

Getting Ready for Program Performance Evaluation:

Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Tip Sheet

Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) initial grantees are required to develop program performance evaluation (PPE) plans that detail how they will monitor and assess progress toward their own goals and objectives and use the resulting findings to support continuous quality improvement.

A PPE plan can help the PDG B-5 grantee develop a realistic timeline for implementation of its evaluation. Having a written PPE plan helps the PDG B-5 grantee make sure its evaluation is:



Feasible



Instructive



Resource efficient



Transparent

A comprehensive PPE plan can also serve to refine goals and objectives and inform key stakeholders and partners about those goals and objectives.

This tip sheet identifies nine tips across four steps based on promising practices and lessons learned from other evaluations.

[SEE THE TIPS](#)

Introduction

What is PPE and why is it important?

PPE is the ongoing self-examination of PDG B-5 mixed delivery system (MDS) accomplishments, particularly toward pre-established goals found in the PDG B-5 grantee’s strategic plan. PPE allows the PDG B-5 grantee to self-assess its efforts to coordinate and build the capacity of its PDG B-5 MDS and can result in findings that it can use to support continuous quality improvement.

What is the tip sheet’s purpose?

This tip sheet highlights promising practices and lessons learned from other evaluations. It draws on insights from a wide range of resources developed by government agencies, foundations, research organizations and other experts with evaluation expertise.

What is the tip sheet’s structure?

The tip sheet includes nine tips organized across four key, overarching steps for PPE planning:

1. [Engage Internal and External Partners](#). Build support for and active engagement in PPE.
2. [Identify Your PPE Goals and Objectives](#). Identify what PPE can and cannot deliver within available resources while taking into account and preparing for any potential challenges.
3. [Plan for Gathering, Preparing and Analyzing Data](#). Identify, gather, prepare and analyze the existing administrative data and/or new data needed to meet your goals and objectives.
4. [Plan for Using and Sharing Findings](#). Create a culture of learning and continuous quality improvement.

How should I navigate the tip sheet?

A navigation bar at the top of each planning step section and tip page to make it easier to move to the specific step and/or tips you need. The navigation bar includes a line indicating the beginning of a new step and clickable links to each tip. Click “T” to go back to the list of tips. Click “A” to go to the appendix of additional resources.

