

Using Shared Services Principles to Reorganize Staffing at Multi-Site Centers

Background

Shared Services is a management framework that allows multiple early care and education sites to pool needs and share resources – including staff, information, skills and funds – in order to improve the capacity to provide high quality care. By sharing resources, ECE businesses become stronger, more accountable, more financially sound and efficient, and better equipped to offer affordable, high-quality services for children and their families. Additionally, a Shared Services framework can make it possible to attain the economies of scale and economies of specialization needed to shift resources from administration to the classroom, which strengthens the ability to attract, support, and maintain staff via improved working conditions and better wages, benefits and embedded professional development.

We have developed this resource for those multi-site organizations not yet taking full advantage of the opportunities available through a shared services framework.

The Value Proposition

Shared Services is a capacity-building strategy. Reorganizing using Shared Services principles helps the organization achieve greater capacity to deliver high quality care, through:

Scale – Economies of scale in purchasing helps reduce costs of goods and services. With automation, programs can also attain economies of scale in a host of business transactions, reducing time on task as well as errors.

Specialization – Economies of specialization accrue when staff can focus on a few tasks that they do well (and hopefully enjoy) rather than being responsible for so many tasks that they must be a “jack of all trades; master of none.” ECE programs that use a Shared Service framework have found that centralized staff increases expertise, efficiency, accuracy; separating business and pedagogical functions enables teachers and site directors to focus on teaching and learning; and thinking intentionally about how to apply a Shared Services framework to staffing enables professionals focus on what they like to do and do best, thereby increasing job satisfaction and helping to reduce turnover.

Steps to Reorganization aligned with Shared Services

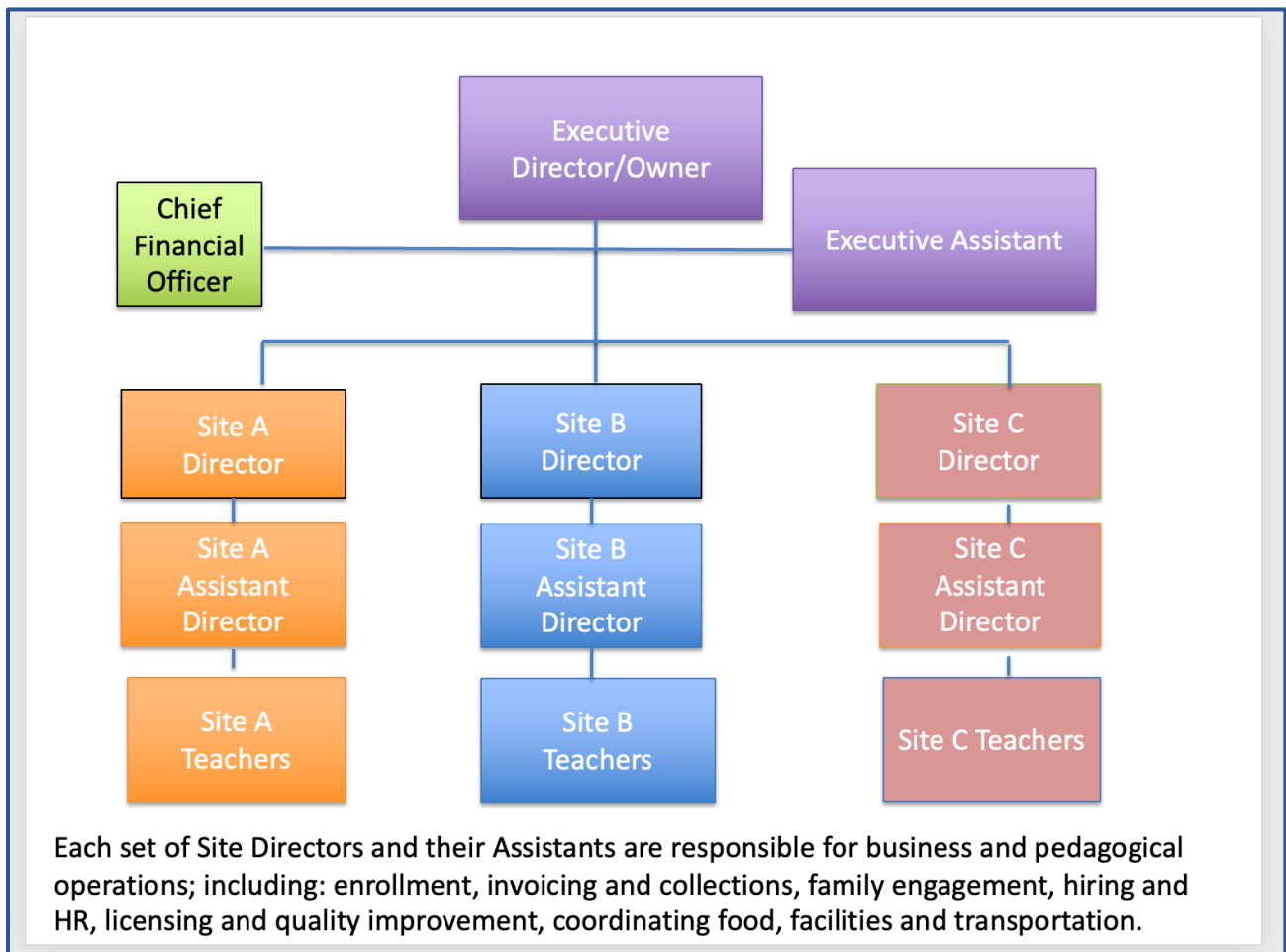
Each multi-site organization is different, but in general, the steps for reorganization are:

