



Expression of Interest (EOI)

Consultancy to Develop the 5-Year Strategic Plan (2026–2030)

Reference Number: NECDA/SP/EOI/10/2025

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1. Background

The Network of Early Childhood Development Actors Uganda (NECDA) is a national coordinating platform established in 2024 to strengthen collective action, policy influence, evidence generation, professional collaboration, and systems accountability across the Early Childhood Development (ECD) ecosystem. NECDA brings together a diverse community of stakeholders working along the ECD continuum, including civil society organizations, community-based organizations, development partners, academia, the private sector, and practitioners, to ensure that every child in Uganda has the opportunity to survive, grow, learn, and thrive from birth to eight years of age. The network's establishment aligns with the overarching policy and institutional commitments to ECD, as outlined in the National Integrated Early Childhood Development (NIECD) Policy (2016) and the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Policy (2024), both of which emphasize the need for holistic, inclusive, and child-centered services delivered through a coordinated, multi-sectoral approach. These goals are further articulated under national planning frameworks such as Vision 2040, the National Development Plan (NDP) IV, and the broader human capital development agenda.

Despite progressive policy commitments, Uganda continues to face systemic implementation challenges that undermine equitable and holistic ECD service delivery. These include fragmentation in programming, limited cross-sectoral coordination, inadequate financing, weak community engagement, insufficient data use for planning, and inconsistent accountability mechanisms across national and sub-national levels. NECDA was therefore established to address these coordination and systems gaps by serving as a sector-wide convening and collaboration mechanism that facilitates shared learning, joint advocacy, integrated planning, and strengthened accountability for improved outcomes for young children and their caregivers. To operationalize this mandate, NECDA is organized around five thematic clusters focused on Child

Protection, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), Health and Nutrition, Parenting, and Research and Academia.

During its foundational phase (2024–2025), NECDA prioritized establishing governance structures, cluster leadership, membership engagement mechanisms, and initial partnerships. As the network now transitions from formation to consolidation and strategic growth, it requires a comprehensive 5-Year Strategic Plan (2026–2030) to define its institutional identity, value proposition, strategic priorities, operational framework, partnership agenda, and resource mobilization pathways. The Strategic Plan will also articulate NECDA's advocacy and systems-strengthening objectives, outline coordinated action across thematic clusters, and establish a results and learning framework to support ongoing monitoring, adaptive management, and accountability. This Strategic Plan will therefore serve as NECDA's central guiding document, anchoring its coordination function, strengthening its institutional sustainability, and positioning it as a catalyst for systems change in the ECD landscape.

2. Purpose and Rationale

The purpose of this consultancy is to facilitate a structured, participatory, and evidence-informed process to develop the NECDA 5-Year Strategic Plan (2026–2030).

The rationale for undertaking this strategic planning process at this stage is anchored in NECDA's transition from its foundational phase to a period of consolidation and institutional strengthening. There is now a need for a coherent, long-term roadmap to guide coordinated action, strengthen internal systems, enhance stakeholder engagement, and position the network as a credible and influential actor in the ECD landscape. The Strategic Plan will enable NECDA to articulate a clear value proposition, align its activities with national and global ECD agendas, and build a sustainable financing and partnership framework. The consultancy will therefore support the network to identify its strategic priorities, define its operational modalities and organizational structure, clarify roles across governance and cluster systems, and outline implementation and monitoring arrangements to ensure accountability, learning, adaptation, and meaningful impact.

3. Scope of Work and Key Deliverables

3.1. Scope of Work

The selected consultant (individual or firm) will be responsible for coordinating and facilitating the full strategic planning process, including:

1. **Situational and Institutional Analysis** – Conduct a comprehensive review of national ECD policies, frameworks, sector trends, organizational documents, and stakeholder perspectives to assess NECDA's current positioning and opportunities for strategic influence.
2. **Stakeholder Consultations** – Facilitate structured consultations with NECDA members, thematic clusters, government ministries and agencies, local government representatives,

development partners, academia, and community actors, ensuring representation of diverse regional and sectoral perspectives.

