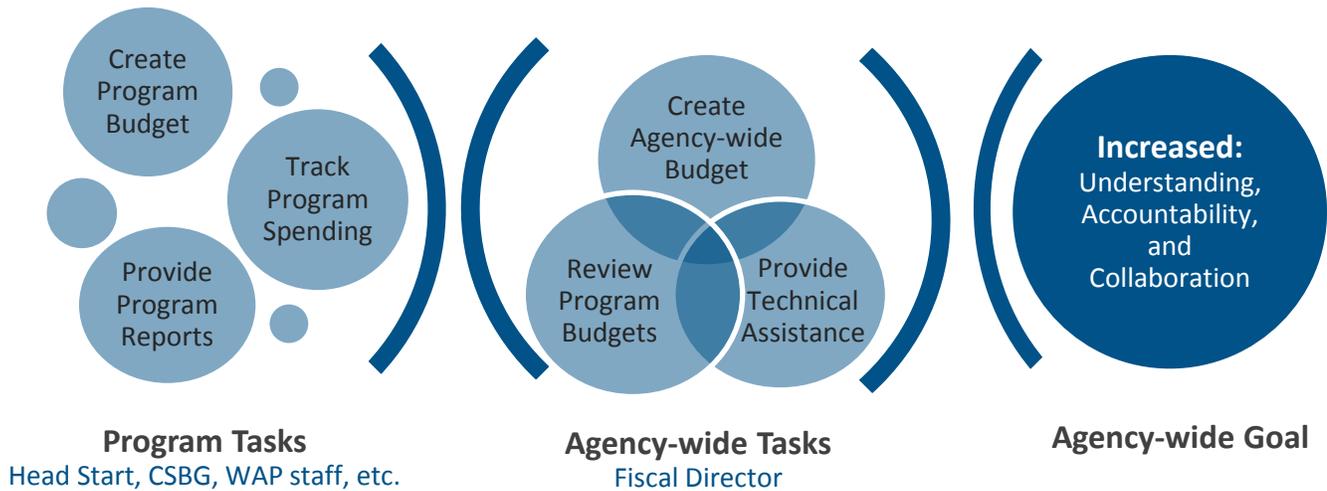
Take Action

One exercise an agency can do is to list all the Head Start program's internal functions (e.g. governance, leadership, finance, human resources, etc) and ask a small group of agency leaders (including Head Start representatives) and score how integrated they are with the rest of the organization on a scale of one to five. This diagnostic is a good starting point to discuss broader issues of integration and where there are potential problems to address.

Centralize Fiscal Functions and Staffing

Head Start is a financially complex program to manage and is often the agency's largest funding source. Having fiscal and program staff in silos can lead to problems that include a lack of collaboration across overall fiscal operations and potential negative impacts on staff morale if they perceive differences in how fiscal resources are allocated to different programs. One way CAA leaders can address such issues is to have central finance staff who oversee financial operations across all programs. The CAA leaders interviewed stressed the importance of managers who are well versed in the budgets of different programs and collaborate with central finance staff and the Executive Director on financial planning and decision making.

The Fiscal Director at Inter-Lakes CAP works directly with the Head Start Director and both are well-versed in the finances of the program. The Fiscal Director routinely meets with the Head Start Director throughout the year to review issues from line item expenditures to long-term budget projections. This assures that expenditures are accurate, allowable, timely, and if changes such as a budget modification are needed. The shared knowledge and good working relationship between Head Start and fiscal leadership are cited as keys to a strong and integrated finance structure. Both sets of staff are familiar with each other's roles, which helps ensure that financial issues don't fall through the cracks. Executive Director Cindy Dannenbring explains that because of this, "It's not scary. We work as a team." At Inter-Lakes CAP the fiscal team reviews the cost allocation formula with each program to create transparency so that all understand how the cost allocation plans work and why their program is charged the specific amounts for items such as rent or utilities. This helps create comfort with the budget, as well as understanding and clarity as they work together as a team.

