

The Action Plan represents a roadmap of activities that the state program and partners intend to undertake to achieve important goals for nutrition and physical activity approaches that address prevention of obesity in the ECE setting.

States can identify how, when, and what they will do in their Action Plan to improve nutrition, breastfeeding, physical activity, and screen time practices; therefore, evaluation of the action plans will vary across states. The evaluation of your state Action Plan provides information that enables you to develop and implement plans as effectively and efficiently as possible. Specific evaluation questions and methods are developed based on the stage of development of your Action Plan as well as your state's priorities and resources and level to which activities have been implemented as of the time of the evaluation.

For those developing a plan, the focus is on using an effective process to develop and write the plan and ensuring the quality of the plan itself. States involved in developing their Action Plan can gather information about their activities and assess the satisfaction and attitudes of the partners in the plan development process ("process evaluation"). They can use this information to strengthen their activities, for example, to improve partnership engagement, stimulate partnership formation, and most efficiently identify the appropriate content and objectives for the plan. For those implementing a state plan, the focus is on practical monitoring of plan implementation, with evaluation activities aimed at early identification of potential progress. States that have begun implementation of their Action Plan can initiate "outcome evaluation" to identify whether the state achieves the intended goals and objectives of the plan.

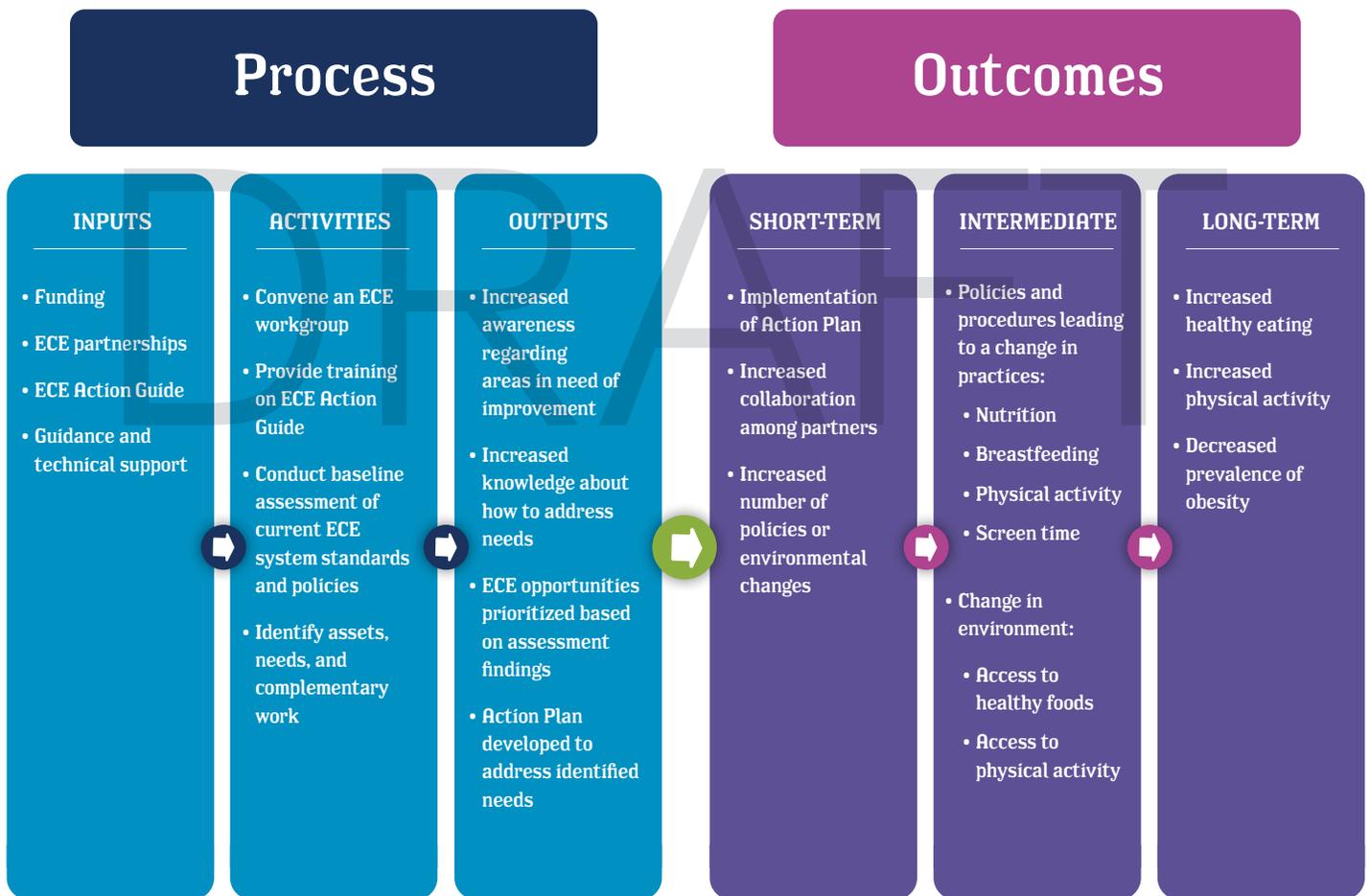
Note that the evaluation of the Action Plan focuses only on the process of developing the Action Plan and on its outcomes. It does not focus on specific initiatives (programs, policies, interventions, etc.) included in your plan. Evaluation of specific initiatives such as partnerships and policies are discussed later in this section, but they are not included in the evaluation of the Action Plan itself.

