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

Text Version

This interactive guide is designed to help Head Start and Early Head Start leaders better utilize consultants to bring lasting program change and quality improvement.

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Activity 1: Setting the Context

1.1 Introduction

Head Start and Early Head Start leaders—including directors, managers, or governing body or Policy Council members—engage with consultants in many ways.

Frequently, they enlist consultants to provide long-term content-area expertise and oversight in the various service areas, such as nutrition and mental health.

Other times, they hire consultants to deliver targeted training and technical assistance (T/TA), to build staff capacity, and to support program change and quality improvement.

1.2 Thoughts from the Field

This interactive guide supports Head Start and Early Head Start leaders in utilizing evidence-based T/TA strategies and becoming wise consumers of consultant services.

To begin, let's consider the following quotes from three Head Start directors knowledgeable about these best practices.

These administrators were asked the following.

What do you look for when hiring a consultant? What recent experiences have you had hiring, retaining, and overseeing consultant services?

1.3 Quotes

"I've learned that in order to find the 'right' consultant, I have to be absolutely confident that I know what we want and, therefore, what we need. Consultants need to know we will be operating off of the agency's agenda, not theirs."

Pamm Shaw, Director, YMCA of the Central Bay Area Head Start/Early Head Start; Berkeley, CA

"Not every program is the same. If consultants are not knowledgeable about our community and program context, I feel they would be limited in what they could offer us. We look for consultants whose services or work products I or trusted advisors have viewed. Consultants should demonstrate knowledge and experience, be timely and efficient, and bottom line, be worth the money expended."

Dr. Al Martinez, Director, Denver's Great Kids Head Start; Denver, CO

"I suspect there are many Head Start directors like myself who have a passion for what we are doing. When looking for a consultant, I want to know if the consultant is passionate about what they can do for our program."

Doug Jacobson, Executive Director, TREC Badlands Head Start: Prenatal to Five; Belle Fourche, SD

1.4 What About American Indian and Alaska Native Programs and Migrant and Seasonal Programs?

While the lessons in this guide are important for leaders of all Head Start and Early Head Start programs, those who manage American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) programs face unique circumstances and issues in serving their children, families, and communities.

Read what different leaders of AIAN programs and MSHS programs have to say about their experiences hiring, retaining, and overseeing consultant services.

These perspectives will be offered throughout the guide to provide more information about the ways that AIAN and MSHS programs work effectively with consultants.

AIAN Perspective

"When seeking a consultant to interface with tribal government, be sure that the consultant fully understands the government-to-government relationship and the types of responsibilities facing tribal leaders. At the same time, be sure the consultant is prepared to impress upon tribal leaders the importance of Head Start and their role in overseeing the program."

MSHS Perspective

"Try your best to find a consultant who not only has the expertise you need but also has firsthand knowledge and a deep appreciation of migrant culture and the mission of migrant-seasonal programs.

Consultants have to recognize that 51 percent of enrolled children in migrant programs across the country are infants and toddlers, and that these programs have served infants and toddlers since 1969! They need to know that the migrant-seasonal program year is defined by the agricultural season and not the school-year calendar, and that program hours are flexible, depending on the harvest and families' work schedules.

Programs sometimes can be open eight to 12 hours per day during the harvest season. Unlike many other Head Start families, migrant-seasonal families typically consist of two-parent households and are multigenerational. Consultants also need to know that most migrant-seasonal families speak Spanish, and some speak only indigenous languages.

I advise all my colleagues who are looking to hire consultants to keep their program goals at the forefront. They need to begin by figuring out what they want to change in their program before they start looking for a consultant to do the job. If your candidate happens to have the necessary expertise and skills but does not represent your program's culture, your next step is to determine with whom he or she can partner to ensure that the work is culturally compatible. This takes time, and you should factor this in when developing your consultant agreement."

1.5 T/TA Program Planning and T/TA Planning

Today, Head Start and Early Head Start leaders are encouraged to use T/TA dollars and other program resources to arrange for individualized T/TA services tailored to the needs of the their program.
In doing this, program leaders must ensure that:
- Program planning and T/TA planning are closely linked, and
- T/TA plans, once implemented, result in measurable program improvements.

MSHS Perspective

"Last year our goal was to improve our community assessment and we decided to hire a consultant to help us with this process. This was no easy task. In order to be of assistance, the consultant had to be familiar with the unique nature of migrant programs. We have very different methods from those of other Head Start programs for determining the number of children and families we will serve. For example, our methods include interviewing local farmers so that we have information on the upcoming growing season and can develop our plans accordingly."

1.6 Crafting T/TA Plans

Program leaders must craft dynamic T/TA plans that incorporate professional development and T/TA strategies with a proven track record. They also must engage effective consultants, manage the consultant relationships, and provide follow-up support to staff to ensure that T/TA services result in positive change for the program.

Think about how your program has engaged consultants in the past. Please indicate which of the following practices you would most like to strengthen, and review the feedback on your choices:

- Crafting T/TA plans that incorporate evidence-based T/TA strategies
- Engaging effective consultants to carry out your T/TA plan
- Drafting contracts that support the consulting relationship
- All of the above

Crafting T/TA Plans Feedback

Crafting T/TA Plans
Fantastic! Incorporating a variety of evidence-based T/TA strategies is critical for success. Review Activity 2: "Trying a Fresh Approach," for more information on this topic.

Engaging Effective Consultants
Wonderful! Engaging knowledgeable and skilled consultants can help you achieve your program goals. Review Activity 3: "Choosing the Right Person," for more information on this topic.

Drafting Contracts
Excellent! You understand that a well-formulated contract is essential for ensuring successful consultant relationships. Review Activity 4: "Creating Strong Contracts," for more information on this topic.

