

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



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Program Management
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Choosing the Right Person

Consultant Recruitment Strategies

Head Start and Early Head Start directors and managers should begin their consultant search by identifying the credentials they seek in a consultant and then taking steps to recruit candidates for the job. When recruitment efforts are successful, programs are able to choose the best consultant from a number of highly qualified candidates. The following strategies can help you recruit those consultants who are best qualified to support your program:

1. **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.

2. **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.

3. **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.



4. 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. Consider reaching out to people in the following positions and organizations:

- Governing body members
- Other Head Start directors and managers
- National and state Head Start associations
- State Collaboration Director
- Community partners
- Local school districts
- ACF Program Specialists and Fiscal Specialists
- State Quality Rating and Improvement System
- Institutes of higher education that offer courses in areas related to Head Start services and systems
- Foundations focused on early childhood