Pacific Regional Council for Early Childhood Care and Education - Terms of Reference

Background / Purpose
The Pacific Regional Council for Early Childhood Care and Education (PRC4ECCE) is proposed as part of the Pacific Education Development Framework (PEDF) strategy to consolidate and coordinate educational development activities across Pacific Island countries. Establishment of PRC4ECCE was approved following acceptance of a paper on ECCE (early childhood care and education) in the Pacific tabled at FEdMM in 2010 (Forum Education Ministers Meetings). A Regional Consultation meeting was held in July 2011 to set out Terms of Reference (TOR) and a strategic plan for the Council. This TOR is based on discussions held and recommendations made during the meetings, which was attended by high level representatives from Ministries and from the Pacific Islands Forum.

PRC4ECCE’s primary purpose is to contribute to and support the PEDF’s objectives of enhancing alignment between national priorities and ECCE initiatives by developing a regional information management platform that will integrate and synthesize existing information, as well as providing direction for future research and programme activities. Activities of the PRC4ECCE will respond to national-level priorities through representation on the Council.

PRC4ECCE will be guided by the following Vision and Mission statements:

Vision

Children across the Pacific reach their full potential through region-wide investment in high quality and sustainable early childhood care and education (ECCE) programmes and initiatives

Mission and Guiding Principles

To provide direction to national and regional level initiatives in high quality, inclusive and equitable ECCE programmes by enabling and promoting effective coordination, sharing, dissemination, and use of relevant research, resources, and documented best practices.

PRC4ECCE’s activities will be guided by principles of good governance, including equity, transparency, integrity, and sustainability. Adherence to the best interests of children and their families across the Pacific Islands will be assured through representation of key stakeholders in ECCE on the Executive Board and / or Advisory Group. PRC4ECCE seeks, in particular, to promote approaches to ECCE that are uniquely ‘Pacific’ and cater specifically to the existing capabilities and needs of Pacific Island nations.

Key Goals

PRC4ECCE will achieve its mission through activities in 5 key areas:

1. Advocating for high quality ECCE in the Pacific at national, regional, and global levels.
2. Creating an accessible knowledge management platform for information sharing;

---

1 PRC4ECCE supports a holistic, multi-sectoral approach for young children, focusing on overall development.
3. Developing a vibrant, dynamic research network in ECCE across the Pacific;

4. Establishing effective mechanisms for sustaining the Council that will ensure commitment and ownership of countries across the region;

5. Promoting the development of adaptation, and distribution of appropriate communication, learning and training resources to facilitate ECCE at community level.

**Five System Components for Quality ECCE Delivery**

The full Council, during its initial full Council meeting in March 2012, identified 5 suggested ‘system’ components which have been found to interact and comprise a quality ECCE framework:

Underlying all activities will be a commitment to enhancements in the 3 key priority areas outlined by the PEDF: **Access; Equity and Quality**

**Expected Outcomes**

The council aims to achieve the following:

- Strengthening data collection for research purposes and policy direction
  - Linked with the existing national EMIS, with additional features to facilitate exchange of a range of information, from current activities to examples of innovative practice.
- Six-monthly, on-line publication of ECCE news magazine
  - Including updates on national ECCE activities, reports on newsworthy activities / programs, funding opportunities, reports from national and regional education meetings / conferences.
- Annual meetings, providing a forum
For updates from national EC Officers, review of national, regional and global developments in ECCE and annual program / research plans.

- Continued membership and attendance at World Forum events, established by the Pacific Preschool Council. Relationship with ARNEC strengthened.
- Increased investment in ECCE
- Knowledge sharing platform developed and regularly accessed/used.
- Encourage evidence-based research and promotion/dissemination across the Pacific Region.
- Ongoing updates on ECCE status by country, linked to PEDF baseline and M&E efforts.
- The Council is available to provide selected mentoring partnerships to individual countries to support ECCE strengthening.

Membership and Governance Structure, Responsibilities

The Council will consist of an Executive Board of the Council; the Council (16 PICs plus Timor Leste), Advisory Group, and Secretariat. The Council will act as a regional advisory body accountable to FEDMM and PHES (Pacific Heads of Education Systems).

During the establishment phase of the Council, the Executive Board will comprise participants (both attendees and those invited) at the consultation meetings in Lautoka, July 2011. Once the Council is fully established, a new Executive Board will be put in place and members of the initial Board will revert to the Advisory Group, with the exception of the development partner representative, who will remain on the Executive Board. The Full PRC4ECCE membership will thus comprise of both the PIC official representatives, who will be full voting members, plus the Advisory Group and Secretariat, who will be non-voting members.

Voting will require the following quorum in order to make voting decisions:

- Executive Board: 5 of 9 Executive Board Members present and voting
- Full Council Membership: 50% (or 8 PICs) present and voting, including representatives from all 3 regions.
Executive Board

Executive Board Membership (to be set up once the Council is established) to include the following 9 people:

1. President,
2. Vice President,
3. UNICEF (as current secretariat),
4. Development & Research Representative;
5. Academic Representative;
6. Development Partners Representative;
7. One (1) representative each from: Melanesia, Polynesia, Micronesia. These regional representatives will be the focal points for the other countries in their region.

