Maturation of the TA Network

"Connecting Capacity, Performance, and Impact"

The Region VIII Head Start Technical Assistance (TA) Network is well into its second year of operations.   During the first year of the new TA Network, a systematic approach to grantee Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) Plans was developed. Grantees responded positively to new criterion for reviewing and submitting comprehensive TTA plans and budgets. Second year plans are demonstrating a developmental understanding of the criterion. Grantees are effectively linking TTA plans and budgets to ongoing improvement, Administration for Children and Families (ACF) national and regional initiatives, and individual and professional development.

The following overview of Region VIII's 2005-2006 TA strategic planning process outlines work expectations and strategies for the next 24 months. This process is dynamic and impacted by frequent interactions between the TA Network and the ACF Regional Office.

Strategic Planning Process

A strategic plan is one that will cause the organization to succeed, to grow, and prosper. For the plan to succeed, it must anticipate, create, and guide change and create commitment in the organization's members.

During the months of June and July 2005, the TA Network met to develop a Strategic Plan for 2005-2007. The Regional Office TA staff and the Local Technical Assistance Specialists (TAS') met to work on common goals – developing a mission statement for the group and objectives for strategic planning. Both groups began by looking internally and externally at past events, present factors, and future goals impacting ACF, Head Start grantees, and the TA Network.

During their meeting, the TA Content Specialists and managers developed a unifying vision statement. Next, they examined strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats being faced by their group and then developed an action plan. During an onsite meeting in July, the TAS' also developed a vision statement based on where they viewed themselves, and their work and relationships within the TA Network. They then looked at the strengths and challenges their group was facing and developed a series of action steps.

The two groups met together again in July to record the challenges needed to be brought forward and considered in the unified strategic plan. Using the ACF Initiatives, Rollouts, Projects and Tasks document (see next page) as a framework, a comprehensive strategic plan was developed. The final product of the session was an integrated TA Network vision statement that was adopted by the TA team:

"A unified, cohesive learning community that radiates synergy
and resilience and facilitates capacity building."

Region VIII 2005-2007 Priorities

Over the course of several independent and collaborative meetings, ACF Federal staff and the Regional Office-based TA team identified fourteen (14) enterprises that would be part of the work of ACF and TA staff over the next 24 months. The team used the metaphor of an Air Traffic Controller to describe the status of these efforts. Some of the projects or initiatives were taking off; many were in mid-air; and some were in the process of landing. ACF and TA strategic planning participants agreed that the metaphor provided inherent cautions including — avoid mid-air and ground collisions by establishing strong communication systems for assigned workgroups. Working definitions for the following terms were identified and ascribed to each enterprise:

- Roll-out (R) — Existing products or services ready for dissemination.
- Initiative (I) — National/Regional client directives; may be in various stages of development.
- Project (P) — Unique work; has start/finish attributes; may be in various stages of development.
- Task Item (T) — Defined work in the TA contract with assigned deliverables.
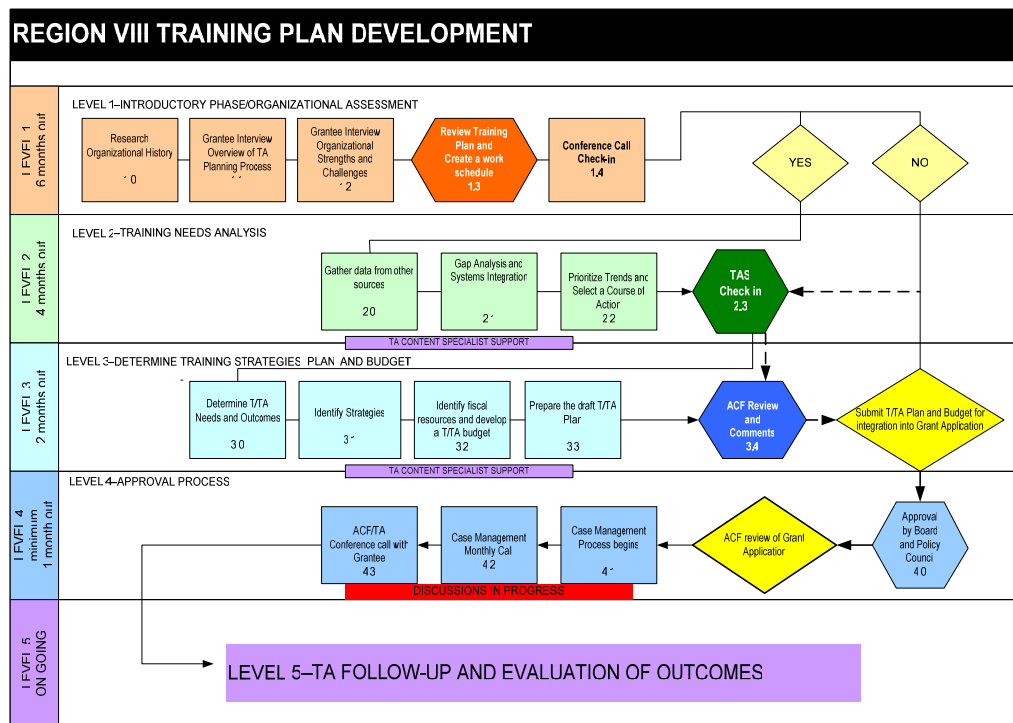
The following is a brief chartered description of the fourteen enterprises:

- **REGION VIII LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM–CHANGE MANAGEMENT SERIES (I).** Reauthorization of Head Start and Early Head Start will present grantees with new challenges and opportunities. The Change Management Initiative is a series of technical support seminars available in a variety of venues for Program Administrators, Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) Directors, Board of Directors, and Policy Councils during the 2005-2006 fiscal year.

- **BIRTH THROUGH FIVE ONGOING COLLABORATION (I).** In Fiscal Year (FY) 2004-2005, Region VIII invited HS and EHS grantees, who share a common service area, to a Regional Forum to discuss emerging and existing issues facing HS and EHS programs including: understanding Federal regulations and framework; systems integration; the joint planning process; and continuity of care for both the child and family. This initiative, with the support of the TA Network, will continue during the 2005-2006 FY.

- **HEAD START SELF-ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT (R).** *The Head Start Self-Assessment Guide: Your foundation for Building Program Excellence* is a toolkit recently distributed to local Head Start grantees. During FY 2005-2006, the Region VIII TA Network will "Roll-Out" supportive training on the Self-Assessment process and this guide.

- **STEPS TO SUCCESS (R).** This roll-out will share with local EHS and HS grantees the newly developed *Steps to Success: An Instructional Design for Early Literacy Mentor-Coaches in Head Start and Early Head Start.* Local TA Specialists will facilitate the Region VIII rollout of the new mentor-coach toolkit by sharing principles and practices; supporting grantees in articulating local Mentor-Coach efforts; and establishing local, regional, and national networks which focus on effective strategies and best practices for promoting social-emotional development.

- **PARENT-MENTORING (R).** The Head Start Family Literacy Project, a cooperative agreement between the Head Start Bureau and The National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), recently concluded its second round of Head Start Parent-Mentor Training in Region VIII. Parents who attended these interactive workshops learned new strategies to support their child's growth in language and literacy development. During the third year of the TA Network, local TA specialists will work with grantees and Parent-Mentor graduates to support grantee follow-up. Grantees will also be encouraged to access family and early literacy materials and strategies through NCFL.

- **REGIONAL TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND PLAN (P).** Under the direction of the Regional Office, the TA Network will develop a technology survey to assess the existing technology infrastructure in Region VIII. The results of this assessment will be used to make recommendations for future planning and direction. The Region is particularly concerned that many of its grantees have limited access to the internet; incompatible software and hardware; and have varied levels of technical skills. An inventory of technological assets will ascertain readiness for National or Regional initiatives, such as the Head Start Online Learning Center.

- **REGION VIII FATHERHOOD PILOT PROJECT (P).** The Region VIII Fatherhood Initiative was developed as a response to regional commitments made to local grantees after the 2004 National Head Start Institute on Father Involvement. Through the combined efforts of grantees, ACF, and TA staff, organized activities have been planned to strengthen local Head Start program leadership. These activities include the development of staff and parent understanding and skills regarding the ongoing involvement of fathers in Head Start and in the lives of their children. This initiative includes special emphasis on showcasing grantees' strategies and approaches to meeting the needs of fathers living in rural and frontier communities.

- **COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT PILOT PROJECT (P).** Region VIII will spearhead a project to develop a comprehensive handbook for Head Start and Early Head Start grantees to use when conducting a Community Assessment (CA). This handbook will provide multiple tools and resources for: planning the community assessment process; gathering and presenting information; and communicating the results of the CA with stakeholders, to help assure sound decision-making practices.

- **HIGHER EDUCATION/HEAD START-STATE COLLABORATION OFFICE LINKAGES (I).** The Regional Office has asked the TA Network to prepare an analysis of the various Head Start State Collaboration plans for FY 2005-2006. In addition, the TA Network will share its Strategic Plan and exchange ideas with Head Start-State Collaboration Directors to enhance

collaboration and ensure that mutually supportive efforts are achieved. The TA Network will also work with state higher education agencies to increase the number of EHS and HS teachers with degrees and to encourage professional development of all EHS and HS staff.

- **2nd HISPANIC INSTITUTE CONFERENCE PLANNING and FOLLOW-UP (I).** The 2006 2nd Hispanic Institute will be held in Region VIII's hub city, Denver, Colorado. The Technical Assistance Network will work collaboratively with the Head Start Bureau and the Regional Office to support the institute's activities and events. For follow-up, TA team members will support grantees in implementing strategies that improve coordination of comprehensive services and maximize resources for Hispanic children and their families.