All of the Above
Congratulations! By crafting T/TA plans that incorporate evidence-based strategies, engaging consultants suited to your program's needs, and creating strong consultant contracts, you will increase your chances of meeting program goals and outcomes. Review Activities 2, 3, and 4 for more information on these topics.

1.7 The Current Context

Recent changes in Head Start policy make it increasingly important to understand best practices related to consultants. In January 2010, the Office of Head Start issued an [Information Memorandum on the Head Start Training and Technical Assistance System](#), which included the following statement:

As Head Start grantees, your organizations form the most critical component of Head Start's National Training and Technical Assistance System. At least 50 percent of all T/TA dollars are provided directly to grantees. Head Start grantees have the discretion to use this money to establish agreements with community or national experts, institutions of higher learning, or private consultants in order to make improvements identified by your organization.

1.8 Head Start Act and Head Start Program Performance Standards

Head Start leaders should be aware of how the Head Start Act and Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) pertain to their work with consultants.

Print the Head Start Act and Head Start Program Performance Standards [PDF, 74KB] handout, which highlights portions of the Act and Performance Standards pertaining to the use of consultants. Make notes on the document as you read, and answer the following questions:

- What are the new pieces of information you learned from reviewing the Standards?
- Does this document contain information you would like to share with members of your program staff?
- Do you need to change any of your current program practices to comply with the regulation regarding standards of conduct that applies to staff, consultants, and volunteers?

1.9 Extend Your Learning

The following resources provide additional information about working with consultants:

- Read Why Hire A Consultant? from the Georgia Center for Nonprofits. This document succinctly describes the benefits a consultant can provide to a nonprofit organization and suggests steps an organization can take to secure consultant services.

- Visit the Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation website to access up-to-date materials and research on using mental health consultants in early child care settings.

- View the Building a Better Child Care Through Health Consultation to learn how child care health consultants can help improve the health and safety of early child care settings.

AIAN Perspective

"As a director of a tribal program, I have always looked to hire consultants who are native or who have extensive experience working with native programs. Sometimes I find that the consultants on whom I have relied in the past do not have the skills needed to move the program in new directions. I have learned that spending time with new consultants acquainting them with the program is time well spent. When I work in partnership with consultants to ensure that the ideas they present make sense for our program, our tribal leaders and Head Start staff are much more accepting of their ideas."

Activity 2: Trying a Fresh Approach

2.1 Consider Something New

Before you hire a consultant, you need to first be clear about what you want to accomplish and how you want to accomplish it.

Annually, Head Start and Early Head Start programs commit to a number of goals to improve services, systems, and the knowledge and skills of their staff. They also develop training and technical assistance (T/TA) plans aligned with these goals.

Yet many programs over-rely on certain T/TA strategies and ignore others when designing and implementing their plans. As a result, they often find themselves disappointed with the outcomes.

You should carefully consider new T/TA strategies to help you reach your goals. When you begin to consider new strategies, you are setting a course for change.

2.2 Introducing Adult Learning Theory

Are your current T/TA strategies getting you the results that you had hoped for? To achieve your program goals and improve your outcomes, choose strategies that are firmly aligned with adult learning principles.

Research tells us that adults learn more in certain learning environments than in others.

Dr. Malcolm Knowles, a leading American scholar of adult education, received national recognition for his influence on how we apply the theory of adult learning, or andragogy, to our work with adult learners. He helped us to recognize that adults benefit most from experiences that are problem based and collaborative rather than didactic.

How does it apply?

2.3 Knowles T/TA Strategies

Knowles' theory teaches us that T/TA strategies that emphasize greater equality between the teacher and learner are likely to be most effective. His theory also suggests that T/TA strategies must connect with adult students' work and lives.

In the following activity, you will consider six research-based adult learning principles. These principles can help you to envision the characteristics that need to be evident in the T/TA strategies you use.

Review each of the six adult learning principles to learn more. Think about how each applies to your T/TA strategies. You can also download the Adult Learning Principles handout [PDF, 176 KB].

Adult Learning Principles:

Adults are internally motivated and self-directed
Adult learners will resist learning when they feel others are imposing information, ideas, or actions on them (Fidishun, 2000). Adults need to be free to direct themselves. Training and technical assistance providers must actively involve participants in the learning process and serve as facilitators rather than didactic teachers. They must guide participants rather than supply them with facts. They must get participants' perspectives and give them the flexibility to work on projects that reflect their interests.

Adults draw upon their own life experiences and knowledge
Adults have accumulated a wealth of life experiences and knowledge—from school, work, and family life—that can be a resource for their own learning as well at the learning of others. Consultants must help adults connect their experiences to the theories and concepts that are introduced during T/TA activities. Consultants also should encourage collaboration and idea-sharing among adult learners.

Adults are goal-oriented
Adults appreciate learning when it is tied to specific professional or personal goals. They desire well-organized T/TA experiences that will help them attain their goals. Consultants should identify learning objectives, follow clear agendas, and show participants how the activities are helping them to achieve their goals.

Adults are relevancy-oriented
Adults must be able to see how learning connects to their work. Consultants should become familiar with the Head Start program and be able to facilitate appropriate connections. They should demonstrate how the theory and content of the learning relates to participants' work.

Adults are practical
Adults will want to focus on those aspects of the T/TA that will help them solve problems in their work. They like hands-on exercises that simulate real-world situations. Consultants must design concrete learning activities and assist Head Start staff in seeing explicitly how the information will be useful to them on the job.

Adults need to be shown respect
Adults need to be given a strong voice during T/TA experiences. Consultants should establish a learning atmosphere within the Head Start program where adults are treated as equals and encouraged to share their opinions, experiences, and knowledge.

2.4 Adult Learning Principles: Matching Activity 1

Match the adult learning principle with the example of T/TA approaches and consultant skills that mirrors that principle by writing the principle letter next to the example that goes with it. When you are done, move to the next page to check your answers.

