



A GUIDE TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & PLANNING

First Nations Early Learning & Child Care (ELCC) Community-Led Development & Planning Grant

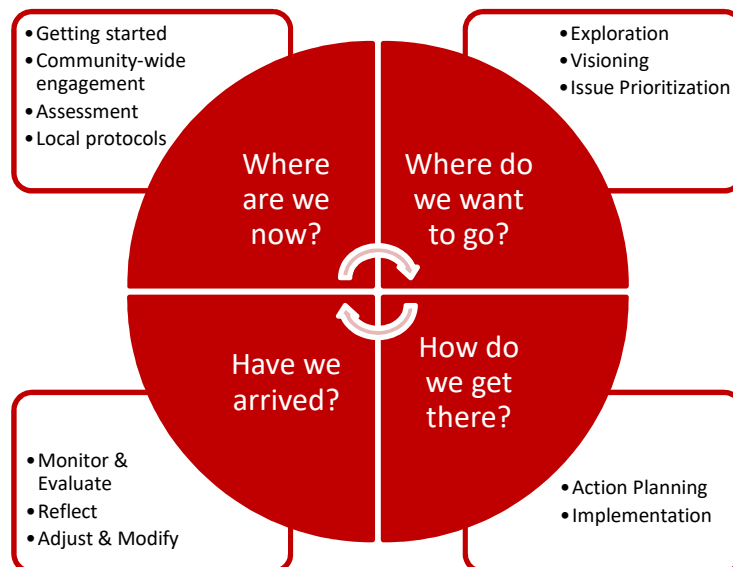
“First Nations children, parents, families and communities are supported to plan, develop and deliver Nation-based programs and services that are holistic (emotional, physical, cognitive, spiritual), integrated, and rooted in their traditional cultures, languages, and histories.” – [National First Nations ELCC Framework draft vision](#)

What is the Community-Led Development & Planning Grant?

In March 2019, the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society (BCACCS) distributed a \$15,000 Community-Led Development & Planning Grant to every First Nation in BC as an initial investment in a long-term strategy to implement the [National First Nations ELCC Framework](#). This grant is intended to support collaborative planning that engages the entire community to imagine a better future for young children and their families, and to create an action plan to achieve the community’s vision.

Why is planning important?

Developing ELCC systems that are sustainable requires taking a long-term perspective. As local contexts are unique, the planning process helps to identify your community’s unique strengths, values and priorities, and ensures that they are integrated into governance and service delivery. Planning takes place as a continuous journey through the following interconnected phases¹:



¹ Adapted from Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund (NADF). (2017). *Comprehensive Community Planning Toolkit*. Retrieved from: <http://www.nadf.org/upload/documents/ccp-toolkit-2018-v2.pdf>.

The results (outputs and outcomes) of a community-led ELCC planning process may include:

- A collective vision and action plan
- A better understanding of community values and priorities
- Identification of cultural and other community resources
- Identification of community strengths
- Identification of challenges and areas for improvement
- Increased community awareness of ELCC issues
- Increased capacity to work together and coordinate efforts
- New relationships and partnerships or the identification of potential partners
- Successful future funding applications²

What does it mean to be community-led?

“A community-led approach to planning is a process driven and owned by all community members rather than a small group or committee. Such a holistic approach to planning is an important step on the path to self-governance and building capacity in First Nations communities.”³ The planning process is a community-wide effort. This means encouraging all members to get involved and work together to rebuild Nationhood and community voice. Processes that are driven by the community, for the community, are more likely to result in sustained positive change.

How do I get started?

Nations are encouraged to develop an engagement plan that will foster community-wide dialogue on how to improve the well-being of young children and their families. To get started, you may wish to consider undertaking the following steps:

1. Review background documentation, including:
 - a. [National First Nations ELCC Framework](#)
 - b. [BC Aboriginal Child Care Society Elements of Quality](#)
 - c. Existing community plans and ELCC policies
2. Reach out to community leaders; find a community champion to support and drive the planning process
3. Establish a committee or team that includes a range of community members to discuss ideas on:
 - a. How to engage a variety of stakeholders within your community
 - b. How your engagement activities will be documented and communicated
 - c. What you will have (output/outcomes) at the end of the process

² NADF, 2017.

³ Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). (2016). *Comprehensive Community Planning for First Nations in British Columbia Handbook*, 3rd ed., p. iii. Retrieved from https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-INTER-BC/STAGING/texte-text/ccphb2013_1378922610124_eng.pdf.

4. Create a work plan that includes:
 - a. What needs to be done (activities)?
 - b. By whom (roles and responsibilities)?
 - c. By when (timelines)?
 - d. How much will it cost (budget)?
5. Share your project ideas and work plan by filling in and submitting the Statement of Readiness template provided by BCACCS. This will allow BCACCS to know best how to direct future investments and support the work needed to achieve your community's ELCC goals and priorities.

Who do I engage?

Engagement is an opportunity for all members in your community to come together to develop a shared dream for your children. This can be a healing and inspiring process, building trust and respect as communities work together to establish a positive vision for the future and take steps towards its realization. Take the time to hear from members and advocate for the important role that parents, families, Elders, caregivers, Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) and other community members play in the healthy development of young children in your community.

When deciding who to invite and engage in the planning process, ask yourself:

- Who are the community's knowledge keepers?
- Who are the community's caregivers?
- Who are the formal and informal leaders?
- Who will be impacted by an ELCC plan?
- Who can be a champion?
- Who will be harder to reach?
- Who is not being served by current ELCC services?

You may consider inviting and engaging:

- Chief and Council
- Hereditary Leaders
- Elders and Knowledge Keepers
- Parents, families & caregivers
- ECEs & teachers
- Community health nurses and other health care providers
- Families living away from home
- Children & youth

How do I engage the community?

To begin the conversation, find opportunities to gather everyone in the community. Or, engage community members at events that they are already attending. Some tips include:

1. Hold engagement sessions at existing events, workshops, support programs and locations that young families and other stakeholders may visit. This might include:
 - Elders gatherings
 - Community feasts
 - Parenting classes
 - Council meetings

- Events at schools and recreation centres
2. Find opportunities within your existing ELCC services or programs, such as:
 - Host an open house of your ELCC facilities
 - Have informal kitchen table conversations with parents
 3. Create new opportunities that incorporate social, cultural and language activities. Remember to offer food, child care and transportation. Events may include:
 - Storytelling
 - Language learning
 - Ceremonies
 - Hunting and gathering site visits, or medicine walks
 - Other intergenerational learning opportunities
 4. Consider who you are trying to reach. Gather ideas and community feedback in appropriate ways. Community engagement events may be supplemented by means of information gathering, such as:
 - Social media
 - Surveys
 - Focus groups

What do I ask?

Please refer to the [Community Engagement & Assessment Worksheet](#) on page 6 of this document to guide your discussions. Remember that the planning process is an opportunity to make children a priority in community development as a whole. Engage in conversations that promote thinking outside the “program box” and beyond child care spaces. Explore new and innovative early learning opportunities that are holistic and rooted in local contexts. Remember to identify and build on your community’s strengths and achievements. Seek out the “best of what is” to help ignite the collective imagination of “what might be”.⁴ Doing so will:

- Foster community pride, creativity and hope for the future
- Build upon existing strengths
- Pinpoint areas of improvement
- Promote awareness of ELCC in your community
- Encourage community engagement, ownership and empowerment

How do I document the engagement process?

When conducting community engagement, it is important to document your process and findings. Documentation will not only inform your planning process but can add to the ongoing generation of First

⁴ Geddes, B. (2015). *Measuring Wellness: An Indicator Development Guide for First Nations*, p. 4. Retrieved from <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/558c624de4b0574c94d62a61/t/558f15c6e4b0c84f9abe4c66/1435440582698/BCF-NDGI-Measuring-Wellness-An-Indicator-Development-Guide-for-First-Nations.pdf>.

Nations ELCC knowledge. Your engagement process can be recorded not only through reports, surveys and other written documentation, but through more narrative and visual forms such as film and photography. Consider activities such as digital storytelling, mapping, art, and other projects that may more accurately reflect traditional ways of sharing knowledge or facilitate hearing the voices of young children themselves.

How do I reflect on community feedback?

