Policy Making Guide for Early Childhood Development in Abu Dhabi
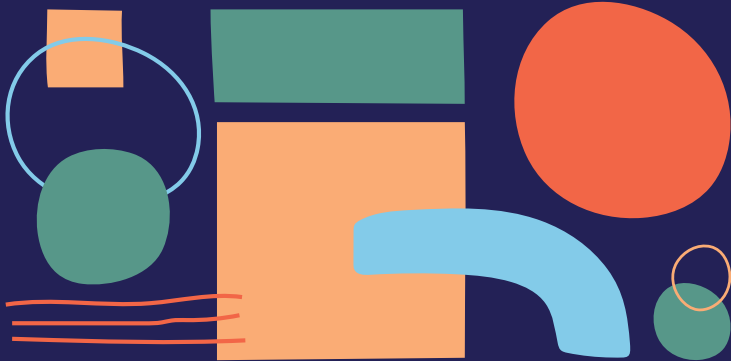
Executive Summary

15 March 2020

Foreword

This document is intended to serve as a guide for Abu Dhabi stakeholders involved in the development of policies related to the Early Childhood Development (ECD) sector. It should continue to evolve as policymakers implement and enhance the approach laid out in this guide.

Guide objectives:

❑ Provide ECD policymakers with a consistent approach, aligned with global promising practices, for the development of ECD sector-related policies

❑ Standardize early childhood development policymaking practices across government bodies

❑ Introduce an approach to developing policies which is focused on the engagement of key stakeholders and reinforce stakeholder coordination to mitigate against a siloed approach to early childhood development policymaking

❑ Reinforce local policymaking capabilities and provide policymakers with detailed frameworks and tools to develop ECD policies

❑ Ensure ECD policies are coherent, evidence-based and aligned with Abu Dhabi's ECD Strategy 2035

❑ Standardize the terms and approach used by ECD policymakers in Abu Dhabi, to ensure alignment with broader national and emirate-level policymaking approaches and national strategies

❑ Enhance monitoring and evaluation practices to ensure continuous improvement of government action in early childhood development

Glossary of terms

Term	Definition
ECA	The Early Childhood Authority is an entity established by Law No. 21 of 2019 to oversee the Early Childhood Development sector in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi
ECD	Early Childhood Development (ECD) refers to the physical, cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional development of a child from conception up to age eight. It primarily encompasses four sectors: Health & Nutrition, Child Protection, Early Childhood Care & Education, and Family Support
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
WHO	World Health Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
ADEO	Abu Dhabi Executive Office
Policy	The choices made at the top of the government that subsequently drive the direction, values, priorities and goals of the government, its associated bodies and its leadership
Policy Development Team	The core team responsible for leading the process of policy creation
Stakeholder	A person, group or organization that has an interest or concern in a given issue
Do-nothing scenario	The forecasted outcome if no policy intervention is made to address a given problem or issue
Cost-Benefit Analysis	A procedure for estimating all costs involved in taking an action (e.g. policy intervention) and the associated benefits to determine ultimate net impact

Early Childhood Care & Education	Education and childcare services provided to children from pre-school up till they reach 4 years old
Early Childhood Care services	Such services include all centers providing early childhood care & education services, including, but not limited to, family day care, nurseries and kindergartens
Policy Instruments	Policy instruments are government interventions to overcome problems and deliver outcomes leading to the fulfilment of national or emirate-level priorities
Randomized Control Trials	A scientific study type that randomly assigns individuals to control and experimental groups to test out a policy. This tool is helpful to assess the impact of a policy on individuals and allows for Rapid Cycle Testing
Evidence Base	A reliable, up-to-date and diverse range of evidence
Impact assessment	Assessment of the benefits as well as the social, economic and environmental risks of the policy

What is a policy?

