

Planning for a Successful Five Years

Foundations for Excellence: A Guide for Five-Year Planning and Continuous Improvement, 2nd Edition

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plan your future





introduction

Foundations for Excellence: A Guide for Five-Year Planning and Continuous Improvement, 2nd Edition highlights how sound planning practices support effective Head Start programs. In Head Start, the planning system is an essential part of program operations. This comprehensive guide shows programs what Head Start expects from strategic planning. The following pages cover a range of planning topics to support programs' successful completion of the Head Start grant application, and to ensure that programming is responsive to community needs throughout the five-year grant period.



This updated guide reflects the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS)—the guiding principles and minimum requirements that shape all Head Start programs. The HSPPS and Head Start’s five-year grant application process ensure that stakeholders engage thoughtfully in strategic planning.

This guide discusses requirements and expectations for effective planning, program operations, and continuous improvement practices. Using real-world scenarios and sample templates, it also explores how reporting requirements support data-informed decision-making.

Tell Me More!

To learn more about strategic planning thought leaders and principles, see Appendix A: Head Start and Data-Informed Decision-Making.



Terminology

Throughout this resource Head Start refers to all Head Start and Early Head Start programs serving children ages birth to 5 and their families.

The Head Start planning cycle relies on a range of community voices and meaningful data to guide decision-making. This approach ensures that the five-year grant process, updates, and the decisions that emerge are based on objective data and community input. The desired outcome for programs is the creation of achievable program goals and related measurable objectives.

Extend Understanding

Whether you are new to Head Start or updating your knowledge of program planning best practices, this guide will help you to extend your understanding of:

- How Head Start programs plan, identify, track, and achieve program goals that yield positive differences for children, families, and communities.
- How developing continuous improvement practices yields ongoing service-specific information.
- How to use ongoing feedback to guide decision-making and adjust services as necessary.

Grow Knowledge

The following pages show programs how to:

- Develop BROAD goals and SMART objectives.
- Design a planned approach to data collection and analysis that enhances program success.
- Create an individualized program planning process that meets the unique needs of the community.

Answer Questions

This guide supports continuous quality improvement by helping programs answer:

- How will we know that our services are effective?
- How can an action plan move us closer to meeting our goals?
- How can we change our approach to improve our programs’ outcomes?

Organized Around Four Topics:



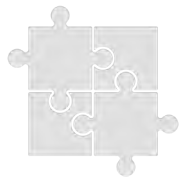
- **Topic 1:**
Nuts and Bolts of Strategic Planning explores key elements in program planning and the importance of program goals, objectives, outcomes, and action plans in improving child and family outcomes.



- **Topic 2:**
Five-Year Planning in Head Start explains the distinction between plans and planning and their significance in strategic planning. This topic also describes the different kinds of plans involved in Head Start's comprehensive planning process and shares tips for establishing strategic long-term goals.



- **Topic 3:**
Achieving Program Goals that Support Child and Family Outcomes clarifies the process for setting goals and objectives related to child and family outcomes. It describes the importance of keeping goals alive and how program goals, including school readiness goals, intersect to ensure comprehensive, high-quality services that are culturally and linguistically responsive. Tips and examples model how to track progress toward achieving family outcomes.



- **Topic 4:**
Pulling It All Together—Program Examples includes four program scenarios, including a health services scenario, that further illuminate the Head Start planning process. Each scenario illustrates how programs integrate goals, objectives, expected outcomes, and action plans into the planning process. The examples include samples of strategic goals and measurable objectives, and how each connects to a program's action plan. The scenarios include sample data tools and methods for tracking progress.



Terminology

School readiness goals are a type of program goal. References to program goals are inclusive of school readiness goals. See Appendix C: Glossary of Program Planning Terms for related terms and definitions.



Tell Me More!

See the appendix for more sample tools and templates.



Tell Me More!

For strategies on using this resource, see Tips for Using Foundations for Excellence: A Guide for Five-Year Planning and Continuous Improvement, 2nd Edition in Appendix B.



Use this Guide to:

- Support the development of both the baseline and continuing Head Start Grant Applications
- Evaluate and measure current goals and objectives
- Set goals, write objectives and outcomes, and develop action plans
- Plan leadership training related to oversight roles of the governing body/Tribal Council and Policy Council
- Discuss community assessment results with your program's management team
- Evaluate your strategic planning process





topic 1

nuts and bolts of strategic planning



Getting Started

When planning a trip, you typically begin by identifying where you are headed and then determine the best route to get there. A Head Start program's strategic planning effort also begins by setting a direction. Programs examine relevant program and community data and ask dialogue-generating questions to clarify the direction to take towards strategic goals. With the Head Start planning cycle as their guide, programs can purposefully pursue goals to transform their vision into reality for enrolled children and their families.

Whether you are new to Head Start or updating your knowledge of program planning best practices, consider reading through this topic to extend your understanding of program goals, measurable objectives, expected outcomes, and action plans. This topic also explores the importance of identifying expected challenges.



Learning Objectives

Programs understand each of the planning elements in the context of Head Start's planning cycle. Learn how they collectively contribute to successful programming, strategic program goals, and ultimately, positive outcomes for children, their families, and communities. Additionally, programs can recognize how planning elements, and the process in its entirety, offer a critical platform for identifying challenges to a program's progress.

topic 1: nuts and bolts of strategic planning

The terms *goals*, *objectives*, *outcomes*, *action plans*, and *challenges* are widely used in the research, evaluation, education, and business communities. The purpose of Topic 1 is to define these terms in the context of Head Start.

These terms and definitions are key to strategic planning and are fundamental to the Head Start grant application process. Both the HSPPS and the Head Start Grant Application Instructions highlight key terminology. Consider how these terms are integral to the program planning cycle.

Terms and Definitions

Program Goals – Broad statements that describe what a program intends to accomplish. Program goals should be strategic, long term, and responsive to the needs identified in the community assessment. They include:

- Goals for the provision of educational, health, nutritional, and family and community engagement program services to further promote the school readiness of enrolled children;
- School readiness goals; and
- Effective health and safety practices to ensure children are safe at all times (programs may wish to identify these as a stand-alone goal or as an objective related to another type of program goal, i.e. a health goal).

School Readiness Goals – The expectations of children's status and progress across domains of language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge, approaches to learning, physical well-being and motor development, and social and emotional development that will improve their readiness for kindergarten (as defined in [45 CFR 1305.2](#)).

Measurable Objectives – Support the attainment of goals that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely (SMART).

Progress – Forward movement toward the achievement of goals, objectives, and outcomes.

Outcomes – Something that happened as a result of an activity or process. The actual results achieved.

Challenges – Information describing obstacles to achieving program goals and objectives.

Evidence – Facts, information, documentation, or examples given to support an assertion.

▶ Page 7 of the Head Start Grant Application Instructions (2017–2018) highlights key terms and definitions.

Tell Me More! ▶

The Head Start resource Five Steps to Community Assessment guides the development of responsive community assessments.

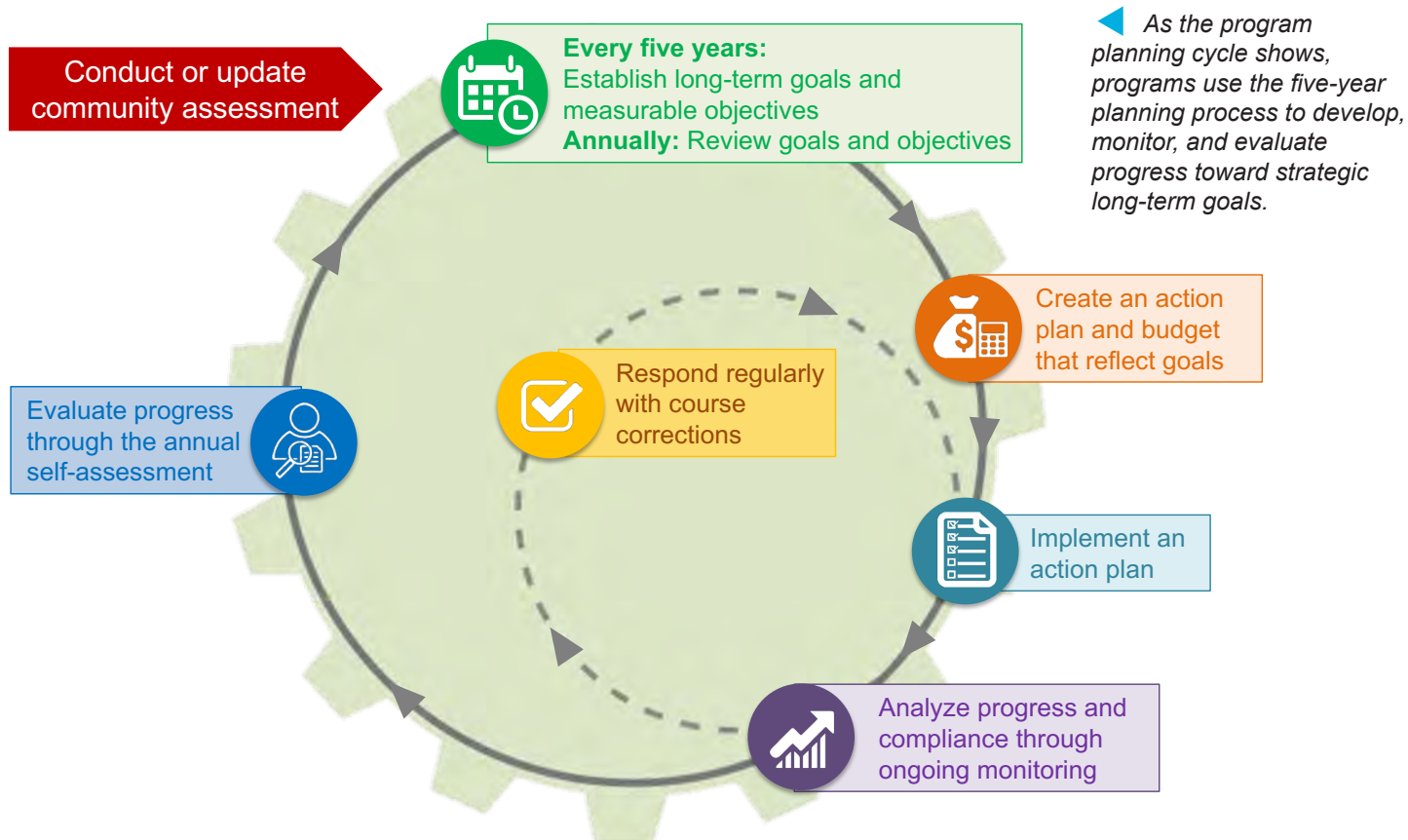
Effective Head Start¹ programs engage in a cyclical planning process. Prior to the first year of the five-year project period, the program's planning team determines strategic goals that are informed by data and findings from the community assessment, annual self-assessment, and related child, family, and community data. These strategic goals set the course for continuous improvement and innovation. New programs that have not yet conducted an annual self-assessment can use the community assessment to develop long-term goals.