Adult Learning Principals:
Principal A - Adults need to be shown respect.
Principal B - Adults are goal-oriented.
Principal C - Adults are practical.

Example 1: T/TA is designed to be concrete, useful, and easily applied to real-world experiences. Consultants assist Head Start staff to see how the information can be applied to day-to-day responsibilities.   **Principle: ___**

Example 2: T/TA is closely aligned with the goals of the program and the professional development goals of participants. Consultants have clear agendas and outcomes embedded in their work.   **Principle: ___**

Example 3: T/TA approaches give staff the opportunity to share their expertise. Consultants regard learners as colleagues and respect the contributions that participants bring to the learning process.   **Principle: ___**

Matching Activity 1: Answer Key

Example 1: T/TA is designed to be concrete, useful, and easily applied to real-world experiences. Consultants assist Head Start staff to see how the information can be applied to day-to-day responsibilities.

Principle C – Adults are practical.

Example 2: T/TA is closely aligned with the goals of the program and the professional development goals of participants. Consultants have clear agendas and outcomes embedded in their work.

Principle B – Adults are goal-oriented.

Example 3: T/TA approaches give staff the opportunity to share their expertise. Consultants regard learners as colleagues and respect the contributions that participants bring to the learning process.

Principle A – Adults need to be shown respect.

2.5 Adult Learning Principles Matching Activity 2

Match the adult learning principle with the example of T/TA approaches and consultant skills that mirrors that principle by writing the Principal letter next to the example that goes with it. When you are done, move to the next page to check your answers.

Adult Learning Principals:
Principal D - Adults are relevancy-oriented.
Principal E - Adults are internally motivated and self-directed.
Principal F - Adults need to draw upon their own life experiences and knowledge.

Example 4: T/TA approaches are designed to provide participants with options so they can choose projects that interest them. Consultants are skilled at facilitating discussions and rarely lecture to participants in a didactic way.

Principle: ___

Example 5: T/TA is designed to engage participants in discussions about their own life and work experiences. Consultants encourage collaboration and help participants connect their personal experiences with the new information being shared.

Principle: ___

Example 6: T/TA approaches are chosen because they are a good fit for the program. Consultants take the time to become familiar with the Head Start program so they know the context within which they are working and the ways their information can be applied.

Principle: ___

Matching Activity 2: Answer Key

Example 4: T/TA approaches are designed to provide participants with options so they can choose projects that interest them. Consultants are skilled at facilitating discussions and rarely lecture to participants in a didactic way.

Principle E - Adults are internally motivated and self-directed.

Example 5: T/TA is designed to engage participants in discussions about their own life and work experiences. Consultants encourage collaboration and help participants connect their personal experiences with the new information being shared.

Principle F - Adults need to draw upon their own life experiences and knowledge.

Example 6: T/TA approaches are chosen because they are a good fit for the program. Consultants take the time to become familiar with the Head Start program so they know the context within which they are working and the ways their information can be applied.

Principle D - Adults are relevancy-oriented.

2.6 Aligning Adult Learning Principles with T/TA Strategies

Some T/TA strategies reflect adult learning principles better than others do, thereby maximizing results. When you adopt approaches to T/TA that incorporate adult learning principles, your staff will be highly engaged and sustained program change is more likely to occur. Keep this in mind when selecting T/TA strategies for your program.

Access the Aligning Adult Learning Principles with T/TA Strategies [PDF, 184KB] handout and follow these steps:

1. Use the first column to identify strategies that best reflect adult learning principles.
2. Use the second column to identify strategies that you will consider using in the future.

AIAN Perspective

"There are a lot of great consultants who work with tribal programs. I realized not so long ago that my T/TA plan was filled with one-shot workshops. I started to think about expanding the consultants' work so that they could engage with my staff in an ongoing way to make sure real change occurred. What a difference this has made!"

2.7 Putting It into Practice

Now that you've learned about the importance of aligning adult learning principles with T/TA strategies and you've committed to trying new evidence-based strategies, let's try putting it into practice.

The following activity will help you think about the best strategies to use in your next T/TA plan. Read the sample program goals and choose the T/TA strategy you think would be most effective for achieving each goal. When you are done see how you did in the following pages.

MSHS Perspective

"Because migrant programs run from dawn to dusk, there are limited opportunities for teachers to leave the classroom to participate in trainings. In our search for alternate ways to support our teachers' professional development, we discovered mentor-coaching. What a difference it made! We recommend it to all our migrant colleagues. Teachers began to receive ongoing classroom-based support and implemented new practices that have really made a difference."

2.8 Program Goal Scenario 1

Program Goal: The program will improve teacher-child interactions in the area of instructional supports to positively impact child outcomes throughout the program. Which T/TA strategy would you choose? When you are done, check your answer on the next page.

- **Mentor-Coaching:** Internal or external specialists interact one-on-one with staff to help them reflect on their practice and connect research and theories to their work. These mentors, or "educational guides," capitalize on staff strengths and focus on children's learning and outcomes.

- **On-Site Workshops and Presentations:** Workshop presenters or program experts offer training to staff on topics of common need or interest. This can include in-service and pre-service training.

- **Reflective Supervision:** Staff members meet with a consultant on a regular basis to explore their experiences, thoughts, and feelings related to their work.

Feedback for Program Goal Scenario 1:

Mentor-Coaching: Excellent choice. Coaching and mentoring strategies are excellent ways to individualize training for staff and focus on children's learning and outcomes. You might also consider reflective supervision, in which staff members meet with a consultant on a regular basis to explore experiences, thoughts, and feelings related to their work.

On-Site Workshops and Presentations: This strategy might be effective, but a better choice in this situation is to consider mentor-coaching or reflective supervision.

Workshops and presentations can be useful in providing staff with initial information on the topic of instructional supports but are less effective in building individual staff skills. If you do go that route, be sure that the consultant you choose exhibits behaviors aligned with adult learning principles. Also, workshops and presentations should include structured follow-up activities so that the learning takes root.