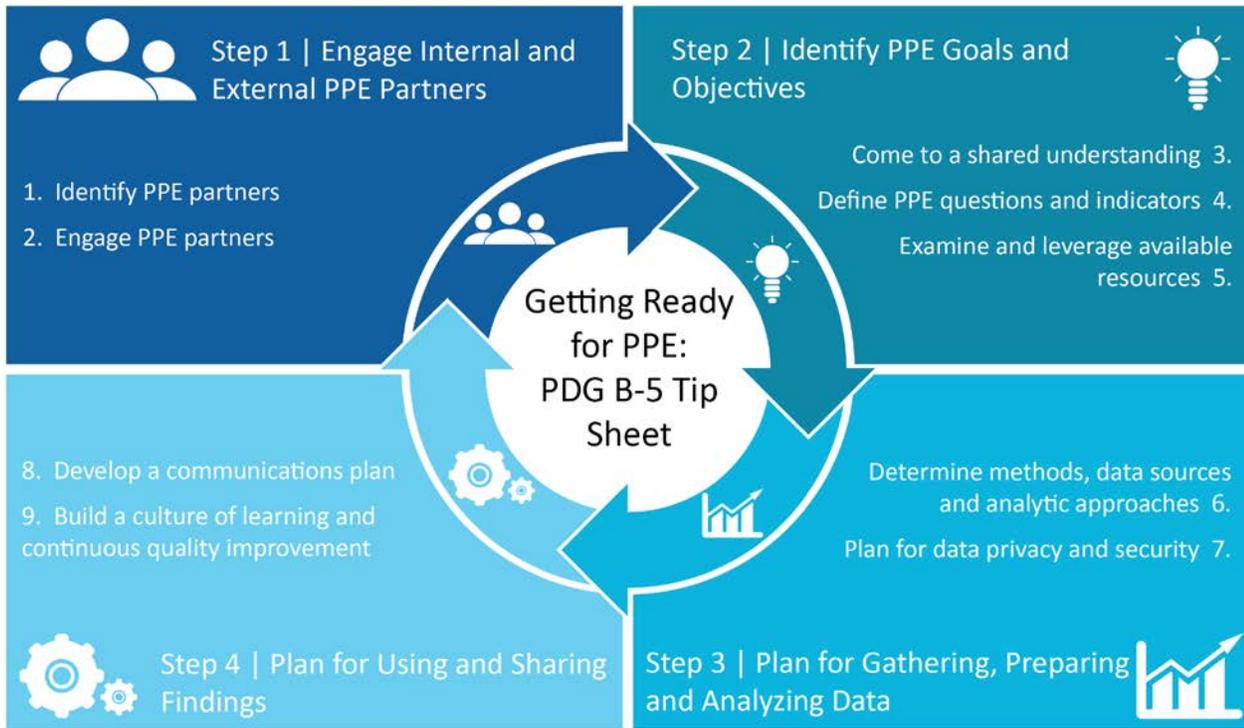


Figure 1 Four Key Steps for PPE Planning

How can the PDG B-5 grantee use the tip sheet?

The PDG B-5 grantee can use the tip sheet in a manner that best fits its needs. The Departments do not intend for this to be a prescriptive checklist. The PDG B-5 grantee can identify the tips that are most relevant to achieving its own goals and objectives.

What other resources are out there?

The tip sheet is not all-inclusive and is not the only resource available. The appendix includes additional publicly available resources that may provide valuable information as the grantee plan its PPE.