Equipped with this wealth of information, your planning team can affirm or revise the program goals and objectives, keeping in mind that program goals should remain the same wherever possible so it is easier to track progress over time. You may find that some objectives have been accomplished over the course of the year, and now the recommendations of the self-assessment team lead to new objectives, along with next steps to move toward the goal.

As part of the baseline application, you will identify expected outcomes and document expected challenges. This process is valuable in encouraging your team to adopt a more critical, thorough, and big-picture perspective. And, in turn, having a more comprehensive perspective will lessen the likelihood that your program will need to change goals. ■



How is the program planning cycle used in your program?



What Is a Program Goal?

You have probably heard the expression “keep your eyes on the prize.” The program goals are “the prize”—broad statements that describe what a program intends to accomplish. Each Head Start program’s long-term goals provide a framework for the program’s mission, including priorities related to education, nutrition, health, and parent and family engagement program services. Program goals are strategic and long-term. They may also support comprehensive approaches that encourage system-wide cultural and linguistic responsiveness. In addition, they include school readiness goals, a distinct set of goals focused specifically on child development and early learning outcomes in each of the five central developmental domains.

Keep in mind the acronym “**BROAD**” as you write your goals: **B**old, **R**esponsive, **O**rganization-wide, **A**spirational, and **D**ynamic. These goals give voice to the shared vision within your program and help everyone (staff, governing body/Tribal Council and Policy Council members) focus on priorities. In Head Start, programs review their goals based on findings from the community assessment, annual self-assessment, and related child, family, and community data.



Definition

School readiness goals as defined by the HSPPS 45 CFR § 1305, are the expectations of children’s status and progress across domains of language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge, approaches to learning, physical well-being and motor development, and social and emotional development that will improve their readiness for kindergarten. School readiness goals are a type of program goal. See Topics 3 and 4 for additional discussion on school readiness goals.

BROAD:
Bold
Responsive
Organization-wide
Aspirational
Dynamic

Tips for Setting BROAD Goals

Bold



Think big; really big. Dare yourself to reach for the stars as you set goals.

Imagine! Where would you like your program to be at the end of five years? What do you expect to accomplish? What will your program's legacy be to the children, families, and communities you serve?

Go beyond compliance. Think about both innovation and compliance as you set your goals. What exciting community-driven initiatives would you like your program to accomplish over the next five years?

Continuously improve. Generate goals that will help your program not only meet the HSPPS but strengthen, strive, and innovate for more effective services for children and families.

Responsive



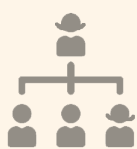
Look to the future. BROAD goals aren't accomplished overnight. Most are written to be accomplished during the five-year project period. In most cases, goals stay the same, so you can measure progress and impact over the five-year project period. BROAD goals tend to be more long-term. Program objectives and related strategies are likely to change from year to year.

Use data to determine your goals. Goals should not be a rewritten regulation or standard. They are developed based on data and the critical needs that emerge for children, families, and the community. Use the community assessment, results from your annual self-assessment process, and other program-specific data sources to develop, prioritize, and refine the program goals. You may have other program-specific data sources that also provide critical insight.

Include families. Look for opportunities to listen, learn, and collect data from parents and family members. Focus groups and surveys are important ways to obtain feedback from families, but be sure to explore different ways to connect that are meaningful for diverse populations. The family partnership agreement process is an important source of data about families' needs, interests, and priorities.

Engage program leadership. The HSPPS require that you establish program goals "in collaboration with the governing body/Tribal Council and Policy Council." Provide decision-makers with the data they need to meaningfully participate in this process.

Explore. Exploring related research could help as you develop program goals. Take advantage of the multitude of resources on Head Start's website, the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC), as well as MyPeers forums.



Organization-wide

Consider how program and school readiness goals work together. Aligned goals are likely to produce more effective results. Also, as you develop your organizational goals, take into account both the demographic changes in your community as well as how diverse populations are changing.

Involve all levels of the organization. Program goals require commitment from many stakeholders including governing body/Tribal Council and Policy Council members and families. The goal of improving attendance is an example of an organization-wide goal. Everyone from bus drivers and teachers, to center directors, Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA) staff, family service and health staff, and, most importantly, families themselves, can have an important role to play in helping a program reduce absenteeism.



Aspirational

Motivate by engaging emotions. Change is more likely to happen when goals speak to the heart as well as the head.

Write with intention. One of the keys to successful goal-setting is to motivate and inspire. Consider starting your program goal statement with inclusive words, such as, "In our Head Start program, we will..."



Dynamic

Dynamic is defined as "energetic or forceful." In the video, *Goals – Four Disciplines of Execution*, Stephen Covey invites us to consider the energy and creativity that are unleashed when everyone in the organization is committed and involved in achieving shared goals.² ■



Management system, 45 CFR § 1302.101(b) affirms the need for organization-wide coordinated approaches: "At the beginning of each program year, and on an ongoing basis throughout the year, a program must design and implement program-wide coordinated approaches." When you adopt an organization-wide focus, you are also reinforcing the message that everyone plays a critical role in helping the program achieve its goals."



How do you engage stakeholders in establishing BROAD goals?

Beware if your goals are too:

Vague	"The program will continue to learn."
Narrow	"All managers will get their masters' degree."
Broad	"All families will become self-sufficient."
Generic	They simply restate regulations.
Many	Programs can't track progress.

topic 1: nuts and bolts of strategic planning

SMART:
Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Realistic
Timely

! Goals keep your eyes on the prize. Objectives help you hit the nail on the head.

► This Venn diagram shows the similarities and differences between goals and objectives.

What Is an Objective?

Objectives expand on the goal by identifying the tasks that will need to be accomplished. Objectives quantify the services that will be delivered within a given period of time. They are written as actions to be accomplished. Use the acronym **SMART** to define the action as **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic, and **T**imely. If goals are your destination, measurable objectives are your mile markers along the way.

Tips for Developing Measurable Objectives

Where the goal is a **BROAD** statement of what your program expects to accomplish, an objective describes a specific action or result to be achieved. One goal is likely to have several objectives.

Be careful to distinguish between objectives and action steps. Think of objectives as your yardstick. Objectives enable you to measure and stay alert as you make incremental progress toward your goal. While the objective is a statement of what a program wants to achieve, it is not yet a statement of how the program will get there. How you get there, the action plan, is built on a series of specific action steps.

Consider including financial objectives as well as program objectives. Goals often require a commitment of resources. Financial objectives ensure that the program is financially committed to its goals.

Your budget is a numerical expression of your program's goals and objectives. A financial objective may be represented in your program budget and budget narrative, and it can appear as the designated and secured source of financing that will support your action plan. If it requires money, even the best plan will not happen if that money is not available. Programs can also establish independent fiscal goals such as decreasing staff turnover by increasing pay of classroom teachers. This is a separate goal and not simply an objective within the scope of an existing goal.



What Is an Outcome and an Expected Outcome?

If a goal tells you where you're headed, an outcome tells you the result of your actions. Very simply, outcomes are the results achieved, like making progress toward the achievement of a school readiness goal.

The Head Start Grant Application Instructions ask programs to forecast expected outcomes in their initial baseline application. For example, the family engagement outcomes in the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework include expected outcomes. Programs may create a program-wide goal of improving the financial stability of their families (e.g., PFCE Expected Outcome: Family Well-being), but they may have several objectives to support this goal. In the end, what they would expect to see is an outcome of improved financial stability for the majority of their families.

Think of expected outcomes as your program's hoped-for results for children, families, and the community. Frame your outcomes to answer this question: "What results do we want?"

Expected outcomes relate directly to program goals and objectives. What do you expect to achieve as a result of meeting your objectives? For example, if an agency sets a program goal of developing and maintaining an exemplary system of program governance, a related objective may be that the management team provides the governing body/Tribal Council with accurate fiscal information on a monthly basis. The expected outcome that could arise from this goal and objective might be "governing body/Tribal Council members fully understand and effectively use all fiscal information on which to make sound programmatic decisions."

