

Principles to Guide the State-Private Nonprofit Provider Partnership

The following key areas for Guiding Partnership Principles are intended to promote a fair, effective, responsive, transparent and accountable partnership between nonprofit providers and their state government funders.¹ The link to the Donor's Forum – Partnership Principles for a Fair and Sustainable Human Service System was used as a guide and reference to develop the Cabinet's principles.

http://www.ct.gov/opp/lib/opp/secretary/hhs_cabinet/partnershipprinciples.pdf

1. CONTRACTED SERVICES: All contracted services are based on a dynamic, data-driven system.

a. Contracted services are based on a comprehensive and transparent planning process that defines and prioritizes services.

1. Planning includes local and regional input from consumers, providers and state agency representatives.
2. Planning is coordinated across service and funding areas.
3. Planning is conducted at a minimum of every 10 years based on the most recent census data, and no more frequently than every five years.
4. Public funding is allocated across services, geography, and populations based first on existing needs, with consideration of emerging needs, service gaps, and disparities.

b. Contracted services balance best practices and good stewardship of public dollars with given resources.

1. There is a system to uniformly describe services and identify consistent terminology for use in budgeting, contracting, reporting, and evaluating.
2. Government and service providers participate in a formal process to identify, define, and communicate best, informed, and promising practices for contracted services. (e.g. DMHAS Practice Improvement Initiative)
3. In determining contracted services, government considers both short- and long-term benefits to consumers and communities, given available resources.
4. Contracted services are assessed according to the relative benefits to the consumers and communities, the number of potential beneficiaries, and the severity and/or extent of need.
5. Where communities do not have the infrastructure to deliver the necessary level or types of services, public dollars are invested in building the capacity of providers to deliver effective services.
6. Government invests in innovative services and service models for providers to achieve desired results.

¹ Adapted from: State of Connecticut: Commission on Nonprofit Health and Human Services (2011) Final Report, Special Act 10-5 (pp 79)

2. CONTRACTED PROVIDERS: The selection processes for contracted providers are transparent and competency-based.

a. The procurement for human services is a transparent and streamlined decision-making process.

1. Government establishes grant criteria and contract award processes in advance and adheres to request for proposal (RFP) processes.
2. Government consistently applies standards and policy to determine contract awards across providers.
3. Potential bidders receive adequate notice of funding opportunities at a designated state website (e.g. State agency and DAS Procurement Portal).
4. Each request for proposal includes explicit guidance on eligibility qualifications for service providers, and all qualified, interested providers have the opportunity to apply.
5. Paperwork is reduced and duplication is minimized through a shared use of a common data bank.

b. Contracts are awarded to providers that best demonstrate an ability to achieve desired outcomes through delivery of quality services.

1. Criteria for selecting providers include experience with service delivery, utilization of appropriate best practice or innovative models, investment in infrastructure, qualified staff and a track record of delivering the agreed-upon outcomes.
2. Selected providers demonstrate specific experience with, or knowledge of, the work specified, the target population(s), community, or region; community and consumer support; and cultural competency.

3. CONTRACT TERMS AND RENEWALS: Contract terms and renewals are based on community best interest and performance.

a. Contract renewal is based on provider performance and demonstration of continues ability to deliver contracted services.

1. There is a system for defining and measuring acceptable and excellent performance, including consumer satisfaction.

b. Decisions to conduct open bidding processes rather than contract renewals consider investments required to apply for, start up, deliver, administer, and evaluate services as well as impact on existing clients.

1. The renewal process minimizes duplicative paperwork by allowing providers to certify where there are no changes to corporate legal and organizational status.
2. Rebidding of contracts is based on principles associated with service quality and cost-effectiveness and fairness associated with the procurement process and on appropriate re-procurement cycles for services subject to rebidding.

c. When contracts are not renewed, the transition process takes the best interests of consumers and communities into account.

1. Timeframes for government communication about the non-renewal of a contract allow for coordination between terminated and new providers to provide continuity of care for consumers.

4. CONTRACT AMOUNTS AND TIMELY PAYMENTS: Contract amounts and timely payments are critical to maintaining a viable system.

a. Payment is based on the full cost of efficient service delivery consistent with agreed-upon quality standards.

1. Payment for services is set in a fair and transparent fashion with clear methodology for assessing the full costs of service delivery and with the opportunity for providers to provide input on the methodology.

2. Where possible and appropriate, payment may be adjusted to reflect differences of geography and/or consumer needs, to the extent that they impact the cost to deliver service.

3. Payment may be adjusted to reflect a level of quality or performance above a defined baseline.

4. Budgets are reviewed and adjusted annually to reflect changing costs of service delivery.

5. Services and other requirements to receive payment, and payment terms, are established at the beginning of the contract and renegotiated only in accordance with pre-established parameters and timeframes.

b. Contracted providers providing services in accordance with contractual requirements do not bear financial risk of late payment.

1. Payments to providers adhere to agreed-upon timeframes.

c. Payment mechanisms maximize federal dollars for the State of Connecticut.

5. REPORTING AND MONITORING: Reporting and monitoring promote efficiency and accountability.

a. Reporting and monitoring systems emphasize the level and efficacy of services for consumers.

1. Providers and government agree in advance and adhere to evaluation methods, which may include assessments by staff and consumers as well as other performance measures.

2. Providers and government agree in advance to program activity measures that provide pertinent information about the services.

b. Reporting, billing, and monitoring systems are efficient and standardized across services and government agencies.

1. Reporting requirements are scaled to the amount of funding provided.

2. Compliance requirements related to financial management are consistent with generally accepted accounting standards.

3. Government monitoring procedures for financial and organizational compliance are standardized and accepted across government agencies, with the objectives to reduce paperwork and eliminate redundant monitoring.

c. Technology efficiently serves the information needs of government and service providers, including the input, reporting, and analysis of service and billing information.

1. Government agencies use common systems for provider reporting and billing to avoid duplicate entry.
2. Government reporting systems allow providers to access the data that they have reported to the government.
3. Government reporting systems allow interface with provider information systems, including furnishing an electronic document vault/file cabinet.
4. Government invests in current technology including its own systems, systems that government requires providers to use, and the related costs of providers' systems.

d. Providers and government agree on the best techniques to demonstrate value of services and prudent use of public funds.

6. COMMUNICATION: Open communication and mutual accountability are critical for government and nonprofit providers to fulfill their shared commitment to the public good.

a. Government and providers are proactive and responsive in their communications concerning all aspects of the contracting relationship, including opportunities and challenges.

1. Government seeks input from providers about potential contract changes and requirements, as well as realistic timeframes to implement these activities.
2. Government provides information about contract changes, requirements, and deadlines within reasonable timeframes to provide for thoughtful planning and to minimize negative consequences for consumers.
3. Government engages providers in developing and implementing quality standards, outcome measurements, and reporting and billing systems.
4. Specific individuals within the government and provider structures are designated as contacts for the other party for problem solving and other communication.
5. In addition to informal communication, there are specific mechanisms that provide opportunities for regular dialogue between government and providers.

b. Government coordinates human services contracting activities across departments and agencies in order to enhance efficiency and effective service delivery for consumers.

c. Government regularly makes information on human services and their results available to the public.²

² Adapted from: Fair and Accountable Principles for a Sustainable Human Service System (Chicago, IL: Donors Forum, January 2010)