1. Review the center director and assistant director positions and remove tasks that can be performed for all staff/all children and their families.
2. Review teaching position descriptions and remove tasks that can be performed for all children and their families regardless of location – such as scheduling of parent/teacher conferences.
3. Group those tasks that have been removed from current position descriptions into subject matter areas – fiscal, Human Resources, pedagogy, data entry – and develop position titles and descriptions. This step involves building an organizational chart and more detailed job descriptions, thinking carefully about caseloads and supervision structures, and so forth.
4. Identify the areas of strength and expertise among current staff and re-assign general administrative staff from various sites to the specialized, centralized positions based on the best possible matches. Depending on state licensing regulation and quality rating and improvement system standards, the site director position and individual may need to remain in place. However, the position itself can be radically altered to focus on pedagogy. And, individuals filling more general administrative positions such as assistant site director or administrative assistant can be re-assigned to more specialized positions that work across all sites.
5. Confirm that automation is being fully exploited to support all positions – administrative and pedagogical and invest in new software or invest in software training to enhance automation as needed.
6. Confirm that the process of centralizing tasks has not created unintended consequences. If site specific administrative staff are often used to cover ratio for staff that are on break, out sick, or on leave, then the organization may need to hire an additional teacher floater for each site as part of the re-organization process. There may be a need to provide additional training for existing staff as they transition to new roles so that turnover doesn't occur.
7. Review systems, processes and documentation to reflect the re-organization. Modifications might be needed to the HR manual, the parent handbook, HR orientation procedures and the like.

“Whatever doesn't have to happen in the classroom or at a particular site can potentially be centralized and scaled.” Louise Stoney, Opportunities Exchange

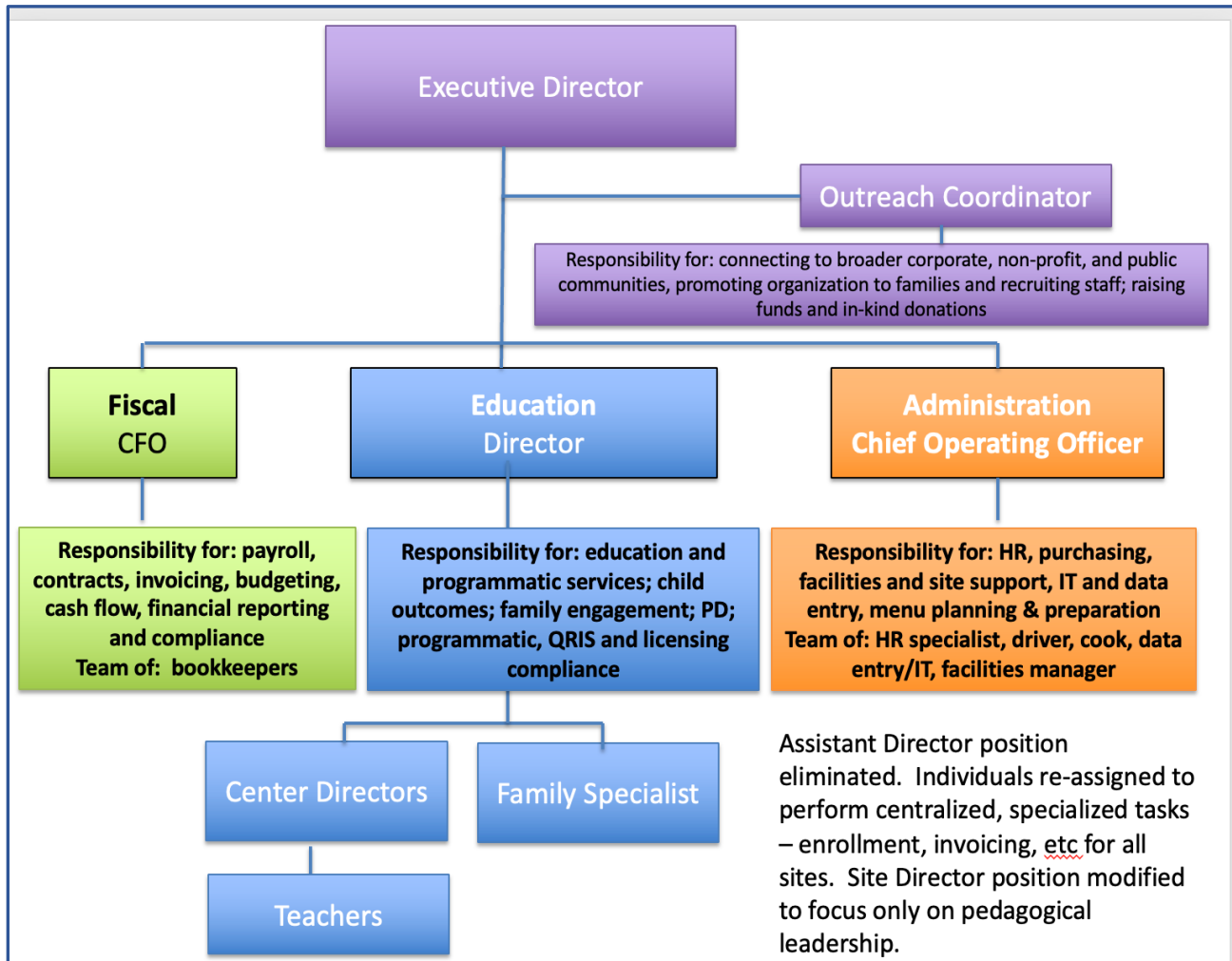
An Example – from stand-alone sites to supported sites

