

FROM EXPLORATION TO IMPLEMENTATION:

Building Child Care Partnerships on Campus

A strategic roadmap for community colleges

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EXPLORE

CONNECT

PLAN

IMPLEMENT

Why this conversation matters

STUDENT PARENT VOICE

Student parents

- balancing coursework and parenting
- finding and maintaining child care
- what happens when care falls through
- what support would make college more workable

THE QUESTION

What does child care access make possible for a student parent?

THE LEADERSHIP ISSUE

How can the college reduce a barrier it cannot solve alone?

THE OPPORTUNITY

Build a partnership around a clearly defined student need.

Child care is not only a child care issue

ENROLLMENT

Can students choose our college if care is inaccessible?

RETENTION

Can students remain enrolled when family needs change?

COMPLETION

Can students complete with fewer disruptions?

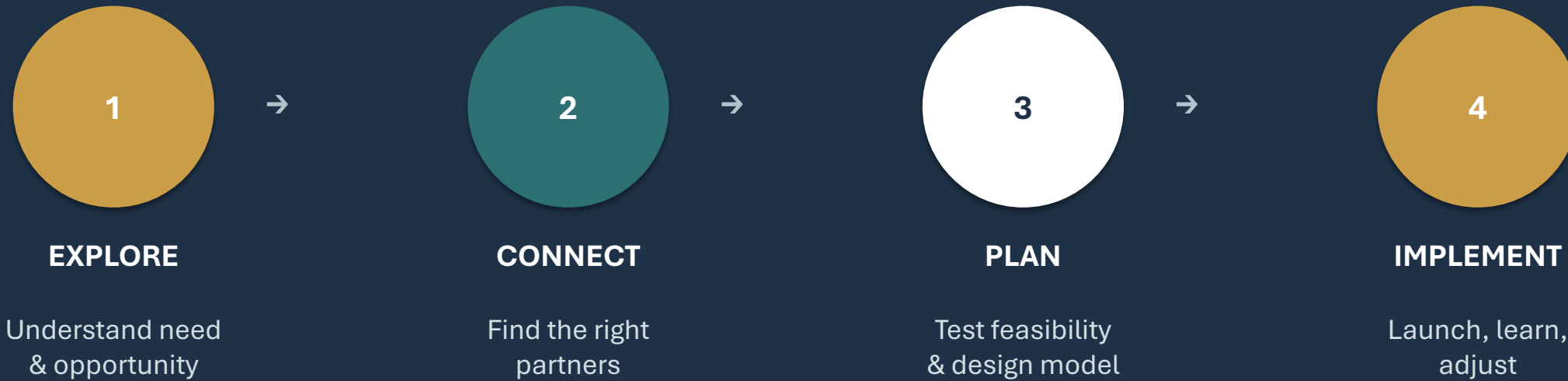
WORKFORCE

Can credentials connect parents to opportunity?

The strategic question: where does child care intersect with your college's existing goals?

THE ROADMAP

From exploration to implementation



You do not need a perfect plan to take the next step.

Stage 1: Explore

WHO

How many students are parents?

WHAT

What child care barriers are they experiencing?

WHEN

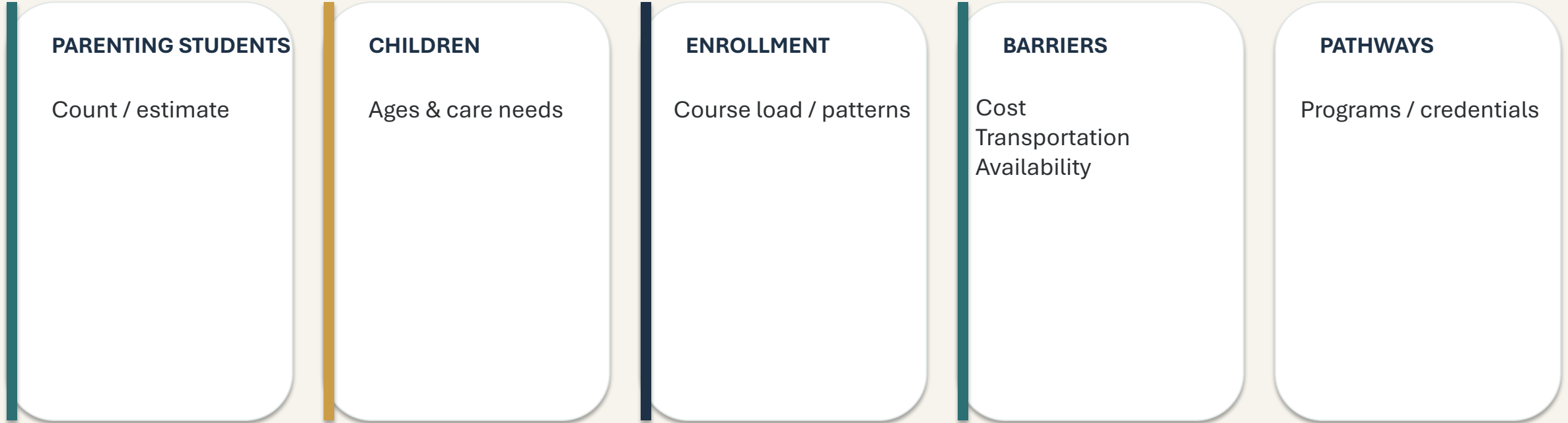
When do those barriers show up?

