

2007-08 Best Start Community Plan

**Building on the Foundation
- Moving Forward**

November 15, 2006

Introduction and Purpose of the 2007-08 Best Start Community Plan

Since the launch of Ontario's Best Start Plan in July 2005, planning efforts have primarily focused on the expansion of child care and the development of enhanced linkages with schools. The creation of almost 15,000 new licensed child care spaces in September 2006, the majority of which are located in schools, represents a major accomplishment and an excellent foundation from which to move forward.

Building on the vision for Best Start outlined by each community in its *Phase One Integrated Implementation Plan* submitted in January 2006, the 2007-08 Best Start Community Plan provides communities with the opportunity to focus their planning activities on moving further towards achieving their community's vision and the ultimate goal of Best Start – the development of an integrated system of services that is seamless from the child and family's perspective and that is responsive to local community needs.

In the 2007-08 Best Start Community Plan, the Ministry is requiring the Best Start networks, with advice from the Regional French-language Best Start networks, to update their strategies for achieving their community vision for Best Start, ultimately leading to an integrated system of services that is responsive to the needs of all community members, including families of children with special needs, Aboriginal, Francophone, and other culturally and/or linguistically diverse families. Communities are being asked to provide an update of the progress they have achieved in 2006-07 towards their goals, as well as outlining the steps they will pursue in 2007-08 to move closer to their vision, and ultimately support their community to move further along the continuum of system integration.

Both the 2007-08 Best Start Community Plan and the *Addendum to the Implementation Planning Guidelines* focusing on system integration have been developed as tools to guide the Best Start networks in moving forward with planning for an integrated system of services. An understanding of the strategies Best Start networks will pursue in working towards achieving system integration, as well as an awareness of the obstacles and challenges that exist, will support the Ministry in developing programs and policies that are grounded in local reality.

Mobilizing Strategic Levers and Existing Resources to Drive System Integration

The 2007-08 Best Start Community Plan is about supporting communities in mobilizing strategic levers and identifying existing infrastructures to build upon in order to move forward with system integration, while recognizing that communities have not received direct funding for system integration. In all communities across the province these strategic levers include:

Best Start Networks

The Best Start networks are a key ***driver of system integration***. The Best start networks play a key role in the development and evolution of an integrated local system of services. Through their comprehensive membership, the networks are well-positioned to strengthen partnerships and support a more integrated approach to planning. The Best Start networks provide an opportunity to reduce the number of planning bodies, where possible, and if not feasible, to strengthen the linkages between the planning tables within the community. The 2007-08 Best Start Community Plan provides communities with an opportunity to consider how to strengthen partnerships at the network table and enhance the linkages between existing planning bodies so as to move towards streamlining planning and delivery in a way that improves access to services for children and their families.

The Hub as a venue for integration

The hub as a venue for integration will make it easier for families with young children to access the services they need. Although funds have not been directed specifically towards the establishment of hubs, the foundations for system integration through the development of hubs is well established in many communities across the province. The 2007-08 Best Start Community Plan provides communities with the opportunity for closer examination and consideration of how the ***existing foundations can be built on to move forward*** with the goals of system integration through hubs.

Funding Enhancement for Preschool Speech and Language and Infant Hearing Programs

The availability of enhanced funding for Preschool Speech and Language (PSL) and Infant Hearing Programs (IHP) provides an ***opportunity to demonstrate how integrated planning can function to strengthen partnerships at the network table and support enhanced integration amongst community resources***. In the 2007-08 Best Start Community Plan, the Ministry is asking that PSL and IHP identify how the strategies and services they will put into place to expand their programs will support the Best Start network's vision and overall plan, making an important contribution to the community in moving further along the continuum of integration.

Instructions for completing the 2007-08 Best Start Community Plan

- Completion of the 2007-08 Best Start Community Plan will require communities to build on the vision and information provided in the *Phase One Integrated Implementation Plan* submitted by the Best Start networks in January 2006.
- As tools to guide the completion of this plan, please refer to the following documents:
 - Implementation Planning Guidelines for Best Start Networks (June 2005)
 - Addendum to the Implementation Planning Guidelines – System Integration (November 2006)
 - Information Sheet on Aboriginal Children/Families in Best Start and Resource Listing of Aboriginal Children’s Initiatives and Programs
- Completion of this plan must be undertaken with advice from the Regional French-language Best Start networks (RFLNs).
- Consideration for meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Francophone children and families, children and families that are culturally and/or linguistically diverse, as well as children with special needs, should be demonstrated throughout all components of the 2007-08 Best Start Community Plan.
- In recognition of the important role that each member of the Best Start network plays in moving towards system integration, the goal is to have each member of the Best Start network sign off on the 2007-08 Best Start Community Plan, as well as the Chair of the Regional French Language Best Start Network within the respective region.
- Deadline for submission of the plan to the MCYS is June 30th, 2007.