Just as one goal might have several objectives, it is important to identify all the expected outcomes you hope to see for a particular goal and set of objectives. By implementing and monitoring your action plan, you will be able to determine whether you are meeting your objectives and making progress towards achieving your outcomes.

What Is Meant by Progress?

While progress is defined as forward movement toward achieving goals, objectives, and expected outcomes, it is not necessarily a steady, consistent climb. Because your program must rely on program data to demonstrate to what extent positive change has occurred, you also need to know where you started. This starting point, also referred to as "baseline data," is necessary for comparative purposes. Baseline data makes it possible to track and report progress in each yearly continuation application and throughout the five-year project period.

Tips for Tracking Progress

Identify which data will enable you to assess how you are doing. To be able to report on progress, programs need to first define what changes to measure, along with the data sources to be used for measuring that change. Begin with existing program data that you know to be reliable and relevant.



Outcomes are actual results. Expected outcomes are forecasted results.



Definition

Baseline data

is the starting point at which information is gathered. It is used for comparative purposes to track and report progress in the annual continuation application and over the five-year project period.

topic 1: nuts and bolts of strategic planning

Integrate methods for tracking and analyzing progress into the program’s ongoing monitoring and continuous improvement system.

You already collect data throughout the year through your ongoing monitoring efforts. As you analyze that data, consider the following questions:




- Are we doing what we said we would do?
- How well are we doing it?
- Do we need to adjust our action plan?

Consider contacting knowledgeable evaluators—nonprofit resource centers and universities—to help select the right data tools and methods for tracking progress toward identified objectives and expected outcomes. Analyzing data can be simple or complex. As you build your program’s analytic capacity, consider the value of asking the right questions. Michael Marquardt, author of *Leading with Questions*³, writes about “great questions.” He suggests that great questions are selfless and support the work of the group by:

- Creating deep reflection
- Testing assumptions and encouraging individuals to explore their thoughts
- Enabling the group to better view the situation
- Opening doors to the mind
- Leading to breakthrough thinking

Using data for continuous improvement plays a significant role in the five-year project period. However, avoid being “data rich and information poor.” Always consider available data during strategic planning. For example, three methods of tracking progress for a measurable objective may be too many. If the findings from two measures are redundant consider discontinuing one of them.

Examples of Data Sources for Tracking Progress

 Children	 Families	 Program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child files • Standardized and structured child assessments • Informal teacher observations, child portfolios, etc. • Daily health checks • Individual attendance records • Well-child data • Kindergarten entry assessments from receiving schools • Parent feedback • Developmentally standardized screenings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent surveys • Family partnership process • Family assessments • PFCE Markers of Progress • Depression screeners • Parenting intervention tools • Tools for family strength-based assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual self-assessment • Community assessment • Aggregated child-level assessment data • Aggregated family progress data • Quality Rating Improvement Systems (if appropriate) • Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) • Health Services Advisory Committee • Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) • Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS)

Go beyond measures that simply count the number of things offered in a program or your effort. Consider the effect of your actions and explore ways to measure the impact of your efforts. Although counting is important—especially when it captures the number of parents who showed up for an event, for example, or the number of evening classes offered—going beyond counting is even more important. For example, can you show how your efforts supported parents in earning their GED or pursuing vocational training? Now, you start getting at the actual effect of your work. ■

Indicators of a Culture of Continuous Improvement

While people have long appreciated the merits of incrementally improving processes, the phrase “continuous improvement” was formalized in the 1980s. No matter the industry or business, a system of continuous improvement is necessary to make the most of your efforts and services. Consider these indicators as you cultivate your culture of continuous improvement.

- **Curiosity:** Ask how and why questions. Are staff actively asking questions and thinking critically?
- **Reflection:** Review program policies and seek regular feedback. Is time and space provided to look at data for meaning and insight?
- **Tolerance for vulnerability:** Recognize and discuss when things aren’t working well. Are staff comfortable making course corrections?
- **Value feedback:** Use data to assess if strategies are making a difference. Do we have a listening culture?
- **Systems thinking:** Take a 10,000-foot view to gain a broader more comprehensive perspective. Does staff appreciate where their Head Start program fits within the larger community and the lives of the children they serve?

What Is Meant by Challenges?

Challenges come in all forms and levels of difficulty. Pat Lynch, president of Business Alignment Strategies, Inc., contends that to successfully address challenges, groups must view them through a big picture lens while focusing on outcome or impact.⁴ The Head Start Grant Application Instructions describe challenges as obstacles to achieving the program goals and objectives. Thus, in the baseline application, expected challenges are those that programs expect to come across as they move forward to achieve program goals and objectives. In the continuation application, programs are also asked to describe the actual challenges to achieving the program goals and objectives. The continuation application also requires that you discuss how your program is working to address the challenges.



How do your objectives measure program success?

Connecting the Steps

Program goal:

Maintain an exemplary system of program governance.

Fiscal objective:

The management team provides the governing body/Tribal Council with accurate fiscal information on a monthly basis.

Action step:

Monthly program expenditure reports are prepared and submitted for review to the governing body/Tribal Council by the Head Start director.

Expected outcome:

Governing body/Tribal Council members fully understand and effectively use all fiscal information on which to make sound programmatic decisions.

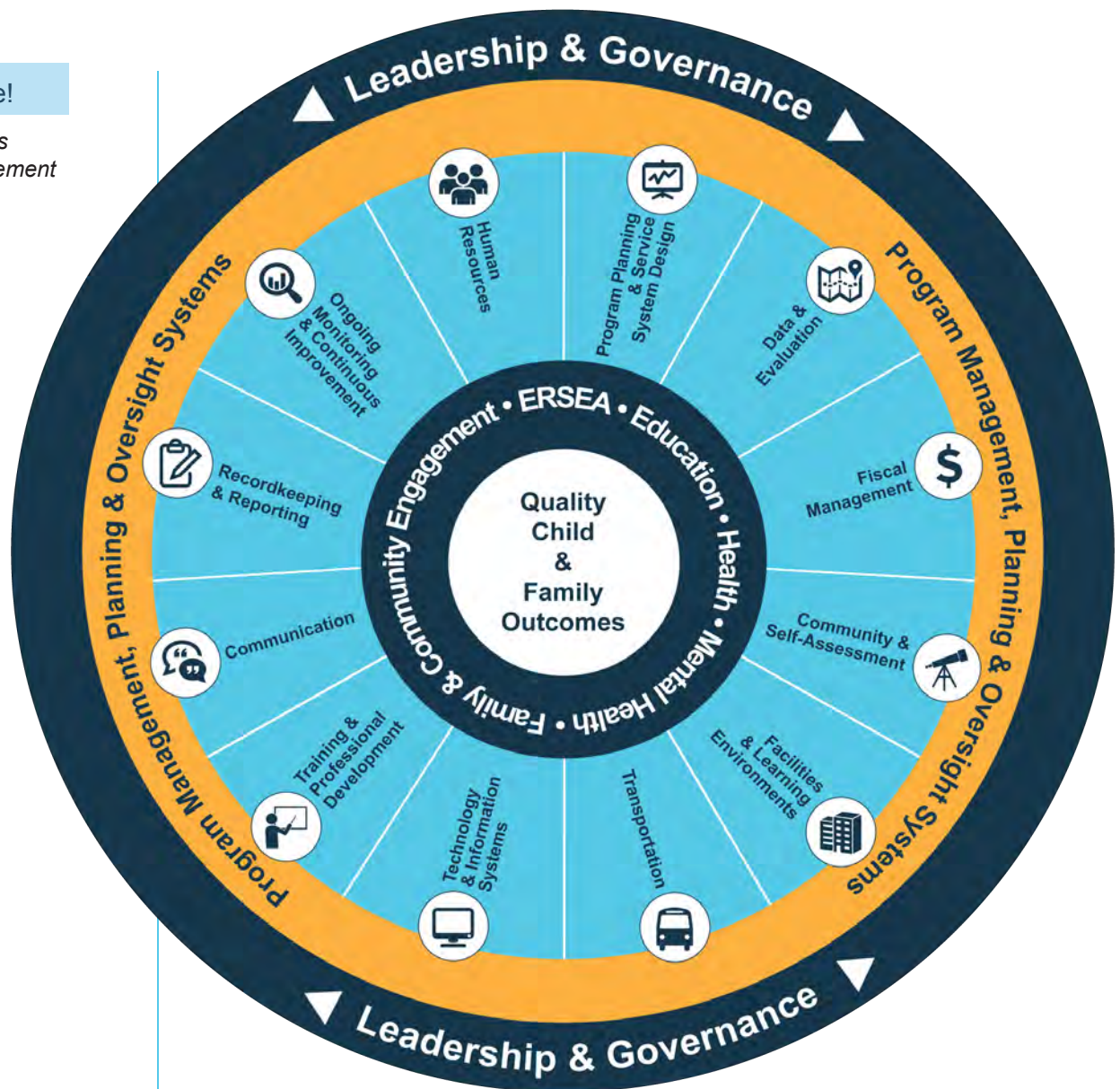
Expected challenge:

Competing financial responsibilities by grantee fiscal staff potentially creates inconsistency on how and when fiscal information is provided to governing body/Tribal Council.

topic 1: nuts and bolts of strategic planning

▶ Tell Me More!