Reflective Supervision: Excellent choice. Reflective supervision enables instructional staff members to explore their experiences and feelings related to their work and consider their own ideas for improving their skills.

2.9 Program Goal Scenario 2

Program Goal: The program will strengthen data management systems so that all staff have access to reliable data that can be used for decision making at the classroom and program levels. Which T/TA strategy would you choose?

- **Expert Consultation:** Consultants are hired for their knowledge and expertise to carry out a specific service for a limited time. These consultants often provide an extra pair of hands and are used to develop community assessments, design written plans, assist in the classroom, and more.

- **State, Regional, and National Conferences:** Staff members attend off-site staff training opportunities that typically utilize keynote, panel, and workshop sessions to introduce participants to new information. Conferences also allow staff to network with colleagues from different settings.

- **Process Consultation:** Content and systems specialists work with teams to examine issues and practices and determine actions to enhance program capacities. This highly individualized technical assistance draws on staff knowledge and experience.

Feedback for Program Goal Scenario 2:

Expert Consultation Choice: This strategy might be effective, but a better choice in this situation is to consider process consultation so that staff will be engaged in the decision-making process and have the opportunity to build their capacity to help implement the system once it is in place.

State, Regional, and National Conferences: This strategy might be effective. Attending the right conference can provide participants the opportunity to learn about different commercial data systems and how they are being utilized by other Head Start programs. A better choice in this situation is to consider process consultation so that staff will be engaged in the decision-making process and have the opportunity to build their capacity to help implement the system once it is in place.

Process Consultation: Excellent choice. Process consultation will draw upon the expertise that already exists in the program, engage staff in the decision-making process, and build their capacity so they can be actively involved in implementing the new data system.

2.10 Program Goal Scenario 3

Program Goal: The program will improve the professional development system by providing professional development opportunities that meet the diverse needs of staff. Which T/TA strategy would you choose?

- **Communities of Practice:** Groups of colleagues who share a concern or passion meet regularly to explore evidence-based strategies and new approaches. The process is organic and usually defined by the group in an ongoing way.

- **Staggered Orientation:** Multiple strategies (training, follow-up meetings, and ongoing supervision) are implemented over time to support staff in adopting new policies, practices, and products (e.g. curriculum resources and child assessment tools).

- **College Courses:** Staff members take academic courses that offer college credits and ideally link to paths or schedules of advancement in a career.

Feedback for Goal Scenario 3:

Communities of Practice: Excellent choice. Communities of practice are an excellent way to meet the professional development needs of diverse and seasoned staff. In fact, all of these choices are good. Staggered orientation will meet the needs of newly hired staff while college courses will support staff who need to build core knowledge and competencies. College courses can also help your program meet staff qualifications outlined in the Head Start Act.

Staggered Orientation: Excellent choice. Staggered orientation will help meet the needs of newly hired staff. In fact, all of these choices are good. Communities of practice will meet the needs of your more seasoned staff. College courses will support staff who need to build core knowledge and competencies. College courses will also help your program meet staff qualifications outlined in the Head Start Act.

College Courses: Excellent choice. College courses will support staff who need to build core knowledge and competencies and will help your program meet staff qualifications outlined in the Head Start Act. In fact, all of these choices are good. Communities of practice will meet the needs of your more seasoned staff, and staggered orientation will meet the needs of newly hired staff.

2.11 Expanding Your Use of Strategies

Congratulations!
Now that you've thought about how certain T/TA strategies may be more effective than others in achieving specific program goals, you will want to have the list of T/TA strategies at your fingertips when developing your T/TA plan.

Read the Key T/TA Strategies [PDF, 167KB] handout for a list of T/TA strategies that other Head Start programs across the country have successfully implemented.

MSHS Perspective

"Consultants need to be willing to adapt their strategies and materials so they are a good fit for your program. In the migrant community, we have a special term to describe the process of adapting and modifying resources so they are applicable to the migrant experience. The term is 'migrantize.' Make sure the consultants you hire are prepared to "migrantize' their approaches and resources so that they can easily be applied to your program."

2.12 Extend Your Learning

The following resources may be useful as you consider fresh T/TA strategies and effective ways to utilize consultants:

- Read *The Adult Learner (7th edition, 2011)* by Malcolm S. Knowles, Elwood F. Holton, and Richard A. Swanson. This update of Knowles' pioneering classic explores the evolution and application of Knowles' theory of andragogy while also reflecting the latest advancement in the field of adult learning.
- Read the paper entitled "Andragogy for Adult Learners in Higher Education," Thompson, M. A., & Deis, M. (2004). Proceedings of the Academy of Accounting and Financial Studies, 9(1), 107–112, to learn more about Knowles' principles of andragogy and how they can be applied to instructional methods for adult learners.

3. Choosing the Right Person

3.1 Consultant Recruitment Strategies

Does your Head Start or Early House Start program use the same consultants year after year? Does your program return to the same methods to recruit consultants?

It may be time to expand your recruitment strategies to find additional consultants better suited for your program's current needs.

Many program leaders have found the following recruitment strategies to be effective:
- Advertising the position
- Seeking qualified candidates from your organization's consultant pool
- Making the most of talent within your organization
- Soliciting the advice of Head Start colleagues and partners

MSHS Perspective

"When I first began at Head Start, I always advertised for consultants who spoke Spanish, since that is the primary language of the families in our program. Then I began to think about the individual consultant assignments and discovered I could widen my consultant pool by focusing on what the consultants needed to do and with whom they needed to communicate. Many of our staff are bilingual, so it is not always important that the consultants speak Spanish. What is more important is that the consultants I hire have experience that relates to my program goals, understand the culture of migrancy, and can provide cultural continuity."

