Public-Private Partnerships in Early Childhood Education and Preschool Preparedness Programs

By

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to gauge the United Way Capital Area's Success-By-Six early childhood education program's partnerships with private and public collaborators (partners) against the practical ideal type partnership design. A practical ideal type partnership has three main categories: 1) partnership purpose, 2) partnership accountability, and 3) partnership communication.

Methodology: A case study of the Capital Area's Success-By-Six partnership was conducted. Information is collected using face-to-face structured interviews and document analysis. Information was evaluated according to a scoring system. Relevant documents were also analyzed to supplement the interview notes.

Findings: The study finds that the Capital Area's Success-By-Six partnership generally met or exceeded standards in all three key areas, but should work toward improving a few key partnership elements. Based on these findings, the following recommendations are made. Partners should: create a partnership contract or written document that states the mission statement and specific goals of the partnership; develop a comprehensive document outlining the partnership's desired outcomes, how the leadership came up with those goals, and how they plan to achieve them; develop a documented evaluation plan; enhance the measurable goals they currently have in place by determining specifically how they are going to evaluate programs and measure success; and finally, develop a joint partnership budget for early childhood needs in Austin.

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About the Author

Elizabeth Carson is pursuing her Masters of Public Administration degree at Texas State University-San Marcos with plans to graduate in December 2011. Elizabeth received her Bachelor's degree with a major in Theology and a minor in Cross-Cultural Studies in 2004. Upon graduation, Elizabeth hopes to begin a career in the nonprofit field or with an international NGO.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

The purpose of the following research is to gauge the United Way Capital Area's Success By Six early childhood education program's partnership with private and public collaborators (partners) against the practical ideal type partnership design. The following chapter outlines the practical ideal type partnership. Characteristics of the practical ideal type partnership are partnership purpose, partnership accountability, and partnership communication, all of which are necessary for a successful partnership.

Early Childhood and Academic Success

Research has shown that early childhood development provides a key to a child's future academic success. Early childhood programs benefit children and families as well as providing cost-effective benefits to society as a whole. Studies evaluating high-quality early childhood programs show that children in these programs demonstrate better academic achievement later in school, as well as competence socially and emotionally. They also demonstrate better verbal skills than children who are not enrolled in high quality early childhood programs. Among other benefits to children who receive early childhood education are higher intelligence scores, improved nutrition and health status, and increased earning potential and economic self-sufficiency later in life (*The World Bank*).

Longitudinal studies have shown that early child development programs resulted in higher rates of high school completion, which itself is tied to higher lifetime wages. Also, academic performance in early grades is a predictor of academic performance in high school and graduation rates. Studies showed that even a few years of early childhood education is linked to greater success in elementary school, high school, and the workforce. These positive long-term impacts are linked to early childhood programs' cost-effectiveness overall (*The World Bank*).

Higher quality childcare is also linked to higher scores in math, reading, and memory. The impact of such programs can be seen in the number of children participating in them each year in the U.S. In 1999, there were 9.8 million children under five years old who were in childcare for 40 or more hours per week (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network 2005, 537). Although the effects reported were not substantial, the broad scope of children they affect likely results in practical and scientific significance to society at large (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network 2005, 564). The levels of achievement and social adjustment that form by third grade are highly stable thereafter, thus, figuring out the links between early childhood education (which many view as a malleable time in children's lives) and primary grades is important. Early factors can prepare children for success or place them at risk (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network 2005, 538).

A study conducted by the NICHD Early Child Care Research Network found that three key factors contributed to effective and successful early childcare programs: the quality of the program, the quantity of time the child spent in the program, and the type of care (ie, home-based, center-based, etc.). The results concluded that higher quality care resulted in better pre-academic skills and language performance. Center-type care produced the best results in language skills and memory test scores (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network 2005, 538, 562).

Not only did the early childcare programs contribute to pre-academic skills, but the relationship between quality care and cognitive development continued through grade three. This is significant because it sets the tone for later achievement. Studies have found that reading and math competencies in third grade are highly predictive of future academic performance. Children who received quality early childcare showed slightly greater academic performance into their primary grades than other children (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network 2005, 564).

Early Childhood Programs

Research has demonstrated that Early Childhood Programs (ECPs) benefit children, families, and communities. Long-term studies aimed at defining and measuring the effects of quality ECPs (as opposed to poorly funded and organized programs) found that several key components contributed to successful preschool programs: 1) small class sizes and low teacher-to-child ratios, 2) teachers who received support to evaluate and improve upon their teaching, 3) ongoing communication between the school and parents, and 4) use of some type of curriculum similar to that used in traditional schools. Many tout the effectiveness of preschool programs (whether state-led or other types) as a means of intervention for low income children, but this may not be generalized to poor quality and poorly funded programs (Frede 1995, 115). People assume that one type of ECP is the same as the next and have not looked into the specific services provided or the ways through which they influenced children's development (the mechanisms) (Frede 1995, 116).

The complexity of children's development and the factors affecting it make simple cause and effect analysis difficult to establish, however, policymakers look to researchers for guidance. Research has found that classroom practices and teacher training make a difference in the effects of early childhood education and early child care on children (Frede 1995, 116). Effective programs all had increased contact between teachers and children and gave the teachers more knowledge about the children so they could tailor teaching style to meet individual children's needs (Frede 1995, 117). Ellen C. Frede concluded that the benefits of ECPs are affected by the "interrelated factors of program structure (class size, the ratio of children to teachers, and service intensity); processes that help teachers respond to individual children (reflective teaching practice and close relationships with parents); and curricula that serve as a bridge between home and school" (Frede 1995, 126). Finally, the ways in which policymakers can affect ECPs is by establishing regulatory standards and by providing funding for both programs and quality-improvement activities (Frede 1995, 126-127). First, to establish regulatory standards policymakers can utilize research to determine appropriate class sizes and ratios and to determine teacher qualification standards. The second (funding) can be used to attract excellent teachers and motivate toward accreditation, for example. However, the responsibility for implementation remains in the hands of practitioners (program administrators, center directors, and teachers) (Frede 1995, 127).

Success By Six

Given the complex nature of early childhood needs, no single organization can address early child care needs for low income and at risk children. Recognizing this challenge, Success By Six (SB6) began in 2000 as the United Way Capital Area Early Childhood Initiative and, in 2004, was licensed as Success By Six by United Way of America. It coordinates nonprofit responses to the issues of child well-being in Central Texas through, "a collaborative, comprehensive plan that successfully engages both the private and public sectors." By forming partnerships with local nonprofit, government, and private industry partners, SB6 works "to align community partners and resources" with the stated goal of preparing all preschool age children in Central Texas for success in early childhood and, subsequently, well into adulthood (*United Way Capital Area*). A comprehensive list of UWCA's Success By Six partners is provided in the table below.

Through their partnership with the United Way Capital Area, the City of Austin and Travis County are able to provide early child care and education services to the local community, specifically those with a greater need for outside support to provide childcare. However, the city and county do not deliver the early childhood program. The UWCA provides the early childhood services through its Success By Six program and, subsequently, through its partnerships with numerous other nonprofits, private businesses, and government organizations. A complete list of those partners is provided below in Table 1.1. The UWCA is a large, national nonprofit organization unlike many of the smaller organizations it partners with to provide services. Therefore, while the UWCA provides a useful case study, particular findings may not necessarily be generalized to all nonprofits or public-private partnerships.

Table 1.1: List of Success By Six Partners

Any Baby Can Applied Materials, Austin Arc of the Capital Area Asian-American Cultural Center Austin Area Interreligious Ministries Austin Association for the Education of Young Children (AAEYC) Austin Child Guidance Center Austin Children's Museum Austin Children's Shelter Austin Community College Child Development Department Austin Independent School District Austin Learning Academy Austin Public Libraries Austin Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) AVANCE- Austin Bryant Wealth Investment Group Capital Area Reach Out and Read (CAROR) CASA of Travis County, Inc. Center for Child Protection Central Texas Sustainability Indicators Project (CTSIP) Child, Inc./Head Start Children's Services Network City of Austin Health & Human Services Department Early Childhood Services Communities In Schools Community Action Network (CAN) Dell, Inc., Austin East Austin Community Health Center (CHC) Ebenezer Child Development Center Education Service Center Region XIII El Buen Samaritano FamilyConnections FamilyForward Far North Community Health Center (CHC) Foundation Communities, Inc. Grande Communications Healthy Child Care/ Healthy Families Travis County HealthStart Foundation Heart House IBM, Austin KXAN Channel 36 LifeWorks Literacy Coalition of Central Texas Liveable City Lower Colorado River Authority	Mainspring Schools Mt. Sinai Christian Academy National Instruments, Austin Northeast Austin Community Health Center (CHC) Open Door Preschools Our Voices (Parent Council) PBS-KLRU People's Community Clinic Raising Austin Reading is Fundamental Ready By 21 Coalition Rosewood Oaks Primary School SafePlace Dell Children's Medical Center Children's Health Express Van St. David's Foundation St. James' Episcopal School State of Texas Department of Health Services Stepping Stones Schools Tapestry Foundation Texans Care for Children Texas Association for the Education of Young Children (TAEYC) Texas Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (TACCRRA) Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition (TECEC) Texas Easter Seals Texas Inmates Family Association (TIFA) Texas Interagency Interfaith Disaster Response (TIDR) The Austin Project (TAP) Third Coast Research & Development Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service True Light Day Care Center UT Child Care Center UT Dana Center/ACEE (Americorps) UT Elementary School YWCA Greater Austin WorkSource Child Care Solutions Zero Thru Five Early Childhood Education Consulting

Success By Six aims to prepare preschool age children for success by school age (six years) by attaining, "broad, community-level change by addressing system barriers that negatively impact children and families in areas such as health, safety, child care, and early childhood education." Some of the website's stated goals are to increase the number of children who receive early screening, assessment, and intervention for social/emotional development challenges, get more parenting resources to mothers within six months of their child's birth, and increase the amount of full-day early child care and education programs that serve at least 5% low-income families in the area (*United Way Capital Area*).

The SB6 program is built on previous long-term research conducted on brain development, quality childcare, and successful early intervention. Such research has shown that the experiences and development of children during their first six years have a lasting impact on their future lives. Based on this rationale and the foundation laid by the Child Care Council's Framework and the Early Start Coalition's work on child outcomes, SB6 hopes to mobilize the community to identify and prioritize specific goals and outcomes for the community. SB6's first project is a public awareness campaign called, "Born Learning," that informs family members and caregivers of the importance of everyday learning opportunities (*United Way Capital Area*).

A good understanding of the problem and a logical proven solution are only as good as their implementation. Effective partnership leaders and staff have the challenge and responsibility of carrying out their partnership's goals. Sustaining partnerships requires strategic effort in challenging economic times as organizations have more difficulty raising capital (Selsky and Parker 2005, 853). Thus, partnership maintenance is key.

The Challenge of Partnership Maintenance

The complexity of current social issues requires partnerships across sectors to collaborate and contribute various resources to the problems. The problems increasingly being addressed by partnerships are multifaceted and, therefore, difficult to comprehend and analyze (Kapucu 2006, 207). They cannot be resolved with simplistic solutions. Thus, in order to tackle these complex problems, various types and all levels of organizations must collaborate (Kapucu 2006, 207).

The general consensus among researchers is that more research is needed on public-private partnerships (Selsky and Parker 2005, 866). Sociologists and public administrators have studied the topic (Kapucu 2006, 207), but have often limited their research to short-term case studies while the field would benefit from long-term analysis of processes (Selsky and Parker 2005, 866). A practical ideal type model is even more lacking in this field of research.

There are as many definitions of partnership as there are researchers on the topic. This paper proposes a working definition for the purpose of this study. Waddock defines a partnership as, "the voluntary collaborative efforts of actors from organizations in two or more economic sectors in a forum in which they cooperatively attempt to solve a problem or issue of mutual concern that is in some way identified with a public policy agenda item" (Waddock 1991, [*Selsky and Parker 850*]). Many view partnership as a "social exchange" or as an exchange of resources toward a need that both parties agree they cannot fulfill well on their own (Kapucu 2006, 207). Public and private parties enter the partnership because they see the opportunity for "critical strategic interdependence" with other organizations that have the resources and capabilities they do not (Kapucu 2006, 207).

Various terms are used to describe partnerships: public-nonprofit partnerships, public-private partnerships, intersectoral partnerships, collaborations, cross-sector partnerships, and more (Kapucu 2006, 207). In the literature, partnerships can refer to anything from a social exchange to an exchange of resources to any degree of formal and informal collaborations (Kapucu 2006, 207). The term "partnership" can also refer to any relationship among organizations from different sectors created to address a common problem (Kapucu 2006, 207). For purposes of this paper, partnership will refer to "any intentionally collaborative relationship between two or more organizations from multiple sectors (that is, public, private, and non-profit) which joins resources to identify and subsequently pursue a joint approach to solving one or more common problems" (Kapucu 2006, 207). In brief, the practical ideal type of partnership is, "a dynamic relationship among diverse actors, based on mutually agreed objectives, pursued through a shared understanding of the most rational division of labor based on the respective comparative advantages of each partner" (Brinkerhoff 2002, 21). Partnership carries mutual influence, mutual participation in decision-making, and mutual accountability, but it is also ideally balanced between total integration and autonomy (Brinkerhoff 2002, 23, 27).

The collaborative relationship, or partnership, between the three main sectors – private (business), public (government), and civil society (nonprofit, voluntary organization, etc.) – is a relatively common means of addressing social issues (Selsky and

Parker 2005, 849-850). Relationships between sectors can vary along a continuum from formal to informal, but the public-private partnerships addressed in this paper fall under a narrower definition of formal, intentional relationships, not to be confused with other fairly common philanthropic efforts of some business-nonprofit relationships (Selsky and Parker 2005, 850).

When it comes to nonprofit-government partnerships, there are comparative advantages to government versus nonprofits in fulfilling certain functions (Selsky and Parker 2005, 861). At times, the government has partnered with nonprofits so that they might serve as a sort of arm of the state to carry out some function (Selsky and Parker 2005, 861). Under this type of relationship, the nonprofit has to meet certain criteria established by the state (Selsky and Parker 2005, 861). These government-nonprofit partnerships, while they may serve in a functional and credible capacity, are not necessarily the type of mutually dependent partnerships that are the focus of this paper.

