

Policy & Financing Domain

This policy and financing program assessment consists of action steps a program's leadership can take to determine how to plan for sustainable programs through financing strategies and public policies that can institutionalize consultation and help prioritize funding for consultation programs. Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) financing and policy development involves a series of strategies that can lead to sustainable consultation when aligned with other activities such as evaluation, program structure, and workforce development. Completing the assessment will help leadership to recognize areas they can strengthen to support their program's sustainability.

Resources for this domain: iecmhc.org/resources-for-policy-and-financing

Instructions

It is best to complete the PPRT as a program team, rather than working through it independently. The PPRT is designed to foster collaborative discussion and reflection that will lead to strategic action.

Users are advised to use the “opt out” rating sparingly, if at all.

If the volume of tasks feels overwhelming, please remember to prioritize action steps and pursue them incrementally according to your program's needs and resources.

Ratings

- **Completed (C).** Use this rating if the program has completed this action step.
- **In progress (I).** Use this rating if the program has started to work on this action step but has not finished yet.
- **Assistance needed (A).** Use this rating if the program is unclear as to how to complete this action step or needs more resources or support to complete it.
- **Not yet begun (N).** Use this rating if the program has not yet started to work on this action step but is interested in doing so in the future.
- **Opt out (O).** Use this rating if the program is not planning to pursue this action step.

Sub-domain 1: Defining a Program

Objective: Determine what funders want to know

ACTION STEP	SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDANCE	RATING
1.1 Identify where and to whom consultation services are provided.	See the program service setting section in the Program Structure domain of the PPRT for specifics.	☐ C ☐ I ☐ A ☐ N ☐ O
1.2 Clearly define program outcomes to funders.	To do this, it is helpful to identify the program's main goals. Examples of some IECMHC program goals include: • Reducing suspensions and expulsions, and disparities in harsh forms of discipline. • Building school readiness. • Building capacity of the early care and education (ECE) workforce	☐ C ☐ I ☐ A ☐ N ☐ O

ACTION STEP	SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDANCE	RATING
1.3 Demonstrate program efficacy through a well-planned evaluation.	Evaluation data is an important funding and policy tool. It enables programs to explain how they impacted different communities and populations. See the Program Evaluation module of the PPRT to determine the program's evaluation needs and progress.	☐ C ☐ I ☐ A ☐ N ☐ O
1.4 Accurately describe the program for funders.	Several formats to consider are: a one-pager, a short paragraph that can be inserted into various materials, and an elevator pitch* with multiple examples for different audiences including funding program officers and policymakers. *An elevator pitch is a brief description of the program's purpose.	☐ C ☐ I ☐ A ☐ N ☐ O

Notes: Use this space to identify which areas are In progress (I) and Assistance needed (A). With your team, develop a plan, discuss the challenges, and decide how you will address them.

Sub-domain 2: Financial Planning

Objective: Calculate program costs.

ACTION STEP	SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDANCE	RATING
2.1 Develop a clear and realistic budget for IECMHC.	Key considerations for the budget include: - It should not obscure IECMHC within a broader program or initiative. - It should specify direct and indirect operating costs, with line items for key program components such as workforce development, supervision, oversight, performance monitoring, evaluation, operations, and administration. It is also important to use a reliable, and preferably user-friendly, budget tracking system.	☐ C ☐ I ☐ A ☐ N ☐ O
2.2 Determine the program's funding needs, gaps, or potential areas of growth.	It helps to create a regularly updated document that includes program costs, current funding sources, and funding opportunities.	☐ C ☐ I ☐ A ☐ N ☐ O
2.3 Develop a fundraising strategy.	Ensure that the program has a large-scale funding strategy that encompasses various funding levels (i.e., federal, state, community). Consider including community and local opportunities for fundraising (although not as the only options). For example, giving days, wine-and-cheese events, and galas, as part of an overall fundraising strategy.	☐ C ☐ I ☐ A ☐ N ☐ O

ACTION STEP	SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDANCE	RATING
2.4 Pursue multiple funding streams.	One strategy is to conduct a funding-alignment analysis to determine what funds align with IECMHC, and initiate discussions to use these funds. Visit the Policy & Financing section of the CoE website to guide your analysis. Policy & Financing section: www.iecmhc.org/resources/policy-financing	☐ C ☐ I ☐ A ☐ N ☐ O

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Sub-domain 3: Adapting to Changing Conditions

Objective: Prepare for and respond to changing political landscapes.

