

1.4 TIP SHEET

STRATEGIC IDEAS FOR ESTABLISHING THE ECE TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP

This Tip Sheet provides the following tips to establish or strengthen the ECE TWG:



Tip 1: Consider and select options for establishing ECE TWGs



Tip 2: Develop a terms of reference (ToR) for the ECE TWG



Tip 3: Become familiar with the background for the ECE TWG



Tip 4: Clarify the objectives of the ECE TWG



Tip 5: Identify factors to consider in selecting members of the ECE TWG



Tip 6: Determine the roles and functioning of the ECE TWG



Tip 1: Consider and Select Options for Establishing ECE TWGs

Two options are available to have an ECE TWG:

Option 1 – Establishing a stand-alone entity

- If there are no appropriate existing TWGs,¹ a **stand-alone entity can be created**, dedicated to supporting ESA/ESP development as well as overall ECE implementation aspects (such as defining teacher qualifications, developing curriculum roll-out strategies, exploring alternative delivery models, etc.).
- In many cases, it will be useful to have a distinct ECE TWG that will have a **mandate beyond the ESA/ESP development**. Such a mandate may help the group working on joint ECE technical subsector initiatives and decision-making processes. The mandate can also facilitate the TWG's role throughout the implementation and monitoring cycles as well.
- If a stand-alone ECE TWG is established in addition to existing ECE or ECD groups, it will be crucial to **ensure that activities and efforts are not duplicated** and that the different groups work in coordination with one another.

A note about ministerial leadership

Typically, the Ministry of Education has jurisdiction over and provides leadership for pre-primary education. The Ministry of Education also leads the ESP processes. As such, the planning, design and launch of the ECE TWG should be led by and done in partnership with the Ministry of Education (and other relevant ministries) as this will help ensure that there is political desire and buy-in for the TWG and that the TWG can be sustained.

If the ECE TWG is created under another ministry's leadership, well-designed connections to the Ministry of Education are critical so that the participation in the ESP processes can be coordinated. Furthermore, as much as possible, the ECE TWG should include members from other ministries that work on ECE (ex., health, social protection, etc.) such that a multi-sectoral perspective can be maintained.

Option 2 – Leveraging existing groups If there are existing groups, it will be ideal to leverage these groups while ensuring that their scope of work includes supporting the ESA/ESP development processes. There are three kinds of groups; determine which one(s) is/are found in your country and consider (i) the guiding question to help reflections on their purpose and functionality; and (ii) the tips about leveraging them to support ECE.

Guiding questions to explore about existing TWGs

- How was the TWG established and pursuant to which laws and policies?
- Who are the members of this group and do they represent a cross-section of ECE-specific stakeholders (ex. pre-primary teachers, ECE teacher training institutions, development partners working on ECE, etc.)?
- Do the members of the TWG have the requisite knowledge or expertise to address ECE issues?
- Is the pre-primary subsector a focus of the TWG's work? Is the TWG active and how often does it convene?
- What is the role of the TWG? Does it serve as a coordinating body or a technical advisory entity?
- What is the TWG's role in contributing to Education sector-wide processes, including ESP development processes?
- How open does the existing TWG seem to broadening or modifying its scope, or joining other TWGs in a collaborative effort?

¹ It is critically important to identify any existing working groups that might be leveraged (see Option 2), in order to avoid duplication of activities and efforts.

Tips for leveraging existing groups:

<p>Groups established under Education sector-wide processes</p>	<p>In the case of thematic groups, it will be important to ensure that they are oriented to the ECE specificities – for example, through inputs from the ECE Unit of the Ministry of Education. If the groups are by subsectors, the ECE or pre-primary education group will be the main body that works on the ECE components of the ESAs/ESPs.</p>
<p>Groups established in connection with broader Early Childhood Development (ECD) initiatives and activities</p> <p>Groups established for specific ECE initiatives, activities or projects</p>	<p>The mandate and scope of work of these groups need to be examined. Their terms of reference may need to be clarified and finetuned so that they have an explicit role in participating in the ESP processes, in conjunction and coordination with the ESP development oversight and managing body (typically the Ministry of Education with support from the Local Education Group).</p>



Tip 2: Develop a Terms of Reference for the ECE TWG

Whichever option you have chosen, it will be important to have clear terms of reference to guide the mandate and activities of the ECE TWG. The tips that follow may be helpful to guide the development or strengthening of the the terms of reference (ToR) of the ECE TWG. A sample ToR is provided as an Annex. The sample may be used as a template and adapted to your context as needed.