Learn more about this planning and management tool on the ECLKC.



A big-picture perspective is consistent with systems thinking, a discipline that deals with seeing the whole. Systems thinking taps into a higher level of analyzing, problem solving, and strategizing. In *The Fifth Discipline*, Peter Senge uses the analogy of putting together puzzles for the sheer joy of seeing the whole image emerge.⁵ He stresses the importance of seeing the “whole”—the “big picture” at the heart of systems thinking.

The Head Start Management Systems Wheel was developed to support Head Start programs in systems thinking. Leadership and governance are the bedrocks of effective management. They encompass and inform the 12 management systems. The yellow circle outlines the scope of these systems consistent with the five-year project period. The segmented aqua blue ring outlines each of the individual management systems. These systems work together to inform and influence the program’s service delivery, represented in the inner blue circle. This includes ERSEA, Education, Health, Mental Health, Community Partnerships, and Family Engagement.

To identify and voice challenges requires a safe space where staff can openly discuss whatever the data might reveal about program operations and outcomes. It is important to model and build a collaborative learning organization that values staff coming together as a community of learners for a continuous exchange of ideas.

What Is Meant by Evidence?

The baseline instructions of the Head Start Grant Application Instructions require programs to “provide evidence to demonstrate that the proposed [service] area is the area of greatest need.” The community assessment is a reliable source to gather the necessary data as evidence to support the assertion that you have selected the area of greatest need.

Evidence includes facts, information, documentation, or examples that support an assertion. This is where you ask “How do we know that we know what we know?” The evidence needed to effectively answer this question can be found in several different forms. Anecdotal and testimonial data tends to be a familiar type of evidence for Head Start programs. Head Start programs are also becoming increasingly familiar with collecting and presenting data in a way that provides compelling evidence to support a claim or assertion. There are multiple sources of evidence that are available to demonstrate an assertion. ■

What Is an Action Plan?

An action plan is a roadmap that can help you accomplish your program goals and objectives. Just as there are different ways to get to a destination if you are taking a trip, there are different routes a program can take to reach goals, meet objectives, and achieve outcomes.

Tips for Developing Action Plans

Include the three vital elements. Action plans generally include “what,” “who,” and “when.” They outline the action steps (the “what”) your program will take to achieve your goals and objectives, the person(s) responsible (the “who”), and the projected completion dates (the “when”). Most importantly, action plans highlight the “why” of a program goal. Research encourages us to lift up “why” in planning and inspire others to work in tandem to operationalize plans and accomplish goals. In *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*, Simon Sinek reminds us that knowing the why of an activity fosters a greater sense of purpose and initiative in those doing the work.⁶

Add other ingredients. Additional ingredients might include such things as how you will measure progress, your evidence or data source, markers for quarterly status updates, financial supports, and resources needed.

Start each action with a verb. This will remind you that action steps are things to do.



What evidence will you gather to identify and address your program goals?



Definition

Action plans are the roadmaps a program uses to accomplish goals and achieve objectives.

Action Plan

- ✓ Why
- ✓ What
- ✓ Who
- ✓ When

topic 1: nuts and bolts of strategic planning



Consider which actions are sequential and which are not. Some actions must be taken in chronological order because a specific action must be completed before the next can occur. See the examples in Topic 4. Other actions may happen simultaneously. Some actions may occur repeatedly or be ongoing. Order sequential actions with their related dates for completion. Indicate in the date column if actions are repeated or ongoing.

Use “Plan, Do, Review.” Many people are familiar with “Plan, Do, Review.” This concept is equally useful for an action plan. Creating an action plan is a big project. It’s tempting to clap your hands when you complete the plan and proudly put it on a shelf as a job well done. But an action plan should be a living document that is reviewed and updated as part of your program’s ongoing monitoring and continuous improvement process. It provides a clear and agreed-upon road map for all to follow. Reviewing your plan regularly offers opportunities to identify bright spots, celebrate small and large accomplishments along the way, and consider how your successes can inform your efforts in other areas of your program. It is also an opportunity to refine and adjust your strategies if you find they are not working, which creates the opportunity for a more robust and informed annual self-assessment.

! Action plans are living documents so “Plan, Do, Review” could be thought of as “Plan, Do, Review, and Revise as necessary.”

Keep it current. The best-laid plans do change as things go along. Make course corrections by adding additional action steps (or getting rid of ones that turn out to be unnecessary) and by changing timelines as needed. If you were not able to accomplish something you planned to do in January but it is now scheduled to take place in February, make sure your updated plan reflects this change so that stakeholders are informed. Don't forget to share your progress and updates with the governing board/Tribal Council and Policy Council members.

By understanding goals, objectives, outcomes, progress, and action plans, you can more effectively carry out your five-year plan. Thinking about the goals from a big-picture perspective allows you to anticipate expected challenges, and this, in turn, enables you to better forecast the expected outcomes. As your program engages in the five-year project period, your ability to craft broad, program goals, measurable objectives, and expected outcomes becomes a critical part of understanding the positive difference your program makes for children, families, and the community. ■



How do these criteria for action plans make you view your program's action plans differently?



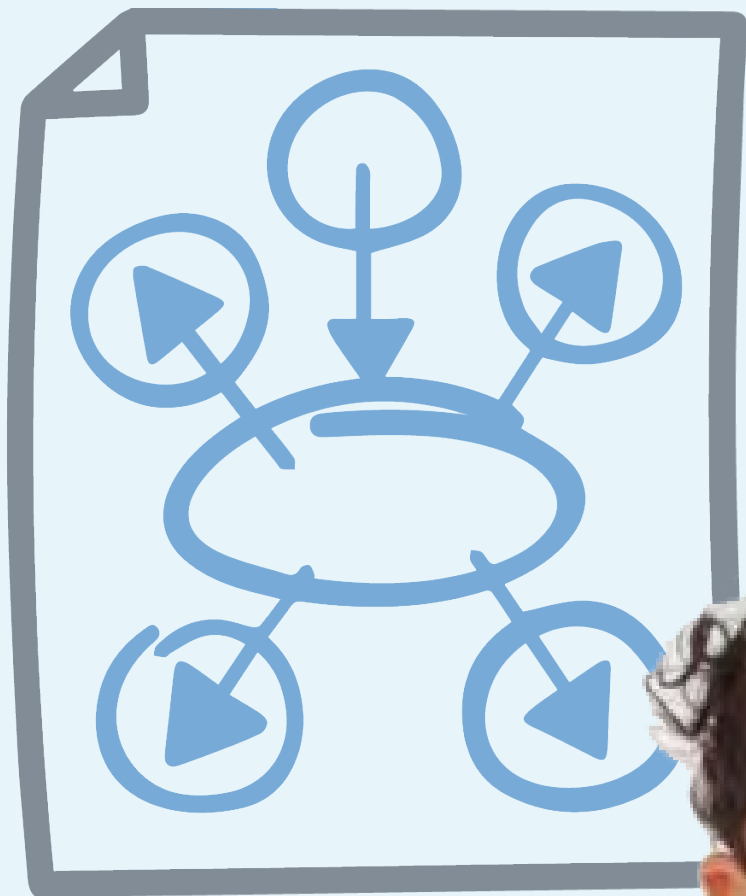
Now that you have identified the importance of program goals, objectives, outcomes, and action plans, **Topic 2** will help you distinguish between plans and planning and their significance in relation to strategic planning.

Strategic
long-term
goals

Expected
outcomes

Measurable
objectives

Anticipated
challenges





topic 2

five-year planning in head start



Getting Started

As discussed in Topic 1, strategic planning is a systematic process that organizations use to envision a desired future.


Then they translate this vision into program goals with measurable objectives and an action plan with a series of action steps. The program planning cycle is Head Start's approach to five-year planning. The HSPPS do not require you to adopt any specific type of planning process. Instead, HSPPS give you the flexibility to choose how to go about planning based on what works best for your program and community. However you choose to proceed, be mindful that whatever you do should be aligned to your five-year plan.

The following describes the values driving Head Start's¹ approach to five-year planning.



Learning Objectives

Programs consider how the planning cycle emphasizes a solutions-oriented mindset with honest dialogue and an examination of challenges and barriers. Programs will become familiar with a range of tools and techniques to advance strategic planning, such as "appreciative inquiry" and 'The 5 Whys.'

 Effective strategic plans are manageable but fluid, precise and adaptable.

Planning that Is Precise and Fluid

Planning is an essential way that programs move forward in a changing and uncertain environment. Thus, it is critical to understand the fundamentals of planning and how to create effective, meaningful plans that enable you to achieve your goals. In a 2016 *Harvard Business Review* article entitled, “Strategic Plans Are Less Important than Strategic Planning,” Graham Kenney describes how travel plans and blueprints are plans with “a specific beginning and end with precise steps along the way.”² Effective strategic plans are manageable but fluid, precise, and adaptable. Although such plans provide a clear, pre-determined step-by-step guide to follow, they should not be seen as carved in stone. Kenney shares four principles for strategic planning.

1. Think of the plan as a guidance tool.
2. Realize that the very process of preparing the plan has you thinking about the future and assembling resources.
3. Focus on the organization and key stakeholders, not individual actions.
4. Assume the plan is a work in progress. A strategic plan is not a set-and-forget instrument. It’s a living and breathing document that guides decision-making and helps marshal resources.


