

CCDF Plan Development Focus Groups: Facilitator's Guide

The Office of Child Care (OCC) is hosting a set of eight meetings for Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Regions across the country. Some of these meetings will be attended by more than one ACF Region. One of OCC's goals for these meetings is to invite volunteers to participate in focus groups. These focus groups will promote discussions about challenges and practical solutions for developing Lead Agencies' triennial Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Plans. OCC will use information collected during these groups to inform technical assistance and training opportunities for CCDF Lead Agencies.

PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT OF 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13) STATEMENT OF PUBLIC BURDEN: The purpose of this information collection is to help the Office of Child Care (OCC) refine the FY 2022-2024 CCDF Plan Pre-Print and also help us develop a training framework on the Plan Preprint for States and Territories. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1.5 hours per grantee, including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and reviewing the collection of information. This is a voluntary collection of information. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB # is 0970-0401 and the expiration date is 05/31/2021. If you have any comments on this collection of information, please contact Lori Bowers, ICF Office of Child Care Projects by email at Lori.Bowers@icf.com

Purpose

The focus groups will be used to do the following:

- Hear directly from CCDF Lead Agencies to increase OCC's understanding of how CCDF Plans are used within different jurisdictions, how Lead Agencies define successful CCDF Plans, and what training and technical assistance is needed to support CCDF Plan development.
- Identify CCDF Lead Agencies' needs for CCDF Plan development and discuss strategies, supports, existing resources, and new resources to help meet those needs.

Participants

CCDF Lead Agencies will invite participants, who will include CCDF Administrators from states and territories and key leadership staff involved in CCDF program administration.

Key Questions for All Focus Groups

Participants in every focus group will be asked the following questions:

- How does your Lead Agency use the CCDF Plan in your state or territory?
- As a CCDF Administrator, what barriers or challenges do you face when developing your Lead Agency's CCDF Plan?
- How does your Lead Agency define success in the CCDF program? How do your stakeholders (for example, providers, families, advocates, legislators) define success?

- What types of resources are most helpful to you and your team when completing your CCDF Plan? What strategies are most helpful to you and your team when planning and completing your CCDF Plan?

The Facilitator Role

The role of the facilitator is to do the following: draw out knowledge and insight from the group; make sure that all participants share their ideas and feelings; keep the discussion moving in a direction that is constructive; and attains results. A facilitator uses her various skills, tools, strategies, and natural abilities to create a positive exchange of ideas and experiences among the group. There are several strategies that facilitators can use during CCDF Plan focus groups to ensure the discussions go well. Some successful facilitation strategies are described in Mike Gospe’s KickStart Alliance blog post “9 Characteristics of a Great CAB Facilitator,” which is available at <https://www.cabstrategy.com/9-characteristics-of-a-great-cab-facilitator/>. Above all else, facilitators should maintain fidelity with the questions in the “Key Questions for All Focus Groups” section.

These questions have been purposefully developed and approved by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget in order to obtain the necessary information. Using the same questions will also ensure consistency in information gathered across all eight ACF Regions

Focus Group Facilitator Guidance

Below is some information, and suggested language, that may be useful to facilitators as they prepare for these focus groups.

Logistics and Overview

Enter in the following information to help you prepare.

Room location: [insert location]

Start time: [insert time]

End time: [insert time]

Facilitator: [insert name]

Notetaker: [insert name]

Duration: 90 minutes

Purpose: Office of Child Care will learn more about specific experiences and barriers that Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agencies face when navigating the CCDF Plan development process and what support would be helpful to Lead Agencies throughout the process.

Facilitator Introduction

[State the following to start the dialogue.]

Hello and welcome to the focus group discussion for CCDF Lead Agencies. My name is [insert name], and I will be guiding our conversation.

My colleague [insert name of notetaker] will be taking notes for us.

Our goal during this session is to discuss what types of tools and training opportunities you are looking for to support the development of your state or territory’s CCDF Plan. Over the next 90 minutes, we want to hear about your challenges and what supports are most important to you. As we talk, I may ask some follow-up questions.

There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions posed during this discussion. Please share openly and honestly so that we can fully understand your experiences with the development of the triennial CCDF Plan.

[Please read this paragraph in verbatim to participants.]

As a reminder, your participation is completely voluntary. All information discussed during our conversation will be kept anonymous. Your responses will not be associated with you directly. We are taking notes that will be used to inform the development of both CCDF Plan training and tools.

Are there any questions or concerns before we get started?

[Plan to devote a few minutes to answer participants' questions.]

Guiding Questions

Facilitate the group discussion by asking the following questions. Reserve 15-20 minutes for discussion of each question.

BACKGROUND

- **How does your Lead Agency use the CCDF Plan in your state or territory?**

Strategies: You may want to ask participants to think about their responses by category, such as data gathering, data informed decision making, legislative efforts, budget building, building partnerships, and collaboration. Or at the end of the discussion, you and your notetaker may identify the categories that emerged from their responses.

Rationale: This question is designed to gather information about CCDF Administrators' planning processes as well as some general information about their state and local contexts.

VALUES

- **How does your Lead Agency define success in the CCDF program? How do your stakeholders (for example, providers, families, advocates, legislatures) define success?**

Rationale: These questions are intended to help Lead Agencies clearly articulate their goals for CCDF program administration while encouraging them to also consider various required and optional stakeholder perspectives.

BARRIERS

- **As a CCDF Administrator, what barriers or challenges do you face when completing your CCDF Plan?**

Additional considerations: How do existing CCDF Plan tools support the development process? What additional resources are needed?

Rationale: This question is intended to identify barriers in CCDF Plan development.

SUPPORTS

- **What types of resources are most helpful to you and your team when completing your CCDF Plan?**
- **What strategies are most helpful to you and your team when planning and completing your CCDF Plan?**

Rationale: These questions are intended to capture Lead Agencies' desired tools, resources, and supports when completing their CCDF Plans. It is also intended to help catalogue strategies that contribute to positive CCDF Plan development, which can be shared with other grantees.

Wrap Up the Discussion

Reserve approximately 7–10 minutes at the end to respectfully wrap up the discussion.

Thank You and Next Steps

[Please read this paragraph in verbatim to participants.]

This has been a very rich discussion. Thank you all for sharing so openly. This information will be shared with the Office of Child Care. Staff will use it to inform the training framework being developed by the technical assistance team. This framework will help you develop your CCDF Plan in the coming year.

[Help participants transition to the next meeting segment. For example, alert them about the next activities on the Region-specific agenda.]