

EHS-CC Partnership Grantee Tip Sheet #1

Engaging an Implementation Planner and/or Fiscal Consultant



NATIONAL CENTER ON

Early Head Start - Child Care Partnerships

Introduction

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) awarded 349 Early Head Start Expansion and Child Care (EHS-CC) Partnership grants from 2015 to 2017. The EHS Expansions and Child Care Partnerships are expected to provide high quality services to low-income families and their infants and toddlers in center-based classrooms or family child care homes.

New and expanding EHS-CC Partnerships are at various stages of implementation. The Implementation Planners and Fiscal Consultants are resources supported/provided by the Office of Head Start (OHS) and Office of Child Care (OCC) through the National Center on Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships to assist partnerships in successfully providing these high quality services.



The implementation period and process refer to the activities in which partnerships engage as they execute their federal grants. The planning period begins during the grant application process and continues through full implementation of services. These stages are considered exploration, installation, initial implementation, and full implementation as described by implementation science.

While many EHS-CC Partnerships are further along than initial start-up planning, an Implementation Planner and /or Fiscal Consultant can work with the program, its partners, and key stakeholders to facilitate a smooth transition during any stage of service implementation. Even for an existing EHS program or an existing EHS-CC Partnership that is expanding, current systems and services need to be revisited to accommodate the new services and requirements of this grant.

Implementation Planners and/or Fiscal Consultants can support EHS-CC Partnerships in meeting requirements by:

- *Entering into a partner relationship of this type and depth and navigate the potential challenges, such as alignment of systems and layered funding and programming*
- *Accessing the State, Territory or Tribal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) child care subsidy system and/or serve low-income families working full-time or participating in approved education and training programs*
- *Providing in-depth comprehensive services, including services to families experiencing homelessness or who are in the child welfare system and serving children with disabilities/special needs*
- *Participating in the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)*

Key Considerations

How can the EHS-CC Partnership program identify its need for an Implementation Planner and/or Fiscal Consultant and prepare to look for one?

In order for an EHS-CC Partnership to determine its need for an Implementation Planner and/or Fiscal Consultant, it must perform a self-assessment of its strengths, challenges and needs. Some EHS-CC Partnerships may be serving infants and toddlers for the first time; others may be engaging in partnerships with family child care homes for the first time. All of these partnerships will present new opportunities and diverse challenges.

An EHS-CC Partnership should consider the following steps and resources when selecting an Implementation Planner and/or Fiscal Consultant:

- **Assess** the partnership's strengths, challenges, needs, and staff expertise - include the partnership management team, staff, families, boards, and community members in this process; two helpful tools for this assessment could be the Partnership Elements Worksheet and the Organizational Readiness Chart;
- **Consider the skills and expertise** of the EHS-CC Partnership staff as well as their availability to take on new tasks, after analyzing the partnership's needs and challenges;
- **List the challenges and needs** where an Implementation Planner and/or Fiscal Consultant can best supplement leadership, management and staff skills, expertise, and availability;
- **Delineate the roles and responsibilities** of the potential Implementation Planner and/or Fiscal Consultant and partnership staff – consider whether your EHS-CC Partnership needs both types of consultants or only one and how the consultant(s) will be part of the partnership team for the period of their service;
- **Identify the timeframes** for completing the activities and deliverables;
- **Consider what resources and systems** will be needed to maximize the use of an Implementation Planner and/or Fiscal Consultant, such as meeting space, communication systems, technology, primary contact for the consultant, office supplies, etc.;
- **Develop an agreement** to use when you secure a consultant; it may be helpful to consult with other EHS and child care programs on this; and
- **Determine what and how you will pay** the consultant, for example, whether you will pay hourly or by the day; it may be helpful to consult with other EHS and child care programs to determine this.

Examples

- If it is the first time the agencies have partnered, a Fiscal Consultant could assist and guide in helping set up cost allocation plans, budgets that include the CCDF subsidies in conjunction with the EHS funding, and other fiscal and accounting systems.
- An Implementation Planner can help a program new to partnering craft how to best represent the child care partners on the Policy Council.
- A consultant can help the EHS-CC Partnership review all of its policies and procedures to ensure they are relevant to the Partnership and can draft revisions for those policies and procedures that need them.

How can an EHS-CC Partnership find the right Implementation Planner and /or Fiscal Consultant?