3.2 Recruitment Strategies

Review each recruitment strategy to learn more. Then choose a frequency for each one to indicate how often you use each strategy.

Recruitment Strategies:

Advertise the Position: Advertising for a consultant position allows you to cast a wide net and attract applicants who may otherwise be overlooked. Be sure to consider the cost of running advertisements, and think carefully about where to place the ads to ensure they reach your target audience.

- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Never

Seek Qualified Candidates from Your Organization's Consultant Pool: Many large organizations and public entities manage their own consultant pool and have internal procedures for using consultants from within and outside the established pool. Organizations that manage a consultant pool typically screen and pre-qualify consultants to ensure that they meet the base-line credentials established by the organization.

If your organization maintains such a pool, you are free to peruse the list and select consultants you want to contact. You can also seek feedback from colleagues who have previous experience working with the consultants you're considering. Drawing from the consultant pool may not be your best strategy if the candidates do not have the specific qualifications you seek or do not appear to be a good match for the program.

- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Never

Make the Most of Talent within Your Organization: Before seeking the support of outside consultants, you may want to think first about the talent that surrounds you. There may be individuals within the Head Start program or within other parts of the organization who could effectively help you advance your program goals. Explore ways that internal talent might be temporarily deployed to the Head Start program to provide consulting services.

- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Never

Solicit the Advice of Head Start Colleagues and Partners: One of the more common ways to learn about talented consultants is to ask trusted colleagues. Colleagues can provide an honest appraisal of consultants they have hired and help you determine if they might be good matches for your program. See the Consultant Recruitment Strategies [PDF, 236 KB] handout for a list of individuals and organizations you should consider contacting.

- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Never

Frequency Feedback

The chances of selecting a great consultant are increased when you have a number of candidates from which to choose. Could increasing the variety of recruitment strategies you employ expand your candidate pool?

Take a look again at your answers. Can you identify any changes that would be beneficial?

Changes You Would Make

Recruitment Strategies:

Advertise the Position

- I should do this more often!
- I don't need to change this.

Seek Qualified Candidates from Your Organization's Consultant Pool

- I should do this more often!
- I don't need to change this

Make the Most of Talent within Your Organization

- I should do this more often!
- I don't need to change this.

Solicit the Advice of Head Start Colleagues and Partners
- I should do this more often!
- I don't need to change this.

Final Feedback

I should do this more often! (One or more checks on this option)
It looks as though you've identified one or more recruitment strategies that you would like to use more frequently.

Congratulations! You've increased your chances of finding the right consultant to help move your program forward.

I don't need to change this. (All of these options checked)
It looks as though you're happy with your current recruitment strategies and they're working for you.

In the future, remember to consider alternative recruitment strategies when you are having trouble finding the right consultant for your program needs.

3.3 Tips for Interviewing Consultants

An informative interview helps you to engage the right consultant. Information gleaned from the interview allows you to select the consultant most able to make a positive difference in your program.

To prepare for your interview, you will want to learn about the core knowledge, competencies, and experience that highly qualified consultants bring to their work. The Characteristics of Highly Qualified Consultants [PDF, 194KB] handout can help you envision the consultant you need to achieve your program goals.

The following activity illustrates why taking the time to prepare for your interview and develop thoughtful questions will help you to secure the right person for the job.

<p align="center">AIAN Perspective</p>

"Consultants who work with tribal programs need to come with a special set of skills, knowledge, and competencies that include an understanding of:
- Ttribal sovereignty;
- Tribal culture; and
- The structure of tribal government.

Consultants who work with tribal communities must also appreciate the concept of the "seventh generation" and appeal to the community's desire to invest in those things that will benefit future generations."

3.4 Tips for Interviewing Consultants

Read the short vignette between Interviewer Chris and Interviewee Jeanie. Use the items in the boxes below the interview text to identify what Chris was able to accomplish during the interview with Jeanie. When you are done, proceed to the next page to see how you did.

Phone Interview:	
Interviewer:	Hi Jeanie?
Interviewee:	Hi this is Jeanie
Interviewer:	Hi this is Chris Hunt, the Head Start director. I've been talking to a couple of my coleauges and they highy recommend you as a consultant.
Interviewee:	Hi Chris, that's very flatering, good to hear.
Interviewer:	Well, I'm looking to develop some ongoing monitorng protocols for my program
Interviewee:	Sure, I've had experience in that.
Interviewer:	Alright, I have an in-service, I know this is late notice but I have an in-service next Thursday, 10am can you be there?
Interviewee:	Let me check my calendar… yeah, it looks good. I can help you.
Interviewer:	Alright. Great, great. Just send me a quick proposal, what it going to cost…
Interviewee:	I think I'll need to know a little bit more, Chris, about your goals for the session and, um, what your looking for. Could you tell me that?
Interviewer:	Goals would help wouldn't they? Um, I have some thoughts on it, I have some ideas, let me get some stuff downn paper for you. I know that we want to do the monitoring protocols but really, let's see what you bring to the table. I'll send you some goal, sound OK?
Interviewee:	OK, great. Thanks. I'll look forward to getting that and then once I do that, I'll send you off my proposal.
Interviewer:	OK, great. See you next week.
Interviewee:	Bye bye.

- Learned of the candidate's intent to engage the governing body, Policy Council, and program managers
- Learned of candidate's experience in the specific area that needs improvement
- Communicated clearly what needs to be accomplished
- Secured the candidate for the time period needed
- Explored with candidate different T/TA strategies
- Learned if candidate was familiar with HSPPS
- Secured professional references from candidate
- Secured a candidate that colleagues recommend

Feedback

This interview was not as comprehensive as it could have been. The interviewer was not able to convey the goals he wanted to accomplish and did not take the time to explore different T/TA strategies with the candidate.

Are there better ways to approach an interview? What would you do differently? Proceed to the next interview to get some ideas.

