

UCEDD Tip Sheets



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ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY CENTERS ON DISABILITIES
THE LEADERSHIP, EDUCATION, ADVOCACY & RESEARCH NETWORK



Developing UCEDD Core Functions Plans

What is Addressed in this Tip Sheet?

This tip sheet addresses **creating plans to carry out the UCEDD Core Functions**. Each of the core functions are outlined by the DD act, defined by the [UCEDD logic model](#), and reported [through NIRS](#).

Why is this Important?

The DD Act Section 154 (a)(2) specifies that each UCEDD core grant application “shall describe a 5-year plan, including a projected goal related to one or more areas of emphasis for each of the core functions.” Section 154 (a) (3) (B) expands that Centers will address their projected goals, and carry out goal-related activities, based on data driven strategic planning. It requires that these goals are also addressed in a way that collaborates with the consumer advisory committee, are consistent with the Council goals contained in the State plan and are reviewed annually as necessary to address emerging needs and trends.

The Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (OIDD) further mentions the need for each UCEDD to integrate the mandated core functions into its activities and programs and to have a written plan for each core function as outlined in the DD Act (45 C.F.R § 1328.6 2015).

How have other UCEDDs structured their demonstration services?



Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities at the University of Rochester

The Strong Center uses an iterative and collaborative process to develop a five-year plan that incorporates the core functions. Centered on their guiding principle of authentic community partnership, the process aims to make sure the plan creates the right goals, as defined by the many stakeholders and partners in the process.

Some elements and strategies help ensure there is broad stakeholder feedback and input in the planning process:

- Overlapped and shared leadership with state Developmental Disability (DD) networks
- Shared grants with partners
- Consistency with network partners through quarterly partnership meetings to align UCEDD plans with the state DD partner plans
- Participation at community tables to share plans and incorporate grassroots feedback

Data sharing in a variety of forms and soliciting data from network partners provides the evidence needed to prioritize goals. The Strong Center uses both qualitative and quantitative data as part of the plan and considers data across the entire cycle of development, including using needs assessments, focus groups, survey data, and research data. There is also a special focus group with the Community Advisory Council (CAC) focused entirely on the five-year plan.

It is important to note that equity and inclusion are integrated throughout the plan, not just as a part, but across all core functions. Guidance from ACL creates an expectation that equity, diversity, and inclusion (ED&I) be supported and defined as it relates to the proposal for the five-year plan (HHS-2020-ACL-AOD-DDUC-0398). Recognizing the importance, they break down the data they use to highlight how they support the integration of ED&I into their goals.

The Strong Center prepares well in advance for the feedback to be useful and to make sure there is enough time to incorporate changes based on the feedback. They work to have equitable contributions from their faculty and staff. To ensure that people see the impact of their input and how their voices are being reflected in the plan, their UCEDD shares back their data as a form of member checking. For instance, they conducted a large mixed method needs assessment that resulted in a written report. They then hosted a webinar to explain how stakeholder contributions were included in the report. They also included visual summaries in plain language to ensure that this data validation was accessible to everyone in the community.

In preparing the plan, the Strong Center organizes their proposal to include the ACL requirements verbatim. This made the report more readable to reviewers and allowed their staff to recognize where more data may be needed in the plan.

Data sharing in a variety of forms and soliciting data from network partners provides the evidence needed to prioritize goals.

Timeline of Creation of 5-Year Plan

January	Develop a timeline
February	Structured focus groups with CAC
March	Staff retreat to provide feedback on functions and focus areas
April	Analyze data from CAC and staff input
May	Needs assessment
June/July	NIRS/PPR Review; sparked evaluation of current progress and kept accountability to previous plans
August	Community assessment
September	Initiate writing, set schedule, assign narrative sections
October/ November	Write!
December	Second Draft
January	Edit
February	Submit
March	Share Out
April	Breathe

Guiding Principles for prioritizing research at UCEDDs

- **Ongoing engagement with the program officer.** Helpful in preparing for the 5-year renewal.
- Using the five-year plan as a **mentorship opportunity**. Having a shared leadership plan at the beginning makes it really clear what the roles were, and the mentorship contributes to an excellent proposal.
- **Review grants in off years.** Helpful in learning creative ways the network presents data or develops their plans. Can improve your grant writing skills in the future.
- **Teamwork.** Proposal is stronger with multiple perspectives and feedback. The iterative process helped make the core function plans actionable, feasible, and meaningful.