- **TA PLAN IMPLEMENTATION–PHASE 2 (T).** The Region VIII TA Network will continue its individualized support of grantees in the preparation of Training and Technical Assistance Plans. During the second year of assisting assigned grantees, local Technical Assistance Specialists will focus on Level 4 (Transitioning and Case Conferencing) and Level 5 (Evaluation/Support Process) of the training and technical assistance plan development process. The Transitioning and Case Conferencing phase provides grantees with ACF and TA Network feedback on submitted plans, as well as scheduling ongoing support for maintenance of the grantee TTA plan. The fifth level involves exploring appropriate evaluation methods for ongoing evaluation of TTA activities, events, and plans. Grantees are actively engaged in working with the TA Network at the following levels:
  - Micro-level: Individual or small group experiences at grantees
  - Mezzo-level: Onsite technical assistance by content area specialty
  - Macro-level: Cross-Grantee Clusters, Regional Forums, or Institutes

REGION VIII TRAINING PLAN DEVELOPMENT

- **HEALTH INITIATIVES — ORAL HEALTH, IMMUNIZATION FOLLOW-UP, SMOKE CESSATION, SUBSTANCE ABUSE (I)**. Region VIII Early Head Start and Head Start grantees continue to provide high-quality health services - helping ensure families' access to medical and dental exams with follow-up treatment as needed; ensuring children are up-to-date in their immunizations; and teaching children proper nutritional practices. Region VIII is also committed to responding to identified health care need trends in communities served by Head Start and Early Head Start grantees, including, disturbing increases in methamphetamine use, smoking, and other substance abuses.

- **REGION VIII UPDATES (T)**. The TA Network will provide periodic news and updates to our ACF partners on TA activities, events, resources, and references. These news updates will be an ongoing communication enterprise sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families-Office of Early Childhood Programs.

- **REGION VIII 40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION AND RECOGNITION (P)**. The TA Network will support the Regional Office's activities and events celebrating the 40th Anniversary of Head Start. Local TA Specialists will interview program administrators and staff to identify Head Start graduates; showcase founding of Head Start programs; and gather early founder information to display at the Regional Office.

Region VIII 2005-2007 Priorities—At-A-Glance

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES–REGION VIII

2005-2006 ROLL OUTS, KEY INITIATIVES, PROJECTS and TASK ORDERS
Training and Technical Assistance Network

REGION VIII LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM–CHANGE MANAGEMENT SERIES (I)
*Directors/Executive Directors,*Board of Directors,*Policy Councils
*Management Staff (2006-2007) and *Grantee Staff (2006-2007)

BIRTH THROUGH FIVE ONGOING COLLABORATION (I)
*2005 Participants–Follow-up

HEAD START SELF-ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT (R)
*Grantees/Grantee Clusters

HEAD START MENTOR-COACHING TOOL-KIT (R)
*Grantees/Grantee Clusters

PARENT-MENTORING (R)
*Grantees/Grantee Clusters

TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND REGIONAL PLAN (P)

REGION VIII FATHERHOOD PROJECT (P)
*Pilot Project

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT PILOT PROJECT (P)

HIGHER EDUCATION/STATE COLLABORATION OFFICE LINKAGES (I)

HISPANIC INSTITUTE MEETING/FOLLOW-UP (I)

TA PLAN IMPLEMENTATION–PHASE 2 (T)

HEALTH INITIATIVES (I)
(ORAL HEALTH, IMMUNIZATION FOLLOW-UP, SMOKE CESSATION, SUBSTANCE ABUSE)

REGION VIII NEWSLETTER (T)

REGION VIII 40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION AND RECOGNITION (P)

LEGEND

I= INITIATIVE
R= ROLL-OUT
P= PROJECT
T= TASK ORDER

FOR DISCUSSION ONLY 08-02-05 v 1.5

Strategic Plan Timetable

9/04
1st Year Milestone

6/04
Governance Criterion
Checklist and
Timeline for New Training Plans
Given by RC

9/04
Grantee Notification
T/TA Plan Expectations

10/05
1st Cycle of
T/TA Plans Completed

10/06
2nd Cycle of
T/TA Plans Completed

10/07
3rd Cycle of
T/TA Plans Completed

9/03 – 8/04
Project Initiation Design
and Staffing

8/05
2nd Year Milestone

10/05
Region VIII Leadership Symposium

9/06
3rd Year Milestone

9/07
4th Year Milestone

9/03

7/04
First BAH/Bureau
Visit to Washington DC

Today

8/07

3/04
First TA On-Site Meeting
in Denver CC

5/04
First State PIR Training
QA Introduction and
TA Roundtable
Committee Established

8/04
Third TA On-Site Meeting
and First Outcomes
Cluster Training in Denver CC

6/04
Second TA On-Site Meeting
in Denver CC
(Formation of TA Handbook
and other committees)

9/04
Fourth TA On–Site Meeting
in Denver CC
(Grant Funding Cycle
Template Created Instructional
Design and 360 Evaluation Introduced)