The Tips

Engage Internal and External PPE Partners

1. Identify PPE partners
2. Engage PPE partners

Identify PPE Goals and Objectives

3. Come to a shared understanding
4. Define PPE questions and indicators
5. Examine and leverage available resources

Plan for Gathering, Preparing and Analyzing Data

6. Determine methods, data sources and analytic approaches
7. Plan for data privacy and security

Plan for Using and Sharing Findings

8. Develop a communications plan
9. Build a culture of learning and continuous quality improvement

Engage Internal and External PPE Partners

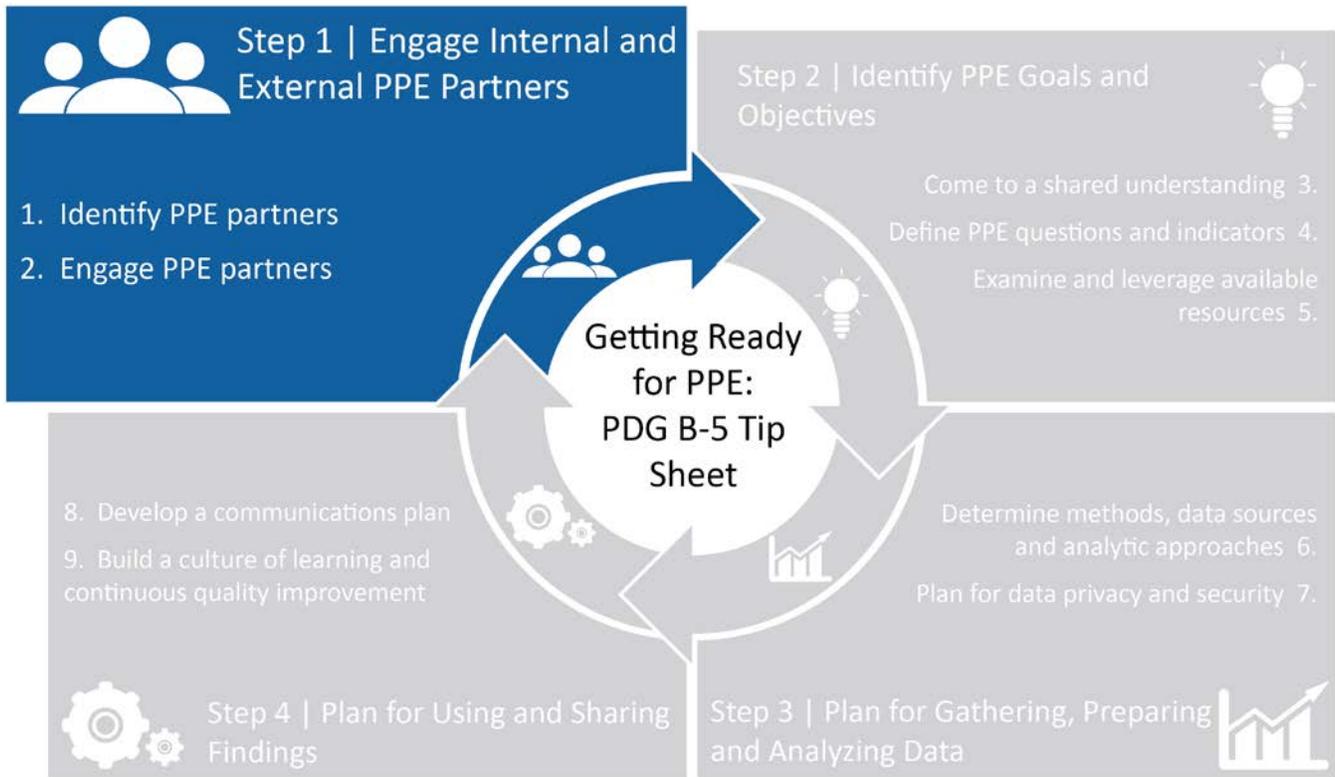


Figure 2 Four Key Steps, Engage Internal and External PPE Partners

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Bringing PPE partners into the planning process can help:

1. Identify and prioritize PPE evaluation questions and associated indicators and data elements
2. Build the expertise of the grantee's PPE team
3. Gain early buy-in and support for PPE from stakeholders

PPE partners may help facilitate the implementation of the PDG B-5 grantee's PPE or other PDG B-5 activities and/or may help make sure they and other stakeholders use PPE findings.

THE SECTIONS OF THE PPE PLAN THAT APPLY

- PPE Resources (e.g., staffing roles and responsibilities, PPE partners)
- PPE Design (e.g., goals and objectives, data sources, data analysis)

Tip 1 – Identify PPE partners

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

PPE partners can be anyone who will support PPE planning and implementation. They may be individuals or organizations with research and evaluation expertise that can support PPE design, analysis and/or reporting. They may also be stakeholders with a vested interest in the findings from the PDG B-5 grantee's PPE, including representatives from other states, children, families, front-line staff, non-profit organizations or foundations. PPE partners may also include state government staff, including those who support programs in the PDG B-5 grantee's PDG B-5 MDS. The PDG B-5 grantee may want to think about who is most likely to help it continuously improve its PPE to determine which stakeholders it invites to be a PPE partner.

Identifying PPE partners can help build the infrastructure and internal or external support needed for a rigorous and relevant PPE.

KEY POINTS

- In general, PPE partners might include those who:
 - Have the expertise to support the grantee's PDG B-5 MDS and/or
 - Have a stake in PPE findings.
- Depending on the size and scope of the PPE, the number of PPE partners may vary. Partners can all help keep the PPE plan focused and achievable.

Tip 2 – Engage PPE partners

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

PPE partners may bring diverse and innovative ideas on how to design the PPE, the PPE questions the PDG B-5 grantee can try to answer and the data it may need to address those questions. The PDG B-5 grantee can engage PPE partners through a participatory approach in which all parties feel invested in the PPE plan, its implementation and its eventual findings.

KEY POINTS

- PPE partners may have a vested stake in the PPE process. The PDG B-5 grantee may want to consider this as it plans for an objective and rigorous PPE.
- Come to a shared understanding of PPE roles and responsibilities.
- Also, allow time to come to a shared understanding regarding PPE goals and objectives.
- Engage PPE partners throughout the PPE plan development, as well as throughout implementation for early buy-in and ongoing support of PPE activities.

Key Considerations to Engage Internal and External PPE Partners

Who are potential PPE partners?

How can they be involved in PPE planning and implementation?