A policy represents the choices made at the top of the federal or local government or its federal and local entities to drive the direction, priorities, values, and goals of the government or entity. Typically, policy is delivered through a variety of instruments, such as:

- **Economic tools**: Common economic policy tools include taxes, fees, subsidies, grants, loans, fines, penalties bonus system and guarantees
- **Government rules and regulations:** Includes Laws, Regulations, and Orders in the UAE and the Emirate of Abu Dhabi
- **Provision of goods, services and infrastructure**: Government provision to achieve desired objectives
- **Institutional**: Institutions established to drive specific policy objectives
- **Awareness mind-set and behavioural change**: Public engagement efforts focusing on education to drive specific behavioural change
- **Other policy instruments**:
  - Programs: Government-supported or -funded initiatives such as incubation and accelerators to come up with ECD-related services
  - Public venture capital funds: Venture capital funds driven by the government that invest primarily in SMEs that help to drive forward the ECD agenda
  - Training and capacity-building programs that the government can itself run or incentivize the private sector to do so

Policy instruments can be triggered by a variety of things, including leadership priorities, governmental agenda, crisis/emergencies, international commitments, social concerns/media attention; and should align to national guiding principles.

Why is the ECA working on a policymaking process for Early Childhood Development?
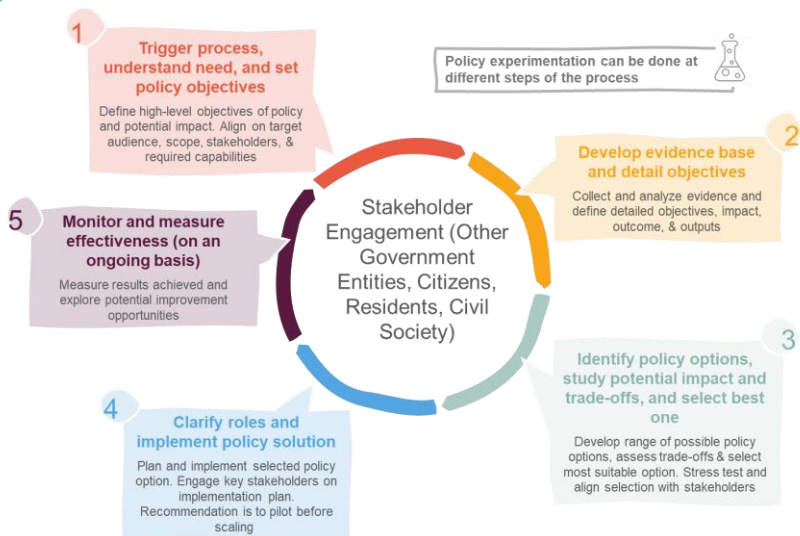
The ECA has decided to work on a policymaking process for Early Childhood Development because policymaking is intricate in this field. The requirement for such effort is due to:

- **The complexity of the topic**: Policies for ECD will often cover topics beyond what is traditionally seen as ECD. For example, policies might be relevant to housing or transportation.
- **The high visibility and timeline for impact**: Recent growth in the field of ECD attracts high visibility and investment, and thus comes with high expectations. It can sometimes take multiple years for full results to emerge
- **The cross-sectoral nature**: ECD issues are cross-sectoral and require the participation of multiple stakeholders

Taking these factors into account, it is imperative, therefore, to align on a unified approach to policymaking in ECD and to coordinate the policymaking process across government bodies

What are the proposed steps of the ECD policymaking process?

Effective policy development needs to focus on long-term outcomes, the inclusion of applicable evidence, careful analysis and the commitment of key stakeholders. The framework below outlines the five phases of the ECD policymaking process. The process incorporates three distinct elements: stakeholder engagement, experimentation and piloting.