3.5 Tips for Interviewing Consultants

Instructions: Read the second vignette. As you do, use the items in the boxes below the interview text determine what the interviewer was able to accomplish. When you are done, proceed to the next page to see how you did.

In-Person Interview:

Interviewer:	So John, thank you so much for coming.
Interviewee:	No problem, glad to be here, Rosario.
Interviewer:	As I mentioned on the phone, we recently did a pretty comprehensive self evaluation of our program and we realized that we really need to strengthen our on-going monitoring systems and we're looking to hire a consultant, as you know, to work with us for a few months, coming up. Thank you so much for sending your resumé, it looks great but I do have a few questions. Questions that I'm asking everybody, um that I'm interviewing. One of them, the first one really is, can you describe any previous consulting experience you have had relating to the development of ongonig monitoring systems?
Interviewee:	Well, I've been a non-profit management consultant for about 25 years so, I've had extensive background in monitoring systems. My forte is really getting into the infrastructure all non-profits and determining what are some of the key issues that, ah, can impact their performance.
Interviewer:	OK, and have you worked with Head Starts before? Do you know about the performance standards, regulations and policies?
Interviewee:	I have, over the years, worked with some Head Starts so I am aware of the performance standards and some of the on-going monitoring system protocols and what not.
Interviewer:	That's great. Can you tell me a little bit about your ideas for the approach, um, in terms of having the greatest impact in improving on-going monitoring systems? You talked a little bit about infrastructure but can you go into a little bit more detail?
Interviewee:	Well, I think it's important to really make sure that all of the key stakeholder parties inside of the Head Start are really engaged. And so that means Policy Council, the board, the staff, so I would work very intennsivly with each of those bodies to make sure there's a mutual understanding of their roles and responsibilities regarding on-going monitoring.
Interviewer:	So what specifics, we have our management team and myself, what specific roles do you see us having to do to make this successful?
Interviewee:	Well, overall, I think you said you all set the tone for the whole agency. You are really the role models. Within that, I would see active engagement, between, uh, within the management team structure and

	then working with staff to also model that behavior and implement the pertinant strategies.
Interviewer:	So, um, just letting you know that whatever work products is produced, this project will remain the property of the Head Start program. You're OK with that?
Interviewee:	That's understandable
Interviewer:	OK, the other thing is, um, I will be checking references. Did you bring that with you or did you email that when you emailed your resumé?
Interviewee:	Yes, I have a list of three references with me today that I'll leave with you and you can follow up.
Interviewer:	That'll be great. Thank you so much for coming by and you'll hear from me soon.
Interviewee:	Thank you Rosario, very nice meeting you.
Interviewer:	Nice meeting you

- Learned of the candidate's intent to engage the governing body, Policy Council, and program managers

- Learned of candidate's experience in the specific area that needs improvement

- Communicated clearly what needs to be accomplished

- Secured the candidate for the time period needed

- Explored with candidate different T/TA strategies

- Learned if candidate was familiar with HSPPS

- Secured professional references from candidate

- Secured a candidate that colleagues recommend

Feedback

This second interview was more comprehensive. Through advanced planning and by asking thoughtful questions, the interviewer was able to learn much more information about the candidate's experience, ideas, and approaches to help her make a good hiring decision. Would you hire this candidate?

3.6 Jump-Start Preparation

To jump-start preparation for your next interview with a prospective consultant, review the Interviewing Consultants: Questions and Tips [PDF, 281KB] handout from the Resources section.

The questions can be adapted and used in your requests for proposals (RFPs).

AIAN Perspective

"For many years, we worked with the same consultant. He had a lot of experience working in tribal programs and was very familiar with our program. Also, our staff were very comfortable working with him. Then, our program's needs changed, and I realized that continuing to use this same consultant would not lead to the results I was looking for. I took a risk and hired a new consultant who was very skilled but had less experience working with tribal governments. This consultant brought new perspectives to the program and delivered a number of strong messages to program leaders that inspired them to change. In the end, it was well worth the risk."

3.7 Additional Interview Tips

- Discuss with the consultant a plan to communicate information that emerges from the consulting to staff, families, Policy Council, and governing body members for whom English is not their home language.

- Distribute and review the program's standards of conduct that include program confidentiality policies concerning information about children, families, and other staff members [1304.52 (i)(1) (i) (ii)].

- Ask the consultant to provide you with work samples to help you evaluate the quality of his or her work.

- Discuss any expectations you have for how the consultant will document his or her efforts.

- Discuss the consultant's fee and the budget you have allocated for this service to determine if a match can be made.

- Explain that all work products produced with the consultant and related to the project will be the property of the Head Start program. Ask, "Does this pose a problem or ethical dilemma for you?"

3.8 Extend Your Learning

Here are additional resources that can help you prepare to secure qualified consultants:

- Read "[Ensuring a Successful Consulting Engagement](#)" by Ruth McCambridge and Lissette Rodriguez (Nonprofit Quarterly, Winter 2007). This article lays out important steps nonprofit organizations should follow as they engage consultants, including identifying needs, distinguishing consultant types, checking references, creating contracts, and evaluating progress.

- Read [Ten Characteristics of Excellent Nonprofit Consultants,](#) on the Georgia Center for Nonprofits website, to explore the characteristics a consultant needs to help you develop, sustain, or build greater capacity in your program.

- Read "How to Hire a Consultant: A Guide for Nonprofits" by Elaine Fogel (Stanford Social Innovation Review, Fall 2006). This article lists five tips nonprofits should follow in selecting and hiring external consultants.

4. Creating Strong Contracts

4.1 Background

The consultant contract that is developed by Head Start and Early Head Start programs is an important document that helps to define the consulting relationship.
A well-written contract is beneficial to the Head Start program because it clearly lays out:
- The scope of the work to be performed
- The goals for services provided,
- Benchmarks for ensuring work is completed on time to meet the needs of the program.