Tip 3: Become Familiar with the Background for the ECE TWG

You are likely to be asked “Why an ECE-focused TWG?” Giving the context in the ToR for the establishment of your ECE TWG will provide stakeholders with the background and rationale for its existence. Useful background information to include in this section of the ToR consists of:

- Legal status and validity of the ECE TWG (i.e., whether the TWG is established pursuant to specific laws, policies, decrees, ministerial leadership, etc.);
- ESP development processes;
- Overall purpose of the ECE TWG.



Tip 4: Clarify the Objectives of the ECE TWG

Having clear objectives for establishing the TWG will help articulate the membership, role and activities of the TWG in the ToR. As you consider the objectives of the TWG, it is helpful to bear in mind the following considerations:

1. **Core team of technical advisors.** The main idea is to create a core team of technical advisors that will support the ECE arm of the Ministry of Education (or other ministries that have responsibility over ECE) with its mandate and tasks on ECE. The TWG can play a critical role in ensuring that ECE is integrated into or strengthened throughout the ESA/ESP development process, as well as supporting quality implementation and monitoring of activities as the ESP rolls out. The TWG will also work and coordinate with other working groups from the Education sector and other sectors (such as health, social protection and welfare, etc.) to enhance alignment of ECE interventions.
2. **TWG's value beyond the ESP process.** While the TWG will have a focus on supporting the integration/strengthening of ECE throughout the ESP development, implementation and monitoring and reporting cycles, it may be beneficial and strategic to extend and broaden their role beyond the ESA/ESP development aspects. It is thus useful to think of the TWG as the main technical entity that can be called upon to brainstorm and problem-solve on all ECE-related matters and issues. Reflecting on these matters will influence how you define the group's objective. In turn, this will have an impact on the duration of the TWG's existence – is it only active for the purpose of the ESA/ESP development, or is it a more permanent group that can intervene as the ESP is implemented and in the monitoring and evaluation phase?
3. **Communication and consensus-building.** The TWG should also have a role promoting communication² among stakeholders such as government officials, NGOs, donors, development partners and community leaders. Additionally, the TWG should facilitate technical inputs to and consensus building on critical issues to achieve common objectives within the ECE subsector, broader education sector, and possibly across sectors with other coordinating bodies (ex. ECD coordinating bodies) at the national level and/or across levels of the system (national to local). For example, **in Lesotho**, the ECE TWG's broad objective of supporting the ECE Unit of the Ministry of Education includes the coordination of the work of all stakeholders in the ECE subsector to align efforts; and the timely sharing of relevant updates and information pertaining to ECE subsector and Education section.
4. **Capacity building and peer learning.** The TWG can serve as an opportunity for members to strengthen their knowledge and deepen their expertise in the area of ECE and sector planning. As such, it is helpful to identify capacity building and peer learning as an objective of the TWG, to enable sharing and exchanges of evidence, best practices and experiences in ECE and sector planning. This capacity building and peer learning approach can further contribute to advancing the objectives and goals of the TWG as a technical and advisory group.

Monitoring the ECE TWG's progress against the objectives of the ToR

It may be helpful to outline in the ToR overarching objectives with specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely (SMART) indicators.³ The ToR may also state that the ECE TWG will review the ToR and the progress against the indicators on a regular basis, so that adjustments can be made.

For example, in Nepal, in the context of the mid-term review of its sector plan, the ToR of the ECE TWG (which were developed at the outset of the sector plan development process) were re-evaluated and new activities and deliverables were agreed upon by the ECE TWG to help support meeting the ECE activities of the sector plan.

² This can include gathering and compiling critical evidence to inform policies and practices to make best practices more widely available.

³ For guidance on SMART indicators, please see Tool "3.2 Criteria, Recommendations and Checklists: Defining ECE Indicators and Target Setting".



