Memorandum of Understanding:

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) is an agreement between two or more parties that describes a convergence of efforts and the principles of a working relationship. A MOU is not inherently legally binding, unless it contains the appropriate legal elements.

**What’s in a Memorandum of Understanding?**

Often, an MOU contains the following elements:

* **Parties Involved**: Who does this MOU pertain to? Who is involved in the agreement?
* **Purpose**: Why is the MOU being created?
* **Scope**: What is the extent of the work to be accomplished governed by the MOU?
* **Objectives**: What are the intentions of the work governed by the MOU
* **Financials**: What are the resources contributed and received by each party?
* **Operational**: What are the roles and responsibilities of each of the parties involved? What are the operating principles for an effective working relationship?
* **Terms, Termination, Legal**: How long is the MOU in effect? How can the MOU be terminated? Is there any additional legal wording that needs to be included?
* **Signatures**: All necessary partners involved in the MOU sign the document.

**When might you use an MOU?**

Memorandums of understanding, unless specifically designed to be, are not legally binding nor initiate a contractual agreement between the parties involved. In situations where partners are weary of or unwilling to take part in a legally binding agreement, an MOU could be an effective yet less threatening alternative. Because partners are not legally required to carry out the terms in an MOU, the integrity of parties involved to adhere to the agreed upon objectives and operating principles is extremely important. MOUs within a cradle to career partnership often occur between different organizations in the partnership (i.e. between the anchor entity and partner organization), but can also occur between different groups in the

accountability structure (i.e. between the collaborative action networks and the leadership table).