The positions of President and Vice President are to be voted from PIC representatives who hold the position of ECCE Director or above within the government structure that oversees ECCE, and are different from the regional representatives. The 3 regional representatives will provide a designated alternate should she/he be unable to attend official Executive Board meetings, who will be accorded voting rights as alternate. In addition, 2 representatives will serve as Pacific representatives on the Steering Committee of ARNEC.

All positions will be for 2 years. The Executive Board President and Vice President will be elected by the Executive Board. Representatives from the 3 Pacific regions will be elected by their respective region representatives in the Council. Representatives for Development and Research, Academia, and Development partners will be elected by both Council Members and Advisory Group. Executive Board members can be voted for more than one term; however, terms cannot run consecutively in order to guarantee full participation and representation for all member countries.

Responsibilities of the Executive Board include: Oversee the activities of the Council, endorsing reports to be tabled at PHES and FEdMM meetings and other key regional forums. It will also be responsible for managing formal communication with partners, media etc. to ensure that the vision, mission and guiding principles are upheld. In addition, the Executive Board responsibilities will include the upholding of the 5 system components as foundational pillars for ECCE in the Pacific Region. Executive Board members will be expected to support the drafting of position statements and strategies for PRC4ECCE. Attendance to Executive Board meetings will be mandatory.

Secretariat:

The Secretariat provides coordination and administrative support and submits reports to the Executive Board on behalf of the Council. The Secretariat will support the communication strategy of the PRC4ECCE.

UNICEF will agree to hold the position of secretariat for a minimum of two years, while alternative models for sustainability (for example, how secretariats were identified and made sustainable within PATE, Pacific Disability Council) of the council are explored / adapted.

Full Council:
Representatives are from each of the PIC’s (Pacific Island Countries) plus Timor Leste, with the renewal of President every 2 years. President of the Board presents annual reports to Executive Board. Country Representatives are to be staff directly in charge of ECCE within their country’s government structure (Ministry of Education, or other Ministry directly involved with ECCE services within the official country mechanism). Any staffing changes at the country level which affects the person in charge of ECCE should be reflected in Council membership. Country member representatives no longer in their current ECCE Director/Coordinator position (retirement, promotion) can still participate on PRC4ECCE as a non-voting advisory board member. Participation in Council meetings is compulsory. Council members may delegate an ‘alternative member’ to attend meetings, in which case voting rights pass automatically to the country representative in attendance at meetings. Each member agrees to provide at least one resource for the PRC4ECCE online library. Invitations to Council meetings and meeting minutes must be sent to both the Directors of Education and country ECCE representatives simultaneously; it is the responsibility of each PRC4ECCE representative to provide Director of Education’s contact details to the Secretariat. ECCE Directors/Officers in every country will be encouraged to become their national representative to the World Forum for ECCE.

*NB. National level ECCE Officers / coordinators to develop and report their own accountability structures, based on national structures.*

Council membership includes the following PIC’s:
- Palau
- FSM
- RMI
- PNG
- Solomon Islands
- Fiji
- Nauru
- Kiribati
- Tuvalu
- Vanuatu
- Samoa
- Tonga
- Cook Islands
- Niue
- Tokelau

In addition, the following countries will be extended invitations to participate, to increase full regional representation:
- Timor-Leste

**Advisory Group Membership:**
The Advisory Group will be set up once the Council is fully established, to provide on-going direction and support. Advisory Group members will hold non-voting observer status as resource people for the Council. Members are welcome to Executive Board meetings upon request and invitation by the Executive Board to address specific issues. Advisory members can be cross-sectoral, to assist in the achievement of the 5 system components and a holistic approach to ECCE.

Advisory Group members will consist of implementing partners, academia, development partners, ECCE specialists, the media, government ministries and others identified by the Council and endorsed by the Executive Board for inclusion:

**Regional Donors**
- NZAID
- AusAID

**Development Partners**
- UNICEF
- UNESCO
• World Bank

• WHO

Academia
• FNU
• USP
• APTC
• Others......

Development and Research
• PIFS
• PREL
• ARNEC
• SPBEA – South Pacific Board of Examination and Assessments

Implementing Partners
• Save the Children – Australia, New Zealand, Fiji
• World Vision
• Plan International

Country-level ECCE partners
• to be determined at country level and communicated to Secretariat

In order to build links between PRC4ECCE and ARNEC, the President of the Council will be automatically nominated to sit on the Steering Committee of ARNEC. One other Pacific-Island country representative from the Full Council will be nominated to sit on the ARNEC Steering Committee. Terms of membership on the ARNEC Steering Committee are for 2 years.

Meetings:

The Executive Board will meet twice yearly, approximately January and August.

The Full Council will meet twice yearly, approximately March and November.

Venues will be hosted by member countries on a rotating basis.

Review of TOR:

This current draft TOR shall be reviewed and finalized by PRC4ECCE by the end of 2012, implemented starting 2013, and be reviewed/renewed every 2 years. Dates in the foreseeable future for Executive Board elections and TOR renewal are to begin the end of 2015 (November) during the Full Council meeting, and held every 2 years thereafter.