Head Start programs that operate within a community action agency, school district, municipality, or other umbrella agency are likely to engage in an organization-wide strategic planning process. Through organization-wide strategic planning, the entire organization and all of its programs have a voice in deciding what issues to prioritize over the upcoming years (strategic direction) and how it will get there (strategic goals). In this situation, the Head Start program goals should align with the organization-wide goals.

The organization-wide strategic planning process often follows an analysis of internal and external environmental factors. One common methodology looks at **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats**—and is called a **SWOT analysis**. A program conducts a SWOT analysis in order to look ahead to obtain an objective review of: where it can improve; what are the strengths and threats; and what are promising opportunities. Results from a SWOT analysis inform strategic plan development and typically look ahead over a three- to five-year period. They link long-term strategic directions and strategic goals to the organization’s vision, mission, goals, and objectives. While the planning team often writes a strategic plan for the organization as a whole, that plan should encompass and influence Head Start operations.

Regardless of whether you are part of a planning process that is organization-wide or specific to your Head Start program, it is important for your program to engage in a strategic planning process. It is the road to successful implementation of the five-year plan. It is critical for both single-purpose and umbrella agencies to engage in long-term strategic planning. In strategic planning, you focus on the forest not the trees. This is a key part of moving into the future regardless of your program’s size or structure.

SWOT:

Strengths
Weaknesses
Opportunities
Threats

 In strategic planning, you study the forest not the trees.

topic 2: five-year planning in head start



Think of your action plan as a GPS for your program. It offers step-by-step guidance for arriving at a desired destination.

Plans Linked to a Program's Strategic Planning Process

As part of the strategic planning process, your program may consider developing a comprehensive five-year plan and action plans that outline strategies for addressing school readiness goals.

Five-Year Plan. Beginning with the baseline application and then annually, the five-year plan provides an outline of what the program intends to accomplish over the entire project period. This plan establishes the five-year program goals, objectives, and outcomes (the results achieved). It identifies expected outcomes and expected challenges. For example, if a program sets a goal to improve child passenger safety after reviewing community data about the number of children injured in motor vehicle crashes, some expected outcomes over the five-year period might be:

- An increase from 25 percent to 50 percent in the number of Head Start families who attend a car seat inspection night to learn how to choose the right car or booster seat for their child and install it properly.
- An increase in the number of families from 50 percent to 60 percent who attend a car seat inspection night after the distribution of child passenger safety educational resources in families' home languages.
- An increase in the number of families from 60 percent to 75 percent who attend a car seat inspection night after the program recruits and trains staff as Certified Passenger Safety Technicians (CPST) qualified to host additional inspection events.
- An increase in the number of families from 70 percent to 85 percent who attend a car seat inspection night through a new partnership with local businesses that offer Head Start families access to free car seats or seats at a discounted rate.

An expected challenge might be providing access to information in multiple languages to help families choose and properly install a car seat in their vehicle. Another challenge might be finding affordable car seats.

Action Plans. An action plan can outline how a program intends to accomplish its overall goals and objectives from year to year and are aligned with the five-year plan. The action plan is developed by determining what actions will be undertaken each year. They enable the program to make progress towards the established goals and objectives. Think of the action plan as a global positioning system (GPS) for your program. Imagine the data put in the GPS to be the contents of the five-year plan instead of an address. The action plan is the destination the GPS guides you to. The action plan focuses on when actions will take place, where they will happen, and who will carry out the series of steps necessary to achieve the goal. It also identifies resources needed, like financial supports, as well as measures of success, including the evidence or data sources that confirm that success. Action plans may also include quarterly status updates.

School Readiness Goals. School readiness goals are especially influential in shaping a program's action plan. Many programs form school readiness teams to organize their efforts in delivering educational program services. This planning should address all program models, ages of children served in the program, children who are dual language learners, and children with suspected developmental delays or diagnosed disabilities. Developing program-wide school readiness goals, a key part of planning, is also required by the HSPPS.³ The *Implementation Guide: Using the ELOF to Establish School Readiness Goals* guides programs on how to establish or revise school readiness goals that are aligned with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF) for children ages birth to 5. School readiness goals should address all five areas of the ELOF central domains. Programs should establish these goals in consultation with families whose children are participating in the program.

There are a variety of ways programs can include family members in decisions about school readiness goals and planning. For example, programs can invite parents and key family members to participate on the school readiness teams. In developing school readiness goals and planning for children's school readiness, programs can also draw on aggregated data from sources like parent/teacher conferences and weekly conversations between home visitors and parents in home-based programs. ■

Tips and Tools that Support Strategic Planning

To develop feasible program goals and measurable objectives, your strategic planning process will need to include a focus on identifying and analyzing the patterns, trends, and issues that might prevent you from successfully implementing your goals. Understanding these challenges will enable you to anticipate and address obstacles before they occur. Just as importantly, it will move your program away from providing band-aid solutions and toward addressing the root causes of systemic problems. The Institute of Cultural Affairs uses the analogy of weeding dandelions to illustrate the importance of addressing root causes.⁴ If you cut down the dandelions, they grow back within a few days; if you dig down and remove the tap root, the dandelion is removed permanently. Focusing on the root cause of challenges or barriers to successful service delivery is strategic planning's way of digging deeper. It is also a practical step in mapping out the strategic direction.

What challenges lay ahead? There are typically three types of responses to this question: lack of money, lack of staff, or lack of time. It is important to look beyond what is lacking and dig deeper. Another analogy from the Institute of Cultural Affairs demonstrates this message: "Imagine watering plants in a garden when the water running from the hose suddenly stops. You don't just stare at the hose and shout, 'There's no water.' Instead, you turn to see if there is a kink in the hose, if someone stepped on it, or if someone turned off the water."⁵ Likewise, in strategic planning, you must move from what's lacking to what is preventing your forward movement.

How should we include family members into planning and goal setting?



How do your strategic plans address your program goals?



Strategic planning shifts the focus from "what's lacking" to "what is preventing forward movement."

topic 2: five-year planning in head start



The five in the 5 Whys technique derives from an anecdotal observation on the number of iterations needed to resolve a problem.

The 5 Whys. The 5 Whys is one of many approaches to identifying and addressing challenges.⁶ The 5 Whys is a series of why-based questions that set the stage for deeper problem-solving. For example, a program might launch the first question with, “What challenges might keep us from achieving our strategic long-term goal to improve child passenger safety?” A team member might respond, “We may not be able to get parents to participate.” “Why can’t we get parents to participate?” The questions and responses continue on this theme until the root cause surfaces. The process is akin to peeling back the layers of an onion. Typically, you will be able to use the final response to document your expected challenge in the baseline Head Start grant application.

Be aware that the challenges you surface may require you to rethink, revise, or reframe your program goal or measurable objectives.

Appreciative Inquiry. Appreciative Inquiry is another technique you can use to support strategic planning. The essence of Appreciative Inquiry is the search for the best in people and their organizations. It lifts up the notion of a focused dialogue. Professor Ron Fry from Case Western Reserve University encourages planning groups to “study what’s good if they want to get more good.” In other words, by examining what is going well, planning groups develop insights into ways to apply good practices in new situations. Conversely, focusing on what is wrong usually produces only incremental change. An expert in Appreciative Inquiry, Professor Fry advises that posing positive questions and encouraging storytelling about successes helps people see the bigger possibilities and go beyond the incremental “tweaks” to truly dig deeper for solutions.

Find a Solution through Focused Dialogue

What does focused dialogue look like? For an example, consider a situation where your data analysis is pointing to a family engagement goal. As your team begins to craft the goal, pull back and begin a dialogue focused on two questions:

- What is working well in this area?
- Why is it working well?

Identify Challenges

Move forward to identifying challenges with questions such as:

- What is not working well?
- Why is it not working well?

Analyze Data

Then, analyze the data through dialogue with questions such as:

- What aspects of “what is working” can be used to find a solution?
- What factors have been considered in reaching a solution?
- What else do we need to know before we decide?

Cont’d

Find a Solution through Focused Dialogue (cont'd)

Decide on course corrections

Next, decide on the course correction with questions such as:

- What changes do we propose?
- Do the changes advance our goals?
- Who is responsible for implementing?

Determine check-ins and follow-ups

Finally, determine when to check-in and follow-up with questions such as:

- What data needs to be reviewed and how often?
- What needs to happen to make sure the changes are working?
- Is it a short term or long-term solution?

Use that solution to inform the course correction. The team's dialogue will move from a simplistic listing of issues to a more substantive solutions-focused discussion. From that, you will be able to identify a more useful solution.

While successful strategic planning requires groups to adopt a forward-thinking mindset, programs nevertheless sometimes cling to once successful strategies, even after those approaches no longer work. Management literature calls this phenomenon “escalation of commitment.” There are several reasons why programs might be reluctant to alter course. First, people tend to value commitments and investments already made, particularly in terms of cost and resources expended. Second, individuals tend to worry that altering course might result in a possible loss of status. And third, groups have a strong desire to simply complete the task—see a project through. Karl Weick of the University of Michigan speaks to this escalation of commitment, asserting that organizational decision-makers must not ignore the events that weaken forward-thinking strategy.⁷ The leader's role is to create an environment of safety so that team members are comfortable to offer ideas, speak to concerns, ask for help, or even express ambivalence about moving forward with program goals and strategies that could be potentially ineffective or damaging. Ultimately, programs should strive to embrace innovative ideas and approaches that are consistent with the changing fluid environments in which Head Start programs operate today.