Researchers have come up with four accountability relationships that any public organization might be subject to – legal, hierarchical, political, and professional – depending on the extent of control they involve (Page 2004, 592). Accountability to external rules can be supplemented with accountability to partners (internal inclusion) (Page 2004, 591-594). Every organization has a mix of these different types of accountability, but some are better suited to certain organizations than to others (Page 2004, 592). Overall, an effective partnership must remain accountable to its internal and external stakeholders by managing expectations and, at the same time, responding to their demands (Page 2004, 593).

The trend toward public-private partnerships stemmed from the need for public service delivery to be more efficient, more responsive to public needs, and more results-oriented (Brinkerhoff 2002, 19). The idea is that government should “steer” and the private sector should “row” because it is more efficient and effective than government (Brinkerhoff 2002, 19). Public-private partnerships support the principle of subsidiarity, which states that the responsibility for meeting public needs should always fall within the “units of social life” closest to the individual (ie, the family, local church, community organizations, and nonprofit organizations) and larger units should only step in when the capacity of the smaller units cannot meet the need (Brinkerhoff 2002, 19).

Partnership between different organizations results in greater depth of services provided. In early childhood education, this can mean greater access for families to services beyond education, such as health and developmental screenings, referrals to social services, and parent education (Selden et al. 2006, 417). Each partnering organization offers unique services to the clients that one or two organizations could not offer on their own. Thus, the intensity (more partners involved) of the collaboration will affect the diversity of services provided by the partnering organizations (Selden et al. 2006, 417).

Whether fully justified or not, the public expects certain qualities from each sector, assuming each has its strengths for certain activities. At the same time, there has been a trend toward organizations subdividing tasks into smaller functions and subcontracting those tasks to specialized producers to become more efficient and cost-saving (O’Regan et al. 2000, 120-121). For instance, a nonprofit organization may contract out its technological tasks to a for-profit company that specializes in that field in order to save time and human resources that can be better utilized to carry out the organization's mission.

One key characteristic of organizations in public-private partnerships (that was predicted by public administration scholar Harlan Cleveland) is that their management has become more horizontal, which is to say, "leadership is shared and decisions are often made on the basis of expertise rather than relative position in a hierarchy" (Kapucu 2006, 206). Other major changes are occurring in this realm, including a growing need for information, more demand for innovation and constant improvement, the shift to flat organizational designs, and greater interorganizational integration (Kapucu 2006, 209).

Public-private partnerships have become useful in situations that require participating organizations to be able to collaborate effectively and to adapt to change (Kapucu 2006, 214). In some cases where standard procedures are not sufficiently adaptable to solve the problem, a dynamic system that can respond to rapidly changing conditions is needed (Kapucu 2006, 210).

Research Purpose

The purpose of the following research is to gauge the United Way Capital Area's Success By Six early childhood education program's partnership with private and public collaborators (partners) against the practical ideal type partnership design. The next section outlines the practical ideal type partnership. Characteristics of the practical ideal type partnership are partnership purpose, partnership accountability, and partnership communication, all of which are necessary for a successful partnership.

Chapter 2
Literature Review

This chapter develops a practical ideal type partnership as detailed in the literature review below. Three key categories are proposed: (1) partnership purpose; (2) partnership accountability; and (3) partnership communication. Private sector involvement in public programs is not a new phenomenon, but private sector involvement in areas typically associated with government action (welfare, for example) is new (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009, 110). The growth of federal programs without a comparable increase in federal employment points to the fact that parties other than the federal government are delivering services and carrying out public programs (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009, 109). The literature reveals that several key factors determine the success and effectiveness of public-private partnerships.

The chapter also provides a conceptual framework for the practical ideal type partnership as detailed in the literature review below.

Conceptual Framework

Table 2.1 summarizes the practical ideal type partnership.

Table 2.1	*Conceptual Framework*
Practical Ideal Type Categories	*Supporting Literature*
1) Partnership purpose *- shared vision between partners* *- specific objectives and goals* *- mutual resource dependence*	*Brinkerhoff (2002); Bryson et al. (2006); Connor et al. (1999); Denhardt and Denhardt (2009); Gazley and Brudney (2007); Gazley (2008); Googins and Rochlin (2000); Kapucu (2006); Kettl (2000); Page (2004); Selden et al. (2006); Selsky and Parker (2005)*
2) Partnership accountability *- partnership evaluation plan* *- specific partnership budget* *- measurable outcomes*	*Brinkerhoff (2002); Bryson et al. (2006); Denhardt and Denhardt (2009); Gazley and Brudney (2007); Gazley (2008); Kapucu (2006); O'Regan et al. (2000); Page (2004); Provan (1998); Milward (1995); McCaskey (1974); Selden et al. (2006); Sowa et al. (2004); Weisbrod (1997); Woodside (1986)*
3) Partnership communication *- regular, informative meetings* *- broad inclusion in partnership communication* *- dissemination of partnership-relevant information*	*Bryson et al. (2006); Connor et al. (1999); Gazley (2008); Kapucu (2006); Page (2004)*

Partnership Purpose

Shared vision

A shared vision is essential for effective public-private partnerships. Organizations should partner around an overarching shared goal to carry out some agreed-upon function which each organization does not have the capacity to fulfill alone (Kapucu 2006, 207). Ideally, programs are formulated based on a shared vision. Effective nonprofit leadership in public-private partnerships establishes, "a mission and vision to guide organizational action, for engaging in strategy making and planning as a way of setting goals and objectives, and for developing an operational structure to facilitate the translation of strategy into action" (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009, 115).

Some scholars predict that partnership decision-making will grow increasingly more multilateral and consultative (Kapucu 2006, 207) as mutual need for information, skills, and resources require each partner to contribute their unique offering. Power imbalances can result if partners do not agree on a shared purpose (Bryson et al. 2006, 50). Despite their differences both parties are taking on the project, with inherent benefits and risks, and both are equally responsible to take specific actions toward its success (Kapucu 2006, 214).

Public-private partnerships are not simply an administrative arrangement. The partnership process creates more effective decision-making and problem-solving capacities, more collective action, and more community involvement (Kapucu 2006, 215). A partnership's mission represents the purpose it will serve in the community. Its vision is the guiding principle of what the organization is working toward in the future (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009, 115). Shared vision carries with it a shared understanding of how to carry out that vision. Programs that have a particularly strong public purpose or mission need the leadership that comes from public-private partnerships (Gazley 2008, 149). As Denhardt and Denhardt state, "Without a strong sense of purpose, or a clear vision for the future, nonprofit leaders will find it extremely difficult to build the 'critical mass' necessary for success" (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009, 115). The partnership process shares common steps which include defining clear goals, obtaining leadership commitment, participating in frequent and quality communication, assigning responsibilities, sharing the commitment of resources, and evaluating progress and results (Googins et al. 2000, 133). The practical ideal type partnership requires shared vision between partners because it results in programs and the means of implementation.

Specific objectives and goals

Effective partnerships must also establish specific objectives and measurable goals. Mission and vision must be grounded in sound planning, particularly in establishing “clear, measurable goals and objectives” (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009, 115). A strong partnership is more likely when partners’ objectives are consistent and in line with each of the partnering organizations’ mission and objectives (Brinkerhoff 2002, 22). A measurement framework tells partners which objectives are most valuable to the partnership’s cause and keeps staff on goal by prioritizing them (Page 2004, 591).

The New Public Management movement holds partners accountable for producing results, not for following procedures ([Kettle 2000] Page 2004, 594). Yet, there are challenges to holding partners accountable for results. There can be disagreement as to how to define which results to measure, and the data can be difficult to track (Page 2004, 591). For instance, some track internal organizational factors, such as the organization’s goals or procedures, when measuring success (Sowa et al., 2004, 713). Success is measured by the extent to which the partnering organization meets its goals (Sowa et al., 2004, 713). Others measure partnership success by external factors such as participant satisfaction (Sowa et al., 2004, 713). Some scholars have developed more comprehensive frameworks for success by combining the various measures and organizational designs into one model of measurement (Sowa et al., 2004, 713).

Collaborators may be resistant to measuring for results because they are afraid that they cannot perform well, either because of a lack of capacity within the organization or due to circumstances they face that are out of their control (Page 2004, 591).

There can be negative consequences from focusing too narrowly on measurable objectives and goals. In an effort to reach measurable goals, partners might incidentally neglect other desirable outcomes and goals (Page 2004, 591). An example of this is when teachers neglect important educational goals because they focus primarily on teaching to achieve good test scores (Page 2004, 591). Thus, creating an organization that is accountable for results requires a whole new orientation, not just new management tools (Page 2004, 591-592). The final challenge is that accountability for results requires definition of who is to be accountable for what results, both within the partnership and between the partners and external stakeholders and the public (Page 2004, 592).

The federal Government Performance and Results Act illustrates that this is a priority (Page 2004, 592). Some organizations in partnership have come up with ways to demonstrate their joint capacity to achieve results and to encourage the partners to carry out their mutual obligations. An example of this is the 360-degree accountability approach (Page 2004, 592). Each member of the partnering organization is accountable to the others, no matter their rank in the organization. Managing for results is enhanced by using data about results to monitor progress, to improve operations in the future, and to make that information available to external stakeholders, internal staff, and the public (Page 2004, 594).

Effective and successful public managers respond to their stakeholders by making their goals public and actively seeking support for their efforts (Page 2004, 593). This provides external authorization. It is prudent for public managers to involve many different stakeholders in deliberations about policy because it improves the quality of the manager's decisions and builds support for the policies that emerge (Page 2004, 593). Expectations and demands of the staff are enhanced by articulating concrete goals (Page 2004, 594). Use of participatory decision-making processes, consultation, empowerment, learning teams and other methods of involving staff in the betterment of the organization can clarify objectives and goals (Page 2004, 594).

Relinquishing service delivery to another organization requires that the tasks and criteria by which they will be judged be made more concrete (O'Regan and Oster 2000, 138). Effective measurement systems contain quantifiable goals with medium-term outputs and outcomes of the main aspects of the mission and strategic plans (Page 2004, 594). Partnership goals should also be broken down into lower-level indicators and be linked to a responsible actor (or actors) (Page 2004, 592). To avoid the promotion of some policy goals to the detriment of others, partners should measure a variety of results in different ways (Page 2004, 594). Also, grouping goals together and prioritizing them helps employees manage a variety of goals (Page 2004, 594). Tracking data over time can help the partnering organizations create realistic, but ambitious goals in reference to past performance (Page 2004, 594).

Often partnerships are formed out of urgent need (that could result from new federal policies, for instance) where adaptability is essential. Societal problems require public and private partners to be able to adapt to rapidly changing scenarios in the environment around them (Kapucu 2006, 210). Partnerships with a formal contractual relationship are more dependent on shared decision-making, are more likely to have a designated lead organization or agency, tend to involve more organizational partners, and have slightly more longevity (Gazley 2008, 148). Partnering organizations' ability to agree on specific goals and objectives is a contributing factor to long-term partnership success. Therefore, clearly defined objectives and goals for the partnership to achieve can be a deciding factor in the effectiveness of the partnership.

Mutual dependency

Effective public-private partnerships stem out of mutual resource dependence between the partnering organizations. Many researchers cite different organizations' need for complementary resources as the driving factor in partnering (Kapucu 2006, 207). This is most often termed "mutual dependency" or resource dependency theory (Selsky and Parker 2005, 851). By partnering with the business sector, public and nonprofit sectors often gain access to more resources, and have greater potential scope and effectiveness (Selsky and Parker 2005, 850-851). Mutual dependency means a strong mutual commitment among partners to each other's partnership goals and objectives (Brinkerhoff 2002, 22). A major challenge to public-private partnerships is creating "effective, high capacity systems of operation" (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009, 116). However, effective partnership management will include resource development (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009, 116).

In cases in which the shared resources are simply office space or equipment, the partnership only has a functional role and not an integrative role (Connor et al. 1999, 129). Partners are dependent on physical resources, but do not partner around decision-making and results. A stronger collaborative partnership is almost always needed for partnership effectiveness (Connor et al. 1999, 130).

Public-private partnerships often generate what is called "social capital," that is, a society's capacity for self-organization and its ability to coordinate its efforts for collective action (Kapucu 2006, 209). A mutual societal need requires collective action. The social capital theory states that the partnership generates benefits not just to the organizations involved, but beyond the scope of their original partnership purpose to society at large (Kapucu 2006, 209). Trust and social capital go hand-in-hand. Researchers have shown that social capital is generated through horizontal organizational structures and that social capital helps create a better society. Societal changes that are happening include the ever-growing need for more information, demands for more innovation, and the change to flat organizational designs (Kapucu 2006, 209). Organizations in partnerships often benefit from the mutually created social capital.

A "partnership" mentality is different than a "contractor" mentality (Gazley 2008, 143) because a partnership is far more integrative and collaborative. Partners should reflect a partnership mentality by shared decision-making, accountability for results, and participating in frequent, quality communication, not just committing resources (Googins et al. 2000, 142). Partners who have a contractual relationship are more likely to share staff and jointly develop policies (Gazley 2008, 146).

In government-nonprofit partnerships, government is the more likely partner to contribute financial and material resources, such as staff and volunteers. However, in the service sector of health and human services, 38.2 percent of the partnerships showed the nonprofit organization most likely to lead, which is a higher percentage than in other comparable partnering service areas (Gazley 2008, 148). Shared leadership, staff, and other shared resources are a crucial aspect of mutual resource dependence. Shared vision, specific objectives, and mutual resource dependence make up partnership purpose and help form the practical ideal type partnership.

Partnership Accountability

One of the benefits of partnerships is that because they work across agency and program lines, they have the discretion to solve public problems creatively (Page 2004, 591). However, this poses the particular problem of accountability (Page 2004, 591). By exercising discretion, partners are in danger of falling outside the realm of controls and regulations to keep them accountable to overseers, including elected officials and the public (Page 2004, 591). Therefore, the challenge for partnerships is that they manage to stay accountable while still maintaining the flexibility to permit collaboration (Page 2004, 591). Strong rules and regulations, as well as a hierarchical design, might make partnerships' work far more difficult since they thrive on using discretion (Page 2004, 591). Some controls, such as professional authority and political responsiveness, can substitute for the more legal and hierarchical controls partnerships often lack (Page 2004, 591). Developing a partnership budget also helps partners maintain accountability. Partnership planning requires a budgeting system, planning models to reach specific goals, and information about past organizational experiences (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009, 115). Establishing a partnership evaluation plan, a specific partnership budget, and measurable goals enhances partnership accountability.