The evaluation of the Action Plan begins by identifying of the purpose of the evaluation and the intended use and intended users. The table below provides examples of purpose, users, and uses of the evaluation of the Action Plan.

Action Plan Evaluation	
Purpose	Intended Users and Uses
<p>Determine the engagement of partners in the development of the Action Plan. Evaluation can determine the extent to which activities to develop the Action Plan engaged key partners in ways that would result in endorsement and acceptance of the plan among those who must approve or implement it.</p> <p>Determine the quality of the Action Plan. Evaluation can determine the extent to which the plan contains necessary or recommended elements such as an assessment of need and readiness for changes in policies or standards, evidence-based strategies, and reach to high-risk populations.</p> <p>Determine whether goals or objectives have been met. Evaluation can be used to determine progress toward achieving outcomes and identify lessons learned for improvement of the plan. Achieving objectives provides a sense of accomplishment to members and demonstrates to funders that the partnership is a good investment.</p> <p>Improve partner awareness of the Action Plan. Evaluation can be used to determine the extent to which awareness about the importance of improved nutrition, breastfeeding, physical activity, and screen time standards has increased among key partners and decision makers.</p> <p>Build capacity and leverage resources. Evaluation can be used to build capacity and leverage resources to implement the Action Plan activities.</p> <p>Improve and guide Action Plan activities. Evaluation can be used to assess Action Plan interventions and activities so that successful strategies can be supported and replicated.</p> <p>Provide accountability to funders and partners. Evaluation can be used to provide accountability for achieving results and managing resources.</p>	<p>Partnership leadership can use findings to provide accountability and show progress toward achieving outcomes to inform the work of the partnership. Findings can also be used to determine areas in need of improvement to facilitate the accomplishment of activities.</p> <p>Management staff can use evaluation data to help them improve the implementation of the Action Plan and the engagement of partners in the implementation of the plan.</p> <p>Partnership members can use the evaluation findings to support their participation in the partnership, to support implementation of the plan, and to advocate on behalf of the Action Plan.</p> <p>Funders may use findings to support continued funding, to leverage additional funding, and to identify successful strategies to share with other grantees.</p> <p>People affected by Action Plan activities. People or organizations may use evaluation findings to support implementation of strategies and promote awareness of the importance of improved nutrition, breastfeeding, physical activity, and screen time practices in the ECE setting.</p>

The example Action Plan logic model in Figure 1 shows the processes and outcomes for the implementation of the Action Plan. This logic model can be used to guide development of the evaluation questions and demonstrate the links between the activities in the Action Plan and the expected outcomes for the improvement of nutrition, breastfeeding, physical activity, and screen time practices in the ECE setting.

Figure 1. Example Logic Model for ECE Action Plan



Evaluation Questions

Following are sample questions and potential methods for responding to questions:

Process Evaluation Questions	Potential Method
What characteristics of the Action Plan implementation process have facilitated or hindered accomplishment of plan objectives/goals?	Survey of partnerships
Which strategies or activities of the plan are being implemented? Which are not? Why or Why not?	Survey of partnerships
What changes should be made in the Action Plan to reflect lessons learned or unrelated factors (e.g., organizational dynamics, personalities, etc.)	Key informant interview
Were the most important partners identified and asked for input on the evaluation needs?	Survey of partnerships
Does the Action Plan include sufficient data describing nutrition, physical activity, and obesity within the state's population? Does it present data on prevalence of obesity and existing efforts to prevent and control obesity?	Expert informant interview Ratings by expert informants, including some public health experts who are not part of the development of the state plan
Does the Action Plan prioritize ECE opportunities based on assessment findings? Were strategies targeted to the highest need/priority areas?	Expert informant interview
Does the Action Plan reflect the current standards to improve nutrition, breastfeeding, physical activity, and screen time practices in the ECE setting? Are the activities in the plan evidence-based?	Expert informant interview
Does the Action Plan address health disparities by reaching those members of a population at greatest risk?	Expert informant interview
Are goals and objectives stated in SMART (or similar) format?	Expert informant interview
Does the Action Plan focus sufficiently on statewide, long-term policy and environmental change?	Expert informant interview
To what extent was the Action Plan developed and published?	Observation / checklist
Have all intended audiences been reached and involved, in accordance with the implementation plan?	Checklist Survey of intended audiences
Short-Term Outcome Evaluation Questions	Potential Method
Do those who should know about the Action Plan actually know about it?	Survey of key leaders, decision-makers
Have agencies/organizations identified by the plan for specific roles or actions carried out their assignments?	Review/checklist, based on implementation of activities
Has collaboration increased among partners?	Survey of partnerships
Has the number of policies or standards to improve nutrition, breastfeeding, physical activity, and screen time practices in the ECE setting increased?	Inventory
Has access to healthy foods and physical activity opportunities increased?	Inventory