WHERE

What resources already exist on or near campus?

Start with the problem—not with a predetermined solution.

Make the data useful



DATA → INSIGHT → PRIORITY → ACTION

Stage 2: Connect

COLLEGE LEADERSHIP

- President
- cabinet
- student success

STUDENT VOICE

- Parenting
- students
- student leaders

CAMPUS OPERATIONS

- Facilities
- finance
- legal
- procurement

EARLY CHILDHOOD PARTNER

- Head Start
- community provider

COMMUNITY

- Workforce
- philanthropy
- local partners

The right partner is not always the first organization you think of.

Why Head Start can be a strong partner

COMMUNITY COLLEGE

- Student access
- Campus infrastructure
- Student engagement
- Institutional systems
- Workforce pathways

HEAD START / EARLY CHILDHOOD

- Early childhood expertise
- Program operations
- Family engagement
- Child development services
- Eligibility & enrollment

Partnership means combining strengths—not asking one organization to do everything.

Stage 3: Plan

NEED

What student need are we addressing?

MODEL

What could the partnership look like?

SPACE

Where could services operate?

RESOURCES

What funding and staffing are needed?

REQUIREMENTS

What licensing, contracts, approvals and standards apply?

DECISION

What must leadership authorize?

Planning turns a good idea into a shared, testable proposal.

A partnership has two systems to navigate

COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

- Facilities
- Procurement
- Finance
- Legal review
- Board / executive approvals
- Campus policies

EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM

- Head Start requirements
- Texas child care licensing, as applicable
- Health & safety
- Program operations
- Family eligibility & enrollment
- Staffing requirements

Strong planning makes the interfaces between systems visible early.

Expect barriers—and make them work items

SPACE

Facilities, location, renovations

FUNDING

Start-up and sustainable costs

LICENSING

Regulatory pathway and timing

CONTRACTS

Lease, MOU, service agreement

BUY-IN

Leadership and campus alignment

MOMENTUM

Competing priorities / transitions

Barrier → Question → Owner → Decision → Next step

Partnerships are built, not announced.



Forms and guides help. Direct communication and trust keep complex work moving.

Texas examples: different paths to partnership

PALO ALTO COLLEGE + AVANCE–SAN ANTONIO

The first Texas Kids on Campus exemplar bringing Head Start onto campus.

Case example: identifying student need aligning partners and creating campus-based access.

TARRANT COUNTY COLLEGE + CHILD CARE ASSOCIATES

A partnership bringing Head Start children onto TCC campuses.

Case example: institutional and provider leaders working through partnership development and implementation.

The models are different. The shared lesson is partnership + persistence + problem-solving.

A real implementation question

SPACE

What space is actually viable?

ACCESS

How will student parents access care?

COST

Who pays for what—and when?

GOVERNANCE

Who owns each decision?