3. **Strategic Prioritization and Design** – Lead the co-creation of NECDA’s strategic pillars, intervention pathways, partnership strategies, and organizational arrangements.
4. **Resource Mobilization and Sustainability Strategy** – Develop a framework for mobilizing financial, technical, and institutional resources, including donor engagement, membership contributions, strategic partnerships, and innovative financing opportunities.
5. **Common Results – M&E and Learning Framework** – Establish clear outcome statements, performance indicators, learning questions, tracking mechanisms, and reporting pathways aligned with national and global ECD monitoring systems.
6. **Validation and Finalization** – Facilitate a validation workshop with NECDA stakeholders and produce the final, edited, and designed Strategic Plan.

3.2 Key Deliverables

| Deliverable | Description | Format | Timeline |
|--|--|-------------------------------|----------|
| Inception Report | Detailed methodology, tools, workplan, and schedule | Word/PDF | Week 1 |
| Situational Analysis Report | Synthesis of policy review, stakeholder insights, institutional assessment | Word/PDF + PowerPoint Summary | Week 3 |
| Draft Strategic Plan (for Validation) | Full draft outlining priorities, strategies, and frameworks | Word/PDF | Week 6 |
| Stakeholder Validation Workshop Report | Summary of validation outcomes and proposed revisions | Word/PDF | Week 7 |
| Final Strategic Plan (Edited and Professionally Designed) | Final approved plan ready for dissemination and printing | Word + Print-ready PDF | Week 8 |
| Common Results-M&E and learning Framework | Indicators, data sources, reporting schedule, learning agenda | Word/Excel | Week 8 |

4. Methodology and Approach

The consultant will employ a highly participatory, evidence-based approach, including but not limited to:

- Deep dives, case studies, bench marks from regional networks, trends analysis, stakeholder surveys, and key informant interviews.
- Methods to ensure representation of diverse contexts
- Nimble and flexible techniques proposed by the consultant, provided they address key strategic questions and align with NECDA’s child rights-based, inclusive, and transparent principles.

The process will be managed by NECDA’s Executive/Steering Committee, with support from Early Years Count Uganda (EYC) as the acting secretariat.

5. Duration and Level of Effort

The consultancy is expected to be completed within a maximum of **30 working days**, starting mid November 2025. The detailed schedule, including key milestones and deadlines, will be agreed upon during the inception phase. The consultant is expected to allocate adequate time and personnel to ensure high-quality execution of the assignment, timely delivery of outputs, and effective engagement with NECDA stakeholders.

The level of effort should reflect the complexity of coordinating multi-stakeholder consultations, synthesizing diverse inputs, and facilitating structured strategic planning processes. The consultant may propose a phased workplan that ensures iterative review and input from the NECDA Steering Committee, thematic clusters, and the broader membership.

6. Management, Oversight, and Reporting

The consultancy will be overseen by the NECDA Steering Committee, which will provide strategic guidance, technical direction, and decision-making support throughout the assignment. The Consultant will work in close collaboration with the Acting Secretariat, which will coordinate day-to-day communication, logistical support, and access to relevant stakeholders.

All deliverables will be submitted to the Chairperson of the NECDA Steering Committee, with copies shared to the Secretariat for review and technical input. Regular progress check-ins will be scheduled to monitor implementation progress, address emerging issues, and ensure alignment with expectations.

The consultant will be responsible for:

- Coordinating stakeholder engagements, interviews, and consultations;
- Ensuring methodological rigor and ethical data management;
- Documenting and synthesizing input from NECDA members and partners;
- Producing high-quality written and designed outputs.

7. Safeguarding, Ethics, and Inclusion Requirements

NECDA is committed to upholding the rights, dignity, and protection of children, families, and communities. The consultant must adhere to Child Safeguarding Standards and ensure that all data collection, consultation, and engagement processes are conducted in a manner that is safe, respectful, and culturally sensitive.

Specifically, the Consultant shall:

- Demonstrate understanding of child protection, safeguarding, and do-no-harm principles;
- Ensure that all research, interviews, and engagements comply with ethical standards and informed consent procedures;
- Apply a gender-responsive and equity-focused lens throughout the planning and analysis process;

- Ensure the meaningful participation of marginalized, underrepresented, and vulnerable groups where appropriate;
- Sign NECD's Code of Conduct and Safeguarding Declaration prior to commencement of work.

Failure to comply with safeguarding and ethical standards shall constitute grounds for termination of the contract.

