
TIP SHEET: DEVELOPING A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU)

Documenting your agreements and commitments are important steps not only at the onset of your partnership, but throughout the partnership relationship. Creating a memorandum of understanding is a way to track your agreements, formalize your partnership, and hold others accountable during the process. Be sure to take notes during meetings, document each partner's roles and responsibilities, and update your written agreement as needed.

WHAT IS A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING?

A memorandum of understanding (MOU or MoU) is a formal agreement between two or more parties. Organizations use MOUs to establish official partnerships. MOUs are not legally binding but they imply mutual obligation, and are preferable to informal agreements. Often, MOUs are the first steps towards a legal contract. In US law, a memorandum of understanding is synonymous with a letter of intent (LOI), which is a non-binding written agreement that implies that a binding contract is to follow.¹

As you move forward with formalizing your partnership with a school and/or partner organization, develop an MOU to cover the following:

- The vision, goals, and expectations of the partnership
- An outline of current services, staffing, and schedules
- An outline of the roles, responsibilities, and communication protocols between the school site and the partner agency.

CHECKLIST FOR DEVELOPING YOUR MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Directions: The following checklist can help you craft an MOU for your partnership. Listing who will be responsible for what can help you avoid misunderstandings and ensure continuity if there is turnover in either organization. Make sure that the signers of the MOU have the authority to commit the time or resources of each entity.

An MOU should include the following:

- CAPTION:** The caption should describe who is entering to the agreement. This is usually centered on the MOU. Below the caption you repeat what parties are entering into the agreement and a very short explanation of what is being provided.

Example: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

BETWEEN

[Insert school]

AND

[Insert Partner Organization]

This Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") is entered into between XYZ School ("School") and ABC Partner ("Provider") to provide tutoring services to school students.

SCOPE OF SERVICES: This is where you explain in detail the responsibilities of the partner organization and the responsibilities of the school and/or district. This section should cover:

- The vision, goals, and learning objectives of the program or service being provided.

Example: For the 2015-16 school year the shared goals, priorities and objectives (e.g. outcomes, strategies, utilization, focus populations, etc.) for this partnership are:

- 1) Provide a life skills class during advisory to all 10th grade students to decrease school drop-out rate and increase student self-efficacy.
- 2) Conduct 5 workshops for families, with minimum attendance of 20 parents/guardians, in order to increase family engagement and awareness around college readiness

- What each entity's roles and responsibilities are. This may include staffing, space, supplies, participant recruitment, etc.

Example: A. Partner Organization will provide:

1. A skilled facilitator to teach the life skills program.
2. Provide supplies, etc.

B. School will provide:

1. Communication to 9th grade teachers about program.
2. Classroom space for the program.

OTHER COMMITMENTS: If both entities have discussed any communication mechanisms, governance structures, conflict resolution measures, data-sharing agreements, evaluation, reporting, or any other specifics of the partnership, don't forget to list them in your MOU.

DURATION: Add when the partnership starts and when the partnership will end.

AUTHORIZATION: Lastly, have both parties sign and date the MOU. The signing of this MOU implies that the signatories will strive to reach the objectives stated in the MOU, to the best of their ability.

SAMPLE MOUS

Below are several samples to help guide you in developing your MOU:

- Coalition for Community Schools at the Institute for Educational Leadership lists samples of MOUs on their resource page: http://www.communityschools.org/resources/default.aspx?F_Category=&F_LeadershipRole=&F_Title=Memorandum&F_Keywords=33&F_ToDate=&F_FromDate=&F_Organization=&F_ResultType=
- Seattle School District is currently working on updating their MOU template. You can access the most up to date one here: <http://www.seattleschools.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=627&pageId=912641>
- Oakland Unified School District has a sample Letter of Agreement on their tools page at <http://www.ousd.org/Page/11101>.

ⁱ Retrieved from <http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/memorandum-of-understanding-MOU-or-MoU>.