ACTION STEP	SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDANCE	RATING
3.1 Create talking points about the impact and importance of IECMHC and your program that are bipartisan and/or can respond to shifting political priorities.	Be prepared to respond to shifts in political priorities through talking points that cover multiple outcome areas, such as return on investment, improved infant and early childhood development, teacher turnover, pandemic recovery, and school readiness.	☐ C ☐ I ☐ A ☐ N ☐ O
3.2 Identify political priorities and compare these to IECMHC priorities.	When political party leadership changes, know the new leadership's priorities, and find ways to highlight how IECMHC program outcomes align with current political agendas.	☐ C ☐ I ☐ A ☐ N ☐ O
3.3 Ensure that the program model is adaptable to demonstrate how its mission can fit into current conditions.	Demonstrate the program's adaptability (e.g., how it can use IECMHC to support infants, young children, families, and providers during a crisis). See Pivoting in a Pandemic for examples. In doing so, however, ensure that the program remains true to its mission. Pivoting in a Pandemic: www.iecmhc.org/files/2021/11/CoE_Resource_PivotingInPandemic.pdf	☐ C ☐ I ☐ A ☐ N ☐ O

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Sub-domain 4: Champions and Partnerships

Objective: Connect with strong partners and champions who will advocate for IECMHC.

ACTION STEP	SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDANCE	RATING
4.1 Develop IECMHC champions or advocates in an early childhood state government system.	One way to do this is to support state employees in child welfare, ECE, and behavioral health by recognizing the positive outcomes of IECMHC as it relates to their work. For example, in Louisiana, mental health (MH) providers at Tulane University (TU) were frustrated by the multiple expulsions of many of the young children with whom they worked and worried that the expulsions would undermine the development and wellness of these already vulnerable young children. In response to this concern, TU approached state policymakers, many of whom were unaware of the inadequate care provided at many of the state-funded ECE settings that accepted state-funded tuition vouchers. In 2003, TU arranged for state leaders to visit such settings. Afterward, the leaders were overwhelmed by the poor quality of care the setting provided. This led to the eventual creation of Louisiana's statewide IECMHC program (see Practice to Policy: How Louisiana Revamped its Approach to Preschool for a more detailed story). Practice to Policy: How Louisiana Revamped its Approach to Preschool: psychologybenefits.org/2015/01/08/practice-to-policy-how-louisiana-revamped-its-approach-to-preschool/	C I A N O
4.2 Develop state-level legislative allies so that when state-level policies are created, there will be advocates at the table who will seek out IECMHC program leadership's expert opinion and perspective.	Be sure to: • Have contact information of a state-level ally readily available and check in with them periodically to identify opportunities to support IECMHC together. • Stay abreast of opportunities for public comment, such as at legislative committee hearings, and sign up to provide expert testimony.	C I A N O
4.3 Connect the program to related systems, and ensure it is understood within, state, tribal, territorial, or local government.	Each tribal nation or community is unique in how they provide services to infants, young children, and families. To build partnerships, it is important to reach out to tribal leadership, program directors, and/or supervisors of the programs such as ECE programs, home visiting (HV) programs, health care services, and child welfare services.	C I A N O
4.4 Participate in initiatives that can support IECMHC.	For example, identify relevant boards, commissions, or councils and connect program leadership to these, such as: • Early childhood leadership commissions. • Infant mental health association boards. • Task forces or state workgroups that focus on infants' and young children's issues (e.g., child abuse and neglect, policies related to prenatal care and infants and young children ages 3 and under).	C I A N O

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Sub-domain 5: Communication and Messaging

Objective: Ensure that community partners and potential funders are aware of and understand the program.

