

Strategic Use of Consultants: An Interactive Guide for Head Start and Early Head Start Leaders



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Cultural and Linguistic
Responsiveness

Impacting Change Across Program Areas

Using Consultants to Impact Change in the Area of Working with Dual Language Learners and Children from Culturally Diverse Backgrounds

Head Start and Early Head Start leaders seeking to strengthen their program's services to dual language learners (DLLs) and children from culturally diverse backgrounds should consider recruiting and hiring consultants who have the following knowledge, competencies, and experience:

- An understanding of the importance of culture and family language as the foundations for children's success in school and life
- An understanding of young children's capabilities to master multiple cultures and languages
- An understanding of how children's knowledge and skills in their home language can support the acquisition of their second language, making the second-language learning process effective and efficient
- The ability to create high-quality, additive, early environments and experiences that support children to develop multiple languages and to function in more than one culture
- The ability to effectively collaborate with families to actively promote children's home language development throughout childhood
- An appreciation for how children can demonstrate their skills, abilities, and knowledge in any language, including their home language and English
- The ability to effectively engage Head Start program systems in providing services to children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- The ability to support and facilitate a comprehensive approach to high-quality language experiences and a planned language approach for *all* enrolled children
- Experience with the community served by the program
- An understanding of the recommendations of the Office of Head Start (OHS) and the National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness (NCCLR) for working with children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Sample Program Goals and Consultant Roles

1. **Program Goal:** To conduct program evaluation and develop an implementation plan toward achieving school readiness goals in the areas of home and English language development for children who are DLLs and their families.

Consultant Role: The consultant uses the Program Preparedness Checklist¹ developed by the NCCLR to gather current information regarding the program's existing systems and services for DLLs. The consultant also

- reviews the program's school readiness goals pertaining to DLLs and identifies strengths, challenges, and opportunities for developing a comprehensive plan of support for DLLs and their families;
- engages a diverse group of staff, family members, and stakeholders in developing a plan for using data the program has gathered related to serving DLLs, including information from the Program Preparedness Checklist; and
- works with the management team, governing board, and Policy Council in implementing and evaluating these new plans to understand the effectiveness of the program in supporting DLLs and their families and in achieving school readiness goals.

2. **Program Goal:** To develop a system for professional development/capacity building of staff in the areas of home and English language development among DLLs.

Consultant Role: A consultant with expertise in supporting children who are DLLs works with program staff to develop a comprehensive, multi-year professional development plan that includes an evaluation component and is flexible enough to accommodate changes based on evaluation or guidance from stakeholders. The consultant ensures the professional development plan is grounded in current and salient research from the field and includes multiple, ongoing modes of professional development delivery, such as mentor-coaching, that integrate adult learning principles. The consultant incorporates messages, materials, and activities into the professional development plan that reflect the most current Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs from the Office of Head Start; NCCLR's key messages and best practices in working with DLLs and

¹The Program Preparedness Checklist can be retrieved at: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic>

families; the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework; and state early learning guidelines.

- 3. Program Goal:** To enhance classroom and family/community partnership practices, especially adult-child interactions, in support of children's home language development and/or English language development.

Consultant Role: The consultant assesses the classroom quality and teacher-child interactions using a well-known measure (e.g., the Classroom Assessment Scoring System [CLASS]) and/or data from a similar measure. The consultant develops materials and resources for staff that reflect best practices and research findings, as well as an understanding of the recommendations of OHS and NCCLR regarding working with children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Finally, the consultant offers a tiered system of support that is individualized to meet the capacity-building needs of classroom staff and that includes a mentor-coaching model of support.

- 4. Program Goal:** To develop an efficient and effective system of screening and assessment for DLL preschoolers that ensures compliance with the requirements of the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework (HSCDELF).

Consultant Role: The consultant, in collaboration with program staff and families, develops a comprehensive screening and assessment plan that includes a process for collecting and analyzing data to support individual children, classrooms, and the program's school readiness goals. The consultant also provides a communication plan and tools that allow staff to share data with families, other staff, and stakeholders. To achieve this, the consultant should be familiar with

- the program's planned language approach and current practices in screening and assessment;
- recommendations and guidelines from such national organizations as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) pertaining to the screening and assessment of DLLs;
- key resources on choosing screening and assessment tools for DLLs²; and

²See the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation's Compendium on Assessments and Developmental Screeners for Young Children

(www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/hs/dev_screeners/reports/screeners_final.pdf) and *Assessing Spanish-English Bilingual Preschoolers: A Guide to Best Approaches and Measures* by Sandra Barrueco, Michael Lopez, Christine Ong, and Patricia Lozano (2012).

- the recommendations of NCCLR regarding screening and assessment for DLLs.

5. Program Goal: To ensure that the program curriculum is reflective and inclusive of the cultures of all children, families, and staff.

Consultant Role: The consultant works in collaboration with program staff and parents to review the current curriculum to ensure that it is reflective and inclusive of the cultures of all enrolled children, their families, and staff. The consultant conducts the review via a systematic process, involving key program and community stakeholders and using an appropriate evaluation tool, such as the NCCLR's Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Express Checkout Worksheet³. The consultant also offers a wide variety of curriculum options for the program to consider if the program chooses to add to its existing curriculum and/or change the curriculum to better reflect the culture of all children, families, and staff in the program.

³The Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Express Checkout Worksheet can be retrieved at eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/docs/express-checkout-worksheet.pdf