Guiding Principles for prioritizing research at UCEDDs

- **Time.** Creating a five-year plan takes a lot of time and resources in order to make sure that stakeholders voices are represented. It is an iterative process, and thus time needs to be planned for to ensure the process works effectively.
- **Prioritization.** When receiving feedback from multiple perspectives, sometimes that feedback can be conflicting, and decisions need to be made on which needs to prioritize. It can be challenging to ensure that all voices are being represented in the final decisions and that the prioritization is informed by data.



North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities (NDCPD) uses thematic-based goals as a framework to address the core functions.

Previously, they had used lists of isolated goals and assured that there was at least one goal per core function. What resulted was a large number of community education goals and an approach that was not integrated into the center's work. Specific goals focused on the core functions were isolated and led to silos in the UCEDD. When speaking with state partners, there was also a disconnect about how the core functions addressed state needs.

NDCPD decided to switch approaches. They now have established core function coordinators and their goals are organized around themes. They can better communicate how their goals meet state needs by orienting around specific topics, for instance Aging, Health, Employment, and Education/Early Childhood. The objectives following each goal, address the core functions.

The core function coordinators responsibilities include:

- Systematically review and progress monitoring of activities for the objectives
- Assess progress of plan related to each of the core function areas using data collected
- Lead theme teams to provide input and review of core functions across themes
- Conduct center-based reporting of efforts in core function area
- Develop initial drafts of core function plan as part of the five-year application

The UCEDD had four goals that were easy to remember and used familiar language between all the stakeholders and partners. They then crosswalk objectives and core functions. For every goal there is a minimum of four objectives and each one addresses a core function.

For instance, regarding the theme of aging and disability, NDCPD set a goal that people will experience the highest levels of quality of life and self-direction as part of healthy aging.

They then set objectives:

1. conduct three needs assessments over five years to identify most critical issues (research core function)
2. make sure that the abundance of data about aging is getting in the hands of the community (communications & dissemination core function)

Organizing people across theme teams with core coordinators ensuring that the core functions are being addressed, is driven by a belief that if a goal is important enough to be a major thematic goal, then every core function should be working towards it in some way. This approach allows the UCEDD's work to be cross disciplinary and interdisciplinary, meeting the original intent of what UCEDDs set out to be.

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Successes include:

- **Effectively and efficiently addressing the core functions** by making sure it was everyone's priority across each thematic issue the center is addressing.
- **Clarity** with funders and state partners to consider themes and better connect the language of the DD Act's core functions to the work they are doing.
- Organizing across thematic areas allows the work to have **greater depth and impact** and reduces silos.

Challenges include:

- **Prioritizing goals**- There are many different needs across various stakeholders, and it can be challenging to pick and choose which goals to focus on because you can't have 10-20 goals.
- **Limited Capacity**- Connected to the issue of prioritization is the issue of capacity. Sometimes you don't have the skills, funds, people, or knowledge to address issues that are pressing to your stakeholders. It can be challenging to make use of the feedback and ultimately decide which goals you can't address because of capacity restraints.

Recommendations

- Use an iterative process of stakeholder engagement to ensure the meaningful use of community voice in the creation of core function plans. This requires a lot of time and resources, but the resulting plan will be more actionable and community driven. Embedding data into the process can also strengthen the five-year plan.
- Review previous year's grants to learn from the creative approaches used by colleagues to develop their core function plans. Reviewing previous grants is one of the best ways to improve grant writing skills.
- Center your core functions around topical themes so that the core functions are serving every aspect of your center's work and are focused on the issues that matter to your state's constituency. Make everyone in your team accountable to the core functions and how they intersect with the work they do.

What are the Relevant resources?

- [UCEDD Logic Model](#)
- [Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities](#)
- [Strong Center Core Grant Application](#)
- [North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [Developing Core Function Plans \(webinar\)](#)

For More Information

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