Partnership evaluation plan

A partnership evaluation plan enhances accountability to the public and effective oversight of the partnership (Page 2004, 591, 599-600 and Bryson et al. 2006, 51). Public-private partnerships need mutual accountability and transparency to be successful (Brinkerhoff 2002, 21). New Public Management principles allow local partnerships the flexibility and discretion to creatively provide service to the public while still holding the partnership accountable for results (Page 2004, 596). A partnership evaluation plan that manages for results enhances accountability by dispelling fears that the organization is exercising discretion for unintended purposes (Page 2004, 594).

However, developing a partnership evaluation plan poses unique challenges. Accountability poses a particular problem in public-private partnerships because it is not always clear to whom the partnership is accountable and for what (Bryson et al 2006, 51). The partnership could be evaluating based on processes or outcomes (Bryson et al. 2006, 51). To be accountable for results, a partnership must have a partnership measurement plan in place that documents its results and their changes over time (Bryson et al. 2006, 51). Not only that, but they must also use that data and information on an on-going basis to work toward improving results (Bryson et al. 2006, 51). Improving the quality of information available to the public about the partnership's performance will give the partners more accountability to their overseers and the public clients who use their goods and services (Page 2004, 592).

Although local cultural norms often substitute for formal contractual agreements in partnerships, contracts are another means of evaluation for both the principal and agent(s) (Gazley 2008, 141). Trust and reciprocity created by a social network can also provide a type of informal control within dense networks (Kapucu 2006, 210). However, whether formal or informal, the planning and evaluation process includes the same major steps: diagnosing the problem, setting priorities, determining action steps, and developing a method of evaluation (McCaskey 1974, 290).

An effective partnership, therefore, plans and allocates resources to measure and track the results it produces (and how they change over time) (Page 2004, 592). The plan should take into account the goals of the organizations and partnership (Page 2004, 594). The partners should have a clear plan to strategically use the data they come up with to improve their performance (Page 2004, 592). A "managing for results" approach suggests the plan should show the connection between the data measured and the specific people and interventions involved in that action, provide critical performance information to stakeholders, and use the information to improve its future operations (Page 2004, 592).

Accountability contributes to overall management capacity resulting in strong partnership performance (Page 2004, 593). Partnership evaluation, a key factor in a successful partnership, involves all participants being accountable to key stakeholders and to the public (Page 2004, 594).

Specific partnership budget

Effective partnerships require fiscal responsibility and budget oversight to succeed. Partnerships often occur due to one or more organization(s) having scarce resources (Gazley and Brudney 2007, 410). While financial partnership resources may come predominantly from one side and human resources (such as skills and expertise) come from the other, budget oversight cannot be overlooked or treated lightly (Gazley 2008, 146). Clearly defined contracts have also helped provide valuable research on effective competitive bidding practices and other cost considerations (Gazley 2008, 141). While some organizations might collaborate simply around joint budgeting, a more formal and integrated partnership bears more strength for success (Selden et al. 2006, 414).

Milward and Provan (1995, 1998) found that networks that have a single source of direct fiscal control are more effective (Selden et al. 2006, 414). A single source of fiscal control may be due to federal government involvement in the program (O'Regan and Oster 2000, 121-122). However, those partnerships that adopt their own single budget for fiscal control would undoubtedly benefit from it (O'Regan and Oster 2000, 130). While a single source may be preferred, clearly identifying different streams of funding within a partnership can create a measure of control because funding is tied to practices that perform well (Gazley 2008, 146).

A primary weakness found in many nonprofits who partner in delivering government services is to rely on a single source of support (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009, 116). Successful nonprofits, however, "diversify their revenue streams, balancing between grants, fees-for-service, and other sources" (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009, 116). Many nonprofits depend on in-kind contributions and the time and expertise of volunteers (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009, 117). While charitable giving by individuals has decreased in recent years, more Americans are volunteering than ever before (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009, 117). Another benefit to nonprofits is that there are financial breaks for charitable organizations (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009, 117). A key to the financial health of partnering organizations is that they secure a commitment to building and maintaining relationships with funders, donors, and volunteers (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009, 117).

Fiscal health and the ability to attract and sustain resources might serve as a partnership measure of success (Page 2004, 592). Both public and private organizations need to acquire resources in order to function effectively. Fund-raising, cost sharing, and staff efficiencies are various means to uphold an organization's financial health (Sowa et al., 2004, 718). Two other possible measures are the stability of revenue acquisition (does the organization have a stable history of primary funding?) and emergency financial surplus (Sowa et al., 2004, 718). Nonprofit organizations often have unique budgets that should be read differently from private company budgets. Nonprofits generally have more difficulty raising capital than the other sectors, partly because of rules that preclude them from raising equity and also because their collateral assets are specific to the enterprise (O'Regan and Oster 2000, 123). Having their own specific budget will explain a partnership's activities and finances more effectively.

A clear and specific partnership budget might also build public trust since transparent finances are necessary to determine revenue streams and expenses (where the money is going) (Weisbrod 1997, 551-552). At the same time, misuse of partnership funds can tarnish the partnership's reputation. This can be avoided by greater transparency in partnership financial practices (Weisbrod 1997, 545).

Financial management practices, including following basic requirements for accounting and public disclosure of financial transactions, are key to the success of public-private partnerships (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009, 117). All 501(c) (3) organizations must maintain open records and prepare financial reports for their stakeholders on a periodic basis (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009, 117). Charitable organizations who have annual gross receipts of $25,000 or more must submit a Form 990 (Return of Organizations Exempt From Income Tax) to the IRS each year, plus file disclosure statements with state and local tax authorities (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009, 117). To meet these requirements, nonprofits must keep detailed financial records and follow at least basic accounting standards (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009, 118). The budgeting and financial management process should be undertaken in coordination with the organization's governing board (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009, 118). "Without the ability to generate clear, meaningful financial information, and incorporate this information into organizational decision making, a nonprofit agency limits its overall capacity" (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009, 118). Basically, organizations must monitor their assets, liabilities, and net assets, as well as the revenues and expenses for established reporting periods (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009, 118).

In partnerships, government is more likely to contribute financial and material resources, while other partners may offer more symbolic contributions (Gazley 2008, 146). When the public funds (and therefore shows support of) the partnership, funding could help public managers maintain control over the service provision (through local grants, for instance) (Gazley 2008, 146). A specific partnership budget not only provides guidance to the partners and transparency to the stakeholders, but it is also a necessary part of financially healthy, effective partnerships.

Measurable outcomes

Effective public-private partnerships require that the partners develop partnership goals that can be measured. Benchmarking and outcome measurement are tools that have been used to measure partnership effectiveness and to build organizational capacity (Sowa et al. 2004, 712).

Studies have found that interagency collaboration – specifically more "intense" collaborations or those involving three or more domains – has a clear impact in the areas of management, program, and client outcomes (Selden et al. 2006, 416). The reason for this greater impact is that partners have increased access to resources and the chance to integrate the strengths of all the organizations (Selden et al. 2006, 417). Service integration reduces duplicity of services, prevents inefficiency, improves coordination, minimizes costs, and improves responsiveness and effectiveness – all excellent goals to pursue in partnership (Selden et al. 2006, 414 from Martin et al. 1983).

However, it can be difficult to assess whether partnership goals have been achieved in partnerships that address social problems since most of the research looks at the partnership design and does not attempt to measure success in terms of measurable outcomes such as client happiness (Selden et al. 2006, 414). Another challenge to defining measurable goals is that some partnerships focus on *systems* change while others focus on *service* change (increasing client access to services) (Selden et al. 2006, 414). The first step in producing measurable goals is to define what the partnership is trying to accomplish and who will be responsible for what activities (Woodside 1986, 151).

Defining and measuring outcomes can also prove challenging. In some studies, partnership provided improved access to services, but no discernible improvement in client well-being outcomes (Selden et al. 2006, 414). The two (improved systems and outcomes) should go hand-in-hand, and in an effectively designed and integrated partnership, both will be addressed (Sowa et al. 2004, 711). This is where benchmarking and outcome measurement to measure partnership effectiveness can be helpful (Sowa et al. 2004, 712).

Partners are aware that the outcomes they are producing are open to the public for scrutiny, and political and financial support is at least somewhat dependent on their ability to demonstrate improvements (Page 2004, 595). In this way, transparency can motivate employee performance and the improvement of the quality of policy and management apart from formal incentives (Page 2004, 595). However, a common form of formal incentives for partners to produce measurable results is to create performance goals for top management that, if achieved, produce financial rewards (Page 2004, 595). This type of motivation toward performance then trickles down from the management to the employees, and can be made specific and appropriate to their organizational culture (Page 2004, 595). Incentives, whether formal or implicit, should help the partners reach their organizations' goals.

Public managers have an excellent range of tools at their disposal to produce partnership outcomes, such as cultural norms, long-standing community reputation, funding, shared goals, and organizational trust (Gazley 2008, 150). In the end, measuring the success of a partnership does not lie solely in the success of the partnership itself, but in the success of the partnership to effect social change and create public good (Woodside 1986, 154). Thus, both partnership processes and results should be measured to provide a complete view of the partnership's outcomes.

Partnership Communication

Communication can be defined as "a process through which an organization sends a message over a channel to another part of the organization (intraorganizational) or to another organization in the system (interorganizational)" (Kapucu 2006, 216). Coordination is the degree to which there are sufficient streams of communication within the organization and to the other organizations (Kapucu 2006, 216). Partnership communication is key to partnership effectiveness and success. Information about the actions that are to be taken and are in progress by each organization allows the other organization(s) to make informed decisions about their own actions and to adjust them according to the others so that the most good can come out of their collective response to the problem (Kapucu 2006, 217).

Regular informative meetings

To ensure effective communication within public-private partnerships, the partners must have regular and informative meetings to discuss progress (Page 2004, 594). One study found that the most frequently reported meeting activity in local government partnerships was "information exchange" (Gazley 2008, 146). Partners must have connections to each other that facilitate communication inside and outside formal meetings (Page 2004, 594). Connections help clarify who to go to in the partner organization for information or ideas. These clear connections enhance the partnership's ability to solve problems and subsequently improve results (Page 2004, 594).

Organizations that already have strong working relationships will have fostered the trust necessary for communication in partnerships (Kapucu 2006, 217). Ideally, it is better to build trust between the sectors (public and private, for example) before entering into a partnership or trying to tackle a crisis (Kapucu 2006, 209). Regular, informative meetings contribute to successful, healthy partnerships (Bryson et al. 2006, 49 and Page 2004, 594-595). Building trust and developing effective communication can also reduce transaction costs (Kapucu 2006, 210).

Communication requires the organizational and technological interconnectedness that is essential in a multi-organizational approach to solving societal problems (Kapucu 2006, 211). In self-governing types of organizations, decision-making results from regular, formal meetings and through frequent, informal interactions of members (Bryson et al. 2006, 49). Some also argue that frequent exchanges between members develop network values and norms, which help social mechanisms coordinate and monitor behavior (Bryson et al. 2006, 49). Not only regular communication, but the quality of communication, is vital (Page 2004, 594). In summary, regular and informative meetings, as well as a social culture that fosters communication within the partnership, are essential for effective public-private partnerships.

Broad inclusion in partnership communication

Effective partnership communication requires that employees of the partnering organizations have the ability to easily inquire into and participate in the processes of the program (Page 2004, 594 and Kapucu 2006, 209). If the employees of the partnership are well-informed, they will be better able to adapt their behavior appropriately to minimize risk and failure (Kapucu 2006, 209). Broad inclusion in meetings reaps benefits because those involved in the partnership are able to quickly and easily communicate with one another (Page 2004, 594). One way in which partnerships are able to solve public problems creatively and effectively is by working across agency and program lines and sharing critical information and resources with each other (Page 2004, 591).

The employees in the organization need to be informed about and involved in the actions being taken by their organization and its partners (Kapucu 2006, 209). This allows employees to make better individual decisions and to more effectively gauge their decisions against others' in the partnership to produce the most good for the organization and the community (Kapucu 2006, 209). Sharing information and knowledge, along with competency and follow-through, is a means of building trust among partners and of managing conflict (Bryson et al. 2006, 48).

Partnership itself encourages communication across sectors (and even community-wide discussion) to acquire a consensus about desired outcomes and how to use resources to reach them (Connor et al. 1999, 127). If everyone within a partnership – and its overseers – knows which people are linked to which responsibilities, they can assess each other's performance and better communicate with one another regarding difficulties and best practices (Page 2004, 592). Partners should be able to make use of available lines of communication and information resources, including social networks, already in place (Kapucu 2006, 217). Ultimately, excellent communication between the management team and staff in a partnership results in a stronger, healthier partnership.

Dissemination of partnership-relevant information

Effective partnerships require that the right information be made available to the appropriate levels within the organization (Page 2004, 594). Partnerships exist in the belief that societal problems can be effectively solved as nonprofit organizations and governments develop partnerships built on trust and communication at all levels (Kapucu 2006, 217). Communication in a partnership involves both intraorganizational (information is sent to another part of the organization) and interorganizational (information is sent to another partnering organization) (Kapucu 2006, 216). Information can only be used effectively if it has been distributed in a successful manner and participants have good incentive to use that information (Page 2004, 595). With partnerships often arising under conditions of mutual need (and sometimes urgent need which requires timeliness), critical and timely information is essential (Kapucu 2006, 206). Developing leadership in a partnership is crucial to information dissemination because those involved in the partnership cannot always rely on clear-cut and centralized direction (Bryson et al. 2006, 47). Members must have faith in the legitimacy of the partnership in order to freely communicate important information within the network (Bryson et al. 2006, 47).

Communication is essential for the organization(s) to be to able to mobilize themselves for collective action (Kapucu 2006, 209). Social networks contribute to collective action by facilitating the rapid dissemination of information to all the members of the organizational network (Kapucu 2006, 210). Understanding and trust are essential in building those social networks and links of communication (Kapucu 2006, 210). Timely and accurate communication is critical at all levels of the organization (Kapucu 2006, 217).

Leaders should provide information and education to participants in the partnership about the concepts, knowledge, and tools that are key to its work (Bryson et al. 2006, 48). It will put partners on equal footing and keep them on the same page (Bryson et al. 2006, 48). Improving the quality of information about the partnership's performance that is available to the public will give the partnership more accountability to their overseers and the public clients who use their goods and services (Page 2004, 592).

Conclusion

The practical ideal type partnership involves partnership purpose, partnership accountability, and partnership communication, all of which are essential aspects of a successful and effective partnership.

This chapter reviewed the literature and developed a practical ideal type partnership model. The next chapter presents the methodology used to gauge an Early Childhood Program (Success By Six).

