

Strengthening Early Childhood Systems to Promote Child Development: *A Framework to Assess Readiness*

We often focus on the readiness of parents for a baby or on the readiness of children for school success. The leaders in early childhood systems development need to be ready for change. Change is inherent to the process of creating a “system of systems” to promote early childhood development: change in data are used for decision-making, changes in program and policy to better serve families, and changes in the way agencies work together. The essential components of readiness for these changes are described below. A series of questions to stimulate dialogue among stakeholders follow each readiness component. When these five components are aligned and are of shared certainty, there will be greater likelihood of successful implementation of the early childhood comprehensive systems plan.

1. REASONING: *We can communicate a clear, compelling case for early childhood systems development.*

What is the current situation in your state of efforts to build early childhood comprehensive systems?

What already has or is being done in your state to address early childhood comprehensive systems development? How effective are your current strategies and interventions?

How well do leading individual and organizational stakeholders in children’s policy and services understand and agree upon the current situation?

What is the potential value-add of using ECCS at this time as a tool for improving children’s health in your state?

How clearly can your state’s leading individual and organizational stakeholders articulate the value-add of doing ECCS at this time?

Given multiple competing public health priorities in your community, how compelling is the case to use ECCS?

2. RESULTS: *Together with key stakeholders, we can articulate what measurable results we expect to achieve through early childhood systems development, and when we expect to achieve them.*

What are the desired results expected from using ECCS in your state?

By when do you expect to see these results? What is the expected time line for interim progress and finally achieving these results?

What measures will you use to assess progress and impact?

Do leading individual and organizational stakeholders concerned with early childhood systems understand and agree upon these measures, time lines, and results?

3. ROLES: *The essential stakeholders are willing and able to champion early childhood systems over time in their various roles as participants in change.*

Who are the *sponsors* of ECCS in your state?

Who are the *agents of change* for ECCS in your state?

Who are the *advocates* of ECCS in your state?

Are key sponsors and agents willing and able to fulfill their roles in the promotion of ECCS in your state at this time?

4. RISKS AND REWARDS: *There is sufficient strategic balance between the potential benefits and possible consequences of engagement for essential community stakeholders to support early childhood systems implementation.*

What are the consequences of continuing current ECCS efforts *without* achieving sufficient, timely, measurable results?

What are the consequences for the key sponsors and agents of pursuing ECCS *without* achieving sufficient, timely, measurable results?

For sponsors and agents, what are the rewards and recognition associated with support of and participating in ECCS? What are their incentives for genuine, sustained engagement?

Are these rewards sufficient to outweigh their perceived risks?

5. RESOURCES: *There are sufficient systems and resources to support full implementation of the early childhood systems approach.*

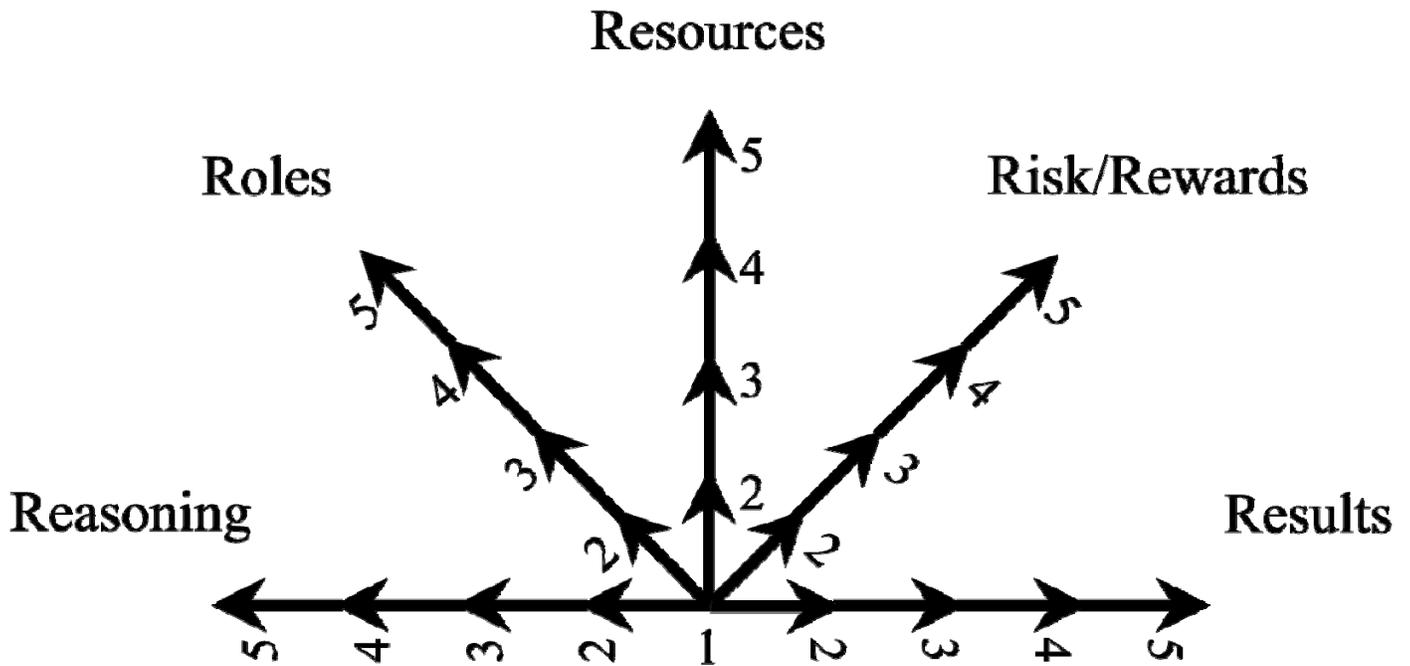
Are sufficient resources available to do the strategic planning and maintain collaborative structures for development of an early childhood comprehensive system?

Are your "sponsors" willing and able to assure the systems and resources necessary to fully utilize ECCS over time?

Do your "agents" have enough dedicated time to champion implementation of ECCS in your state?

Are there resources you can draw on that you have not yet tapped into that will support ECCS implementation?

RAISING THE ROOF: WHAT SHAPE IS YOUR TENT?



1. Transfer each of your agreement scales from the Summing Up sheet to the graphic above. Mark your score on each corresponding axis with **◆**.
2. Connect each of the five **◆** from axis to axis.
3. Shade the inside region across the axes.
4. Look at the shape of your 'tent': what does it tell you? Is there enough room to grow this initiative? Is it balanced? Is it able to withstand external elements that bear weight on its surface? Where is your greatest constraint?