ATCAA structures their financial operations as depicted in the graphic below. The Fiscal Director provides guidance and oversight with the "big picture" in mind, and Head Start leadership manages the day-to-day financial operations. They engage in a joint review of fiscal processes and reports to ensure the numbers "add up". This helps provide Head Start programs with autonomy, but also allow for accountability and oversight. Head Start leadership and the Fiscal Director are clear on their individual roles and responsibilities, but also how they connect and coordinate with each other. Head Start leadership creates the budget, tracks program spending, and provides reports to leadership. The Fiscal Director reviews the reports and provides technical assistance and expertise when needed. Overall, this results in understanding, accountability, and collaboration.

ATCAA Fiscal Operations

Create Program Budget

Track Program Spending

Provide Program Reports

Create Agency-wide Budget

Review Program Budgets

Provide Technical Assistance

Increased: Understanding, Accountability, and Collaboration

Program Tasks
Head Start, CSBG, WAP staff, etc.

Agency-wide Tasks
Fiscal Director

Agency-wide Goal

Utah Community Action recently transitioned from a system with separate Head Start finance staff to one with central finance staff who provide organization-wide support to department managers, who in turn directly manage their own program budgets. Fiscal policies and procedures are now organization-wide and not department driven, which allows for some degree of autonomy at the program level with broader support and oversight provided by a single financial unit. Jennifer Godfrey, Chief Operating Officer, explained that the transition to a central finance structure can be a challenge, but the key is having clear, defined systems that still enable flexibility. All staff now have a clearer understanding of organization finances and how they work together, resulting in more streamlined and integrated efforts.

"Having a detailed understanding of the budget allows for the ability to be flexible and creative with programs, as well as committed to quality. I really appreciate that the agency really allows directors to have this kind of hands-on interaction with the budget."

-Marcia Williams, ATCAA Head Start Director

3. Promote the Mission and Direction of the Organization.

Fostering a common vision

+Discuss the mission and its meaning at staff meetings

+Make the mission visible online and throughout agency buildings

+Take the mission into account for decision-making

+Communicate the mission from the top to encourage unity

A common challenge for CAAs is that staff often identify with the program they work within rather than the agency as a whole. Unfortunately, without a common identity, programs that operate in silos develop their own organizational cultures that impede collaboration and may even lead to conflict over perceived and real differences. This is not unique to Head Start, but the typically larger size of most Head Start programs compared to other CAA services makes this an especially persistent and prevalent issue. This skewed perception of a collection of programs rather than a multi-service organization can inhibit the development of a common mission, lead to mission drift, and even fragment the organization. CAAs can work to shift this perception through consistent messaging. A common theme through the interviews was the importance of promoting the organization's common mission and shared identity from the top.

Be Visible as One Organization

As Utah Community Action transitioned out of program silos, collaboration and trust across departments became critical as changes in staff, organizational culture, and structure were taking place. The leadership team had to be the first to model this new culture. To support this process, Utah Community Action used an outside facilitator to bring all staff together to define and understand the direction of the agency and how they were connected to the key results of the organization. For example, one key result they identified during the process was that 90% of clients will receive services to enhance health and well-being. Through the help of the facilitator, key results such as this

"We don't exist to run Head Start, we exist to serve Davidson county residents. We are the organization who was designed to combat poverty… Head Start helps to serve the mission of the agency"
-- Dr. Cynthia Croom, Metropolitan Action Commission

one were embedded across all programs to help all staff understand how each department contributes to the key result – from the health of children in Head Start, to overall family well-being through access to housing or having heat in the winter. This mindset is maintained through weekly manager meetings, mid-management meetings twice per month, and meetings of all 500 staff three times per year. The process has taken approximately two years, but Jennifer Godfrey, Chief Operating Officer of Utah Community Action states that if asked, any staff would confirm, *"We are one"*.

Take Action

One exercise an agency can do is to have staff members to discuss how they think programs they work in, as well as other agency programs, contribute to the mission.