The contract should be in writing and signed by all parties involved before consulting services begin. This provides documentation to support compliance with Head Start cost principles and the program's organizational procurement procedures.

4.2 Addressing Common Scenarios

As you prepare to develop a consultant contract, consider these common scenarios and how they apply to your program:

Scenario	If yes, you may want to…
Your program already has a standard consulting agreement	Have a legal expert review the contract language to ensure legal compliance.
	Tailor the agreement to address the specific consulting services your program needs.
The consultant you hire works for another organization	Determine up-front issues of copyright and ownership of any materials and tools developed.
You are a home-based provider	Partner with nearby programs and pool T/TA resources. This will impact the language of the contract, the signatures, and the payment method.
Your organization has negotiated federal rates	Establish that the consultant with whom you wish to contract has rates that fall within the designated range.

4.3 Payment Methods

Head Start and Early Head Start leaders should consider the payment method they will use with their consultants. Will your program pay an hourly or daily rate, use a fixed-price contract, or adopt another method?

Prior to finalizing any contract with a consultant, you will need to negotiate the rate or amount of payment as well as the payment method.

Read through the Determining Payment for Consultants [PDF, 201KB] handout for information on payment methods and rates. This document outlines the pros and cons of two common methods of payment: hourly rate and fixed contract.

4.4 Key Elements of a Contract

All contracts should include certain key elements to protect both the contracting agency and the consultant. Some of the key elements are listed here:
- The objective or goal of the work
- The specific services to be performed by the contractor
- The terms of payment (e.g., hourly rate or fixed-price contract) and amount
- A description of the roles and responsibilities of the contractor
- A description of the tasks or components of the project
- A timeline with milestone completion dates and a final deadline
- A list of any project costs for which the organization will reimburse the consultant
- A "no conflict of interest" statement that ensures protection of the organization hiring the consultant

- Language requiring the consultant to abide by the program's standards of conduct, as required in 45 CFR 1304.52
- A termination clause that allows either party to terminate the contract for any reason within 30 days written notice
- Rights to retain ownership and control over the work products of consultants
- Signature of chief operating officer or highest organizational official

4.5 Head Start Regulations

The following **Head Start regulations and standards** must also be considered when hiring consultants and developing consultant contracts per 45 CFR 1304.52 (Human Resources Management):

- Grantee and delegate agencies must ensure that all employees engaged in the award and administration of contracts or other financial awards sign statements that they will not solicit or accept personal gratuities, favors, or anything of significant monetary value from contractors or potential contractors.
- Personnel policies and procedures must include provision for appropriate penalties for violating the standards of conduct.

Per 45 CFR 74.40-74.48 and 45 CFR 92.36:
- Head Start and Early Head Start leaders should follow their organization's procurement guidelines and processes when hiring a consultant.

For future reference, download the Key Elements of a Consultant Contract [PDF, 236KB] handout from the Resources section.

4.6 Sample Contract

Review this sample consultant contract, taking special note of the related tips for developing a comprehensive contract.

<center>**SAMPLE CONTRACT**</center>

Tip: Begin with your goals and objectives for the consulting work.

THIS AGREEMENT is effective as of_____[date], by and between_____.
Hereafter referred to as "Company, and_____[Consultant], hereafter referred to as "Consultant."

Term
Company will retain Consultant, and Consultant will accept such retention, commencing as of the effective date of this Agreement and continuing through midnight of _____[date] or until termination of this Agreement as provided below.

Tip: Succinctly specify the services to be provided by the consultant. An addendum, to the work plan or scope of work, can provide additional detail on the services to be provided and timelines for completion.

Scope of Services

Consultant will provide expertise to deliver successful outcomes for the following objectives (EXAMPLES):

- To enhance skills in reflective supervision for the supervisory staff
- To improve communication between all levels of staff
- To assist the program's management team in revising communication systems

Consultant will provide technical assistance and training and facilitate meetings as necessary. Consultant will provide an action plan to accomplish the outlined objectives with timelines prior to implementation of the plan, Implementation of the plan will begin after the approval by the Company.

Consultant agrees to be available on a basis to be mutually agreed upon, but no more than_____ hours or days under this agreement. Services shall include telephone time; on-site consulting at Company or elsewhere; review of written documents and data; and preparation of written documents.

Tip: Specify the pre-negotiated hourly rate (or other method of payment), and include a "not to exceed" limit on hours worked and total payment amount.

Compensation

Company will pay Consultant a fee of $_____ per hour/ day for the consulting services requested and performed under this Agreement. Total hours/day of services will not exceed _____ hours/days under this agreement. Consultant invoices detailing the services rendered pursuant to this Agreement should be sent to [Contact] at Company, and payments will be made within thirty (30) days of [Contact's] receipt of such invoices. In addition, Company will reimburse Consultant for her reasonable expenses approved in advance by Company.

The Hourly Compensation Rate does not include expenses. Company shall reimburse Consultant for all reasonable living and transportation expenses incurred in response to requests by Company for Consultant to travel. Reimbursement shall be made directly to Consultant within 30 days of receipt by Company of a request from Consultant for reimbursement, with original receipts of all expenses submitted.

No Conflict of Interest

Consultant acknowledges that no prior or existing relationships exist that would prevent Consultant from entering into and fulfilling all obligations under this Consulting Agreement.

Consultant shall not disclose to Company any information, suggestion, product, product development, or process with respect to which Consultant is under any actual or implied duty to any third party to keep secret to advise, suggest, or develop such information, and nothing in this Agreement shall impose an obligation on Consultant to act contrary to any such actual or implied duty to others. Company shall be free to use all information that is disclosed by Consultant to Company without any further obligation to Consultant.