When analyzing the information gathered and documented from your engagement process, try to reflect on:

- What did we learn about the community's values, priorities and concerns?
- What does quality in ELCC mean in your community?
- What are our assets and strengths?
- Where do we need to improve?
- What creative ideas emerged?
- Have we consulted everyone we need to? Are there missing voices?

How do I share my findings?

In your engagement plan, remember to incorporate ways of sharing and communicating your results with community members. Information can most easily be shared through existing communications channels, such as the community newsletter, social media platforms, public displays at community gathering spaces, and at community meetings and events. Additionally, consider who these existing channels may not reach and explore new forms of communication. Your documentation and findings should also be shared with BCACCS and other potential partners in order to garner support and leverage additional funding for putting your plan into action.

What support can BCACCS provide?

If invited, BCACCS can provide guidance and/or support for your ELCC planning, proposal writing, resource mobilization, documentation, and implementation activities. Please contact us at planninggrant@acc-society.bc.ca or 604-913-9128 to discuss how we can support your work.

Additional Resources

For more planning and information guidance, consult some of the following toolkits and resources:

- [Comprehensive Community Planning Toolkit](#)
- [Comprehensive Community Planning Handbook](#)
- [Measuring Wellness: An Indicator Development Guide for First Nations](#)
- [National First Nations ELCC Framework](#)
- [BC Aboriginal Child Care Society Elements of Quality](#)

Community Engagement & Assessment Worksheet

Community engagement is an opportunity to collect information, share knowledge and build community relationships. The following worksheet provides some examples of questions that you may choose to ask to facilitate conversations focused on children and their families. We invite you to adapt these questions to your community context or develop your own locally relevant questions.

Explore

Begin with open ended questions that promote storytelling and sharing of experiences and aspirations. Discuss your community's vision for young children and their families.

1. What does early learning mean to you?
2. What factors contribute to the well-being of children in our community?
3. What are our community's core values?
4. What is our dream or vision for young children and their families?

Identify

Ask more specific questions about your community's existing strengths, assets and challenges.

1. **Existing assets, strengths and achievements** (see the [Asset-Based Community Assessment Worksheet](#) on page 9 of this document for types and examples of community ELCC assets):
 - a. What are the positive influences in our community for young children and their families?

- b. What cultural resources do we have that support young children and their families?
- c. What services do we have that support young children and their families?
- d. Who is providing these services?
- e. What have we already achieved? How did we achieve it?
- f. What are our strengths? What are we doing well?
- g. What are we most proud of?

2. Areas of improvement

- a. What would you like to see in our community that could better support early learning?
- b. What strengths and assets could we build on to help us address these areas of improvement?
- c. What challenges do we face in addressing these areas of improvement?

3. Goals & Priorities

- a. What are our goals?
- b. What is most important?

- c. Which goals do we have the capacity to address now?

Plan

Discuss action points on how to leverage your community's strengths to achieve their vision and goals.

1. How do we work together to support our children?
2. What do we need? What resources are required?
3. Who in our community needs to be involved to achieve our vision?
4. What is happening in our area and in our community that could benefit our children?
5. Who can support us?

Assets-Based Community Assessment Worksheet

What are community ELCC assets?

Community ELCC assets are aspects of a community that members identify as having value in nourishing the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs of young children and their families. When discussing your community's strengths and achievements, it is important to identify your community's existing assets by asking community members to write down their ideas or locate areas of importance on a large map of your community. While there is no official list of what you should identify as an asset, community ELCC assets may include:

People

People may include: Leadership; Elders; Knowledge and Language Keepers; artists and other cultural resources/talent; community professionals (ECEs, teachers, health staff, social workers, counsellors); volunteers; parents and caregivers

Cultural knowledge

Cultural knowledge may include: cultural traditions, rituals and ceremonies; traditional language resources; traditional stories; traditional art

Land

Land may include: cultural landmarks; fishing, hunting and gathering areas; mountains, forests, lakes, rivers; community gardens; parks and open spaces; recreational spaces

Physical structures

Physical structures may include: child care centres; community halls; schools; health centres; recreation centres; other meeting places for young families; unused spaces

Services

Services may include: ELCC programs and services; parenting/family programs and services; transportation and communication; ELCC education and training; cultural programs, services and events; ELCC employment programs

Economic

Economic assets may include: supportive businesses and organizations; funded programs and partnerships; student funding and scholarships