IDENTIFY A NETWORK HUB(s)

No matter which services providers document as most important for the Network to deliver, a successful SFCCN needs one or more organizations that can provide those services. There can be more than one Hub; for example, one might provide business leadership services while another may be more skilled at pedagogical (teaching and learning) leadership. A Hub can also be located outside the local community, if services are accessed remotely. A successful SFCCN will, in time, be self-supporting and able to generate enough revenue (from a combination of grants, contracts and user fees) to cover costs. However, in the short term, startup funding for the Hub will be needed. Ongoing third-party funding may be required for some services as well (e.g., comprehensive services for high-need children and families, more intensive professional development, etc.)

It is critical to focus first on which organizations have the capacity to be a Hub. One approach is to look at ECE organizations and identify the one(s) that have key strengths in pedagogical and/or in business leadership. Some potential examples include:
- A large successful child care program that has achieved quality and sustainability through good management and economies of scale
- A CCR&R or other child care intermediary organization that has experience with functions such as child care subsidy billing, professional development and mentoring, USDA food program management, etc.

Another approach is to look at organizations strong in administrative and business practices, not in the ECE field but with a vested interest in building capacity in the ECE sector. Examples include:
- A back-office or property management organization with strong expertise in billing, accounting, maintenance, HR, and related administrative functions
- A community or family foundation with a deep connection to the local ECE community and a willingness to play a deeper role in operations
- A human services agency whose mission "connects" to ECE (e.g., early intervention services, adult education agencies, etc.)

Organizations thinking of becoming a Hub should do some self-assessment to determine the degree of fit.

Download a copy of **Characteristics of Successful Hubs** from the website

Successful Network Hubs will have most or all of the following characteristics:
- *Mission Driven* – Wants to work with other ECE organizations and sees this as part of their mission rather than as an opportunity for increased funding.

- *Leadership and market credibility* – Trusted leader in the community, or able to quickly build trust among providers and funders.
- *Access to providers* – Knows the provider community well and has the capacity to reach out to and successfully engage providers in an Alliance approach to service delivery.
- *Financial reach and stability* – Has sound fiscal management capacity, with dedicated and skilled fiscal management staff, and experience with automated information technology for billing, data collection and overall fund management.
- *Access to a variety of funding streams* – Already has, or is able to tap, multiple funding streams.
- *Innovation* – Leadership, board and staff are open to new ideas and approaches, willing to "think outside the box," and experienced in developing promising new approaches to old problems.
- *Commitment to excellence* – Leadership, board and staff are willing to do the internal and external work needed to raise the bar on quality service delivery.
- *Entrepreneurial* – Leadership embraces an entrepreneurial way of thinking and uses this entrepreneurial energy to effectively engage the staff and board.
- *Risk tolerance* – Leadership, board and staff are willing to take risks and organization is stable enough to launch a new endeavor that may not pay for itself in the short term.

A Hub should NOT expect to generate profit for their organization by operating a SFCCN. The Hub is a legal and administrative structure that enables services at scale, so that participating FCC providers can share the cost of both business and pedagogical leadership and generate savings (in both time and money) to improve program quality and job satisfaction. Because of the work and funding required, becoming a Hub should only occur if the overall objective is mission-related: to help participating FCC providers build capacity to offer sustainable, high quality care.

Identifying a successful Staffed Family Child Care Network Hub
There are many factors and characteristics that successful SFCCN Hubs share. The singular most important factor, however, is a Hub organization's ability to **lead change**. Change is defined as the ability to **transform, alter, or switch**. Organizations that lead change are organizations that embrace change.

Here are some questions to help you evaluate a potential Hub agency:

Track Record
- ☐ Does the organization regularly explore new ways to achieve its mission?
- ☐ Does the organization frequently design new programs, services, and projects?
- ☐ Is there an internal focus on infrastructure change and improvements?
- ☐ How frequently is technology upgraded and are internal systems modified within the organization to support efficiency and effectiveness?

☐ How often is the phrase "because that's how we have always done it" used as an answer to the question "why?"

Mission Match

☐ How would serving as a Shared Service Hub help achieve organizational mission?
The more readily that leadership and staff see the connection between the mission and the reason for a change, the more quickly they jump into the change process with both feet.

Trust

☐ What is the evidence that the organization has the trust of child care providers that will allow providers to feel safe and supported in making changes within their businesses?

☐ How do you know that staff within the organization have trust in leadership that the Alliance framework is a viable means for providers to improve their sustainability?

☐ How will the organization assure staff that they will receive the training, resources, systems, and supports they need to perform their Shared Service Alliance Hub work effectively?

☐ How will the Hub organization ensure that staff know they will be supported in making modifications, rather than blamed for mistakes?

☐ How do staff know that the timing of Alliance implementation and the delivery of services is reasonable?

Embedded within the above questions and considerations are key characteristics that the organization needs to lead change: expertise within the organization; culture of support (from the Board and staff leadership) for change, experimentation, and automation; and, strong communication to connect the Network to the organizational mission.