ACTION STEP	SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDANCE	RATING
5.1 Regularly communicate with current funders and community partners.	Some ways to do this include: - Take a program officer out for tea, or send a friendly note to check in. - Use social media to promote awareness about the program and its impact. - Continually update the program's website to reflect program accomplishments.	☐ C ☐ I ☐ A ☐ N ☐ O
5.2 Know what program funders think of the work the program does.	Find opportunities to check in with funders and ask them how they think the program is doing.	☐ C ☐ I ☐ A ☐ N ☐ O
5.3 Ensure communication materials are responsive to the priorities and needs of funders and community partners (without losing sight of program values).	If school readiness is a priority for a funder, look for ways to structure the program to support this priority.	☐ C ☐ I ☐ A ☐ N ☐ O
5.4 Ensure communications messages are clear and have a purpose.	For example, find a community partner who is in a related but different line of work (e.g., welfare, school counseling, HV) and ask if they can review messages for clarity and purpose.	☐ C ☐ I ☐ A ☐ N ☐ O
5.5 Reach partners “where they are,” and understand the program’s participants and stakeholders.	For example, find groups with whom to discuss the value of IECMHC; research the groups to understand how the program can help support them. Identify events where the value of IECMHC can be promoted.	☐ C ☐ I ☐ A ☐ N ☐ O

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Sub-domain 6: Integrating IECMH into Systems

Objective: Learn how to integrate IECMHC into early childhood and MH systems.

ACTION STEP	SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDANCE	RATING
6.1 Consider integrating the consultation program budget into a dedicated state/local early childhood or MH budget.	Find a way to create a line item for IECMHC so it isn't constantly at risk as a discretionary expenditure. For example: • Colorado's state IECMHC program is included in the Office of Early Childhood's programs budget, which has a line in the state budget. • Project PLAY in Arkansas receives funding from the Child Care and Development Block Grant quality-improvement funds administered by the Arkansas Department of Human Services/Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education. While there is no single dedicated federal funding source available for IECMHC, several federal funding streams can be paired with state and local funds to support IECMHC. For examples, visit the Policy & Financing section of the CoE's website. Policy & Financing section: www.iecmhc.org/resources/policy-financing	C I A N O
6.2 Advocate for inclusion of IECMHC as a best practice in education, mental health, or other related systems.	Ways to do this include: • Embed IECMHC into related systems as a supporting practice. • Connect with Part C programs and discuss embedding IECMHC into their structure. For example, advocates, the Erikson Institute, and other stakeholders identified the overwhelming need among providers across Illinois for training and support related to infants' and young children's social-emotional development health and MH. Working with the public sector and legislators, this group identified Part C EI and general revenue funds to support the placement of MH consultants at every Child Family Connection EI site across the state. (See Illinois's Approach to Building and Sustaining Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation for the full story). • Meet with racial equity advocates in the state and, where applicable, equity officers in government. Some states and communities have DEI administrators or leaders within government, working across programs or within specific systems, such as education. Highlight how IECMHC can be a tool for achieving equitable, high-quality ECE services. Illinois's Approach to Building and Sustaining Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation: www.iecmhc.org/files/il-approach-building-sustaining-iecmhc.pdf	C I A N O

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Sub-domain 7: Policy

Objective: Learn how to obtain support for the program through state level legislation, rules, and regulations.

ACTION STEP	SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDANCE	RATING
7.1 Work toward a state mandate for provision of IECMHC through state legislation.	For example, find a legislator or two who cares about infants and young children and/or MH, and work with them to introduce a bill that codifies the program. For example, in 2020, Colorado passed legislation that put the state ECMHC program into law and required the establishment of a defined model of consultation and training guidelines.	☐ C ☐ I ☐ A ☐ N ☐ O
7.2 Develop a state oversight body for IECMHC.	One way to do this is to find a connection with the legislator's mission, and advocate for housing IECMHC funds and programs within a state entity. For example, some consultation programs have been housed in: • Early childhood development offices. • Behavioral health departments. • Education departments.	☐ C ☐ I ☐ A ☐ N ☐ O
7.3 Identify where regulations for ECE settings can define and include IECMHC.	For example, Review state child care rules and regulations, and find places to define IECMHC and include it as a required or voluntary support (For example, see Colorado Child Care Rules). Colorado Child Care Rules: licensingregulations.acf.hhs.gov/licensing/states-territories/colorado	☐ C ☐ I ☐ A ☐ N ☐ O

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