Chapter 3
Methodology

Chapter Purpose

This chapter presents the research methods used to gauge United Way Capital Area's Success By Six partnership against the practical ideal type partnership developed from the literature review. This chapter identifies the methods for collecting and analyzing data, and offers a discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology used.

Success By Six

This research identifies the characteristics of the practical ideal type public-private partnership. The case study method was used to examine the partnership practices of a well-established nonprofit organization. Success By Six provides an excellent case study because of the United Way's longstanding history and recognition in the community and across the United States. Using a recognizable organization as an example of public-private partnerships provides the opportunity for readers to gauge other smaller, lesser-known partnering organizations against the practical ideal type developed from the literature.

Operationalization of the Practical Ideal Type Partnership

The case study method is most appropriate for this study. A structured face-to-face interview method provided direct feedback on the SB6 partnership. Document analysis of the SB6 Form 990 IRS return for FY 2010 was also used to supplement information received from the structured interviews. Tables 3.1-3.8 below list the structured interview questions used to operationalize each element of the practical ideal type conceptual framework. Based on the responses to the structured interview questions, a corresponding scoring system was used to gauge how closely Success By Six aligned with the practical ideal type partnership. The scoring system was applied as follows: 1 = does not meet standards, 2 = meets standards, and 3 = exceeds standards.

Case Study Method

In order to produce an unbiased research design, two research techniques were employed. The primary research method for this case study was structured interviews and the secondary method was document analysis. Structured interview questions were carefully constructed. Structured questions were designed in advance and linked to a scoring system to code the response given. Document analysis was used as a secondary research method. Document analysis added support to the responses received through interviews. The case study method was determined to be the best means of conducting the qualitative research related to this topic.

Since the research question seeks to explain a current social phenomenon – the "why" or "how" of a specific, current partnership design – the case study method is the best approach to analyzing the data (Yin 2009, 4). Since the research also attempts to look at the topic in-depth, the case study method offers more in-depth information than other research methods (Yin 2009, 4). Answering the "how" and "why" questions allows the researcher to focus on operational links over a period of time, rather than simply frequencies or incidence (Yin 2009, 9). As Robert K. Yin explains, "A case study is an empirical inquiry that: investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin 2009, 18). When contextual conditions surrounding the case are highly pertinent to the study, such as in a specific geographic area's collaboration to meet a specific community goal, the case study method should be used (Yin 2009, 18). Also, the case study method is best used when the researcher is dealing with a technically distinctive situation with many more variables of interest than data points, it relies on multiple sources of information that must come together in a triangulating fashion, and it uses previously developed theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (Yin 2009, 18).

The case study method was determined to be a suitable approach for the following research, as well, by determining whether the researcher had sufficient access to the data needed, such as personal interviews and documents for analysis (Yin 2009, 26). A research design was then developed to logically guide the research through the collection and analysis of relevant data to reach the results and conclusion (Yin 2009, 26). Thus, in order to study the interorganizational partnership between local government and the UWCA in carrying out SB6, it was best to interview three key leaders in this partnership. That way, more holistic conclusions could be drawn about the specific public-private partnership studied (Yin 2009, 27).

Structured Interviews

Structured interview questions were developed from the literature and the conceptual framework provided in Chapter Two. The structured interview questions were based on the practical ideal type partnership characteristics drawn from the literature. The structured interviews were provided in separate face-to-face meetings with a top program manager of Success By Six, a top city official over early childhood education affairs, and a top county official.

Designing interview questions creates a "dialogue" with the respondent, which means that while the interview might be structured, the interviewer must be prepared to listen closely, incorporate information, and analyze discrepancies in the information they receive (Yin 2009, 69). While other methods of data collection (surveys, for example) require little discretionary thinking on the part of the researcher, interviewing requires that the interviewer use judgment and inquire for further information as answers require it (Yin 2009, 69-70). Yet, if used properly, interviews can provide better in-depth information since even focused interview questions should be open-ended enough to lead to a conversation about the topic (Yin 2009, 106-107).

The structured interview explained the purpose of my research, which is to study public-private partnerships and their effectiveness in providing alternative delivery systems for services that would commonly be carried out by the government (for example, health, education, and welfare provision). The United Way provided a good source of study because it has a solid reputation and long-standing history of partnering with the government to carry out some of these functions in the community. Therefore, the UWCA – specifically the Success By Six early childhood care and education program – as well as partners in the city and county was the logical source of study. The research studied the field of public-private partnerships by gauging UWCA's Success By Six program partnership against the practical ideal type partnership developed from the literature. The research focused on three specific areas of successful partnerships: 1) partnership purpose, 2) partnership accountability, and 3) partnership communication.

The time allotted for each interview was approximately 30-50 minutes (although the interviewee was not obligated in any way to answer all the questions and could end the interview at any time). During the interview, I asked the questions provided in the tables below related to the three partnership areas mentioned. The interviewees had the opportunity to add any further information at the end of the interview. I documented the answers provided by carefully taking notes.

Document analysis was used as a secondary research method, in order to supplement the structured interviews. The documents analyzed were an SB6 brochure titled, "The Success By 6 Report to the Community: 5-Year Trends and Successes (2005-2010)," UWCA's Form 990 for FY 2010 which contained budgetary information, the Austin Child Care Council's "A Comprehensive Early Care and Education System," as well as web documents (United Way Capital Area's Success By Six webpage and related links) explaining the program. Document analysis served as a secondary research method because the documents analyzed could only provide information on two aspects of my research: specific partnership budget and specific objectives and goals.

Structured Interview Questions

The questions used in the structured interview are displayed in the Conceptual Framework tables below. Each has been categorized under the three key headings (partnership purpose, partnership accountability, and partnership communication) and also linked to the subheadings that describe specifically which sub-category they are related to. Tables 3.1-3.8 below present the interview questions that correspond to the subcategories of the conceptual framework.

Interview Questions – Partnership Purpose

Effective public-private partnerships have a clearly defined partnership purpose. It includes a mission and vision to give organizational action direction (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009, 115), clear measurable goals that are grounded in sound planning (Denhardt and Denhardt 2009, 115), and the different organizations' mutual need for complementary resources (Kapucu 2006, 207).

Tables 3.1-3.3 below present the interview questions related to partnership purpose and the corresponding subcategories within the conceptual framework.

Table 3.1	*Operationalization of Partnership Purpose (Part 1)*
Partnership Purpose	*Operationalization Questions*
Shared vision between partners	1) Did the partnership develop around a shared goal or vision? a) Have there ever been times in your recollection that one or more of the partners strayed from the original shared goal or vision? b) If so, what happened and what were the effects?
Shared vision between partners	2) How does this partnership create better decision-making and problem-solving capabilities? (Than if there were no partnership and the organization acted on its own.) a) How does it create more community involvement?
Shared vision between partners	3) When UWCA-SB6 created this program, did they understand how they would carry out that purpose or vision? If not, how did they come up with a plan?

Table 3.2	*Operationalization of Partnership Purpose (Part 2)*
Partnership Purpose	*Operationalization Questions*
Specific objectives and goals	4) Do you measure concrete goals and do employees know what they are? a) Which goals (results) do you measure for and how did you come up with those? b) Do people within the organization and partners know to whom they are accountable?
Specific objectives and goals	5) What indicators can employees measure to show progress toward goals?
Specific objectives and goals	6) Did your organization face any challenges to implementing a partnership "orientation" or culture? Explain.
Specific objectives and goals	7) How do you make your goals public (for example, newsletters, etc.)?

Table 3.3	*Operationalization of Partnership Purpose (Part 3)*
Partnership Purpose	*Operationalization Questions*
Mutual dependency	8) Was the need to share resources a contributing factor to your decision to partner? If so, explain.
Mutual dependency	9) How has partnering enhanced your access to various resources? What are these resources (ie, finances, staff, equipment, space)?
Mutual dependency	10) Do you have a contract defining your partnership? If so, what elements are included in it?

Interview Questions – Partnership Accountability

Partnership accountability is an important aspect of overall partnership success. Partnership accountability requires a partnership evaluation plan that manages for results (Page 2004, 594), adopting a single budget for fiscal control (O'Regan and Oster 2000, 130), and practicing benchmarking and outcome measurements (Sowa et al. 2004, 712).

Tables 3.4 – 3.5 present the interview questions related to partnership accountability and the corresponding subcategories within the conceptual framework.

Table 3.4	*Operationalization of Partnership Accountability (Part 1)*
Partnership Accountability	*Operationalization Questions*
Partnership evaluation plan	11) How has partnering allowed you to solve problems in a more creative and discretionary way than if you had not partnered?
Partnership evaluation plan	12) What kinds of challenges has being accountable (to the government and to the public) presented to this partnership? What controls (outside of government regulations) would you say help to keep your organization on track and accountable?
Partnership evaluation plan	13) Does SB6 have a partnership evaluation plan that measures the effectiveness of the program? a) If so, how often is it used (quarterly, annually)? b) Do you document results that you measure? c) How is that information used to improve performance? d) Are resources set aside to measure and track results?

Table 3.5	*Operationalization of Partnership Accountability (Part 2)*
Partnership Accountability	*Operationalization Questions*
Specific partnership budget	14) Does the partnership have its own specific budget? a) Who in the organization prepares the budget? b) Who has oversight of it?
Measurable outcomes	15) Does the partnership have measurable outcomes? a) If so, what does it measure? b) How did it come up with these particular results to measure?

Interview Questions – Partnership Communication

Partnership communication is a necessary aspect of interorganizational collaboration. To ensure effective communication within public-private partnerships, the partners must have regular and informative meetings (Page 2004, 594), broad inclusion of partnership participants in meetings (Page 2004, 594), and the means to get relevant information to the appropriate levels within the organization (Page 2004, 594).

Tables 3.6 – 3.8 present the interview questions related to partnership communication and the corresponding subcategories within the conceptual framework.

Table 3.6	*Operationalization of Partnership Communication (Part 1)*
Partnership Communication	*Operationalization Questions*
Regular, informative meetings	16) Does your organization have regular meetings? a) How often? b) With partnering organizations, as well?
Regular, informative meetings	17) Do partners have the connections to acquire and share pertinent information as needed?
Regular, informative meetings	18) Do you ever run into communication problems? If so, what do you think they result from?

Table 3.7	*Operationalization of Partnership Communication (Part 2)*
Partnership Communication	*Operationalization Questions*
Broad inclusion in partnership communication	19) If an employee of the organization has a question about the program or a particular process, how can they go about inquiring about it? a) Is this an easy process? b) Is their feedback valued? c) Is the same true of a member of a partnering organization?
Broad inclusion in partnership communication	20) How does the ease of information sharing improve the program?
Broad inclusion in partnership communication	21) How does SB6 involve members of the organization and the community in discussions about the program and its desired outcomes?

Table 3.8	*Operationalization of Partnership Communication (Part 3)*
Partnership Communication	*Operationalization Questions*
Dissemination of partnership-relevant information	22) If employees need information about the program, do they know where they can find it?
Dissemination of partnership-relevant information	23) How does SB6 provide information on concepts, knowledge, and tools important to its work to employees and to those receiving its services?

Human Subjects Protection

The interview questions were exempted from full review by the Texas State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the exemption number is included in Appendix B. Interview participants were all given a consent form, a copy of which has been included in Appendix B. A structured interview was conducted with informed consent. Participants had the right to refuse to answer any questions and/or to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants are referred to as “SB6 leader,” “city leader,” and “county leader,” to protect their identities. Participants received no compensation for participating in this study.

The content of the interviews focused on partnership and organizational culture and practices, and not directly on participants’ feelings or any other personal information. Disclosure of information will not put the human subjects of this study at risk of criminal, civil, or financial liability because the information collected was given in full consent of participating individuals or it is open to public review. The information also relates to organizational practices and not to legal standards. The researcher avoided personally identifiable information regarding the interviewees as it was not relevant to this study or its results. No children or individuals deemed significantly vulnerable were contacted in this study.

Coding Criteria

The information obtained from the interview questions was evaluated according to specific coding criteria. The information was documented and then analyzed using the following scoring system: 1 = does not meet standards, 2 = meets standards, and 3 = exceeds standards. These codes are linked to the questions asked above and coded by the author into one of the three ratings. However, further descriptions of the specific coding criteria the author used are explained in Appendix C under "Interview Coding Criteria." The descriptions of the coding criteria provide insight into the specific elements of each partnership area the author was seeking to gauge from the interviews.

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the research methods used in this project. Structured interview questions were developed from the literature and the conceptual framework provided in Chapter Two. The structured interview questions were based on the practical ideal type partnership characteristics drawn from the literature. The structured interview was provided in separate face-to-face meetings with a top program manager of Success By Six, a top city official over early childhood education affairs, and a top county official. The information received from the interview was then analyzed using the following scoring system: 1 = does not meet standards, 2 = meets standards, and 3 =

exceeds standards. These codes are linked to the questions asked above and coded by the author into one of the three ratings. Further descriptions of the coding criteria are provided in Appendix C. Evidence to support the rating is presented in Chapter Two. Document analysis was used as a secondary research method, in order to supplement the structured interviews.

Chapter 4
Findings

Chapter Purpose

This chapter presents the findings from the structured interviews with different participants in the SB6 partnership. The structured interview questions were based on the practical ideal type partnership characteristics drawn from the literature. In order to facilitate interpretation, a score from 1 to 3 was assigned to each answer that the various organizational leaders provided, with "1" indicating that the partnership did not meet standards, "2" indicating that the partnership met standards, and "3" indicating that the partnership exceeded standards. The criteria for each of these standards are discussed in Chapter Three and further explained in Appendix C under "Interview Coding Criteria."

Partnership Purpose

Table 4.1 – Shared Vision

Question	*Score*	*Comments*
Question 1 - Did the partnership develop around a shared goal or vision?	2	Shared vision came as an "assumption" at formation, but was not articulated.
Question 2 – How does this partnership create better decision-making and problem-solving capacities, and more community involvement?	3	Three of three respondents said that the partnership has had a positive community impact through better coordination of services and better communication.
Question 3 – When the partners created this program, did they understand how they would carry out that purpose or vision?	2	Partnership leaders came together in a series of meetings to develop a plan, and UWCA's documents and plans helped coordinate independent strategies.

Shared Vision. Overall, Success By Six and the organization's city and county partners shared a vision for the partnership. Question 1 asked, "Did the partnership develop around a shared goal or vision?" and, "Have there ever been times in your recollection that one or more of the partners strayed from the original shared goal or vision? If so, what happened and what were the effects?"