Tip 5: Identify Factors to Consider in Selecting Members of the TWG

In the ToR, you can name the individuals or set out the profiles and how the membership has been, or will be, selected or confirmed. It is helpful to bear in mind the following considerations:

1. **Size of the group.** If the group is too large, it might be difficult to get full engagement, while a too small group will not have as many varied perspectives represented. There is no particular limit to the number of members in the TWG, but experience shows that a group of 8 to 10 people is likely to work well and build consensus on issues.
2. **Multi-stakeholder group.** The TWG should include the Ministry of Education's technical officers who work on ECE (or those of other ministries that have responsibility over ECE), as well as key development partners (such as UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, etc.) and other partners such as academic partners, international or national non-governmental organizations and/or civil society organizations who are closely involved in supporting governments in their pre-primary efforts.
3. **Cross-section of leaders.** A broad, inclusive cross-section of leaders is essential. Begin by identifying categories of responsibilities rather than individuals. To do this, you may find it helpful to look at the different core areas of the ECE subsector such that there are individuals with expertise and positions related to:
 - (1) pre-primary planning and budgeting;
 - (2) curriculum development and implementation;
 - (3) preparation and oversight of teachers and other personnel, both those involved in community-based or in-service training and those in higher education;
 - (4) family and community initiatives related to pre-primary services and systems; and
 - (5) monitoring and quality assurance.
4. **Inclusive approach.** Take an inclusive approach in selecting potential TWG members. Expertise may be found within government agencies/functions across the Education sector and other sectors (including finance, statistics, planning-related ministries/bodies), (I)NGOs, higher education, public or private pre-primary services, or other places. The inclusive approach also entails including underrepresented groups in the TWG. It will be particularly useful to consider the following selection criteria:
 - The process will benefit from **experts or colleagues working in different core areas**, so you may find it useful to have representation from:
 - across key branches of the ministry and academic institutions;
 - ECE teachers/practitioners, teacher training institutions, teacher unions;
 - individuals with expertise in special education and education in emergencies;
 - other relevant ministries (such as health, social protection, family affairs, etc.).
 - You may wish to ensure representation from **stakeholders across the system**, including national, subnational and local stakeholders, with inclusion of both policymakers and implementers.
 - You may wish to include other actors such as **private pre-primary providers and NGO leaders**.
 - You may wish to ensure to include **people with disabilities, people belonging to a cross-section of minority or ethnic, religious and language groups**.



Tip 6: Determine the Roles and Functioning of the TWG

This entails determining the structure of the TWG, meeting and decision-making procedures. The following tips can help ensure that the TWG is productive:

1. **Determine the legislative and/or administrative status of the TWG.** For example, in **Kyrgyzstan**, the ECE Steering Committee was appointed by the Minister of Education, in accordance with the laws of the Kyrgyz Republic. A set of regulations were adopted to clarify the functioning and activities of this group.
2. **Consider the different roles that can be included in the TWG structure**, such as:
 - **Chair:** Typically, a TWG is led by a chair or co-chair who are strong leaders, have significant interest in the issue and are respected as subject matter experts.
 - **Secretariat:** Some TWGs have officers, such as a secretary who is responsible for keeping meeting minutes or sharing information with the members, etc.
3. **Clarify the responsibilities of the TWG members.** What are the expected and optional contributions of each members – for example, an expected contribution would be attending a certain percentage of meetings, while an optional contribution would be serving in a leadership role, etc. What are the specific tasks of the TWG members? Clarity on these issues may also help recruitment of members.
4. **Define the processes for how the group will function.**⁴ How often will the group meet? Who will convene meetings? How will the activities and decisions of the TWG be recorded? How will decisions be made? How long will the TWG remain active (if a time limit is relevant)? Note that processes should be open to revision as the work progresses.
5. **Document and communicate progress.** It is important to record the discussions and decisions of the TWG and make it easy for members to access and share that information. This enables members to advocate for the TWG and increases buy-in as well. Communication can widen the circle of people who are invested in the success of the TWG.
6. **Empower the leadership.** Ideally, the TWG should be officially acknowledged or recognized by high-level policymakers. Such recognition helps validate the status of the TWG and endorse its activities and decisions. This will also help empower Ministerial Leadership and promote their ownership and buy-in of the TWG.

⁴ The processes for how the group will function should take an inclusive approach. For example, ensuring that meetings are held in accessible buildings, that presentations are shared prior to the meetings and not as handouts (so that visually impaired members can access the information through assistive devices), etc.

ANNEX

SAMPLE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (ECE) TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP (TWG)

Note: The specifics and sections of this sample ToR are likely to need adaptation to your country context. This is a suggested format only – please feel free to use any format that suits for your country context.

1. Background

The Ministry of Education has established a Technical Working Group (TWG) as a key part of its strategies to strengthen its work in the area of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in the country.

The TWG will provide technical and advisory support for the planning, implementation and monitoring of ECE activities within the context of the development of the country's Education Sector Plan and associated Action Plan.

These Terms of Reference sets out the roles and responsibilities of the ECE TWG and determines the rules and procedures of its organizational work.