1 Trigger process, understand need, and set policy objectives

Define high-level objectives of policy and potential impact. Align on target audience, scope, stakeholders, & required capabilities

Policy experimentation can be done at different steps of the process

2 Develop evidence base and detail objectives

Collect and analyze evidence and define detailed objectives, impact, outcome, & outputs

Stakeholder Engagement (Other Government Entities, Citizens, Residents, Civil Society)

5 Monitor and measure effectiveness (on an ongoing basis)

Measure results achieved and explore potential improvement opportunities

3 Identify policy options, study potential impact and trade-offs, and select best one

Develop range of possible policy options, assess trade-offs & select most suitable option. Stress test and align selection with stakeholders

4 Clarify roles and implement policy solution

Plan and implement selected policy option. Engage key stakeholders on implementation plan. Recommendation is to pilot before scaling

Who to contact at ECA?

If you are considering launching a policy that may affect young children or fall under the ECD sector in Abu Dhabi, please reach out to the ECA's policy team for discussion and support at SPO.Sector@eca.gov.ae

Appendices

Appendix 1: ECD policymaking process checklists

Step 1: Trigger policy process, understand need, and set policy objectives

Current legislative ecosystem analysis:

- ❑ We have analysed and reviewed existing policies and identified any overlaps / conflicts between our proposal and these existing policies
- ❑ We have identified and analysed gaps in the current ECD legislative ecosystem

Policy needs relevance:

- ❑ We have verified alignment with local and government vision / strategies
- ❑ We have confirmed the need for the policy as the solution to the identified issue by engaging key stakeholders, including the public, through various approaches (e.g. experiments)

Problem framing:

- ❑ We have defined the problem statement based on the initial baseline assessment
- ❑ We have formalized the initial view on stakeholder engagement for the required effort

Scope definition:

- ❑ Policy scope identification:
    - – We have defined ECD policy areas to be addressed
    - – We have detailed issues and sub-issues
    - – We have formed an initial view on potential policy instruments to leverage
- ❑ Policy aims definition:
    - – We have defined strategic ECD related objectives
    - – We have established relevance to current government agenda
    - – We have articulated the intended impact and outcomes of the policies
    - – We have identified relevant KPIs
- ❑ Alignment of scope and objectives:
    - – We have shared policy scope, objectives and desired outcomes with key stakeholders
    - – We have obtained alignment, and the activities to be conducted by key stakeholders have been detailed
- ❑ Stakeholder identification:
    - – We have defined a list of key stakeholders related to policy area(s)
    - – We have defined roles and responsibilities
    - – We have defined capabilities required to develop underlying policy
    - – Coordination mechanisms/forums are established

Step 2: Develop the evidence base and detail objectives

Policy baseline:
- ❑ We have identified the scale and scope of problems affecting Abu Dhabi children
- ❑ We have identified the root causes of the problem
- ❑ We have assessed the socio-economic impact on the Early Childhood Development ecosystem (quantitative/ qualitative analysis, as applicable)
- ❑ We have detailed and quantified the relevant objectives to achieve through the policy

Benchmarking exercise:
- ❑ We have identified countries to study
- ❑ We have defined benchmarking elements
- ❑ We have identified promising practices and summarized key lessons learned
- ❑ We have defined the potential implications for Abu Dhabi, carefully taking into account the relevance for the local context

Stakeholder engagements:
- ❑ We have captured input from relevant stakeholders (including beneficiaries and entities impacted)
- ❑ We have gathered feedback and shared the analysis of key findings with relevant stakeholders
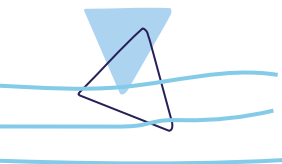
Step 3: Identify policy options, study potential impact and trade-offs, and select best one

Options' identification:
- ❑ We have leveraged promising practices and identified potential options
- ❑ We have defined short-listing criteria options (e.g. feasibility, practicality, impact on children)
- ❑ We have identified options relevant to Abu Dhabi

Options section:
- ❑ Cost-benefit analysis:
    - – We have identified options for monetary and non-monetary benefits
    - – We have assessed options for costs and secondary impacts
    - – We have identified trade-offs and defined priorities
- ❑ Risk assessment:
    - – We have identified risks associated with each short-listed option
    - – We have assessed risk likelihood and consequences
    - – We have defined mitigation measures