When the partnership was created, the members had a shared vision for helping preschool aged children in the Austin area. However, because the partners had difficulty articulating the vision at the outset, and used different words to describe the vision, the partnership was assigned a score of "2"or "meets standards." The Success By Six partnership grew out of conversations in the community between city and county planners about local children's needs. The partners then created a five-year plan. The greatest challenge to SB6 in maintaining the partnership's vision is a loss in funds, which happened to ECE efforts in Austin when government stimulus money dried up (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011).

The city leader agreed that the shared vision of the partnership came as an "assumption" at the outset, but was not articulated. The greatest challenge to maintaining shared vision that city leadership faced was building up other community leaders' trust. Before SB6, a failed attempt in the form of another ECE program called "Thrive By 5" made community leaders hesitant and cautious about starting a new initiative. They agreed with the principles behind SB6 and shared the vision, but government leaders had to gain their trust. Once relationships were built between community partners and the partners secured various means of funding, they were able to plan and coordinate (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011).

The county leader explained that in Austin, there is much energy around creating vision, but less in administering the next steps. Before the formation of the partnership, the Early Childhood Council used to carry out planning in regards to ECE in Austin. The UWCA had the idea of SB6, so when the need arose in the community for a coordinating body, government leaders asked the UWCA if they would partner with them. They developed a framework that had specific goals, but it did not identify who was responsible for implementing those goals. Thus, the county leader stated that the biggest challenge to maintaining the vision is in "role definition." At the same time, staff members responsible for ECE concerns in the community all answer to their agency leadership and are held accountable, "to keep with the intentions of the agencies" (County Leader Interview, 10/4/2011).

Question 2, "How does this partnership create better decision-making and problem-solving capabilities? (Than if there were no partnership and the organization acted on its own)," and along with it, "How does it create more community involvement?" was assigned a score of "3," "exceeds standards." Generally, the partnership leaders strongly agreed that the partnership enhanced decision-making and improved their ability to engage in problem-solving. All of the respondents (three of three) clearly report that the partnership, due to better coordination of services and better communication among the various ECE leaders in the area, has had a positive community impact.

The specific comments from some of the interviews with partnership members justify the conclusion that the partnership helped improve decision-making and problem-solving capacity. The city leader stated that the partnership helped "align and coordinate program design," and helped the partnership establish performance measures (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011). Indeed, in recent years Success By Six programs around the country have been encouraged to change the way that cities and schools provide early childhood education programs. SB6's approach improves the quality of early childhood programs by providing more training and more supplies for teachers and by using on-site mentors for those in the program. It addressed the problem of limited funds by funneling money to agency directors as agents of change (City Leader Interview 9/30/2011).

The county leader explained that the partners had a "robust communication" between them that was indispensible (County Leader Interview 10/4/2011). For example, the county leader reported that the partnership members had "informal coffee shop meetings" that helped them identify emerging needs, gaps in services, and funding opportunities. These additional conversations are important because each member of the partnership leadership works in different geographic communities. They are able to make informed decisions because they can discuss issues as partners that they cannot discuss in their public office settings due to political reasons or other hindrances (County Leader Interview 10/4/2011). The opportunity to talk without immediate decision-making implications helps partnership members be more effective in their formal roles. The partnership leaders can candidly discuss community needs and possible ways to address those needs.

Question 3 stated, "When the partners created this program, did they understand how they would carry out the purpose or vision? If not, how did they come up with a plan?" In regard to Question 3, the partnership was assigned a score of "2," "meets standards." Nonprofit (UWCA), city, and county leaders came together in a series of meetings to develop a plan to carry out the partnership's purpose and vision. The partnership grew out of conversations in the community between government (city and county) planners about needs in the community. They came up with a five-year plan, but the SB6 leader says that they need to revisit the strategic plan. It is, "text-heavy and not easily referenced" (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011). The SB6 leader would like to be able to link the owner responsible for each task to their particular piece of the plan. The partnership's vision was incorporated into the plan by meeting with early childcare providers, working at getting other people on board, and coordinating with higher-up leadership (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011).

The county leader said that all three major partners have acted independently to invest in early childhood services. The partnership, then, was a "big bonus" (County Leader Interview, 10/4/2011). Government partners and other childcare agencies were able to use UWCA's documents and plans to further their interests. So, the result is that the partners coordinated their previously independent strategies into a shared vision and plan.

Table 4.2 – Specific Objectives and Goals

Question	*Score*	*Comments*
Question 4 - Do you measure concrete goals and do employees know what they are? Which goals do you measure and how did you come up with those? Do employees and partners know to whom they are accountable for those goals?	2	The partners measure three high-level goals and other measurable goals, and are in the process of increasing accountability and measuring community outputs more precisely.
Question 5 – What indicators can employees measure to show progress toward goals?	3	Partners meet quarterly to show progress and report on specific, quantitative goals.
Question 6 – Did your organization face any challenges to adopting a partnership ‘orientation’ or culture?	2	Two out of three leaders faced challenges to adopting a partnership culture, but over time they have all improved their partnership orientation.
Question 7 – How do you make your goals public (for example, newsletters, etc.)?	3	There are strategic efforts to make information available to the public, especially on the part of SB6.

Specific Objectives and Goals. Ideally, specific objectives and goals for the partnership should be written because a measurement framework tells partners which objectives are most valuable to the partnership’s cause and keeps staff on goal by prioritizing them (Page 2004, 591). The SB6 and government partnership leaders measure three high-level goals and each contract with other partners states measurable goals, as well. However, UWCA is in the process of increasing their accountability and measuring community outputs more precisely. SB6 partnership leaders are increasingly concerned about the need to measure goals (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011). All three leaders said they were working to develop clearer goals and objectives, and that they hoped to more clearly link people to specific tasks and goals.

Question 4 asked interview participants, “Do you measure concrete goals and do employees know what they are? Which goals (results) do you measure for and how did you come up with those? Do people within the organization and partners know to whom they are accountable?” Question 4 was assigned a score of “2,” “meets standards.”

The city leader confirmed what the nonprofit leader stated, that specific goals are set out in each contract with other organizations and they must report on these goals every quarter. For instance, they must show a percentage number increase in centers that are Texas Rising Star certified. Plus, they must analyze and renew their contracts every year (although this will soon change to 30-month contracts). In the city’s contracts with each partner, there must be a specific contract for each source of funding and reporting. This is where performance is reported in the budget. Therefore, goals relate to specific organizations, but do not show how people are linked to achieving the partnership goals. Partnership leaders are trying to establish the planning cycle, to make it more clear and routine, and to develop certain work tasks that are linked to specific people (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011).

The county participant said their aim is to identify more community-level goals. Other partnering organizations can then identify with those goals and receive funding themselves. The partnership has developed “SB6 Readiness Indicators,” and when these indicators are in line with agency measures, agencies can then report them. The county (TCHHS), the city (HHSD), and SB6 each have goals and measures, but they also align under one community planning body. Even though each has its own plans and goals, the partners hope to more clearly align them all under the umbrella of SB6. So, while concrete goals leave room for improvement, the partners are working toward updating this (County Leader Interview, 10/4/2011).

Question 5, "What indicators can employees measure to show progress toward goals?" was assigned a score of "3" or "exceeds standards." The partners meet quarterly to show their progress and report on their achievement of the specific goals they currently have in place. "Quantitative goals" and "quarterly targets" are reported and set for the next term. There is also an action plan for the year that is based on a timeline. Funding agencies report quarterly (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011). There are specific goals (such as a decrease in the rate of low birth weight babies). Funding cannot support all of the desired goals and changes, but community support can help reach those goals. For example, the city has a contract with local schools for childcare for teen parents, and an indicator would be how many classes teen parents are passing. By setting achievable goals for teen parents, partners can show positive change. Then, they can look at such indicators and adjust the program accordingly (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011). However, the partners are also working toward a more comprehensive "umbrella" community planning body to further improve this area (County Leader Interview, 10/4/2011).

Question 6, "Did your organization face any challenges to adopting a partnership 'orientation' or culture?" was assigned a score of "2" or "meets standards." Among the three major players in the partnership (UWCA, City, and County), the county leader stated that there was no problem adopting the partnership culture. However, the city and nonprofit leaders saw some local challenges to area leaders grasping the "big picture," or adjusting to the new partnership. Over time, and with effort on the part of UWCA to "market" Success By Six and communicate its partnership vision and goals with Austin leaders and the public, the partners have gained a partnership orientation.

The United Way "brand is built on community collaboration," said the SB6 leader. So, they see their challenge as connecting community members in the big picture. However, a challenge UWCA faces is giving agencies credit for their involvement while still giving UWCA credit for improvements and ownership of successes, as well (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011).

The city leader faced challenges to establishing a "partnership culture." When SB6 was new in Austin, he spent a long period of time trying to convince other leaders about its validity. Community leaders were interested – it promised more money for early childhood education – but they were also concerned that their voice would not be heard or that they would have to give up control. Soon, the Community Action Network in Austin (which comes up with community planning/coordinating networks) legitimized the partnership by embracing it and people grew more comfortable with SB6. Now, there are city representatives active in SB6 and UWCA employees are active on the city board. SB6's marketing and branding helped this process because people knew about the program from other cities around the country (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011). One way, the county leader explained, that they are creating more of a collaborative mindset is by expanding their small planning body and including more representatives from other agencies into the Results-Based Planning Committee (an umbrella group over the partnering organizations) (County Leader Interview, 10/4/2011).

Question 7, “How do you make your goals public (for example, newsletters, etc.)?” was assigned a score of “3,” “exceeds standards.” There is a concerted effort to make information available to the public. The partnership makes information such as the 2-1-1 Helpline (which links community members to health and human services and community organizations) available via the SB6 website. SB6 is developing a “progress to goals” report to post on the website, but are in the process of working on it (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011). Not only does the website provide easily accessible and navigable information, but UWCA actively seeks ways to solicit community feedback (SB6 website). The SB6 manager stated that the nonprofit was working to improve their website (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011).

The city and county leaders expressed their dismay about how difficult it is to get feedback and participation from the public and those in the community who are receiving services, which makes it difficult to monitor how information is getting out. At the same time, they were aware of the added benefit that SB6 brings in this area by their branding and community-involvement efforts. They coordinate “Community Cafes” to bring people to the table to discuss their needs and to communicate about the services the partnership provides (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011). They provide brochures with helpful and relevant SB6 information in them. Before the UWCA’s brochures, the city’s Early Childhood Council had a “Comprehensive Early Childhood System” report published and it was used as a prototype for UWCA’s materials. SB6 shared their resources and developed the previous materials into something marketable to the public (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011).

The quarterly meeting of SB6 stakeholders is the biggest, broadest meeting and makes the partnership visible by bringing everyone together (providers, multiple counties, etc.). The Early Childhood Council, Austin Independent School District, and others who participate in these larger forum discussions can then communicate out what is happening in the partnership (County Leader Interview, 10/4/2011).

Based on all of these factors, the partnership clearly exceeds standards since they invest a substantial amount of time and effort into "making their goals public," as well as creating documents and a plan to disseminate them directly to the community and through a website.

Table 4.3 – Mutual Resource Dependence

Question	*Score*	*Comments*
Question 8 – Was the need to share resources a contributing factor to your decision to partner?	2	Each partner benefitted from resources the others contributed, but it was not the deciding factor in partnering.
Question 9 – How has partnering enhanced your access to various resources and what are those resources?	3	Three out of three partners' access to resources was enhanced as a result of the partnership.
Question 10 – Do you have a contract defining your partnership and what elements are included in it?	1	There is no formal contract defining aspects of the partnership.

Mutual Resource Dependence. Mutual dependence is an important aspect of partnerships because it suggests a strong mutual commitment among partners to each other's partnership goals and objectives (Brinkerhoff 2002, 22). Sharing resources is an important aspect of mutual dependence because by committing resources, the partnering organizations then have a vested interest in the decision-making, communication, accountability, and results of the partnership (Googins et al. 2000, 142). Interviewees were asked, "Was the need to share resources a contributing factor to your decision to partner?" Clearly, each partner benefitted from something another partner contributed which they were lacking, but this did not seem to be the driving factor in partnering. SB6 benefitted from increased funding and focus on ECE that government offered, and the city benefitted from the increased advocacy that the United Way Capital Area offered. SB6 has been able to use their relationships and trust in the community, long-standing reputation, and human capital resources to benefit the public-private partnership.

From the perspective of the city leader, shared resources were a "byproduct" of the partnership, or "value added," (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011) which is an apt description because government does not lack the funding, but likely underestimated the importance of other non-financial benefits the nonprofit partner brought to bear, such as social capital. The SB6 leader explained that early childhood education receives less funding than the public school system and preschool age children are generally "off the grid," therefore, it was important to pool resources for this cause (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011). The city leader described the increased advocacy, education, and community awareness SB6 offered as "value added" (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011). The county leader saw the greatest benefits to them in the area of planning and the opportunity for public input (County Leader Interview, 10/4/2011). The results are that Question 8 was given a score of "2," "meets standards."

Question 9, "How has partnering enhanced your access to various resources, and if it has, what are these resources?" received a score of "3," "exceeds standards." Partnering has enhanced the partners' access to various resources. For SB6 it is primarily funding (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011) and for the county, it is primarily human capital and space. UWCA has excellent meeting space in their building which they share with local leadership, and when local early childhood projects require extra work, UWCA is able to share their volunteers to get the work done. Partnering with the city provides access to city leadership (County Leader Interview, 10/4/2011).

The SB6 leader also explained how partnering improved their funding abilities by "leveraging funding." Agencies who apply for grants have more leverage in being able to say they have UW funding. Also, a large private donor uses a matching system (how much they donate must be matched by UWCA) (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011). The ability to utilize multiple funding sources enhances the partnership's access to funding.

Question 10, "Do you have a contract defining your partnership, and if so, what elements are included in it?" received a score of "1," "below standards." There is no formal contract defining the aspects of the partnership. There are many contracts around funding with various organizations partnering with SB6 to serve the needs of preschool age children in the community, but any contract encompassing the government-nonprofit partnership is informal (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011). Formal funding contracts with outside community agencies help bring community members to the discussion table because they want a say in how the money is used. The city leader expressed some concern that without a contract, the public-private partnership is dependent on the leadership involved in it. If a key player were to leave, would their replacement understand the specifics of the partnership and be able to carry on the vision (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011)? While these concerns suggest that the partnership would benefit from a formal contract, the county leader said that whether a formal contract is necessary or not depends on the needs of each specific community or group (County Leader Interview, 10/4/2011).