The ECE TWG shall be guided by the Laws of [country] and by the Ministry of Education. **[Note: Reference applicable policies, regulations or decrees, as well as other ministries that may have responsibility over ECE, as the case may be]**

Guiding questions to help you reflect on the information to include in this section of the ToR:

- What is the legal status and validity of the ECE TWG? Which laws, policies or regulations will be applicable to the ECE TWG?
- What are the national ESP development processes?
- What is the overall rationale for having the ECE TWG?

2. Objectives

The objectives of the ECE TWG are:

- 2.1.** to advance results in early childhood education (ECE) in [country] through supporting the Early Childhood Education Unit under the Ministry of Education (MoE), which is responsible for Early Childhood Education in the country.
- 2.2.** to provide technical and advisory support for the planning, implementation and monitoring of ECE activities within the context of the development of the country's Education Sector Plan and associated Action Plan.
- 2.3.** to facilitate the sharing of relevant updates, information, best practices and experiences pertaining to the ECE subsector and the education sector.

More specifically, the ECE TWG aims to provide technical and advisory support to strengthen the enabling environment for pre-primary education (in the areas of policies and legislation; financing; ministerial leadership and capacity; public demand) and the core functions of an effective pre-primary subsector (planning and budgeting; curriculum development and implementation; workforce development; family and community engagement; quality assurance).

Guiding questions to help you reflect on the information to include in this section of the ToR:

- What are the objectives of the ECE TWG (with respect to sector planning processes and beyond)? What are the ECE TWG's main tasks/activities?
- How will the ECE TWG's work contribute to the strengthening of the ECE subsector?
- Are there SMART indicators that can guide the progress of the ECE TWG? Will the ECE TWG review the objectives and the progress against such indicators on a regular basis so that adjustments can be made?

3. Membership of the ECE TWG

Membership of the TWG will be by invitation from the ECE Unit of the MoE. As a general rule, the TWG will comprise of representatives of stakeholders that contribute to ECE in the country.

It is envisaged that representatives from the following departments/institutions (but not limited to) will be nominated to participate in the TWG:

- 3.1. Planning unit
- 3.2. Curriculum development unit
- 3.3. Etc.

Representation of the TWG will be reviewed annually or as required to ensure it continues to meet the objectives of the TWG. Members may resign from the TWG at any time by providing notice in writing to the Chair.

Guiding questions to help you reflect on the information to include in this section of the ToR:

- Who will be part of this ECE TWG? How many members will the ECE TWG have?
- Would the ECE TWG benefit from expertise in different thematic areas (ex. curriculum; teacher training; monitoring; planning; etc.)?
- What is the process for becoming a member of the ECE TWG?
- What is the process for reviewing/changing the membership of the ECE TWG?

4. Structure of the ECE TWG

The ECE TWG will be led by the Chair, with the logistical and practical support from the Secretariat.

The Chairperson and the Secretariat person for the ECE TWG will be appointed by the ECE Unit of the MoE, and approval will be sought from all ECE TWG members.

Other members of the ECE TWG can be requested to support the Chair or the Secretariat to prepare materials for the meetings or follow-up on action points.

Revisions of the structure of the ECE TWG can be requested and communicated by any member of the ECE TWG, including the Chair or the Secretariat, at any given point in time.

Guiding questions to help you reflect on the information to include in this section of the ToR:

- What is the governance structure of the ECE TWG (i.e., what are the different roles in the ECE TWG)?
- Who chairs/leads the ECE TWG and who supports with the operations of the ECE TWG?

5. Responsibilities of the TWG

All TWG members shall:

- regularly attend meetings, or nominate an appropriate alternate representative of their organization to attend;
- report back as necessary to their nominating organization and members to encourage a wide dissemination and sharing of knowledge about progress and issues;
- inform the TWG of any issues/ recent information which should be discussed/ noted/ acted upon;
- make available relevant information held by the organizations they represent to support the planning, implementation and monitoring of ECE activities.

Guiding questions to help you reflect on the information to include in this section of the ToR:

- What is expected of the ECE TWG members? What are their roles?
- What are their specific tasks?