In summary, as Kenney infers at the opening of this topic, strategic planning is indispensable. Strategic planning is the process of digging deeply with dialogue-focused questions so that you are able to develop sound program goals and measurable objectives. It is a dynamic process resulting in a strategic plan that is a work in progress. ■



Escalation of commitment is a human behavior pattern in which stakeholders facing increasingly negative outcomes continue the same behavior rather than alter course.



Definition

Forecasting

is the process of making future predictions based on past and present data with an analysis of related trends. The Head Start Grant Application Instructions ask programs to identify expected outcomes and challenges in the baseline application. This is forecasting. Forecasting is an important part of strategic planning.



What role does collaboration and honest dialogue play in your planning process?



In **Topic 2** you learned how to use strategic planning tools and techniques to envision a desired future. In **Topic 3** you will build on this understanding and consider how to use different types of goals to provide responsive, high-quality services to children and families.





topic 3

achieving program goals that support child and family outcomes



Getting Started

Topic 3 explores the importance of program goals and how they ensure high-quality, culturally and linguistically responsive comprehensive services. This critical function of the Head Start planning cycle underscores how important it is for programs to plan strategically and to retain an unwavering focus on program goals including school readiness goals and parent, family, community engagement goals. These components work together to support progress toward child and family outcomes.



Learning Objectives

Programs will explore different types of goals and consider how specific data sources and tools can help them track their progress towards desired family outcomes.

topic 3: achieving program goals

! Families are critical in helping their children be ready for school. Head Start programs can be partners in this endeavor.

As outlined in Topic 1: Nuts and Bolts of Strategic Planning, program goals related to child and family outcomes are broad statements that describe what a program intends to accomplish through its work with (and in support of) children and families. The ongoing partnership between program staff and families is crucial in supporting children's school readiness. As your program implements child development services and constructs school readiness goals that align with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF), you will also need to integrate parent and family engagement strategies into all systems and program services. This will enable you to promote family growth and development as exemplified in the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework. Families play a critical role in helping their children be ready for school, and Head Start programs are valuable partners in this endeavor.

What is the ELOF?

The ELOF:

- Is a guide for programs to plan and implement a comprehensive, yet focused, early learning program
- Reflects research on what young children should know and be able to do in the following five domains:
 1. Approaches to Learning
 2. Social and Emotional Development
 3. Language and Literacy Development
 4. Cognition
 5. Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development
- Applies to all Head Start program settings serving children ages birth to 5, including center-based, family child care, and home-based programs
- Applies to all children, including children who are dual language learners (DLLs) as well as children with disabilities
- Provides rich descriptions of children's developmental progressions, which can help program staff implement intentional teaching practices to support children at various ages
- Informs many aspects of program practices, such as:
 - Establishing school readiness goals
 - Selecting and implementing a curriculum
 - Selecting assessment instruments
 - Planning professional development

Prioritizing Program Goals

Head Start programs frequently ask how many program goals they should have. You can answer this question with the juggling test: How many balls—goals—can your program realistically keep in the air? Moreover, make sure the program goals are connected to data that can be analyzed, aggregated, and compared in order to measure progress. To ensure minimal bias, objectivity is important. Programs should not tailor the data they select based on what they want to see. Consider the following questions when you develop your program goals and objectives:

! Data-informed continuous improvement is only possible with good quality data.

- What is the data telling you, and what are the most urgent family, child, and community needs?
- How will program goals be developed and communicated internally (e.g., to staff, families, governing body/Tribal Council, and Policy Council members) and externally (e.g., to community partners and funders)?
- How will you make sure that program goals embrace culturally and linguistically responsive practices and outcomes?
- How would each group of stakeholders embrace and articulate these program goals?
- How will programs track, monitor, and evaluate activities and progress?
- How much data is currently used to measure progress, and what new data is needed to determine progress?
- What is realistic given funding constraints and opportunities?

These questions indicate how important it is to plan strategically. Families, staff, governing body/Tribal Council and Policy Council members, and other key stakeholders have a role to play in supporting a program's goals. Being strategic takes more planning time, but the results are well worth the investment. When a program's direction is established, it is easier to prioritize a manageable number of program goals and a clear method for achieving expected outcomes. Ultimately, the decision on how many program goals to have should be guided by the program's data. Although there is no required number of program goals and objectives, programs need to focus on the five central domains of the ELOF when addressing school readiness-related goals.

School Readiness Goals

The HSPPS require programs to establish school readiness goals that are aligned with the ELOF, state, and tribal early learning standards as appropriate, and the requirements and expectations of the schools that Head Start children will attend. At a minimum they must address the domains of language and literacy development; cognition and general knowledge; approaches toward learning; physical well-being and motor development; and social and emotional development. Programs will likely establish a goal for each of the ELOF's five central domains. Many programs serving infants, toddlers, and preschool children develop one set of school readiness goals appropriate for all children birth to 5.

Programs are required to establish school readiness goals in consultation with the families whose children are participating in the program. There are a variety of ways a program can do this. Consider forming an implementation team or school readiness committee that includes staff and parents. Examine data gathered through parent interest surveys. Ask parents for input during home visits and on lesson plans.


◀ Tell Me More!


Learn more about the expectations around establishing program goals with HSPPS regulation 45 CFR § 1302.102(a).

◀ Tell Me More!

Guidance on how programs can revise or create a school readiness goal as a type of program goal can be found in the Implementation Guide: Using the ELOF to Establish School Readiness Goals, which is part of the ELOF Implementation Toolkit.

topic 3: achieving program goals

 School readiness goals are a type of program goal.

Tell Me More! 

The ECLKC offers resources related to the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to 5.

Table 1 compares the characteristics of program goals and school readiness goals. Note that school readiness goals are a type of program goal.

Table 1: Characteristics of Two Types of Program Goals

Program Goals	School Readiness Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• BROAD statements of strategic direction that are compelling and engage everyone in the program in some level of related effort• Answer two questions:<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What is to be accomplished?2. Why is it important?• Describe the program’s focus and priorities• May generally or specifically support the attainment of school readiness goals (most program goals do this)• Must include goals for the program’s provision of educational, health, nutritional, and PFCE program services• Must be responsive to culturally and linguistically diverse populations of children and families served in the program• Are phrased as statements and begin with words like “Program will...”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• BROAD statements of expectation around children’s status and progress that address the five central domains of the ELOF• Reflect the age of the children being served• Answer two questions:<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What will children accomplish?2. Why is the goal important for kindergarten entry?• Describe what the program wants children to know and be able to do at the end of their Head Start enrollment• Encompass the range of children served (e.g., are applicable for children who are DLLs and children with disabilities or suspected delays)• Are phrased as statements and begin with the words “Children will...”

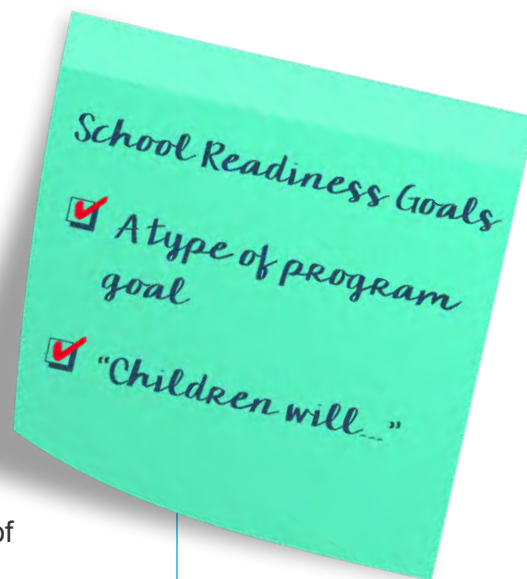


Table 2 compares the development process for the different types of Head Start goals.

Table 2: Process for Developing Two Types of Program Goals

Program Goals	School Readiness Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typically developed for the baseline application of the five-year project period through the organization's strategic planning and Head Start planning processes Informed by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community assessment for new grantees Annual self-assessment, updated community assessment, and program-specific data sources, including aggregated PFCE data for existing grantees (e.g., summaries of conversations and observations, family strengths and needs, surveys of family satisfaction with services and referrals, and family partnership agreements) Developed in consultation with and approved by the governing body/ Tribal Council and Policy Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typically developed for the baseline application of the five-year project period through the organization's strategic planning and Head Start planning processes Aligned with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ELOF State or tribal early learning guidelines Requirements and expectations of schools Developed in consultation with the families of the children participating in the program Developed in consultation with and approved by the governing body/ Tribal Council and Policy Council Mapped to align with indicators of child outcomes from the program's child assessment system



Head Start Approach to School Readiness

- Children are ready for school
- Families are ready to support children's learning
- Schools are ready for children

topic 3: achieving program goals

Table 3 compares how each type of goal is reviewed, revised, tracked, and analyzed to support program-level school readiness goals.