What role do we expect PPE partners to play in PPE planning and implementation?

Identify PPE Goals and Objectives

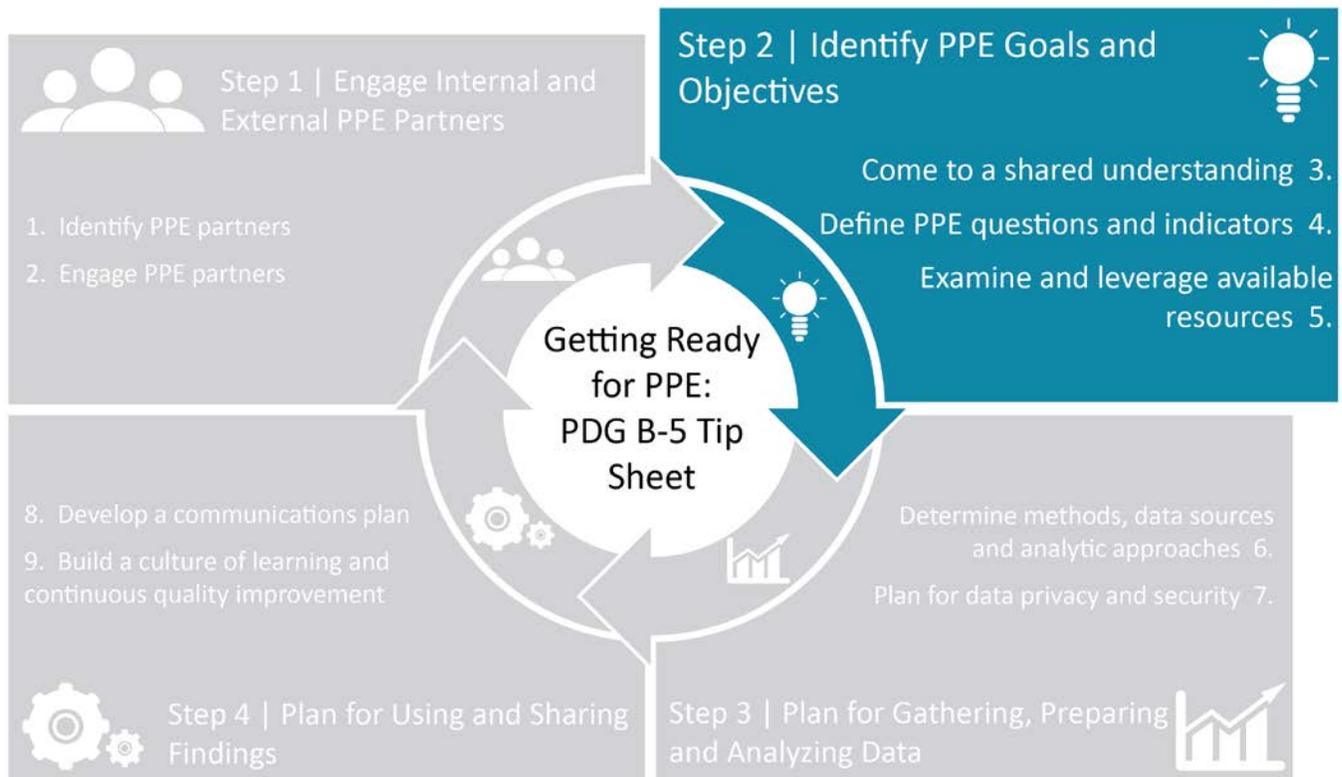


Figure 3 Four Key Steps, Identify Your PPE Goals and Objectives

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

PPE planning can help identify PPE questions of interest that are potentially answerable given available quality data and resources. PPE should support the PDG B-5 grantee as it builds the capacity of its PDG B-5 MDS through PDG B-5 strategic plan implementation. Identifying the goals and objectives of the PPE and for the PDG B-5 MDS more broadly can help ensure that the PPE addresses the questions of greatest interest to the PDG B-5 grantee.