Partnership Accountability

Table 4.4 – Partnership Evaluation Plan

Question	*Score*	*Comments*
Question 11 – How has partnering allowed you to solve problems in a more creative and discretionary way than if you had not partnered?	3	The partnership has allowed the partners involved to solve problems with more flexibility than if they had acted alone.
Question 12 – What kinds of challenges has being accountable presented to this partnership? What controls help to keep the organization on track and accountable?	2	The partnership maintains accountability to the public, despite facing some challenges, by having quantitative goals and outcome measures.
Question 13 – Do you have a partnership evaluation plan that measures the effectiveness of the program?	1	Individual partnering agencies have their own evaluation measures, but there is no specific partnership evaluation plan.

Partnership Evaluation Plan. The partnership has allowed the organizations involved to solve problems with more flexibility than if the organizations had not partnered and had provided service alone. Therefore, Question 11, “How has partnering allowed you to solve problems in a more creative and discretionary way than if you had not partnered?” received a score of “3,” “exceeds standards.” The ways in which it helps are that it avoids duplicate services, avoids start-up costs (as organizations partner around services already in place), and brings together various service provision outlets to meet one target’s needs (teen moms, for example) (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011).

SB6 explained that partnering reduced duplicate services once community leaders realized it was better to divide up the services provided to the same group (ie, the teen moms target group). The nonprofit has limited resources. SB6 received stimulus money, but that money has a time limit. Since start-up costs are high, it is preferable to use money in existing programs and toward existing infrastructure to deliver services (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011).

The city found that partnering added expertise to the field of early childhood education in Austin. Partners who move to Austin from other parts of the country bring knowledge resources with them. Each organizational leader brings his or her own unique resources to the partnership. The county leader, for instance, is skilled at acquiring demographic information, while the city leader brings knowledge of the history of Austin's programs and partnerships and long-standing relationships (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011).

The county leader said that the ongoing, informal forum the partners participate in (in which they are candid and open) allows them to be creative. Rather than cold-calling contacts, for instance, and having to go through formal layers of contact, partners benefit from each having access to certain contacts. Another example of how the partnership allowed them to come together to creatively solve a problem is that the UW received ELOA (Early Learning Opportunities Act) funding and, along with it, pressure to spend it on specific quality improvements in childcare centers. Because the partnership was already in place, several key partners were all able to contribute resources to carry out the improvements. It was very successful and worked well because they had already established that partnership. The results are that the Quality Childcare Collaborative (QC3) is now totally self-managing (County Leader Interview, 10/4/2011).

Question 12 asked participants, "What kinds of challenges has being accountable (to the government and to the public) presented to this partnership? What controls (outside of government regulations) would you say help to keep your organization on track and accountable?" Question 12 received a score of "2," "meets standards." The partnership organizations maintain accountability to the public and keep on track with their goals and mission by having quantitative goals and outcome measures, being accountable to sources of funding, and through the Early Childhood Council in Austin. However, they admit that there is room for improvement in this area to show that they are indeed producing results and meeting community needs.

SB6 named a few challenges in continuing to be accountable to the public. A major challenge is that there are so many variables they do not have control over, such as the growing need in the community. The partnership can try to maintain accountability by having quantitative goals. SB6 has also made commitments to continue to meet the needs, which presents another challenge: dependencies on other funding sources. Changes in other sources affect their funding source. SB6 needs to make this clear to donors so that they understand the nature of nonprofit service delivery (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011).

The city leader explained that the partnership remains accountable to the public because they can show results for children who have improved. Policymakers can put pressure on program leaders because they want to see community conditions change in a tangible way. The SB6 partnership showed a dramatic change in the percentage of childcare providers who are certified, for instance. However, the number of children ready for kindergarten proves more difficult to quantifiably demonstrate in terms of results. The city does not fund money for evaluation, but local elected officials want to see immediate results (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011). Nonetheless, UWCA maintains responsibility to charitable contributors and the city to the city council. The partnership can provide proximal measures of improvement (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011).

The county leader sees a lot of opportunity to improve accountability to the public and to give them venues to express their ideas. Right now, citizens can express themselves through the Early Childhood Council, but in the future, the partners hope to develop the Results-Based Planning Committee as an accountability venue (County Leader Interview, 10/4/2011).

Question 13 asked, "Do the partnering organizations have a partnership evaluation plan that measures the effectiveness of the program? If so, how often is it used (quarterly, annually)?" The following follow-up questions were also asked: "Do you document results that you measure? How is that information used to improve performance? Are resources set aside to measure and track results?"

Question 13 and its follow-up questions received a score of "1," "below standards." There is no specific evaluation plan in place. Since there is limited funding to begin with, it is difficult to find a way to evaluate the partnership. Individual agencies in the partnership have their own evaluation measures. Some partnership results (such as a common curriculum) are easy to measure, but many of the desired results are difficult to measure in quantifiable terms (such as school readiness) (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011 and City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011).

Limited resources are set aside for evaluation. Contracts require evidence-based measures, but not need-based programs specific to each center, so they lose some flexibility. The city leader said that public organizations, unlike private businesses, do not want to "hurt people's feelings." So, while there is sharing going on in meetings, the city leader said there is not enough of it and it is not honest enough. He suggested that addressing more controversial concerns might be healthier for the partnership and produce more thoughtful decision-making (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011). A commitment to funding and planning more serious and honest evaluation would benefit the partnership.

Table 4.5 – Specific Partnership Budget

Question	*Score*	*Comments*
Question 14 – Does the partnership have its own budget? Who prepares it? Who has oversight of it?	1	There is no partnership budget that shows a single source of fiscal control.

Specific Partnership Budget. Partnerships that require members to make a specific budget that identifies different streams of funding for the partnership activities are more successful than partnerships that do not (Gazley 2008, 146). Respondents were asked (Question 14), "Does the partnership have its own specific budget?" as well as, "Who in the organization prepares the budget? Who has oversight of it?"

All of the partnership members noted that there is not a specific budget that shows a single source of fiscal control. (See document analysis section below for more on UWCA's Form 990). Of course, SB6 has a budget for program activities and this budget is managed by the Grants Manager (as well as the CFO) (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011). In addition, the city and county budgets make specific allocations devoted to early childhood development. However, without a shared budget, other financial losses associated with under-performing programs or drops in charitable giving, for example, cannot be tracked. This is not to say that there is no oversight. For example, the city requires that the UWCA submits a childcare status report that indicates money is being properly spent, but the reporting is dependent on the UWCA (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011).

Due to the lack of a specific partnership budget that would allow for a comprehensive picture on partnership expenditures, the partnership did not meet the standards on this criteria and received a score of "1."

Table 4.6 – Measurable Outcomes

Question	*Score*	*Comments*
Question 15 – Does the partnership have measurable outcomes? What does it measure and how did it come up with those particular results to measure?	2	There are measurable outcomes, and they are ones that SB6 developed.

Measurable Outcomes. Question 15 and follow-up questions asked, "Does the partnership have measurable outcomes? If so, what does it measure? How did it come up with these particular results to measure?" Question 15 received a score of "2," "meets standards." At the program level, SB6 firmly stated that they indeed have measurable outcomes. They are a big part of the funding cycle. SB6 is "reporting for a reason" – it is strategic (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011). In their case, they are working with partner agencies and what they are already reporting so as not to overlap and to make use of reporting already in place. SB6 comes up with the results it measures by keeping up-to-date on the literature, best practices, and reporting practices of other UW's across the country (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011).

However, at the county level, no clear measurable outcomes for the partnership could be identified (but each individual program has their own goals) (County Leader Interview, 10/4/2011). The city leader answered that there were indeed measurable outcomes, but they were the ones that SB6 came up with. They have measurable outcomes for services, but not for the partnership itself. There are measurable outcomes for the total amount of local funding, but none related to planning. The city leader stated that it would be beneficial to measure aspects of the partnership (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011).

Partnership Communication

Table 4.7 – Regular, Informative Meetings

Question	*Score*	*Comments*
Question 16 – Does your organization have regular meetings? How often and with whom?	3	Three out of three leaders said that they have many informative meetings and much open discussion.
Question 17 – Do partners have the connections to acquire and share pertinent information as needed?	3	The partners have developed the trust and connections necessary to share pertinent information.
Question 18 – Do you ever run into communication problems? If so, what do they result from?	2	Each leader faces unique communication challenges, but has addressed those challenges.

Regular, Informative Meetings. Question 16, “Does your organization have regular meetings? How often, and with partnering organizations, as well?” received a score of “3,” “exceeds standards.” All of the partnership organizations’ leaders said that they had many and varied meetings. The three leaders meet informally on a monthly basis to honestly and openly discuss issues relevant to the partnership. The partnership also holds quarterly meetings for the stakeholders. Then, there are the “Community Café” meetings for the public. The Results-Based Planning Committee (RBPC) holds bi-monthly (to monthly, depending on the time of year) meetings (County Leader Interview, 10/4/2011). The RBPC started out by including just funders, but has grown. Head Start, for instance, receives federal and local funding and, thus, both funds and receives funding (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011). There are several levels of meetings – both formal and informal – and the challenge for the leadership is to limit themselves to just attending strategic meetings when there is potential for endless meetings (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011).

The three partnership leaders meet once a month in an informal setting. Some leaders expressed that these are their favorite meetings because they can have honest discussion. They can effectively hash out concerns because they “can talk about real problems,” said the city leader, and they “don’t have to mince words” (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011). These frank discussions are the result of the relationships the leaders have built and the culture of trust and acceptance they have developed (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011). This culture of trust fosters open discussion in partnership meetings, which in turn strengthens the partnership with more information to function successfully.

The SB6 leader finds balancing all the potential meetings a challenge. There are meetings with providers and the government, and then meetings of the local advisory councils. Her challenge is balancing between internal and external meetings. For example, the SB6 leader must decide whether to attend "strategic" meetings with people in the community, even though they do not affect the day-to-day operations of her organization (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011). The city leader also attends UWCA meetings even though he is not required to (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011). The partnership leaders choose to participate in many meetings in order to effectively communicate with each other, stakeholders, and the community.

Question 17, "Do partners have the connections to acquire and share pertinent information as needed?" received a score of "3," "exceeds standards." Partners do have the means to acquire and share pertinent information as needed. They have many meetings and much communication outside of meetings. They are a "tight-knit community" and have developed the trust and relationships necessary to confidently share information directly related to the program or not directly related to the program (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011).

Question 18, "Do you ever run into communication problems? If so, what do you think they result from?" received a score of "2," "meets standards." The partnership typically does not have communication problems, but each leader described a different communication challenge occasionally faced. For the nonprofit organization, the challenge was that there was simply too much information to communicate, and there is a need to direct that information to the appropriate people within the partnership (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011). For the city, the challenge was for the leader to communicate information up the hierarchy of government to the appropriate people (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011). For the county, the challenge was in getting information from the community. The county is required to report each year on outcomes and, in this particular community, the leader finds it challenging to acquire the necessary data from the community (County Leader Interview, 10/4/2011).

Success By Six uses social media (Facebook and Twitter) to provide up-to-date and relevant information, but a challenge is that people expect "up-to-the-minute" information and the nonprofit is not currently providing that. However, SB6 has a desire to communicate to the community the scope of their work. Newsletters also help provide information to the public (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011).

The city leader's challenge was keeping everyone up-to-date with all the different agencies. "Keeping a balance is important," explained the city leader, and too many meetings can be counter-productive (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011). The Early Childhood Council is a 13-member advisory group to Austin's City Council made up of leaders and citizens from the community. This advisory group is a help to the city leader in regards to information exchange because otherwise he would have to go through several channels to acquire and share information (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011).

Reporting every year on outcomes is important to the county because they use public funds. The county leader faces the challenge of trying to get data from the community (particularly in Austin). The early childhood field expects to see long-term results reported, but such results are a challenge to report, not only because it is not usually an interest of the agencies to report data, but also because the human services field often has less capacity (technology and skills) to report data. If the partners would be able to "shift the paradigm into an ongoing, well-funded project," data collection could provide much opportunity, as planners would have to think about communicating data throughout the planning cycle (County Leader Interview, 10/4/2011).

Table 4.8 – Broad Inclusion in Partnership Communication

Question	*Score*	*Comments*
Question 19 – If an employee has a question about the program or a particular process, how can they go about inquiring about it?	2	Although there may be some challenges, an employee can easily acquire program information.
Question 20 – How does the ease of information sharing improve the program?	3	It helps quickly identify gaps in service and emerging needs and creates more responsiveness.
Question 21 – How does your organization involve its members and the community in discussions about the program and its desired outcomes?	3	The partners involve the community in discussions by holding "Community Café" meetings, having quarterly stakeholders meetings, and by various other means.

Broad Inclusion in Partnership Communication. Question 19 and follow-up questions asked, "If an employee of the organization has a question about the program or a particular process, how can they go about inquiring about it? Is this an easy process? Is their feedback valued? Is the same true of a member of a partnering organization?" Question 19 received a score of "2" or "meets standards." Generally, all three leaders agreed that it was fairly easy for people to receive information about the program and that their feedback was highly valued. However, the leaders expressed a couple challenges to providing answers to employee and partnering agency questions. The city leader explained that in city government while the leaders can share information amongst themselves, people outside of the partnership have to go through proper channels to acquire information. A benefit of the partnership is that he can refer people to the UWCA who have more flexibility in addressing problems and providing answers. He described this as the “swiss cheese” effect – he can provide information, but it may have “holes” as he has limited information (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011).

The SB6 leader explained that when an employee or partner has a question, the organization would like to be able to provide more specific information to link those people to the UW employee they need to answer that question. The UWCA has much more informal processes for acquiring information about programs and processes, but they question whether these processes should be made more formal. They have struggled to make it an easy process for partners to acquire information. One challenge the SB6 leader expressed was that certain visible leaders within the UWCA are known to people outside the organization, and thus, they are the first ones people go to with questions. She is working on providing more specific information to link people to the UWCA employee they need (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011).

The county leader said that it is very easy to acquire information about the programs and partnership through SB6 because they have done such a good job at branding themselves. She said that employee feedback is valued and that they communicate it back to the partners (County Leader Interview, 10/4/2011).

Question 20, “How does the ease of information sharing improve the program?” received a score of “3,” “exceeds standards.” The ease of information sharing in the partnership greatly improves the early childhood program. It helps quickly identify gaps and emerging needs and allows the partnering organizations to be much more responsive

(County Leader Interview, 10/4/2011). SB6 has done a great job of bringing people together and providing information. For example, agencies can take the information they provide, such as brochures, to write grants and show city leaders as a source of credibility (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011).