Table 3: How Different Types of Goals Support School Readiness

Program Goals: Reviewed and Revised	School Readiness Goals: Reviewed and Revised
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed and revised only if program/ community assessment data indicate the goal is no longer relevant May be revised as other goals are accomplished May be revised as program, state, national or tribal priorities are modified or emerging issues are identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May not change from year to year unless the context changes (e.g., there is a shift in program demographics, a need to realign with local education agency, state, or tribal early learning standards or guidelines, or need to incorporate parent input)
Program Goals: Tracked and Analyzed	School Readiness Goals: Tracked and Analyzed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objectives related to program goals are measurable to enable programs to track progress throughout the five-year grant cycle, as well as analyze impact at the end of five years Progress toward goals is tracked by using different tools or methods and by analyzing relevant data sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on child-level assessment data this is aggregated and analyzed at least three times a year. Except in programs operating fewer than 90 days, aggregation and analysis includes sub-groups as appropriate, such as DLLs and children with disabilities² Includes data that measures features such as adult-child interaction, professional development efforts for staff, responsive environment, curriculum fidelity, parent and family input, etc. Includes disaggregated child assessment data that is compared with other data collected by the grantees, such as individual child health data, individual child attendance data, human resource data, and fiscal data Includes the collection and analysis of individual child attendance data within the first 60 days of program operation (fewer than 60 days for Migrant and Seasonal Head Start), and on a regular basis thereafter, to identify children with patterns of absence that put them at risk of missing 10 percent of program days per year³ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In some cases, includes comparison with other aggregated child level assessment data from the state, local pre-K programs, and other sources

Understanding the similarities and differences between program goals and school readiness goals is an important part of planning. Ultimately, program and school readiness goals, along with measurable objectives, all work together to strengthen high-quality, comprehensive services to children and families. ■



How does your program ensure that the program goals and school readiness goals are aligned?

Family and Community Engagement Program Goals and Outcomes

The PFCE Framework is your guide to program planning for parent, family, and community engagement. It encourages programs to explore effective ways to design and implement systems and services to achieve expected outcomes for families and children. In Topic 1: Nuts and Bolts of Strategic Planning, we defined the term “expected outcomes” to be results the program anticipates. The PFCE outcomes are defined areas of expected outcomes that all Head Start programs must work toward.

The PFCE Framework helps programs plan with the end, or expected results, in mind. When collecting and using data, it is helpful to consider from the outset what you want to achieve with families and children and which outcomes are most important to work toward over the projected five-year period. Many programs use their data and the expected PFCE outcomes to design their PFCE program goals. Just as the domains in the ELOF are made more specific through the development of school readiness goals, PFCE outcomes can also be tailored to support the strengths and needs of unique populations. This can be done through the development of specific program goals for the provision of family and community engagement program services.



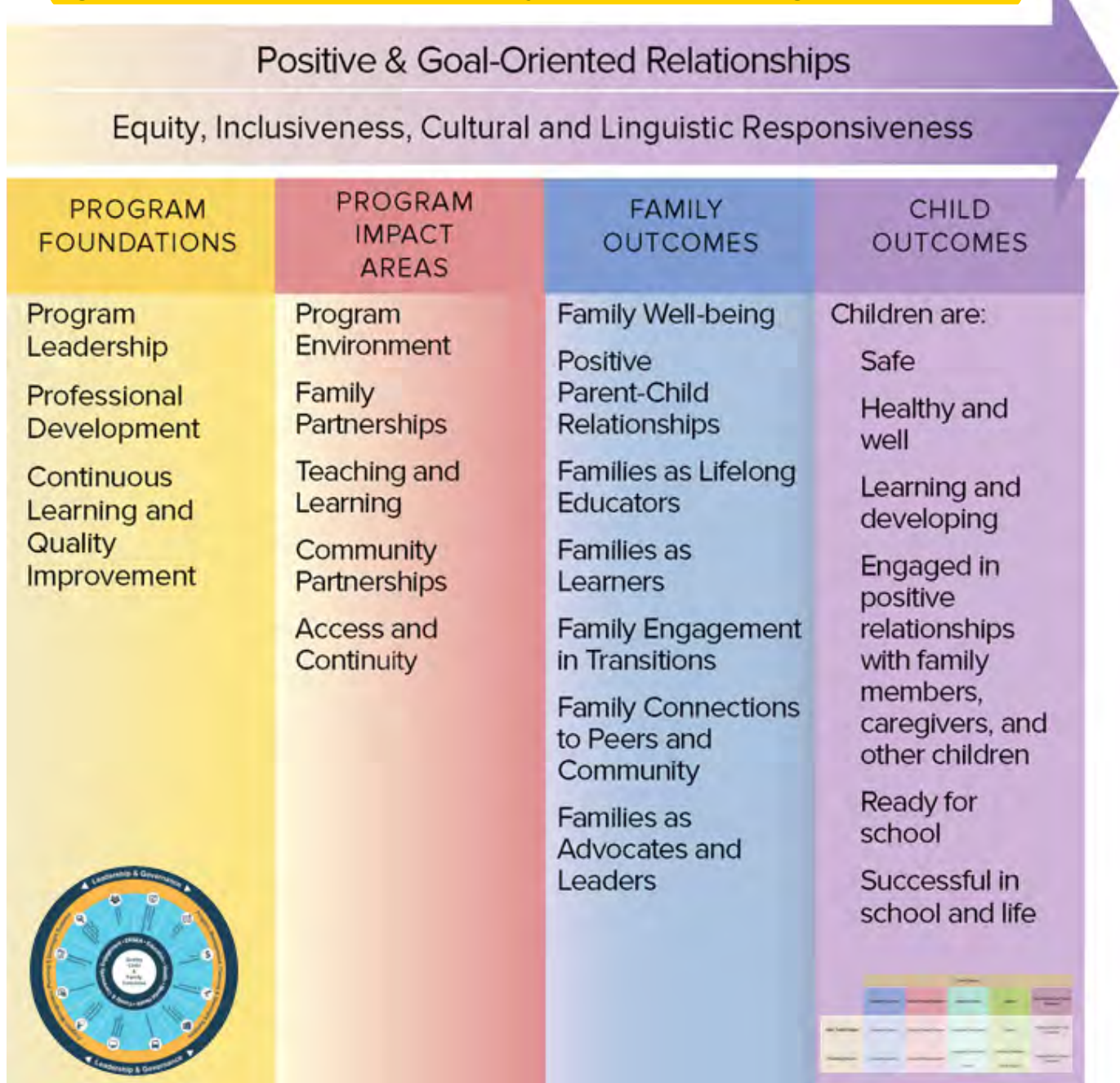
topic 3: achieving program goals

Tell Me More! ▶

Learn more about the PFCE Framework, Version 2 on the ECLKC.

As program-level goals are developed, consider objectives that will help you meet your program goals. Many programs use the PFCE Framework Foundations (Program Leadership, Professional Development, and Continuous Learning and Quality Improvement) and the Program Impact Areas (Program Environment, Family Partnerships, Teaching and Learning, Community Partnerships, and Access and Continuity) to develop objectives and actions/strategies. As shown in Figure 1, objectives and actions/strategies link across systems (yellow column) and services (pink column) to support overall program goals that support family and child outcomes.

Figure 1: Relationship between Goals, Objectives, Actions/Strategies, and Outcomes




Tracking Progress toward the Achievement of PFCE Program Goals and Expected Outcomes

There are a variety of data-related tools that can be used to develop goals and measurable objectives and track progress toward achieving them. Many programs use published or locally designed tools to support their ongoing monitoring process. Other helpful sources of information include conversations with key staff and stakeholders (e.g., Policy Council and parent committee) and observations of staff who interact regularly with families (e.g., teachers, family service staff, home visitors, health services staff, bus drivers). Summaries of family input can also be invaluable.

One way to effectively track progress toward your program goals is to design objectives that address both the effort and the effect of your strategies. A program’s level of effort includes the type and amount of family programming offered. Your program’s effect focuses on whether your program’s activities have made a difference for children and families.

It is important to use data to identify the changes needed to achieve goals for families. For example, while working with individual families to set goals in the family partnership process, program staff may learn about family-specific trends and patterns that may inform program-wide goals setting and planning with community partners. This goal-setting process with families can provide another source of data to inform monitoring and decision-making about what improvements to make over time.

 Tell Me More!

To learn more about tracking progress, see Measuring What Matters on Head Start’s the ECLKC.


-  The Four R Approach to Support Family Progress
- Responsible
 - Respectful
 - Relevant
 - Relationship-based

Table 4: Sample Program Goal, Objective, Outcome, and Result

Sample Program Goal	Objective	Expected Outcomes	Outcomes (Actual Results)
“Moving Forward” Head Start program will support all parents through enhancing their parenting skills	Implement an eight-week research-based parenting curriculum offered to parents throughout the program year	Participating parents will increase their parenting knowledge and skills, increase positive interactions with their children, and have opportunities to connect with other parents and community agencies (Positive Parent-Child Relationships)	40 percent of enrolled parents participated in year one. Of those participating parents, 80 percent reported reduced parenting stress levels, increased knowledge about parenting better interactions with their children, and more connections to their peers and other community agencies

Differentiating between Program-level and Individual Family Goals

It is important to be able to distinguish between: 1) program-level goals to support PFCE outcomes; and 2) individual family goals that are developed with the family through the family assessment and family partnership process. At the same time your program is implementing intake and family assessment procedures, you must also identify family strengths and needs related to PFCE Outcomes. Both the family partnership process, as well as the family goals, should be aligned with the PFCE Outcomes.

Just as your program develops program-wide goals to support PFCE outcomes, you also will work with the family to develop individual family goals. They are based on the family assessment, family partnership process, and ongoing dialogue. ■



How does your program track its progress toward the PFCE program goals and outcomes?