THE SECTIONS OF THE PPE PLAN THAT APPLY

- PPE Resources (e.g., staffing roles and responsibilities, budget)
- PPE Design (e.g., goals and objectives, data analysis)
- Assumptions, Constraints and Risks

Tip 3 – Come to a shared understanding

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Strong communication and coordination among members of the PDG B-5 grantee’s PPE team can help refine the goals and objectives of the PPE and associated PPE questions of interest. Coming to a shared understanding can help support the PPE planning process and ensure that all members of the PDG B-5 grantee’s PPE team have similar expectations and are working toward a common aim.

A logic model can help support this goal by visually depicting the links between inputs, key processes and expected outcomes. Logic models can help the PDG B-5 grantee articulate the parameters and expectations of its specific PDG B-5 grant activities and inform how it uses PPE to inform continuous quality improvement. Logic models can also help the PDG B-5 grantee assess where it is in the development of its PDG B-5 program, which will help inform the types of PPE questions it can consider for current planning versus those it may want to add to future PPEs.

Some PPE questions may not be answerable until the PDG B-5 grantee’s PDG B-5 MDS reaches a specific stage of maturity. Table 1 shows alignment between PDG B-5 developmental stages and activities. The PDG B-5 grantee can use this or a similar alignment to self-assess its own stage of maturity.

Developmental Stage	PDG B-5 MDS Activities
PDG B-5 Planning	Inputs Identified Activities begin
PDG B-5 Strategic Plan Implementation	Activities Underway Outputs and short-term outcomes achieved
PDG B-5 Maintenance	Activities sustained Intermediate and long-term outcomes achieved

Table 1 General Alignment of PDG B-5 Developmental Stages and PDG B-5 Activities

KEY POINTS

- PDG B-5 MDS maturity may affect the types of PPE questions the PDG B-5 grantee can ask, the data elements it can collect and analyze and the sources for existing administrative data and any new data.
- PPE planning is iterative and the PDG B-5 grantee can update its PPE plan as its PDG B-5 MDS matures.
- Coming to a shared understanding regarding what the PPE can or cannot deliver may help support the successful implementation of PPE activities and use of PPE findings.

Tip 4 – Define PPE questions and indicators

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

PPE can include descriptive, process, cost and outcome questions – and associated indicators – to glean holistic insight into the PDG B-5 MDS.

- Descriptive questions and indicators may provide insight into the organizational structure and capacity of the PDG B-5 MDS.
- Process questions and indicators may provide insight into the implementation of strategic plan recommendations.
- Cost questions may provide insight into the resources needed to implement or sustain strategic plan recommendations.
- Outcome questions and indicators may provide insight into whether the PDG B-5 MDS is making progress toward goals or objectives.

Qualitative and quantitative indicators can both provide useful information. Having PPE partners participate in PPE design and indicator development may increase the likelihood of more useful PPE findings.

For each PPE question and indicator, it may be important to consider any assumptions made, the resources the PDG B-5 grantee may need, and any limitations or expected challenges. The PDG B-5 grantee can document its assumptions and potential constraints or risks at the end of its PPE plan.

KEY POINTS

- It may be difficult to evaluate every aspect of the PDG B-5 MDS every year. It may be necessary to prioritize amongst questions of interest for particular years.
- Strong indicators are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely (SMART).
- Collecting and analyzing data for some indicators may be more time-consuming and costly than others.

Tip 5 – Examine and leverage available resources

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Understanding the budget, staff and information technology resources available for PPE planning and implementation is critical to the development of a comprehensive and feasible PPE plan. It would be helpful to examine available resources early in the planning process to make sure the PPE plan is achievable and will lead to useful findings the PDG B-5 grantee and others can apply across the grantee's PDG B-5 MDS. PPE design, data sources and methods are likely to influence the resources that the PDG B-5 grantee may need for its PPE.

IDENTIFY PPE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

KEY POINTS

- Consider aligning the scope and complexity of the PPE plan with the resources available to support implementation of the plan. Discussions about feasibility within resource constraints may contribute to a shared understanding of what PPE can and cannot deliver.
- Consider the resources that may be available from key partners and stakeholders.