Question 21, "How do the partners involve members of their organizations and the community in discussions about the program and its desired outcomes?" received a score of "3," "exceeds standards." The partners involve the community in discussions about the program (SB6) and its outcomes in various ways. They have the "Community Café" meetings for the public to express their needs and concerns. They have the quarterly stakeholders meetings "to engage SB6 as a collaborative, not a program" (County Leader Interview, 10/4/2011). They have meeting tiers and it is a highly visible process (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011). The county leader agreed that the quarterly meetings of the larger stakeholder group provide an excellent opportunity for partnership members to engage in SB6 as a collaborative (County Leader Interview, 10/4/2011).

SB6 carries out "Community Conversations" in which they hire bilingual facilitators to help the citizens who attend. They discuss early childhood needs with those who attend. Similarly, community members can engage in smaller conversations at the "Community Cafe" meetings that are ongoing over several weeks. There they can discuss current needs and individual staff members work with them (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011).

The city leader agreed that the partnership was trying to be inclusive of the community. Meetings are a visible process and people know that they can express their concerns. There are several meetings that take place annually: first, there are the meetings of the stakeholders (about 50-60 people from various agencies) that take place 2-3 times a year; next, there are the meeting tiers that meet a couple times a year; next, there are various specific meetings. “Community Café” meetings help to gather information from community members. Collecting information, explained the city leader, is the most difficult thing to get from clients/parents themselves, but it is a requirement of the federal grant to get citizens’ (in this case, parents’) input at meetings (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011).

Table 4.9 – Dissemination of Partnership-Relevant Information

Question	*Score*	*Comments*
Question 22 – If employees need information about the program, do they know where to find it?	2	Employees know that they can receive an answer or be directed to someone who can provide an answer, and it is an easy process.
Question 23 – How do you provide information on concepts, knowledge, and tools important to your work to employees and to those receiving your services?	2	Employees and the public can find resources on the organizations’ websites, through the 2-1-1 Helpline, and through the partnership leaders.

Dissemination of Partnership-Relevant Information. For partnerships to be effective, employees must understand the partnership structure and have access to information about the partnership, because information can only be used effectively if it has been distributed in a successful manner (Page 2004, 595). When conflicts arise, critical and timely information is crucial for employees to be able to mobilize themselves to action (Kapucu 2006, 206, 209). Respondents were asked, “If employees need information about the program, do they know where they can find it?” According to respondents, if an employee has a question about program activities, they know that they can receive an answer (County Leader Interview, 10/4/2011) or be directed to someone who can provide an answer (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011). It is an "easy process" when there are questions about the partnership (County Leader Interview, 10/4/2011). It is unclear whether useful partnership information is distributed to employees in a proactive manner, but in response to the question, the respondents stated that employees would be able to find information when they need it. Therefore, Question 22 received a score of "2," "meets standards."

Partnerships that provide a central source for partnership-relevant information for employees are more likely to be successful because it puts partners on equal footing and coordinates their activities (Bryson et al. 2006, 48). It also gives the partners more accountability to their overseers and the public clients who use their goods and services (Page 2004, 592). Respondents were asked, "How does your organization provide information on concepts, knowledge, and tools important to its work to employees and to those receiving its services?" The question received a score of "2," "meets standards." The public can get information and tools they need through the 2-1-1 Helpline, which is a resource and referral line for people to get community resources, and through the SB6 and county websites (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011 and County Leader Interview, 9/30/2011).

Employees also receive information from the organizations' leadership. Organization leaders meet with each other monthly to discuss relevant information and they report back to charitable contributors (UWCA) and the city council (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011). Each partner plays a slightly different role and, therefore, brings slightly different "tools" and knowledge to partnership members. For instance, the city leader meets with partnering agencies regularly to get feedback, and can work to change their individual contracts or get the tools to agency leaders to make improvements where needed (City Leader Interview, 9/30/2011). The partnership leaders said that they were working toward further improving access to relevant partnership knowledge and tools in the future.

Document Analysis

Document analysis was also used to support the interview data. Success By Six budget information and the five-year trend report provided information to support the evidence of partnership financial accountability and outcomes. The document titled, "A Comprehensive Early Care and Education System," was issued by the Early Childhood Council in December 2001 and was updated in June 2002. It also provided insightful information into the vision, planning, goals, and evaluation of the local initiative to address early childhood needs in Austin.

"The Success By 6 Report to the Community: 5-Year Trends and Successes (2005-2010)" states the outcomes and specific outputs that the program aimed to achieve. SB6 focuses on three main strategies: family support, quality childcare, and social, emotional learning. Family support is provided through parent education programs, play and learn groups, and home visitations for high-risk families. Quality childcare is provided through professional mentoring of childcare center directors and grants to accredited childcare centers serving low-income children. Social, emotional learning is provided through professional development and onsite support groups for childcare teachers, clinical mental health observation of targeted children, and parent follow-up (*SB6 5-Year Trends* brochure).

Under "Family Support," the stated goal is that, "25% of children living in low-income families will have parents who have completed research-based parent education programs by 2016." The improvements are seen in the following indicators: immunization rates, low birth weight improvements, mothers and children enrolled in the WIC nutrition program, CHIP/Medicaid enrollment, and a drop in families in poverty (*SB6 5-Year Trends* brochure).

Under "Quality Child Care," the goal is that, "75% of early care and education centers serving low-income children will be quality rated by Texas Rising Star or the National Association for the Education of Young Children by 2016." The indicators can be seen in the following: kindergarten retention, education level of childcare workers, childcare worker wages, childcare centers meeting quality standards, and cost of quality care reimbursed by childcare subsidy (*SB6 5-Year Trends* brochure).

Under "Social, Emotional Learning," the goal is that, "50% of early care and education programs serving low-income children will have access to mental health consultation services by 2016." The indicators are early childhood mental health (as seen in centers that have access to a consultant) and a decrease in confirmed victims of child abuse and neglect (*SB6 5-Year Trends* brochure).

This success report quotes Ellen Balthazar, Executive Director of partnering organization Any Baby Can as stating, "Success By Six is extremely important to our community because it promotes a 'whole child' plan of action, and brings together stakeholders that were previously working in silos" (*SB6 5-Year Trends* brochure). The statement indicates that community leaders are confident that the partnership has enhanced service provision to preschool aged children in Austin.

"A Comprehensive Early Care and Education System" report was published by the Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department and the Austin Child Care Council in 2001 (CECES 2001, 2). A Policy Development and Research Committee made up of eight members prepared it and posed the question, "What would an early child care and education system look like?" if they could fund it in Austin (CECES 2001, 2, 4). They came up with six core values (assumptions), expected outcomes, and six critical components of a system (CECES 2001, 4). The report explained that public, private, and nonprofit organizations were working on the problem of early childcare in Austin to address what they called the current "crisis" (CECES 2001, 4). It identifies the need to coordinate services (CECES 2001, 10). There was an initial response to "collaborate with public agencies, community organizations, and the private sector…" (CECES 2001, 5).

The "Comprehensive Early Care" report also initiated the goal of getting more childcare centers Texas Rising Star certified for quality standards (CECES 2001, 10). It began to identify predictors (or indicators) of a high level of success in childcare centers (CECES 2001, 11). Specific desired goals are expressed on pages 14-15 of the report. One noteworthy section is "Planning, Evaluation, and Coordination," which identifies specific objectives that the community collaborative wants to carry out (CECES 2001, 16). These objectives are: 1) Ongoing program evaluation, 2) Needs identification, 3) Data collection and dissemination, 4) Planning [for future demands], 5) Coordination [filling gaps without duplication], 6) Monitoring/Program oversight, 7) Technical assistance, and 8) Cost/benefit analysis (CECES 2001, 16). Many of these objectives match those identified in the practical ideal type partnership found in the literature.

Reviewing the Form 990 IRS exemption return revealed that there had indeed been a drop in funds during the last fiscal year. Fundraiser events showed a slight loss and revenue from public donations also showed a drop from 99% in 2008 to 96% in 2009. Also, overall net assets showed a minimal deficit in 2010 (UWCA Form 990). This seems to confirm the claim from the nonprofit manager that nonprofits face constant funding challenges. While they are dependent on an in-flow of funds from public entities, they are also responsible to fund the agencies that carry out their programs. The nonprofit manager explained that they were keenly aware of this responsibility and chose to uphold their agreements with these agencies even if it meant a loss to UWCA (SB6 Leader Interview, 9/22/2011). The budget also revealed that UWCA cash grants to organizations that provide early childhood services represented the greater amounts than those to organizations serving other sectors of the community (this is not including services that may benefit children's health and education indirectly, such as services to parents) (UWCA Form 990).

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the findings of the research. A series of structured interview questions were developed from the literature and the conceptual framework provided in Chapter Two. The structured interview questions were based on the practical ideal type partnership characteristics drawn from the literature and were explained in Chapter Three. The structured interviews were carried out in separate face-to-face meetings with a top program manager of Success By Six, a top city official over early childhood education affairs, and a top county official. Document analysis was used as a secondary research method in order to supplement the structured interviews. The documents analyzed were UWCA's Form 990, "The Success By 6 Report to the Community: 5-Year Trends and Successes (2005-2010)," "A Comprehensive Early Care and Education System" report, and the UWCA-SB6 website.

Overall, the SB6 public-private partnership meets or exceeds standards except for the following areas: lack of a defining partnership contract (Question 10), an incomplete partnership evaluation plan measuring the effectiveness of the program (Question 13), and lack of a specific partnership budget (Question 14). Some of the areas in which SB6 is below standards are perhaps due to the structure of the partnership itself. However, there are some areas where improvement is possible. The next chapter reviews these areas and makes recommendations.

Chapter 5
Conclusions

Purpose of the Research

This chapter gives a summary of the chapters, strengths and weaknesses of the research, recommendations, and suggestions for future research. The purpose of this research was to gauge Success By Six's partnership against the practical ideal type partnership. After reviewing the literature and collecting data through face-to-face structured interviews, this chapter summarizes the research results and offers recommendations for the partnership. Finally, the chapter also provides ideas for future research to further benefit the field of public-private partnership study.

Summary of the Chapters

Chapter One provided an introduction to the topic of the study, including "Early Childhood and Academic Success," "Early Childhood Programs," "Success By Six," and "The Challenge of Partnership Maintenance." Chapter One also explained the purpose of the research and the major categories that were studied. Chapter Two provided a review of the literature relating to public-private partnership best practices in three areas: partnership purpose, partnership accountability, and partnership communication. Chapter Three explained the methodology used to operationalize the three major research categories. Chapter Four presented the data received from various one-on-one structured interviews. Finally, Chapter Five shares the findings from the research, explains the strengths and weaknesses of the research methods, and provides some recommendations for further research in the area of public-private partnerships.

Recommendations for Success By Six

The success of public-private partnerships is dependent on careful consideration in three key areas: partnership purpose, partnership accountability, and partnership communication. SB6's partnership generally showed that it met the expectations of the practical ideal type partnership in all three key areas. Some areas showed results that exceeded practical ideal type partnership standards and others fell below standards. Even in areas where the partners did not meet the standards of the practical ideal type partnership, the leaders expressed awareness of challenges they face and areas that need development. The following recommendations relate to those areas that fell below standards and leave room for improvement.

The partnership leaders generally agreed, even though the challenges each leader faced within their respective organizations varied. For instance, each organizational leader faced different communication challenges within their roles, but they all noted the importance of communication and purposefully met often to maintain healthy communication.

The partners should create a single and unified partnership mission statement and outline specific goals of the partnership beyond the contractual services. The document could include a mission statement incorporating all the partnering agencies under a clear vision for ECE service provision in Austin and concrete goals such as quality training for preschool teachers. In many cases, informally agreed-upon goals may be sufficient, but public-private partnerships would undoubtedly benefit from a well-thought-out, clearly stated contract that participants can reference for guidance. The SB6-government partnership has done the research and set the groundwork for a thoughtfully prepared document outlining their partnership, but has not yet created such a document.

In the same way, clear partnership goals indicated some thoughtful planning processes, but there was no comprehensive document outlining the partnership's desired outcomes since its formation in 2005. The "Success By 6 Report to the Community: 5-Year Trends and Successes (2005-2010)" update brochure provided excellent and useful research in this regard, but the information it provided was specific and limited since it was intended for the public (to confirm partnership successes). The partnership would further benefit from a written document outlining specific partnership goals and desired outcomes that encompasses all partnering organizations. The partners should work on developing a comprehensive document that shows not only goals, but the process they went through to determine those goals and approaches as to how they can be achieved. Program information and the processes used to achieve goals should be developed into a more streamlined document that links specific people to specific tasks and knowledge, so that staff and community members can better access that information. Steps like identifying responsible staff for collecting data at specific points in time and determining how goals can be effectively and efficiently achieved are essential to documenting outcomes.

Furthermore, the partnership would also benefit from a written evaluation plan for the partnership itself. Regular evaluation provides opportunities for improvement and contributes to the success of the partnership. On the other hand, neglecting evaluation can lead to organizational blind spots. SB6 and government partnership leaders can, with a written plan, refine the measurable goals they currently have in place by determining specifically how they are going to evaluate programs and measure success. Since time and a lack of resources sometimes limit the implementation of evaluation plans, the key partners should set aside staff resources and time for that task. Setting aside funds to hire an external partnership evaluator is also a way to enhance the use of an evaluation plan.

A final recommendation for the SB6 partnership is that the key partnering organizations develop a joint budget for early childhood needs in Austin. Currently, individual agencies must maintain their own budgets and individual programs that serve early childhood needs show how much funding they receive generally on the UWCA Form 990. Specific agency outcomes are also linked to their individual budgets. However, a budget document that shows all the ways that public, nonprofit, and private partners in the community are partnering to fund early childhood education and success initiatives would not only serve as a visible accountability tool for the public, but it might also be a helpful tool partnership leaders can use to determine areas where funds are lacking and to set overarching partnership goals.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Research

One of the weaknesses of the research involves the method of personal interviews with head partnership contract managers. These individuals have an interest in representing the partnership and their organizations in the best possible way. A more comprehensive approach would be to interview a random sample of the nonprofit employees (in SB6). However, the majority of my questions concerning the practical ideal type partnership could best be answered by the leadership as they related directly to partnership formation and implementation. Some information, particularly regarding partnership communication, would have been greatly strengthened by gathering employee feedback (although city and county ECE leaders had no staff per se). Leadership input on the inclusiveness of communication and the ease of information flow to various levels of the partnership would be improved by adding a staff perspective. Interviewing employees at SB6 only would not sufficiently enhance the breadth of data received to provide a broad employee perspective.