6. Convening of the ECE TWG meetings

- 6.1. Meetings shall be held once every two months or more frequently, if required.
- 6.2. The specific time and place of the meeting shall be suggested by the Chair of the ECE TWG and agreed with the members in the ECE TWG meetings and scheduled accordingly.
- 6.3. Extraordinary meetings of the ECE TWG to consider urgent matters shall be convened at the initiative of the Chair of the ECE TWG or one of the members of the ECE TWG in consultation with the Chair of the ECE TWG.
- 6.4. Reminders of the date of meetings with the agenda shall be sent not later than 5 working days before the actual meeting date of the ECE TWG.
- 6.5. Quorum for the meetings will be achieved if the meeting is attended by at least three (3) member organizations as follows: 1 representative from the Ministry of Education, 1 international organization and 1 local/national organization.
- 6.6. Member organizations need to confirm participation one (1) day before the ECE TWG meeting, at the latest.

Guiding questions to help you reflect on the information to include in this section of the ToR:

- How often will the group meet? Who will convene meetings?
- What is the process for convening meetings and for establishing quorum?

7. Participation in the ECE TWG meetings

- 7.1. Member organizations of the ECE TWG shall take part in the ECE TWG meetings, as well as any other MoE staff (such as the PS Basic Education or the CEO Primary) as relevant and possible.
- 7.2. Members of other working groups or relevant experts or other specialists related to the issue under discussion may be invited to participate in the ECE TWG meetings.

8. Decision-making procedure

- 8.1. Each member organization of the ECE TWG shall be entitled to one vote only when taking decisions on the matters under consideration at the ECE TWG meeting.⁵
- 8.2. All participants and invitees present at the ECE TWG meeting shall have the right to make suggestions, comments and amendments on the substance of the issues under discussion as well as to make inquiries.
- 8.3. Those invited to the ECE TWG meeting may submit in writing their comments or suggestions on the issues under consideration.
- 8.4. Decisions of the ECE TWG shall be taken by consensus by a simple majority (more than 50%) of the ECE TWG members.
- 8.5. Decisions on procedural matters shall be taken by a simple majority of the member organizations participating in the ECE TWG meeting.
- 8.6. The results of the decision-making shall be recorded in the Minutes of the meetings.

Guiding questions to help you reflect on the information to include in this section of the ToR:

- How will the decisions be made?
- How will the activities and decisions of the ECE TWG be recorded?

9. Preparation of materials

The draft agenda shall be set based on the ECE TWG's objectives or work plan, as well as taking into account the proposals of the ECE TWG members and realities requiring immediate attention. The agenda shall set out the topics of discussion and as relevant the desired outcomes of the meeting.

Materials for consideration at the ECE TWG meetings shall be prepared by the Secretariat of the ECE TWG in accordance with the agenda. Materials should contain:

- Reference materials and documentation on the issues (to be) discussed;
- Draft decisions/resolutions of the ECE TWG.

The draft agenda with the necessary documents shall be sent to all members of the ECE TWG not later than 5 working days before the ECE TWG meeting.

Comments and suggestions on the documents received shall be communicated to the Secretariat of the ECE TWG at least 5 working days prior to the commencement of the work of the ECE TWG. Comments or suggestions not submitted within the specified period shall be considered as unavailable.

The draft agenda, considering the amendments and additions made by the members of the ECE TWG, shall be approved by the ECE TWG in session. By the decision of the ECE TWG during the meeting, the issues that members of the ECE TWG may consider important and urgent, shall be included to the agenda.

⁵ You may consider if the Minister of Education or a representative (such as a director general or secretary general) may participate in meetings in an advisory capacity.

10. Minutes of the meetings

The results of the meetings shall be recorded by the Secretariat in the Minutes summarizing the proceedings, including decision-making and records. The Minutes and decisions shall be signed by the Chair of the ECE TWG and the Secretariat of the ECE TWG. The minutes of all meetings will include:

- a list of the members in attendance
- action points/responsibilities under each agenda item
- progress on agreed actions from previous meetings
- any statements which members request be recorded.

Any member of the ECE TWG may, if necessary, request that a dissenting opinion on a decision taken by the ECE TWG be reflected in the Minutes and that a full or partial statement be included in the records.

The minutes of meetings and records of all correspondence and reports of the ECE TWG will be kept by the Secretariat and will be made available to the members of the TWG in an agreed manner.

Decisions and minutes of the meetings shall be sent to the ECE TWG members within 5 working days after the meeting. Members are required to provide feedback on the minutes that were shared before the next ECE TWG meeting.

Guiding questions to help you reflect on the information to include in this section of the ToR:

- How will the results/summary of the meetings be documented? Who has the responsibility of documenting and communicating the activities/decisions of the ECE TWG?
- What should the minutes of the meetings include?
- How are the minutes of the meetings shared with and approved by the members?