Key Considerations to Identify PPE Goals and Objectives

What are the goals and objectives of our PPE?

Are our PPE questions answerable with quality data based on existing infrastructure and resources?

What are the assumptions, constraints or risks we need to consider?

Plan for Gathering, Preparing and Analyzing Data



Figure 4 Four Key Steps, Plan for Gathering, Preparing and Analyzing Data

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

There are multiple facets to consider when planning to gather, prepare and analyze data. Chief among them is designing a rigorous approach that leverages credible data and will result in credible findings. The PDG B-5 grantee may consider aspects like data quality, integrity, use and integration as it develops its PPE plan.

The PDG B-5 grantee may also want to take time at the beginning of the planning process to make sure it has a data system in place that allows for the proper collection and storage of PPE data.

THE SECTIONS OF THE PPE PLAN THAT APPLY

- PPE Design (data sources)
- Data Analysis
- Data Privacy and Security

Tip 6 – Determine methods, data sources and analytic approaches

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Credible data is critical to produce reliable findings and ultimately to use those findings for continuous quality improvement and to identify promising practices and lessons learned.

The methods, data sources and analytic approaches selected should be appropriate for the question of interest and the overall goals and objectives of the PPE. For example, the grantee may consider using qualitative methods if it is looking for rich feedback from a small group of individuals. The PDG B-5 grantee may consider using quantitative methods if it wants to identify current and future trends or look at outputs or outcomes across its PDG B-5 MDS. The PDG B-5 grantee may be able to examine its PPE questions using existing administrative data or it may need to identify new data sources or collect new data elements.

KEY POINTS

- Take time early in the PPE planning process to identify a process to properly collect and store data in a way that allows for thoughtful and accurate analysis and reporting.
- Consider the quality of data available and the new data you may need to collect.
- Select the method(s), data source(s) and analytic approach(es) that best align with the PPE question of interest.

Tip 7 – Plan for data privacy and security

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Data privacy and security are essential to protect the confidentiality of children, families, providers and other individuals or communities represented in PPE data. Remaining knowledgeable about and implementing privacy and security protections will only further promote interoperability efforts across PDG B-5 MDS programs.

KEY POINTS

- Consider existing privacy policies and procedures.
- Implement privacy policies and procedures to adhere to expectations, laws and practices.
- Data de-identification measures, data destruction protocols and data matching protocols can all be helpful tools to promote privacy compliance.

Key Considerations to Plan for Gathering, Preparing and Analyzing Data

Is the method we chose the most appropriate way to answer our PPE questions?

What credible data elements already exist and are usable to answer our PPE questions?

Do we need to consider using multiple data sources or methods?

Is there a data governance committee we need to or can work with?