One of the strengths of choosing to collect data through one-on-one interviews is that one is able to gather much more in-depth information on the partnership than they would gain through surveys or other possible means of data collection. The researcher can gain a historical perspective of the partnership's development over time – a narrative – that they would less likely be able to acquire from survey questions or participant observation. In this particular case, I was also able to acquire information from all three major players in the partnership – the city, the county, and the nonprofit organization – and their different perspectives based on their level of involvement, resources at their disposal, and the amount of time they had been active in the partnership. This information could then be compared against the information received from the other leaders. Interviewing also allows the researcher to use follow-up questions to clarify certain answers and to better gain insight into nuances such as motivations, intent, and emotional drivers.

Document analysis as a secondary means of data collection proved effective in gathering concrete evidence of performance measurement (outcomes and outputs measured). Measurable outcomes fell into three key categories and outputs were established under those categories. It also gave evidence to the level of strategic planning the partners participated in. Document analysis of the UWCA's financial document (Form 990) provided concrete information about other aspects of the partnership – including its fiscal state – that could not have been gained through interviews. A weakness of document analysis is that it generally looks at one aspect of the research in isolation and sometimes in the absence of supplementary information that affects it. Another weakness is that the researcher only has access to certain (and not all) documents that are available.

Suggestions for Future Research

Much as the field of ECE needs long-term studies to fully understand the outcomes of intervention in children's early years, researchers should study public-private partnerships over their lifespan to better understand the benefits of this approach to ECE problems. It would seem that the early childhood field would benefit from a "community collaborative" approach since the influences preschool age children face are equally broad, including health and social development. Researchers in the field of ECE want to see the long-term effects – graduation and workforce readiness, for instance – of preschool preparedness programs. Therefore, the field of public administration should study the long-term impacts of partnerships on fulfilling these outcomes.

Future research might also benefit from a focus on a client point of view rather than a leadership perspective. Partnership leaders offer their own specific understanding of the partnership, but partnership effectiveness from the point of view of parents whose children are using the program might look different and offer unique insight into how processes can be improved. The same could be said of employees working in the partnership.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions for PPP Analysis

The purpose of my research focuses on the study of public-private partnerships and their effectiveness in providing alternative delivery systems for services that would commonly be carried out by the government. Examples of such areas are health, education, and welfare provision. The United Way has a solid reputation and long-standing history of partnering with the government to carry out some of these functions in the community. Therefore, I chose the United Way Capital Area - specifically the Success By 6 early childhood care and education program – as my source of study in order to contribute to the research in this dynamic field. I will do so by gauging UWCA's Success By 6 program partnership against the practical ideal type partnership developed from the literature. I will be looking at three specific areas of successful partnerships: 1) partnership purpose, 2) partnership accountability, and 3) partnership communication.

The time allotted for the interview is 30-50 minutes (although the interviewee is not obligated in any way and may end the interview at any time). During the interview I will ask 23 questions related to the three partnership areas mentioned above. That allows approximately two minutes for answering each question, so please do not be offended if I need to request that we move on to the next question. You may add any further information at the end of the interview. I will be taking notes if the interviewee permits.

CLEAR PARTNERSHIP PURPOSE

Shared Vision

1) Did the partnership develop around a shared goal or vision? Explain. (Was there a need your organization wanted to fill, but did not have the resources?)

a) Have there ever been times in your recollection that one or more of the partners strayed from the original shared goal or vision? If so, what happened and what were the effects?

b) In what ways would you say each partner bears responsibility for both the benefits and risks related to the partnership project?

2) How does this partnership create better decision-making and problem-solving capabilities? (Than if there were no partnership and the organization acted on its own.)

a) How does it create more community involvement?

3) When the partners created this program, did they understand how they would carry out that purpose or vision?

a) If not, how did they come up with a plan?

Specific Objectives and Goals

4) Do you measure concrete goals, and do employees know what they are and how to achieve them?

   a) Do people within the organization (and partners) know to whom they are accountable in achieving these goals (results)?
   b) Are specific actions and results linked to specific players?

5) What indicators can employees measure to show progress toward goals?

6) Did your organization face any challenges to implementing a partnership "orientation" or culture? Explain.

7) How do you make your goals public (for example, newsletters, etc.)?

Mutual Dependency

8) Was the need to share resources a contributing factor to your decision to partner? If so, explain.

9) How has partnering enhanced your access to various resources?

   a) What are these resources (ie, finances, staff, equipment, space)?

10) Do you have a contract defining your partnership?

   a) What elements are included in it?

PARTNERSHIP ACCOUNTABILITY

Partnership Evaluation Plan

11) How has partnering allowed you to solve problems in a more creative and discretionary way than if you had not partnered?

12) What kinds of challenges has being accountable (to the government and to the public) presented to this partnership?

a) What controls (outside of government regulations) would you say help to keep your organization on track and accountable?

13) Do you have a partnership evaluation plan that measures the effectiveness of the program?

   a) If so, how often is it used (quarterly, annually)?
   b) Do you document results that you measure?
   c) How is that information used to improve performance?
   d)Are resources set aside to measure and track results?

Specific Partnership Budget

14) Does the partnership have its own specific budget?
    a) Who in the organization prepares the budget?
    b) Who has oversight of it?

Measurable Outcomes

15) Does the partnership have measurable outcomes?
    a) If so, what does it measure?
    b) How did it come up with these particular results to measure?

PARTNERSHIP COMMUNICATION

Regular, informative meetings

16) Does your organization have regular meetings?
  a) How often?
  b) With partnering organizations, as well?

17) Do partners have the connections to acquire and share pertinent information as needed?

18) Do you ever run into communication problems? If so, what do you think they result from?

Broad inclusion in partnership communication

19) If an employee of the organization has a question about the program or a particular process, how can they go about inquiring about it?
    a) Is this an easy process?
    b) Is their feedback valued?
    c) Is the same true of a member of a partnering organization?

20) How does the ease of information sharing improve the program?

21) How does your organization involve its members and the community in discussions about the program and its desired outcomes?

Dissemination of partnership-relevant information

22) If employees need information about the program, do they know where they can find it?

23) How do you provide information on concepts, knowledge, and tools important to your work to employees and to those receiving services?

Follow-up Questions:

Is there anything else you would like to add?
Are there any documents you would like to share with me that help express your organization's mission, goals, outcomes, and/or finances?
Are there any strategic partners that you would recommend I contact for an interview?

Thank you for your time and for providing me with this information! The information you have provided will help contribute to the research on public-private partnerships and will hopefully help organizations like yours partner more successfully.

Appendix B

Consent Form

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This study involves research for a Texas State MPA Applied Research Project. The purpose of this study is to conduct research to gauge a specific early child care public-private partnership against the practical ideal type. The organization that I have chosen to study in order to gauge its practices and policies against the practical ideal type as determined based on the literature review is United Way Capital Area's Success By 6.

This study will involve an approximately 50 minute interview. The student researcher will ask questions regarding public-private partnerships in three key areas: partnership purpose, partnership accountability, and partnership communication. Survey questions will be asked in a format similar to the following question: Do partners have the connections to acquire and share pertinent information as needed?

This study could be beneficial to the participant by identifying policies and practices of the ideal type partnership, as well as providing opportunity for self-evaluation on the part of the organization. There is no compensation offered to participants. Participation is voluntary, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled and the subject may discontinue participation at any time. The participant has the right to refuse to answer any question at any time, for any reason, and participants may withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice or jeopardy to their standing with the University and any other relevant organization/entity with which the participant is associated.

Pertinent questions about the research, research participants' rights, and/or research-related injuries to participants should be directed to the following:
IRB chair, Dr. Jon Lasser (512-245-3413 –lasser@txstate.edu), or to Ms. Becky Northcut, Compliance Specialist (512-245-2102).

The confidentiality of the individuals will be maintained as a result of the project. A summary of the findings will be provided to participants upon completion of the study, if requested. Participants may access the results by contacting the researcher listed above.

IRB Approval # 2011B3352

Participant ______________________________

Researcher ______________________________

Appendix C

Interview Coding Criteria

Interview Questions – Shared Vision

Did the partnership develop around a shared goal or vision? a) Have there ever been times in your recollection that one or more of the partners strayed from the original shared goal or vision? b) If so, what happened and what were the effects? 1=did not form around shared vision or goal 2=may have formed around shared vision/goal, but it is not clear 3=formed around clear shared vision or goal

Interview Questions – Shared Vision

How does this partnership create better decision-making and problem-solving capabilities? a) How does it create more community involvement? 1=does not help solve community problems 2=helps in some ways 3=helps solve many community problems

Interview Questions – Shared Vision

When the partners created this program, did they understand how they would carry out that purpose or vision? a) If not, how did they come up with a plan? 1=had and still has no plan in place 2=did not understand initially, but soon came up with a plan 3=has a strategic plan in place

Interview Questions – Specific Objectives and Goals

Do you measure concrete goals and do employees know what they are? a) Which goals (results) do you measure for and how did you come up with those? b) Do people within the organization and partners know to whom they are accountable? 1=does not measure goals 2=measures goals, but they are not always clear and concrete 3=measures clear, concrete goals

Interview Questions – Specific Objectives and Goals

Did your organization face any challenges to implementing a partnership "orientation" or culture? 1=does not deal with organizational culture challenges or is not aware of them 2=may have faced some challenges and has addressed some 3=overcame challenges and improved processes as a result

Interview Questions – Specific Objectives and Goals

How do you make your goals public (ie, newsletters, etc.)? 1=does not make goals public 2=occasionally and/or arbitrarily makes goals public 3=makes goals public in a clear and responsible way

Interview Questions – Specific Objectives and Goals

What indicators can employees measure to show progress toward goals? 1=no indicators present 2=some indicators exist 3=several clear indicators present

Interview Questions – Mutual Dependency

Was the need to share resources a contributing factor to your decision to partner? 1=unaware of any need to combine resources 2=partners share resources 3=yes, and organization is aware of those mutual dynamics

Interview Questions – Mutual Dependency

How has partnering enhanced your access to various resources? a) What are these resources (ie, finances, staff, equipment, space)? 1=has not enhanced organization's access to resources 2=has enhanced access to resources, but have not fully utilized that access 3=has enhanced access, and organization fully utilizes access to resources

Interview Questions – Mutual Dependency

Do you have a contract defining your partnership?

a) What elements are included in it?

1=no defining contract

2=partnership has a contract, but it does not clearly define terms

3=partnership has a clear contract that can be referred to when necessary

Interview Questions – Partnership Evaluation Plan

How has partnering allowed you to solve problems in a more creative and discretionary way than if you had not partnered?

1=has not helped the organization solve problems

2=has helped in some ways

3=has helped the organization solve multiple problems creatively

Interview Questions – Partnership Evaluation Plan

What kinds of challenges has being accountable (to the government and to the public) presented to this partnership?

a) What controls (outside of government regulations) would you say help to keep your organization on track and accountable?

1=unaware of challenges

2=aware of some challenges, but has not addressed them

3=aware of challenges and has taken steps to successfully address them

Interview Questions – Partnership Evaluation Plan

Do you have a partnership evaluation plan that measures the effectiveness of the program?

a) If so, how often is it used (quarterly, annually)?

b) Do you document results that you measure?

c) How is that information used to improve performance?

d) Are resources set aside to measure and track results?

1= does not have an evaluation plan

2= has an evaluation plan, but does not does not use it to measure results or improve performance

3=has an evaluation plan and effectively uses it to measure results and improve performance

Interview Questions – Partnership Evaluation Plan

What results are desired by the partnership?

a) Do members and employees know what these?
b) Are specific actions and results linked to specific players?
1= no clear results are articulated
2= clear results are desired, but employees are unsure of these
3= partnership members are aware of what results are desired

Interview Questions – Specific Partnership Budget

Does the partnership have its own specific budget?

a) Who in the organization prepares the budget?
b) Who has oversight of it?
1=does not have a budget
2=has a budget, but it is unclear and under-utilized
3=has its own specific budget, and it is adhered to

Interview Questions – Measurable Outcomes

Does the partnership have measurable outcomes?

a) If so, what does it measure?
b) How did it come up with those particular results to measure?
1=does not have measurable outcomes?
2=has some outcomes, but they are unclear or cannot be measured
3=has clear, well-known measurable outcomes

Interview Questions – Measurable Outcomes

What kinds of incentives do management and employees have to produce results or successful outcomes?

1=do not have incentives to produce results
2= have some incentives, but they are ineffective
3=have excellent incentives to produce results

Interview Questions – Regular, Informative Meetings

Does your organization have regular meetings? a) How often? b) With partnering organizations, as well? 1=does not have meetings 2=has occasional meetings, but only a few people are involved 3=has regular, informative meetings that include a range of stakeholders

Interview Questions – Accessibility of Information

Do partners have the connections to acquire and share pertinent information as needed? 1= do not have communication connections to share information 2=have the connections, but do not share information 3=have the connections in place and communicate effectively

Interview Questions – Accessibility of Information

Do you ever run into communication problems? If so, what do you think they result from? 1=unaware of communication concerns 2=occasional communication problems, but often not sure how to address them 3=effectively address the source of communication issues as they arise

Interview Questions – Accessibility of Information

If an employee of the organization has a question about the program or a particular process, how can they go about inquiring about it? a) Is this an easy process? b) Is their feedback valued? c) Is the same true of a member of the partnership? 1=employees cannot inquire about concerns in the partnership 2= employees can inquire, but it is unclear how to do this or their input is unwelcome 3=employees can inquire about the program and their input is incorporated within reason

Interview Questions – Dissemination of Information

How does the ease of information sharing improve the program? 1=members do not share information 2=members share information, but it is not easy or a smooth process 3=information is shared easily and effectively to improve the program

Interview Questions – Dissemination of Information

How does your organization involve its members and the community in discussions about the program and its desired outcomes? 1=it does not discuss the program 2=it discusses the program, but does not involve many members of the organization 3=it frequently discusses the program with its members and those in the community

Interview Questions – Dissemination of Information

If employees need information about the program, do they know where they can find it? 1=information about the program is not available 2=information about the program is available, but employees do not know how to access it 3=information about the program is readily available and employees can access it

Interview Questions – Dissemination of Information

How do you provide information on concepts, knowledge, and tools important to your work to employees and to those receiving services? 1=it does not provide pertinent information to its employees 2=it provides some useful information to employees 3=it provides lots of useful information to its employees to improve their performance