Confidential Information

Company shall disclose confidential information to Consultant directly or indirectly, with or without notice of its confidential nature. Accordingly, Consultant agrees to hold all information disclosed to Consultant by Company in confidence and neither disclose the same to others nor use the same for any purpose without the written permission of Company. Upon request, Consultant will return to Company all written information supplied to Consultant by Company or generated by Consultant on behalf of Company, including all copies thereof.

Consultant agrees that all technical information, including any reports, relating to the field developed by Consultant in connection with services under this Agreement shall be the property of Company and subject to the confidentiality and nonuse provisions set forth herein.

Consultant will follow program confidentiality policies concerning information about children, families, and other staff members, as specified in 45 CFR 1304.52(i)(1)(ii).

Code of Conduct

Consultant will follow Company's code of ethical and professional conduct. Consultant's failure to follow the code of professional ethics will result in immediate termination of this agreement and notification to appropriate sources as necessary.

Other Provisions

In performing Services for Company pursuant to this Agreement, Consultant shall be acting in the capacity of an independent contractor to Company and not as an employee of Company or any of its subsidiaries. Accordingly, although Company shall specify the

general nature of the work to be performed and the goals to be met, the details of performing such work and meeting such goals shall be determined by Consultant.

Tip: Clarify that consultants do not receive company fringe benefits.
Consultant is an independent contractor and is not an employee or agent of Company. Consultant shall not be entitled to any benefits or compensation from Company except as set forth in this Agreement, and shall in no event be entitled to any fringe benefits payable to employees of Company. Consultant will be responsible for taxes.

The term of this Agreement shall be _____ months from the Effective Date, unless terminated earlier or extended longer as may be mutually agreed upon by the parties in writing. Some provisions of this Agreement, including provisions of confidentiality, shall survive termination of the Agreement.

Any amendment or modification to this Agreement shall be valid only if in writing and signed by both parties.

Tip: An "early termination" clause allows for either party to terminate the agreement with written notice.
Either party may terminate this Agreement for any reason upon no less than 30 days prior written notice delivered to the other.

This Agreement will be governed by the laws and policies of the Company. Any dispute arising under this Agreement that the parties cannot resolve by good faith discussion and negotiation shall be decided by binding arbitration and conducted according to the rules and guidelines of the Company policy.

Agreement to this consulting contract is indicated by the signatures below:

Consultant Name: _____   Company Director: _____
Social Security #: _____   Company Name: _____
Consultant Address: _____   Company Address: _____

4.8 Developing Your Own Contract

Download a copy of the Sample Contract [PDF, 186KB] to help you draft your own consultant contract. Programs should always have a legal expert review their contract to ensure legal compliance.

4.9 Managing Contracts

Head Start and Early Head Start program leaders will also want to consider the following when managing consultant contracts:
- Include the consultant's resume with the signed contract in the consultant's file.
- Obtain the required IRS Form W-9, and use the IRS Form 1099-Misc to report payments to the contractor.
- Monitor contract performance and timely receipt of detailed invoices; be sure to note the contract end-date, and update or extend the contract if needed.

4.10 Extend Your Learning

Consider using the following resources as you create contracts with consultants:

- Read Understanding Tax, Labor, and Procurement Laws and Regulations [PDF, 639KB], a PMFO resource to help you (1) understand the legal distinction between a consultant and an employee; (2) determine which federal tax forms organizations should collect and file for consultants; and (3) identify key federal and state labor laws and procurement regulations that may apply to the use of consultants.

- Download Sample Procurement Procedures for Community Action Agencies [PDF, 182KB] from the Community Action Program Legal Services (CAPLAW) for guidance as your organization procures consulting services.

- Visit the Financial Management of the National Council for Nonprofits website, which offers various forms and tools that address financial literacy, managing cash flow, and financial policies for nonprofits.

5. Resources: Impacting Change across Program Areas

To learn how highly qualified consultants can support Head Start and Early Head Start leaders and staff in impacting change in particular program areas, access the resources below.

- Using Consultants to Impact Change in the Area of Health [PDF, 233KB]
- Using Consultants to Impact Change in the Area of Parent, Family, and Community Engagement [PDF, 268KB]
- Using Consultants to Impact Change in the Area of Program Management and Fiscal Operations [PDF, 190KB]
- Using Consultants to Impact Change in the Area of Quality Teaching and Learning [PDF, 237KB]
- Using Consultants to Impact Change in the Area of Services to Infants, Toddlers, Pregnant Women, and Families [PDF, 193KB]
- Using Consultants to Impact Change in the Area of Working with Dual Language Learners and Children from Culturally Diverse Backgrounds [PDF, 333KB]

6. Resources: Voices from the Field

Select a program area to learn how Head Start and EHS leaders of diverse programs across the country have effectively engaged consultants to achieve improvement goals in particular program.

- Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness
- Early Head Start
- Health
- Parent, Family, and Community Engagement
- Program Management and Fiscal Operations
- Quality Teaching and Learning

7. Resources: Tool Box

Below, organized by activity, are links to each of the materials from the Guide for Head Start and Early Head Start Leaders.

Setting the Context
- Head Start Act and Head Start Program Performance Standards [PDF, 177KB]

Trying a Fresh Approach
- Adult Learning Principles [PDF, 176 KB]
- Key Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) Strategies [PDF, 167KB]
- Aligning Adult Learning Principles with T/TA Strategies [PDF, 184KB]

Choosing the Right Person
- Consultant Recruitment Strategies [PDF, 236 KB]
- Characteristics of Highly Qualified Consultants [PDF, 194KB]
- Interviewing Consultants: Questions and Tips [PDF, 281KB]
- Interview Activities [Video]

Creating Strong Contracts
- Determining Payment for Consultants [PDF, 201KB]
- Key Elements of a Consultant Contract [PDF, 236KB]
- Sample Contract [PDF, 186KB]
- Understanding Tax, Labor, and Procurement Laws and Regulations [PDF, 639KB]