Plan for Using and Sharing Findings

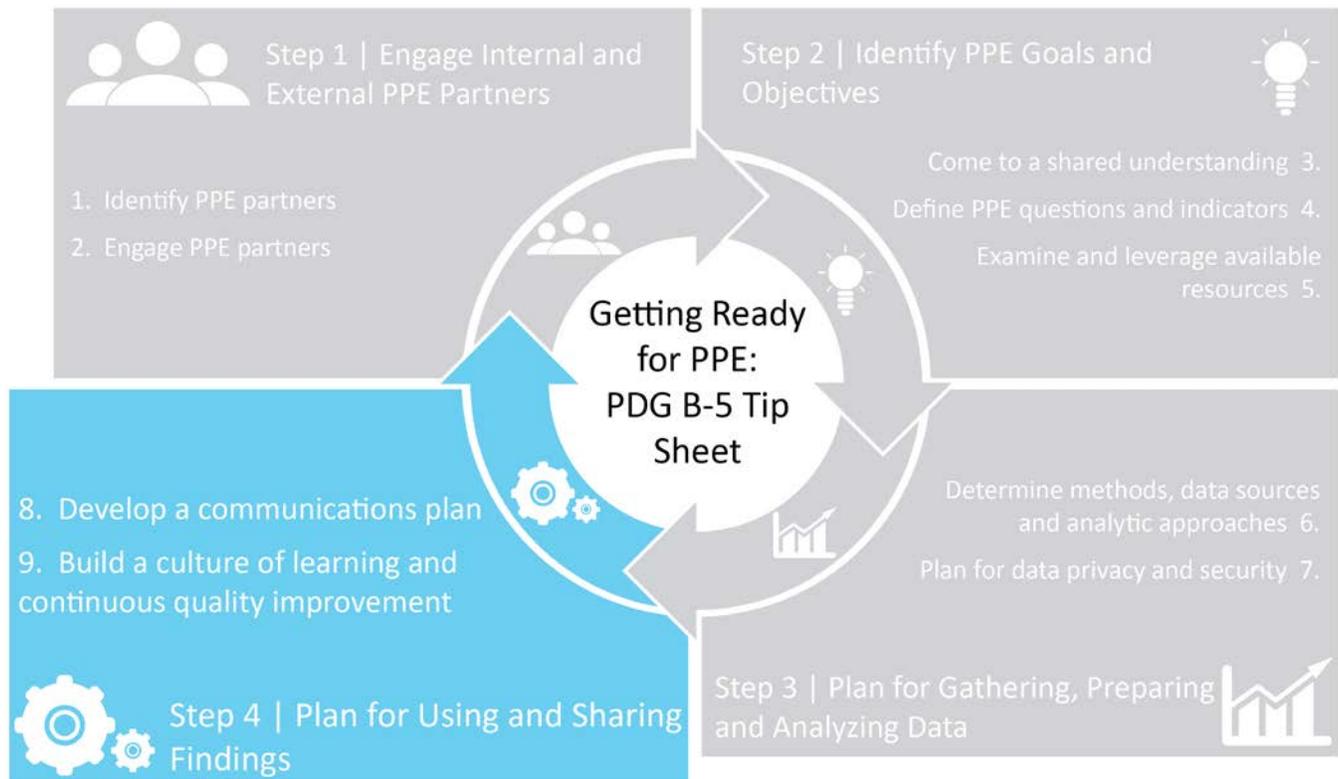


Figure 5 Four Key Steps, Plan for Using and Sharing Findings

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

PPE findings may describe the PDG B-5 grantee's progress toward pre-established goals and objectives identified in its strategic plan, identify opportunities for continuous quality improvement and/or provide insights to identify potential promising practices and lessons learned. PPE findings can be crucial for strengthening the capacity and infrastructure of the PDG B-5 MDS. Careful planning can maximize how useful and informative PPE findings will be to the PDG B-5 grantee and its stakeholders.

THE SECTIONS OF THE PPE PLAN THAT APPLY

- Timeline
- Using and Reporting PPE Findings

Tip 8 – Develop a communications plan

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

An intentional communication plan that describes who may be interested in PPE findings and how they can learn the information of interest is critical to the translation and application of PPE findings. Communications planning can be internal or external and use a variety of audience-specific strategies.

Some questions to ask as you write your communications plan include:

- Who are the priority audiences who need to learn about PPE findings?
- What do they already know?
- What do they need to know?
- What might they do with the information?
- What are the best communication channels for reaching each audience?
- What is the timeframe for providing each audience PPE updates and findings?

KEY POINTS

- The PDG B-5 grantee might consider ways it can use interim PPE findings to support continuous learning and allow for any needed course corrections.

Tip 9 – Build a Culture of Learning and Continuous Quality Improvement

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Communicating PPE findings may not be sufficient to ensure that PPE partners or other stakeholders use or apply the findings. The PDG B-5 grantee may want to develop an early approach to promote the use of PPE findings and the identification of lessons learned. This approach might include:

- Engaging PPE partners and other stakeholders in periodic discussions of PPE findings throughout PPE implementation.
- Examining how PDG B-5 program staff and partners within the PDG B-5 MDS are using PPE findings and sharing those practices with others.
- Reporting tailored PPE findings that address the specific questions of interest of particular PPE partners and stakeholders.

KEY POINTS

- PPE partners and stakeholders who are involved throughout the PPE planning and implementation process, and who have a feedback loop with the PPE team, may be more likely to apply PPE findings.
- Strategize with PPE partners early in the planning process to ensure findings are relevant and communicated clearly.

