

Program Planning and Reflection Tool: Financing and Policy Domain

This financing and policy program domain of the PPRT 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 enhance to support their program's sustainability.

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. Each subsection of this module lists several action steps for the team to consider and assign a rating that indicates the extent to which the program has implemented that action item. The rating system is below. Users are advised to use the "opt out" rating sparingly, if at all. Throughout the module, the supplementary guidance column offers best practice tips, resources and examples to help programs thoroughly understand and make plans, as needed, for each action step. Within each module, there is space for programs to jot down notes or reflections to help program planning move forward.

As a final note, the PPRT provides a detailed framework of recommended action steps in each domain. Depending on your program's developmental stage, you may find that many of the tasks have already been completed, or you may discover that there is still much to do. 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.

To access an interactive version of the PPRT, visit www.iecmhc.org/pprt/intro. To access additional resources to support program implementation, visit www.iecmhc.org/resources/.

Ratings

For each of the action items in this section, please use the ratings below to indicate the program's progress so far related to determining its IECMHC sustainability strategies.

C – Completed. Use this rating if the program has completed this action step.

I – In progress. Use this rating if the program has started to work on this action step but has not finished yet.

A – Assistance needed. 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.

N – Not yet begun. 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.

O – Opt out. Use this rating if the program is not planning to pursue this action step.

1. Defining a Program: Determine what funders want to know.

Rating	Item #	Action Step
	1	Identify where and to whom consultation services are provided. See the program service setting section in the Program Structure module of the PPRT for specifics.
	2	Clearly define program outcomes to funders. To do this it is helpful to identify the program's main goals. Examples of some IECMHC programs' goals include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing suspensions and expulsions and disparities in such forms of harsh discipline. • Building school readiness. • Building capacity of the early care and education (ECE) workforce
	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.
	4	Accurately describe the program for funders. You should have several formats to choose from, for example a one-page, a short paragraph, and an elevator pitch with multiple examples for different audiences including funding program officers and policymakers. An elevator pitch describes the purpose of the program in no more than 27 words. Include no more than three ideas and ensure that the pitch can be delivered in 9 seconds or less.

Use the space below to identify which areas that are **I – In progress** and **A – Assistance needed**, with your team, develop a plan, discuss the challenges, and how you will address them.

2. Financial Planning: Calculate program costs.

Rating	Item #	Action Step
	1	<p>Develop a clear and realistic budget for IECMHC. This should include a budget:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● That doesn't obscure IECMHC within a broader program or initiative. ● Where direct and indirect operating cost include line items for specific program components, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Workforce development. ○ Supervision. ○ Oversight. ○ Performance monitoring. ○ Evaluation. ○ Operations. ○ Administration. ● Which also involves a budget tracking system.
	2	<p>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.</p>
	3	<p>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.</p>
	4	<p>Pursue multiple funding streams. One strategy is to conduct a funding-alignment analysis to determine what funds align with IECMHC, and initiate discussions to utilize these funds. This resource may help in your analysis.</p>

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3. Adapting to Changing Conditions: Prepare for and respond to changing political landscapes.

Rating	Item #	Action Step
	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 able to respond to shifts in political priorities through talking points that cover multiple outcome areas, such as return on investment, enhanced infant and early childhood development, teacher turnover, pandemic recovery, and school readiness.
	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.
	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.

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4. Champions and Partnerships: Connect with strong partners and champions who will advocate for IECMHC.

Rating	Item #	Action Step
	1	<p>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 (i.e., young children in foster care, young children with developmental delays or disabilities). They worried about the expulsions undermining 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, the institute 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 link for a more detailed story).</p>
	2	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have contact information of a state-level ally readily available and check in with them periodically to identify opportunities to support IECMHC together. ● Be aware of opportunities for public comment, such as at legislative committee hearings, and sign up to provide expert testimony.
	3	<p>Connect the program to, 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.</p>

	4	<p>Participate in initiatives that can support IECMHC. For example, identify relevant boards, commissions, or councils and connect program leadership to these, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Early childhood leadership commissions. ● Infant mental health association boards. ● Tasks force 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).
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5. Communication and Messaging: Ensure that community partners and potential funders are aware of and understand the program.

Rating	Item #	Action Step
	1	<p>Regularly communicate with current funders and community partners. Some ways to do this include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
	2	<p>Know what program funders think of the work the program does. Find opportunities to check in with funders to ask them how the program is doing.</p>
	3	<p>Ensure communications 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.</p>
	4	<p>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.</p>
	5	<p>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.</p>

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6. Integrating IECMH into Systems: Learn how to integrate IECMHC into early childhood and MH systems.

Rating	Item #	Action Step
	1	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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. <p>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.*</p> <p>*For examples, visit the Financing section of the Center of Excellence website.</p>
	2	<p>Advocate for inclusion of IECMHC as a best practice in education, mental health, or other related systems. Ways to do this include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Embed IECMHC into it as a supporting practice. ● Connect with Part C programs and discuss embedding IECMHC into their structure. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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 diversity, equity, and inclusion administrators or leaders within government, working across programs or within specific systems, such as education. Make the connection between providing equitable, high-quality ECE services and how IECMHC can be a tool for accomplishing that.

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

Rating	Item #	Action step
	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.
	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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early childhood development offices. • Behavioral health departments. • Education departments.
	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).

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