OPERATIONS

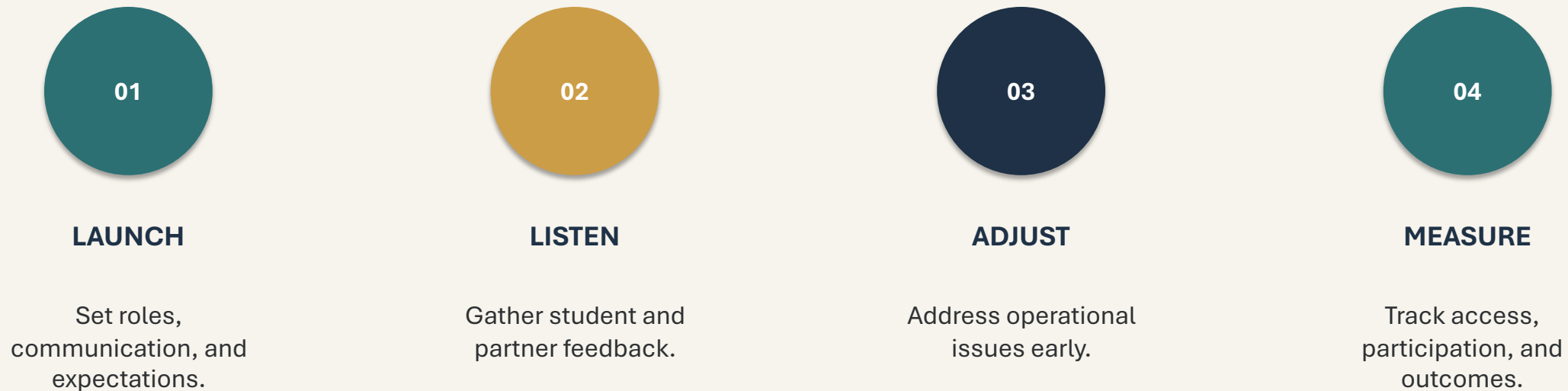
How will the college and provider coordinate?

MEASUREMENT

How will we know whether it is working?

Implementation is where assumptions become visible.

Stage 4: Implement



Implementation is not the end of partnership development. It is the beginning of learning.

What should leaders measure?

ACCESS

Students who
can access care

PARTICIPATION

Enrollment /
utilization
patterns

PERSISTENCE

Changes in
continuation
patterns

EXPERIENCE

Student & partner
feedback

PARTNERSHIP

What is working /
what needs
adjustment

Measure what the partnership is designed to change—and use the findings to improve it.

Not every college needs the same solution

EXPLORE

Needs assessment / student survey

CONNECT

Partner introductions / site visit

PLAN

Feasibility study / space review

IMPLEMENT

On-campus Head Start / provider model

EXPAND

Additional classrooms / campuses / supports

The goal is not to copy another college. It is to identify the right next model for your students.

What we are learning in Texas

1

Personal outreach matters

Initial tools and forms are useful, but many partners need more individualized support.

2

Leadership buy-in matters

Institutional alignment is often necessary to move from interest to action.

3

Site visits build understanding

Seeing a partnership in practice can help partners identify possibilities and constraints.

4

Partnerships move at different speeds

Facilities, planning cycles, transitions, and competing priorities affect timelines.

5

Keep the relationship alive

A pause does not have to end the conversation.

Leadership is the lever.

ASK

What do we know about
our student parents?

ALIGN

How does this connect
to strategic priorities?

CONNECT

Who should be at the
table?

SUPPORT

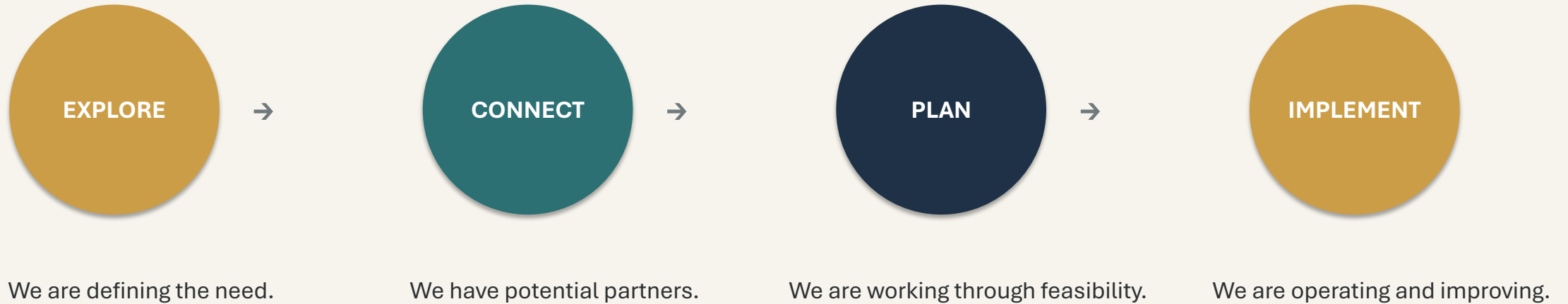
What institutional
barriers can we remove?