It is important to consider the diversity of all partners. For example, will you need to find a consultant who has worked with rural or urban programs, has experience with Migrant and Seasonal Head Start or American Indian/Alaska Native programs, etc.?

To match the Partnership with an Implementation Planner and/or Fiscal Consultant, the self-assessment and capacity of the Partnership should be considered along with the following steps:

- Review the expertise and experience of available Implementation Planners and Fiscal Consultants by visiting the EHS-CC Partnerships Learning Community located on MyPeers available at <https://mypeers.mangoapps.com>
- Talk to other EHS-CC Partnerships in the local area, state or region to see who they are using and if they are familiar with the individuals you have identified;
- Discuss with other early childhood, management and fiscal professionals who are familiar with the partnership's leadership and management teams;
- Consult with the Federal Regional Office to discuss the need to use the services of an Implementation Planner and/or Fiscal Consultant;
- Interview potential Implementation Planners and/or Fiscal Consultants; and
- Always check references once the partnership has selected its top candidates for the consultant position.

What qualities can an EHS-CC Partnership look for when selecting an Implementation Planner and / or Fiscal Consultant?

Implementation Planners and Fiscal Consultants can play many roles and share responsibilities with EHS-CC Partnerships to implement successful partnership programs. Consider looking for the following qualities when selecting a planner or consultant:

Knowledge and Experience

The planner and/or consultant should act as a guide or resource on:

- Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) implementation
- State, Territory or Tribal CCDF subsidy systems, child care licensing, QRIS and other systems
- Partnership processes and how partnerships affect program systems and service delivery

Understanding and Responsive

The planner and/or consultant should act as an advisor regarding:

- Unique needs of low-income families and their infants and toddlers, and implications for service delivery
- Diverse and special populations; understanding how diversity impacts systems and services
- Elements of successful EHS-CC Partnerships and how they operate within various organizational grantee systems

Communicator and Liaison

The planner and/or consultant should be skilled in:

- Communicating with all stakeholders at all levels of the Partnerships
- Working with other consultants who have specific expertise that is different than their own
- Facilitating discussions among all partnership stakeholders and decision-makers
- Knowing when to guide the grantee to seek support or approval from the partnership's federal partners according to the established protocol

Information about Implementation Planners and Fiscal Consultants trained by the Office of Head Start and Office of Child Care, in conjunction with the National Center on Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships, can be accessed at <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehs-ccp/implement.html>.

While the consultants are listed according to the geographic regions in which they reside, many of them are willing to consult with partnerships outside their regions. EHS-CC Partnerships are encouraged to read the biographical information to determine the best fit related to expertise, experience, and availability for travel outside the “home” region.

Conclusion and Additional Resources

Executing effective new services for infants, toddlers, and their families can be challenging. The support of an Implementation Planner and / or Fiscal Consultant can make a difference for an EHS-CC Partnership during the planning stages and into service delivery and beyond.

All activities of the EHS-CC Partnerships must comply with the Head Start Program Performance Standards, the Head Start Act, Child Care and Development Fund, licensing, and other state and local regulations. The Implementation Planner and/or Fiscal Consultant can provide an EHS-CC Partnership the “extra hand” and the broader view that can be invaluable to success, excellence, and partnership.



EHS-CC Partnerships and the planners and consultants they hire may find the following tools useful:

- A Guide to Effective Consultation with Settings Serving Infants, Toddlers, and their Families: Core Knowledge, Competencies, and Dispositions
https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/effective_guide_to_consultation.pdf
- Infant Toddler Consultant Self-Assessment Tool
https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/pdwcenter_roi_selfassessment_itconsultants.pdf
- Glossary for Partnerships
https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/quilt_glossaryforpartnerships.pdf
- Partnership Elements Worksheet
https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/quilt_partnershipelements_0.pdf
- Checklist for Developing a Partnership Agreement or Contract
https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/quilt_checklist_developing_partnershipagreementcontract_0.pdf
- Fiscal Management Checklist for Partnerships
https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/quilt_fiscalmanagement_checklist_partnerships_0.pdf

These and many other resources can be accessed at <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehs-ccp>.

For additional information, contact the National Center on Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships at 800-4EHS-CCP (800-434-7227) or ehsccpinfo@zerotothree.org

This Tip Sheet revisits the EHS Grantee Start-Up Fact Sheet 2 on this same topic and presents EHS-CC Partnerships with key questions to consider when selecting an Implementation Planner and/or Fiscal Consultant.

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