Conclusion

Patience, persistence, and intentionality are common themes that cut across the cases examined for this report. CAAs noted that it took anywhere from one year to four years to achieve integration and realize its associated benefits. However, interviewees all felt that the positive outcomes they achieved were worth the challenge of changing agency processes and culture. The results of their work include increased morale, united staff, streamlined processes, less duplication of efforts, more collaboration, enhanced productivity, and ultimately better service to families and communities.

In summary, common themes for successful integration emerged through three actionable, promising practices:

1. Share Knowledge across the Organization
2. Align Organizational Structures and Processes
3. Promote the Mission and Direction of the Organization

It is important to stress that these practices are not "cut and paste" formulas. What works in one organization may not be a fit in another because of organizational culture, staff capacity, available resources, or any number of other reasons. Rather, the examples profiled should be seen as starting points for discussion and adapted as necessary based on discussions among governance bodies, leadership, and staff.

One final example from Utah Community Action illustrates the benefits of enhanced integration for organizations and families alike.

> *A family came in to Utah Community Action to apply for HEAT services. As the worker was conducting the intake with the father (the wife had been in a car accident and was home-bound), they learned he had three young children, as well as an infant, and they were eating cat food because they had no other means of food. The HEAT program manager reached out to the Utah Community Action Food Pantries and they were able to get them food immediately. Staff made it a priority to get a box of food dropped off at the family's home that day. Two of the children were of Head Start age and were able to be enrolled in Head Start. Housing assistance followed as well. The older children have since graduated from Head Start with one returning next year.*

The staff interviewed explained that if the processes and programs had not been integrated, the family may have only received a HEAT benefit that day. As a result of organizational changes at the agency, staff now think holistically by asking, "what can we do as an agency?" not "what can I do within my department?"

As seen throughout the cases, integration efforts at all levels of an organization not only create positive change internally to head off potential issues with monitoring and compliance before they start, but externally through the improved integration of services provided to the families and communities the CAAs serve.

Participating Community Action Agencies

South Plains Community Action Association Inc.

Private Non-Profit CAA

Operating Head Start since 1965

12 counties in the South Plains of West Texas mainly rural counties

1,238 children served through Head Start

168 Head Start staff

684 total CAA staff

Head Start program funding: $13,000,000

Overall CAA budget: $40,000,000

Inter-Lakes Community Action Partnership

Private Non-Profit CAA

Operating Head Start since 1965

11 counties in East Central South Dakota, Head Start all rural

390 children served through Head Start

76 Head Start staff

148 total CAA staff

Head Start program funding: $4,100,000

Overall CAA budget: $11,000,000

Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo

Private Non-Profit CAA

Operating Head Start since 1965

San Luis Obispo County, with Head Start serving 10 counties

3700 children served through Head Start

500 Head Start staff

1100 total CAA staff

Head Start program funding: $40,000,000

Overall CAA budget: $81,000,000

Amador-Tuolumne Community Action Agency

Public CAA

Operating Head Start since 1984

Amador & Tuolumne Counties, California

233 children served through Head Start

59 Head Start staff

170 total CAA staff

Head Start program funding: $3,700,000

Overall CAA budget: $8,600,000

Utah Community Action

Private Non-Profit CAA

Operating Head Start since 1965

3 Counties (Salt Lake, Tooele, ECCP in Wellington)

2231 children served through Head Start

350 Head Start staff

500 total CAA staff

Head Start program funding: $22,000,000

Overall CAA budget: $29,000,000

Metropolitan Action Commission

Public CAA

Operating Head Start since 1965

Davidson County (Nashville, TN)

1485 children served through Head Start

267 Head Start staff

320 total CAA staff

Head Start program funding: $15,000,000

Overall CAA budget: $28,000,000

Greater East Texas Community Action Program

Private Non-Profit CAA

Operating Head Start since 1968

5 rural counties in East Texas

690 children served through Head Start

140 Head Start staff

180 total CAA staff

Head Start program funding: $7,000,000

Overall CAA budget: $18,000,000