Key Considerations to Plan for Sharing Findings

How might we share findings with PPE partners or other stakeholders?

What do we want recipients of PPE findings to do with the information?

Appendix: PPE Planning Resources

Overarching PPE Planning Resources

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Evaluator Self-Assessment](#) is available in a print-only format to encourage evaluators to systematically reflect on and inquire about their capacity to conduct high-quality program evaluations. Grantees can use this tool from CDC's Program Performance and Evaluation Office to identify their PPE strengths and professional development needs.

CDC National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (NCCDPHP) [Developing an Effective Evaluation Plan workbook](#) applies the CDC Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health. It lays out a six-step process for the decisions and activities involved in planning and conducting an evaluation.

[The Program Manager's Guide to Evaluation, Second Edition](#) offers guidelines for planning and implementing a program evaluation. It provides information to help readers understand each step of the evaluation process so they can fully participate in it.

U.S. Government Accountability Office's (GAO) [Designing Evaluations: 2012 Revision](#) provides guidance on commonly used evaluation methodologies and tips on designing the evaluation scope and assess program implementation. GAO based its guidance on GAO studies, policy documents and program evaluation literature.

The Corporation for National and Community Service's Social Innovation Fund's [Evaluation Plan Guidance: A Step-by-Step Guide to Designing a Rigorous Evaluation](#) outlines how to assess grant program effectiveness and build a knowledge base that will help other initiatives addressing similar issues. The guidance also offers recommendations related to logic models, evaluation components, data collection and reporting.

The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) [Research and Evaluation Capacity: A Self-Assessment Tool and Discussion Guide for CCDF Lead Agencies](#) includes advice on strengthening organizational research capacity to carry out and use research in decision-making. The tool guides user through a process of reflecting on organizational research capacity strengths and weaknesses, establishing priorities for capacity building and articulating outstanding questions regarding strengthening organizational research capacity.

The [Evaluation Resource Guide for Children's Bureau Discretionary Grantees](#) provides a list of resources that grantees can use to inform and enhance the evaluations of child welfare initiatives. It offers general guidance for researchers and evaluators in the areas of evaluation design, data collection and analysis and reporting and using evaluation findings.

The Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) [Evaluation Plan Development Checklist for MIECHV Awardees: A DOHVE TA Resource](#) provides a list of the basic components of an evaluation plan.

Logic Models

CDC's evaluation toolkit [Evaluation, Documents, Workbooks and Tools website](#) includes examples of logic models and a guide for developing a logic model.

[Tribal TANF—Child Welfare Coordination: Theory of Change and Logic Models](#) includes a discussion of strategies for ensuring that programs' outputs and outcomes, two key components of a logic model, are measurable. It concludes with a discussion on how and why to revisit a logic model so that it remains a relevant resource throughout the life of a program.

Measures and Indicators

The Child Care and Early Education Research and Policy Analysis project produced [Defining and Measuring Access to High-Quality Early Care and Education \(ECE\): A Guidebook for Policymakers and Researchers](#). It establishes a common understanding of ECE access and how to measure it across different types of early learning settings.

[Supporting the Use of Administrative Data in Early Care and Education Research: Resource Series](#) offers a set of resources to strengthen childcare administrators' and their research partners' ability to use administrative data to address policy-relevant early care and education research questions.

[Research Connections Working with Administrative Data website](#) provides guidance on how to work with administrative data (i.e., information about individual children, families and/or providers of early care and education and other family benefits collected and maintained as part of the operation of government programs).

Data Collection and Analysis

ACF's [Qualitative Research Methods in Program Evaluation: Considerations for Federal Staff](#) provides guidance to help users think through the appropriate use of qualitative research in evaluation efforts and assess the credibility of qualitative findings and conclusions.

Using PPE Findings

CDC NCCDPHP's [Evaluation Reporting: A Guide to Help Ensure Use of Evaluation Findings](#) describes key considerations for effectively reporting evaluation findings, the elements of evaluation reporting and the importance of disseminating evaluation findings.