

CAD Best Practices

The purpose of a Contract Activity Description (CAD) is to provide a brief scope of work describing the main elements of a Smart Start activity. If an activity is subcontracted to a Direct Service Provider (DSP), the CAD and the DSP proposal are used to determine compliance with Smart Start Guidelines. If there is a conflict between the CAD and the proposal, the CAD governs.

A well-written CAD includes the requirements that are expected and mandatory for a Smart Start funded activity. The language in the CAD needs to be specific enough that each element can be proven that it has been completed through documentation. Language in the CAD should not be so specific that a minor or unimportant variation from what is in the CAD would cause noncompliance. Excessive use of the word “may” can make it difficult to know what is actually required, or when the “may” becomes “will.” The word “may” cannot be used for core components, but can be acceptable for complementary components such as child care or transportation support that “may” be added if funding is available and needs exist to increase participation.

A CAD must address the following:

- **To Whom:** Who are services directed to? Teen parents? Child care facilities with less than 4-star ratings? Note: If participants are eligible for services using other government funds, supplantation must be avoided, if applicable (such as Medicaid resources for health services).
- **What:** What services are being provided? (EB/EI Program ID)
- **How:** What strategies are used? What core components are required for that Program ID? (Feel free to copy/paste pieces from Smart Solutions.) If a purveyor or program permits the choice between multiple assessments, please specify which assessment(s) are used for your activity.
- **Where:** Do participants attend group meetings? Is coaching done in classrooms? Is home visiting a component?
- **When:** Are services provided weekly? Monthly? One time? 14-16 times? And length of service and sessions, when appropriate.
- **Who:** (if applicable) Do those providing services need specific training or certifications? The CAD does not need to list whether an activity will be completed by DSP or in-house because it will be noted in the contract.

NCPC reviews for coordination between the CAD and specific budgeted line items:

- **Meeting and Conference expenses:** If the activity includes hosted events, the CAD must reference the types of events.
- **Grants:** If an activity includes offering any type of grant, i.e. stipends/scholarships, cash grants, non-cash grants, the CAD must note what is being given to whom (parents? providers?) and why (general eligibility and rationale).
- **Detailed list of expenses not required:** Some CADs include a statement such as “Expenses may include personnel, rent, supplies, travel...” There is no need to itemize basic types of expenses such as these that would be reasonably expected to be needed for any activity.

Personnel Guidelines for CADs:

- Smart Start Cost Principles require that personnel costs only be charged to an activity on an after-the-fact determination of time spent working in that activity. This information must be documented by a timesheet and approved by the authorized staff member of the organization.
- The CAD must list any education or certification requirements to determine who is qualified to deliver the services. If timesheets show the work was done, and the staff was qualified, the related personnel costs can be charged to the activity.
- It is not always necessary that a CAD lists the titles and number of staff (or FTEs) in each activity. Specifying FTEs is important when:
 - The LP and/or NCPC feels specifying FTEs (including minimum or maximum) will convey monitorable expectations.
 - When staff are split between multiple programs.
- Please do not include staff titles in CADs. It becomes problematic if titles change or if vacancies dictate a need for other staff to cover the work.

Example CADS

Incredible Years – Preschool Group Sessions		
	Example CAD Language	Guidance
Too Vague:	Incredible Years Preschool Basic group sessions for parents will be held weekly.	<i>How many? This is important because the model requires a certain number of sessions.</i>
Too Specific:	Incredible Years Preschool Basic group sessions for parents will be held on Tuesdays from 5-7pm at the Partnership office from January to March.	<i>This is too specific because if the dates, days of the week, or times need to change to meet the parents’ needs, the activity will be out of compliance.</i>

Best Practice:	Eighteen to twenty Incredible Years Preschool Basic group sessions for parents will be held weekly for two hours for each series offered.	<i>Specific enough to describe what is required by model but not so specific that minor logistical changes impact compliance.</i>
-----------------------	---	---

Meeting and Conference Expenses		
	Example CAD Language	Guidance
Too Vague:	This activity may include meetings or events.	<i>What is the purpose of the meetings? Who will be attending?</i>
Too Specific:	A community outreach event will be held on Fourth of July weekend including booths representing 20 different services and sandwich box lunches will be provided for families who attend.	<i>This is too specific because if the date, number of booths, or type of lunch change, the service will be out of compliance.</i>
Best Practice:	A community outreach event will be held including booths representing Smart Start and other family and early childhood services.	<i>This is enough detail to indicate this is a large community event for outreach. It is not necessary to specify what kind of food will be provided, or even that food will be provided, as meeting and conference expenses for hosted events may include site rental, fees for guest speakers, food, supplies, etc. The Smart Start Cost Principles require that the events are referenced, not necessarily each type of meeting expenditure.</i>

Grants		
	Example CAD Language	Guidance
Too Vague:	Participants may receive cash or non-cash grants as incentives for participation.	<i>What type of participants? What is being given out? How are the incentives earned?</i>
Too Specific:	Participating families will receive Llama Llama's Little Library book set for attending at least 5 Circle of Parents group sessions within an 8-week period.	<i>This is too specific because if the distributed books change, or if weather or other factors make the target attendance difficult within an 8-week window, the service will be out of compliance.</i>
Best Practice:	For each 5 Circle of Parents group sessions attended, participating	<i>This specifies who will get an incentive, how the incentives are</i>

	families will receive a small, developmentally appropriate children’s item such as a book or educational toy.	<i>earned, and a general description of the incentives that still allow some flexibility.</i>
--	---	---

TA Consultation & Coaching for CLASS - Personnel		
	Example CAD Language	Guidance
Too Vague:	Staff will provide classroom consultation and coaching to participating child care facilities.	<i>Staff qualifications missing.</i>
Too Specific:	Child Care Quality Technical Assistants (1.5 FTE) with Level 11 certification will provide classroom consultation and coaching to participating child care facilities.	<i>What if staffing at some point during the fiscal year is above or below 1.5 FTE? What if a Technical Assistant is out on medical leave and another qualified staff member with a different title steps in?</i>
Best Practice:	Staff with level 11 and CLASS certification will provide classroom consultation and coaching to participating child care facilities.	<i>Without specifying titles or FTEs, this language notes the required staff qualifications.</i>