Multi-site organizations typically staff each site as if it is a stand-alone center with a director, an assistant director and often an administrative assistant. These staff positions are tasked with handling a wide range of responsibilities – from greeting parents to managing a plumbing repair to evaluating teacher performance. Rarely do individuals filling these positions possess expertise in all of the areas that they are tasked with supporting, yet each set of site-based staff works on its own to muddle through. Through application of the Shared Services framework multi-site organizations can relieve staff from responsibility for everything needed for one site and instead provide a backbone structure of centralized, expert support available for all sites. An organizational chart reflecting that typical structure is provided below.



The organizational chart for a multi-service organization that aligns with the Shared Services framework is below. All of the positions with the exception of center director are responsible for task across all of the organization’s sites. The Executive Director, Outreach Coordinator, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Education Director, Family Specialist and Human Resources Specialist form the centralized office of operations. They support the Center Directors with a business and pedagogical infrastructure so that Center Directors can focus on

the needs of their teaching staff, the children they teach, and the families in which those children live.



The position of Assistant Director was eliminated and those staff were re-assigned to complete tasks across all sites. One becoming a Tuition and Fee Specialist; responsible for subsidy invoicing, parent invoicing, recording of payments, reconciliation of payments, re-billing, assignment of late fees and other fees as per policies. One becoming the Data Specialist; responsible for entry of child assessment and other education data. One becoming a Family Specialist; responsible for maintaining the waiting list, enrolling children, creating and maintaining family records. One becoming an HR Specialist; responsible for screening teacher applicants, scheduling interviews, onboarding new hires, creating and maintaining employee HR records, and filling in for Center Directors during planned absences.

Changes were also made to the Center Director position description, including eliminating the following responsibilities: maintaining staff files; maintaining family files; enrolling families; and,

generating invoices or collecting payments from families (except those paying cash). These changes were designed to allow the Center Director to focus on a range of critically important pedagogical responsibilities including: coaching and reflective supervision of classroom teachers; ensuring the collection, analysis, and use of child assessment data; engaging and supporting families; and, ensuring regulatory, program, and accreditation compliance.

In this example, the list of functions that were centralized across sites included the following:

- Marketing – one centralized website; one person responsible maintains the waiting list
- Enrollment and family record keeping
- Data entry
- Food program administration, food purchasing, and meal preparation
- Office and classroom purchasing
- Billing, subsidy administration and fee collection
- HR (recruitment, screening, orientation, staff files)
- Maintenance and custodial
- Transportation
- Development/Fundraising

Additional tasks that are often centralized during a multi-site re-organization include the following:

- Substitutes – recruitment and scheduling
- Staff scheduling
- Quality Assurance (including interface with licensing, QRIS, etc.)
- Professional Development (including individual staff professional development plans)
- Children’s health supports
- Family support services

Automation

Attaining economies of scale and specialization requires automation. Many tasks that ECE leaders and managers perform daily can be automated, saving significant time and also reducing the likelihood of error. Child care management software systems (CCMS) readily support key functions such as: staff scheduling; timekeeping; child enrollment and child/family record keeping; staff record keeping; invoicing and fee collection; waitlist management; and expense tracking.

For more information on selecting a child care management system, visit the [OppEx website](http://www.oppex.org), technology resources.