MEASURE

What will tell us whether
we are making progress?

Trustees: governance. Presidents: alignment and execution. Partners: shared implementation.

Where is your college?



What would moving one step forward look like?

A practical 90-day starting plan

DAYS 1–30

LISTEN

Identify student-parent need;
review available data; hear student
voice.

DAYS 31–60

CONNECT

Identify 2–3 potential partners;
hold exploratory conversations;
visit a model.

DAYS 61–90

PLAN

Define the problem, potential
model, feasibility questions,
and leadership decision
needed.

90 days can produce clarity—even if it does not produce a launch.

You do not have to figure it out alone.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Individualized support for partnership development and problem-solving.

KIDS ON CAMPUS RESOURCES

Specific guidance for community college–Head Start partnerships.

PARENTING STUDENT TOOLS

Tools to understand student-parent need and translate data into action.

TEXAS EXAMPLES

Case examples and lessons from colleges and early childhood partners.

kidsoncampus.org

Your next step

ONE PERSON

Who needs to be in the next conversation?

President
Student success leader
Facilities
Head Start partner
Student parent

ONE QUESTION

What do we need to understand before we can move forward?

ONE ACTION

What can we do in the next 30–90 days?

Do not leave with a vague intention. Leave with a next conversation.

FROM EXPLORATION TO IMPLEMENTATION

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**Start with student need.
Build the relationship.
Work through the barriers.
Take the next step.**

EXPLORE

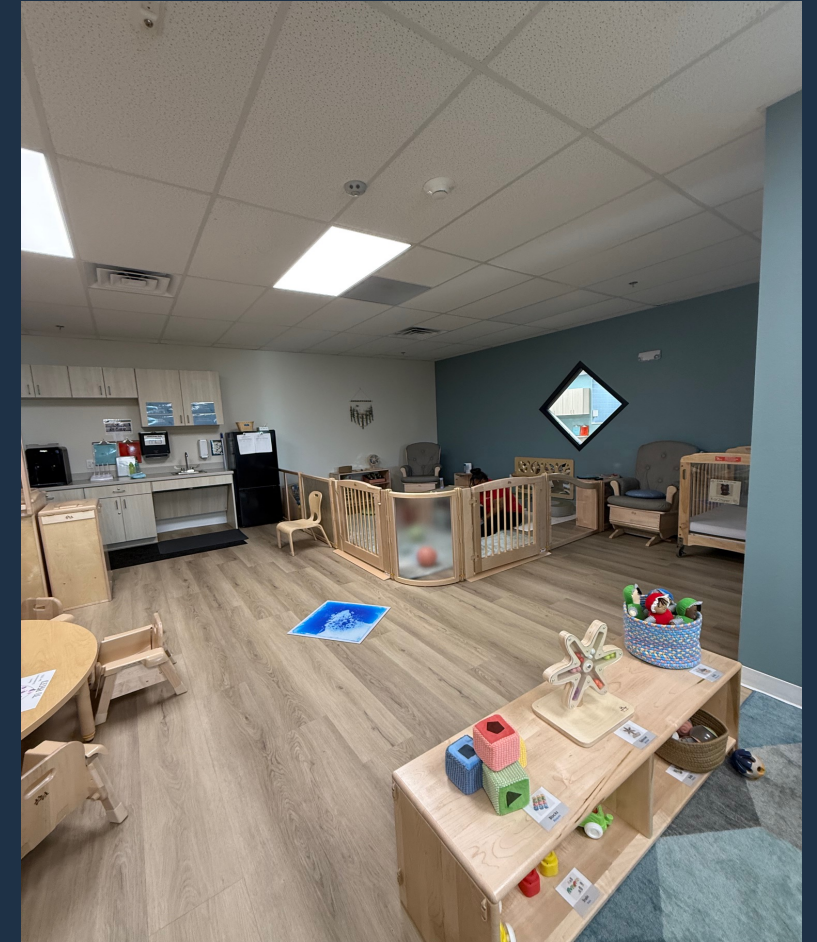
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