8. Expected Qualifications and Competencies

The assignment may be undertaken by an individual consultant or a legally registered consulting firm. Applicants must demonstrate the following minimum qualifications and competencies:

a. Academic and Professional Background

- Advanced degree in Education, Early Childhood Development, Public Policy, Social Sciences, Development Studies, Organizational Development, or a related field.
- Additional training or certification in strategic planning, systems strengthening, organizational development, or project management is an added advantage.

b. Expertise

- Minimum of five (5) years of experience in strategic planning, institutional strengthening, program design, or policy analysis within the social development or education sectors.
- Demonstrated understanding of the ECD ecosystem in Uganda, including policy frameworks, financing architecture, coordination mechanisms, and service delivery landscape.
- Proven experience working with national networks, alliances, platforms, or sector coordination mechanisms.

c. Methodological and Analytical Capacity

- Strong competencies in qualitative research, stakeholder facilitation, collaborative design processes, and synthesis of complex information.
- Experience developing results frameworks, monitoring and learning systems, and advocacy strategies.

d. Facilitation and Communication Skills

- Proven ability to facilitate multi-stakeholder consultations, workshops, and dialogue processes.
- Excellent writing, communication, presentation, and report development skills in English.

e. Values and Professional Conduct

- Demonstrated commitment to child safeguarding, gender equality, inclusivity, and respectful engagement.
- Ability to work collaboratively, diplomatically, and with cultural sensitivity.

Preference will be given to Uganda-based firms and consultants with demonstrated capacity to engage national networks and government institutions.

9. Submission Requirements

Applicants must submit a complete Expression of Interest (EOI) in two documents: (a) Technical Proposal and (b) Financial Proposal, submitted as separate attachments.

9.1. Technical Proposal

The Technical Proposal should include:

- Brief profile of the consulting firm or individual, including legal status (if applicable)
- Understanding of the assignment and NECDA's strategic positioning
- Proposed methodology and approach
- Detailed workplan and timelines
- Profile and roles of key personnel (attach short CVs)
- Evidence of previous similar assignments (with links or attachments where available)
- Three (3) professional references from recent comparable work

9.2. Financial Proposal

The Financial Proposal must:

- Be presented in Uganda Shillings (UGX) with an optional comparison line in USD
- Provide a breakdown of costs (professional fees, fieldwork/logistics, communication, design/production, etc.)
- Indicate daily rates and estimated level of effort of each team member
- Clearly state whether amounts are inclusive or exclusive of applicable taxes.

10. Evaluation and Selection Criteria

Submitted EOIs will be evaluated based on the following weighted criteria:

| Evaluation Criteria | Weight |
|---|---------------|
| Understanding of the assignment and contextual analysis | 30% |
| Proposed methodology and approach | 25% |
| Relevant experience in ECD ecosystems, strategic planning, and multi-stakeholder facilitation | 20% |
| Qualifications and experience of key personnel | 15% |
| Cost-effectiveness and budget clarity | 10% |

Only proposals that meet both the technical and ethical/safeguarding requirements will be considered.

11. Administrative and Contracting Arrangements

The successful consultant will enter into a Lump Sum Consultancy Contract with NECDA.

11.1. Payment Schedule

Payments will be made upon submission and approval of deliverables, as follows:

| Deliverable | Payment Allocation |
|--|--------------------|
| Approval of Inception Report | 40% |
| Submission of Draft Strategic Plan and Situational Analysis Report | 30% |
| Approval of Final Strategic Plan and Common results – M&E and Learning framework | 30% |

11.2. Intellectual Property

All materials, tools, and outputs produced under this assignment shall become the property of NECDA.

11.3. Confidentiality

The Consultant shall maintain the confidentiality of all information received or generated throughout the assignment.

11.4. Conflict of Interest

Applicants must disclose any actual or potential conflict of interest.

12. Submission Instructions and Contact Details

Interested firms or individuals are invited to **submit their EOI by November 7th 2025, at 17:00 (EAT) via email to: info@necdaug.org copy to helen.namulwana@necdaug.org.**

Subject Line: *EOI – NECDA 5-Year Strategic Plan Consultancy*

For any inquiries, you call 0393102098 or 0772474913.

Responses will be shared with all requesters to ensure fairness and transparency. NECDA reserves the right to accept or reject any submission without providing reasons.