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Section 1: Progress Towards Achieving the Long-term Vision for Best Start

In the 2007-08 Best Start Community Plan, the Ministry is requiring that the Best Start networks provide an overview of the vision they identified in the Phase One Plan, indicating any components or strategies included in this vision that may have changed since the submission of this plan in January 2006.

In updating your community's vision for Best Start, please describe the overall progress that has been accomplished in achieving components of this long-term vision, including, where possible, a description of the progress made towards:

- Closing the gaps in service and better meeting the needs of the community, including the needs of Francophone and Aboriginal children and families, children with special needs and their families, and culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and families.
- Implementing key Phase One components of Best Start including child care expansion for children 0-4 and in JK and SK, helping to enhance key early identification and intervention programs, integrating child care with schools.
- Overcoming the implementation challenges faced by the community, which were identified in your Phase One Plan.

Section 2: Best Start Network Composition, Activities and Community Engagement Process

Best Start networks have been established to lead the planning and implementation of Best Start at the local level, with advice from the Regional French-language Best Start networks. The networks are expected to incorporate a broad spectrum of membership through a community development process. Network members must continue to strive to include members from all programs/agencies and relevant stakeholders that have a mandate which incorporates a focus on children.

Please provide a description of the composition and activities of the Best Start network, including:

- An overview of who is represented at the network table and any subcommittees, working groups, or other relevant planning components and structures that exist. Where you have made a change to your Terms of Reference to support a focus on system integration, please attach your revised Terms of Reference to this plan.
- Identification of the gaps in representation at the network table and the strategies the network will undertake in 2007-08 to address these gaps and support comprehensive participation on the Best Start network.
- The strategies used to facilitate the participation of the Regional French-language Best Start network in the community planning process.
- The linkages between the Best Start network and the other children's planning bodies in the community and consideration of any opportunities that may exist to strengthen these linkages and support the community in moving towards a more streamlined and integrated planning process.
- A description of how each of the following stakeholders have been engaged in the planning and implementation process to date, as well as the strategies that will be undertaken in 2007-08 to sustain or strengthen the partnership with these stakeholders:
 - Parents (including Francophone and Aboriginal parents, as well as parents of children with special needs, and other culturally and/or linguistically diverse parents)
 - Francophone stakeholders and service providers
 - Aboriginal stakeholders and service providers
 - Service providers for children with special needs and other special needs stakeholders
 - Other culturally and/or linguistically diverse stakeholders and service providers

Section 3: 2007-08 Strategies to Move Forward with the Community Vision for Best Start

The Ministry is requiring that the Best Start networks provide an overview of the strategies that will be pursued in 2007-08 in order to move closer to achieving the community's long-term vision for Best Start (as you have outlined in Section One of this document).

In outlining the strategies the Best Start network will pursue in moving closer to achieving the community vision for Best Start, please include:

- A description of any emergent needs or gaps within the community that have arisen since the submission of the Phase One Plan (Jan. 2006).
- A description of the strategies the community will undertake to further close the gaps in service and meet community needs, including the needs of Francophone and Aboriginal children and families, children with special needs and their families, and the needs of other culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and families.
- A description of the obstacles and challenges to closing existing gaps and moving forward with the Best Start vision that continue to exist within the community, and how the network proposes to address these challenges. These challenges may be related to funding, legislation, program mandates, human resources, etc.

Section 4: Strategies for System Integration

Part A: Best Start Network Strategies to Move Forward with System Integration

System integration is an on-going process whereby local service providers and relevant stakeholders engage in progressively greater degrees of joint service activity along an integration continuum in order to provide families with better access to services.

As system integration is a priority for Best Start, the *Addendum to the Implementation Planning Guidelines - System Integration* has been developed by the Ministry to support communities in moving toward this goal. Specifically, the Addendum provides a model for system integration including a mechanism for communities to track where they are located along the continuum of integration and the steps they may consider to pursue in moving forward.

Using the *Addendum to the Implementation Planning Guidelines - System Integration* document as a tool, please describe the overall strategies the Best Start network will pursue to move the community further along the continuum of system integration, including the challenges the community will face and how those challenges will be addressed.

Part B: The Hub as a Venue for System Integration

Hubs are venues for integration and provide families with simplified and convenient access to the array of services under Best Start. Through strategic partnerships and strong pre-existing foundations to build upon, a number of communities have been able to work towards the development of hubs in the absence of designated hub funding.

The Ministry recognizes that communities across the province are at different stages in moving forward with the establishment of hubs. Community partnerships and other foundations for hub development already exist in some communities; other communities may not be as well-positioned to proceed as quickly.

While we recognize that the timing and extent of hub development will vary from community to community, the Ministry encourages all communities to move forward with hub development as children and families across the province will benefit from having a simplified and convenient point of access to an array of programs and services responsive to their local needs.

