
WHY CONSULT INITIALLY WITH STAKEHOLDERS?

Ultimately the various stakeholders—from those for whom the program is intended to policy-makers—will need to take ownership of and responsibility for sustaining the ECCD project over time. Thus they need to be involved in helping to define the effort—in terms of the needs the project will address, how it will be set up and managed, and how it will be maintained. These stakeholders need to be involved from the beginning. Specifically they need to be involved in order to accomplish the following:

- 1. TO ASSESS THE DEGREE OF THEIR INTEREST IN ECCD.** If the potential audience for the project is not interested in ECCD then perhaps that is the wrong place to begin. There may be other priorities that must be addressed first before people can turn their attention to ECCD issues.
- 2. TO DEVELOP INTEREST AND SEEK POSSIBLE PARTICIPATION IN THE PROCESS** among those who should have a stake but who have little interest currently. Sometimes when there is a low level of interest it is possible to engage in a series of awareness-raising activities that help people pay attention to the status of young children and what they need. By engaging a variety of groups in discussions regarding the needs of young children it may be possible to generate interest and to identify potential partners in the effort.
- 3. TO DISCOVER AND UNDERSTAND ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF DEFINING THE PROBLEM, GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF A PROJECT.** By working with a variety of stakeholders it may be possible to come up with alternative approaches to meeting a need. By creating a situation where there is participation from people from different sectors and individuals who have had a wide range of experiences, new ideas may come to the forefront.
- 4. TO BRING TO LIGHT INFORMATION ABOUT CHILDREN AND PROGRAMS THAT IS PERTINENT,** and to identify what additional information is needed. There may be individuals who have worked in one way or another with the community to be served. Their personal knowledge is likely to be of value, and they may be in a position to help identify significant gaps in knowledge and understanding that might well have an impact on the project.
- 5. TO BEGIN IDENTIFYING EXISTING PROJECTS, ASSESSING EXPERIENCE AND DETERMINING INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE** so as to determine what can be drawn upon and what needs to be added from external sources. It is likely that there are projects already in place that are complementary to what you think should be developed. By learning more about what these projects are able to offer it is possible to identify gaps that need to be filled by the new project and resources that can be drawn on in support of your efforts.

6. TO IDENTIFY POTENTIAL BARRIERS, RISKS OR CONFLICTS that might be associated with particular groups and options. Through a mapping of what is currently being offered in the community, and with an understanding of the relationships between the various organisations and individuals, it is easier to anticipate where you can expect to garner support and where there is likely to be opposition to what you are proposing.

The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development, 1998.

Early Childhood Counts: Programming Resources for Early Childhood Care and Development.
CD-ROM. The Consultative Group on ECCD. Washington D.C.: World Bank, 1999.