Stakeholder engagement:
- ❑ We have shared short listed options with a diverse set of stakeholders and we have engaged them on it
- ❑ We have obtained alignment on the relevant options to select

Step 4: Clarify roles and implement policy solution

Monitoring:
- ❑ Monitoring principles:
    - – We have defined objectives, scope and level of monitoring
    - – We have allocated monitoring and reporting responsibilities
    - – We have set monitoring mechanisms with regularly updated key indicators

Implementation plan:
- ❑ Implementation planning and schedule:
    - – We have identified required activities to implement the policy (e.g. obtaining resources, defining governance)
    - – We have defined the implementation schedule
    - – We have assessed key dependencies
- ❑ Stakeholder involvement:
    - – We have identified relevant entities for implementation
    - – We have clearly defined roles and responsibilities
    - – We have identified decision accountabilities

Risk management:
- ❑ Risk identification:
    - – We have identified potential risks related to implementation
    - – We have assessed the likelihood and impact of risk occurrence
- ❑ Risk mitigation:
    - – We have analyzed the consequences of risks
    - – We have defined the mitigation measures

Communications plan:
- ❑ **Communication:**
  - – **We have defined communication objectives, messages, channels, timing and responsibilities**
- ❑ **Key stakeholders:**
  - – **We have informed key stakeholders on implementation including timeline, objectives, and immediate next steps**

Step 5: Monitor and measure effectiveness

Monitoring:
- ❑ Monitoring process:
  - – The relevant body gathers and analyzes monitoring information
  - – We have reported monitoring analysis to key stakeholders

Effectiveness measurement:
- ❑ Evaluation principles:
  - – We have defined evaluation criteria (e.g. impacts, outcomes and outputs)
  - – We have allocated evaluation responsibilities with clear timelines and information sharing guidelines
- ❑ Impact evaluation:
  - – We have conducted measurements to assess objective achievements
  - – We have defined improvement areas and detailed the implications on policy
  - – We have shared key findings with key stakeholders and decisions makers

Appendix 2: Key steps to effectively scope policy needs

Steps	Potential sub questions (non-exhaustive)	Sample Scope
Determine the problem to be solved and assess feasibility of government intervention		• …
Define governance		• …
Identify issues to be addressed		• …
Set up policy team		• …

Appendix 3: Key steps to develop the evidence base

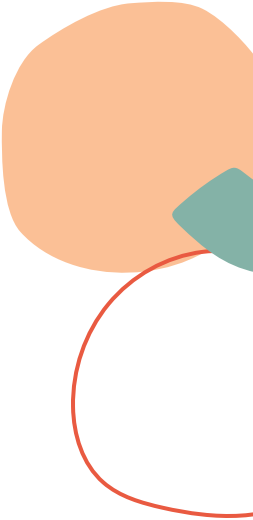| Steps	Sample Scope	Data/Information needed (non-exhaustive)
Determine the problem to be solved		• …
Identify issues to be addressed		• …
Assess feasibility of government intervention		• …
Define governance		
Set up policy team		

Appendix 4: Process to shortlist options

Policy Option	Align-ment with strategy	Effective-ness of outcome	Ease of Implemen-tation	Total Score	Next Steps
Option 1	*Grade between 1 and 10*				*"Cost-Benefit Analysis" or "Eliminate Option"*
Option 2					
Option 3					
Option 4					
Option 5					

The exercise results in identifying certain policy options that appears viable on paper, but which in fact are not likely to be feasible and are, thus, eliminated. For the remaining options that are deemed viable, the team needs to conduct a cost benefit analysis.

Appendix 5: Tool for policy review

Sample Performance Indicator (not-exhaustive)	Year 1 (Target)	Year 1 (Actual)	Variance	Root Causes
Indicator 1				*Provide explanation for root causes of variance in actual vs. target results*
Indicator 2				