In the 2007-08 Best Start Community Plan, the Ministry is requiring that Best Start networks respond to the following questions related to current and future hub development:

- If the community was able to move forward with hub development in 2006-07, please complete the applicable questions in Appendix A.
- Once Best Start is fully implemented in your community, how many hubs are envisioned to be operational? If details are available please complete Appendix B.
- For the hubs that will become operational in future years, and/or already existing hubs, describe how programs/services are/will be delivered to best respond to the needs of Francophone children and families. For French-language programs/services delivered within the community, please describe how service linkages to the hubs are/will be developed and sustained.
- For the hubs that will become operational in future years, and/or already existing hubs, describe how programs/services are/will be delivered to best respond to the needs of Aboriginal children and families. List any specific Aboriginal programs/services that are/will be connected to the service delivery model (i.e. Aboriginal Healthy Babies Healthy Children; Community Action Program for Children; Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program; Aboriginal Health Access Centres, etc.). For Aboriginal programs/service delivered within the community, please describe how service linkages to the hubs are/will be developed or sustained.
- For the hubs that will become operational in future years, and/or already existing hubs, describe how children with special needs and their families will be supported with access to the programs and services provided within, and linked to, the hub. For services for children with special needs that are delivered within the community, please describe how service linkages to the hubs are/will be developed or sustained.
- Describe the mechanisms that are or will be used to facilitate collaborative service delivery between programs and services within the hub (e.g. communication and service protocols, MOUs), in order to improve access for families.
- Identify and describe the implementation challenges and barriers faced by the community in the implementation of hubs, including the identification of the proposed strategies to overcome these challenges.

Part C: Integrated Planning and Service Delivery Amongst the Best Start Network Partners

Best Start networks are a consortium of programs/agencies and relevant stakeholders that work together to help give young children the opportunity for healthy development and the best start in life. Each network member has a defined role within Best Start that should be clearly articulated and accepted at the network table and the consortium of network members needs to assume shared accountability for integrating services and making sure that they work together to achieve the community's vision for a locally integrated system of services.

i) Integration of Child Care With Schools

With the implementation of the *Schools First* Policy, the province has taken an important step towards the integration of child care with schools. The 2007-08 Best Start Community Plan provides communities with the opportunity to develop mechanisms to further the goal of supporting children with access to a seamless day of early learning and care.

Please describe the strategies that communities will pursue to further develop an integrated and seamless day of early learning and care for children in child care and kindergarten. To provide all children with the same opportunities to achieve success in school, these strategies should extend themselves to both child care centres located within and outside of schools. Examples of strategies may include joint planning and training opportunities for child care and educational professionals, complimentary learning programs, etc.

ii) Preschool Speech and Language (PSL) and Infant Hearing Programs (IHP)

The availability of enhanced funding for PSL and IHP programs provides an opportunity to integrate planning and strengthen partnerships at the network table and allow for enhanced coordination amongst community resources. In the 2007-08 Best Start Community Plan, we are requiring responses to the following questions pertaining to PSL and IHP:

- Infant Hearing Programs will receive enhanced funding to extend all services to children with identified permanent hearing impairment to grade 1 entry. Please describe how the services IHP will put into place to achieve this objective will support the Best Start network's vision and 2007-08 plan.
- Preschool Speech and Language will receive enhanced funding in order to reduce waitlists, improve training in the areas of language and literacy through integrated planning with other program areas, and expand service to children with complex needs who do not attend senior kindergarten. Please describe how the strategies and services PSL will put into place to achieve this objective will support the Best Start network's vision and 2007-08 plan.

iii) Integration Amongst the Best Start Network Partners

The 2007-08 Best Start Community Plan encourages members of the consortium of programs/agencies and relevant stakeholders on the network to develop plans for strengthening the alignment between their individual planning processes and delivery models, so as to move closer to achieving the Best Start network's vision of improved access for children and families.

At a minimum, we require the following program areas to respond to the questions in this section: Child Care, Ontario Early Years Centres, Preschool Speech and Language, Infant Hearing, Healthy Babies Healthy Children, Infant Development Program. In addition, **all** network members are encouraged to respond.

- Consider the nature and structure of your individual program/service/agency planning process – what opportunities exist to integrate, or further integrate, this planning process with the community planning occurring at the Best Start network table, in order to move forward with the development of a locally integrated system of services?
- Are there opportunities for your program/service/agency to engage in collaborative service delivery within community hubs that are currently operational, or which may be operational in future years? For program/service components delivered within the community, how are or will linkages to the hubs be developed or sustained?
- Are there opportunities to develop mechanisms that will facilitate collaborative service delivery between your program/service/agency and other Best Start partners (e.g. communication and service protocols, MOUs, etc.)?
- Are there implementation challenges and/or barriers faced by your program/service/agency in moving forward with the community's vision for an integrated system of services? Please describe these challenges and include a description of the strategies to overcome these obstacles.