Table 5: Differences Between Program and Individual Family Goals

Type	Definition	Purpose	Informed By
Program goals to support family outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goals that are designed for all families or for specific groups of families in the program (e.g., immigrant groups, DLLs, fathers) and that support progress toward child and family outcomes Goals that affect all program services and systems Goals that are set at the program level and that may or may not affect all families in the program 	To answer the question: <i>What should our program do to make a difference for children and families?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of trends and patterns that affect children and families through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community assessment Annual self-assessment Summary of family strengths and needs assessments (aggregated data) Summary of individual family goals from family partnership agreements (aggregated data) Aggregated child assessment data

Type	Definition	Purpose	Informed By
Individual family goals reflect strengths, needs, and aspirations and are where progress is made toward one or more of the seven PFCE outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goals set with an individual family to support progress toward child and family outcomes Goals developed by staff and parents together, based on the family's strengths, interests, and needs, and apply to all types of families (e.g., pregnant woman, expectant father, parent of a child with a disability, a couple whose child is transitioning to kindergarten, etc.) Goals may target adult learning, economic mobility, financial stability, and/or child outcomes related to early learning, school readiness, and healthy development Goals and related activities taken on by staff and families relate to PFCE Outcomes and ELOF 	To answer the question: <i>How can we partner with this individual family to make progress toward the goals that family members set for themselves and their family?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family discussions about goals, interests, strengths, and hopes Recruitment and application process Regular communication with family Family assessment data Child assessment data

Tips for Linking Family Engagement and School Readiness Goals

Ensure families are a part of the program goal-setting process.

By engaging families in Head Start planning, program plan design and implementation is strengthened and parents are involved as leaders and decision-makers. To engage families as program planners, be intentional in building a welcoming environment where families feel valued, supported, and ready to contribute. Strength-based attitudes and relationship-based practices help individual staff have positive goal-oriented relationships with families.

Families can be involved in all planning phases, including the development of five-year plans, program plans, and T/TA plans, among others. Parent input on program plans can be sought through Policy Council and parent committee meetings, parent focus groups, staff and parent conversations, parent representation on the Health Services Advisory Committee, and on

◀ Tell Me More!

To learn more about engaging families in program planning, see Building Partnerships: Guide to Developing Relationships with Families document on Head Start's ECLKC website.

topic 3: achieving program goals



Engaging families in the program planning process strengthens child and family outcomes.

planning committees. Be sure to thoughtfully include families in diverse circumstances (e.g., families experiencing transitions, families of DLLs) and different subgroups of families (e.g., fathers, grandparents, families of children with disabilities or special health care needs, pregnant women, refugee and immigrant groups, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT)-headed families).

Ensure families are providing input in the development of program school readiness goals. The HSPPS require programs to include parents and family members when setting school readiness goals. Many programs, for example, include parents on school readiness implementation teams and intentionally gather parent input on a range of topics.

Collect and review data about the strengths, needs, and personal goals of families from a variety of sources. Use data collected from the intake process, family and child assessments, ongoing communication with the families, and family partnership agreement process. You will find that family surveys, input from community partners, summaries of individual family goals, the community assessment, and the annual self-assessment are also good data sources. Staff can also use aggregated information about individual families and children—including their goals, strengths, and challenges—to set program goals and measurable objectives that link child and family outcomes. These sources of data can also help programs identify revealing trends and patterns that inform the development of their program goals and objectives.

Table 6: Sample Linking School Readiness and Family Engagement Goals, Objectives, Outcomes, and Results

School Readiness Goal	Objective	Expected Outcomes	Outcomes (Actual Results)
Children will engage in positive interactions through secure relationships with consistent, responsive adults. (Infant/Toddler Social and Emotional School Readiness Goal)	Implement a 12-week parenting curriculum to enable, at a minimum, 50 percent of families to practice skills related to nurturing their children	50 percent of participating parents will have enhanced warm relationships that nurture their child’s learning and development	60 percent of enrolled families reported enhancements in relationships with their young child(ren) following participation in course Per ongoing child assessment data: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 65 percent of infants (birth–18 months) demonstrate a secure attachment to their parent and to one or more familiar adults (e.g. primary caregiver, another teacher in their classroom, other family members)• 70 percent of toddlers (18–36 months) demonstrate the ability to depend on trusted adults (e.g. primary caregiver, another teacher in classroom, parent) to meet their needs appropriately

Ensure alignment between the goals families set for themselves and the goals set at the program level. Consider whether you have planned for services that are responsive to families' strengths and needs. At times, you may need to change a program goal (or objective) to address a gap in services identified during your planning process. You'll also want to consider how goals families set for themselves can support your program's school readiness goals for children.

In summary, programs and families set goals at the program and individual family level. Program goals related to family outcomes are intended to address the needs of all families in a program. These program-wide goals emerge from several data sources. Program leadership, governing bodies, community partners, staff, and families all work together to set and achieve these goals.

In addition, staff work with families to establish specific individual family goals based on the family's strengths, needs, interests, hopes, and progress. This goal-setting process helps programs identify recurring issues and remain responsive to the needs and aspirations of the families they serve. This kind of collaborative, data-informed goal-setting helps programs evaluate the efficacy of their services, monitor progress at individual and program levels, and engage in continuous quality improvement. ■

◀ Tell Me More!

For more information about goal-setting with individual families, see The Family Partnership Process: Engaging and Goal-Setting with Families on Head Start's ECLKC website.



How does your program engage families in setting goals and program planning?



In **Topic 3** you learned how to use different types of goals to provide responsive, high-quality services to children and families. In **Topic 4** four scenarios offer samples of program goals and measurable objectives, and show how each connects to a program's action plan. The scenarios also include sample data, tools, and methods for tracking progress.





topic 4

pulling it all together: program examples



Getting Started

Topic 4 *Pulling it All Together—Program Examples* describes how four typical programs integrate program goals, expected outcomes, and action plans into their planning process to support program excellence. As you read these planning scenarios, think about your own program. Of course, the specifics differ, but what can your program learn about the planning process? Refer to Topic 1 for planning terms while reading through the scenarios.



Learning Objectives

Programs understand how the Head Start planning process comes together to advance their vision for the children and families they serve. They expand their knowledge of strategic planning in Head Start and see how they can use data, tools and methods for tracking progress.

topic 4: pulling it all together

Goals, Objectives, Outcomes, Progress, and Action Plans—What Do They Look Like?

The Head Start five-year grant application requires programs to submit an outcomes-focused plan that shows how program services will have a cumulative positive impact on children, families, and the community. After the initial baseline application, each subsequent continuation application will ask programs to demonstrate progress made each year towards achieving those program goals, objectives, and expected outcomes. By year five, programs will use findings from all five years to describe how their services have made a difference for children, families, and the community.

Programs need two specific skills to engage in five-year planning:

- 1) The ability to develop and write BROAD program goals and measurable objectives
- 2) The ability to translate goals and objectives into an action plan that supports progress toward expected outcomes

Aligning BROAD goals with clearly defined SMART objectives will help programs identify specific, expected changes; project when those changes will occur; and allocate the necessary resources to ensure success. Expected outcomes include changes in child and family knowledge and behavior, program practice, and community engagement which occur as a result of your program's efforts.

Defining the monetary resources your program needs is an important part of building an action plan. With this knowledge, programs can include fiscal objectives and action steps to ensure adequate funding for the essential components of the program plan and program. This includes personnel, equipment, materials, and T/TA. Programs may want to use the Management Systems Wheel to review implications for all aspects of program operations.

Topic 4 provides four examples of program goals. The first example focuses on strengthening children's transitions to kindergarten or other placements. The second outlines an initiative that promotes language and literacy development for preschool children. The third examines a health-related goal. The fourth explores ways that programs partner with families to make progress toward family well-being. Each of these examples illustrates:

- **BROAD program goals** based on data from a community assessment, annual self-assessment, and ongoing monitoring and which require contributions from all parts of the program
- **Objectives that are SMART:** Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely
- **Expected outcomes** that show what success looks like if the goal is achieved
- **Data, tools, or methods** for tracking progress
- **Expected challenges** that might impede progress on goals and objectives
- **Sequential actions/strategies** to carry out over the program year

Example 1:

Program Goal: Strengthening Transitions to Kindergarten

SCENARIO

Community Assessment Report

Always Cutting Edge (ACE) Head Start program serves children and families in four different counties. A recent update of its community assessment revealed some interesting information. Two new elementary schools had opened in its service area, each in a different county and supported by its own local education agency (LEA). This meant that the program would have to work with two different schools and LEAs to support children's educational and special needs. Parents' dissatisfaction with program communication was already an area of challenge that ACE was trying to overcome.

During Annual Self-assessment

Aggregated data from the family satisfaction survey, completed prior to the program's annual self-assessment, pointed to a concern among families about children's transition to kindergarten. These parents and family members, especially those whose primary language was not English, and those whose children had special health needs, were unsure how to approach and communicate with school staff. They expressed a second concern about how their children would do in kindergarten.

During Planning

Based on this data, ACE's planning committee, consisting of management team members and representatives from the governing body and Policy Council, decided to develop a new program goal. They aimed to strengthen the program's process for transitioning to kindergarten, with increased focus on children who are DLLs and children with special health needs. In developing its action plan, the planning committee sought input from the LEA representatives, receiving school principals, and the governing body member with early childhood expertise.

Program Goal

ACE Head Start will use coordinated transition strategies involving parents, Head Start staff, and public school personnel so the preschool and elementary programs can help children maintain and maximize the gains they made in preschool and succeed in kindergarten and beyond.

The planning team developed four SMART objectives and identified several expected outcomes for the goal. They also identified the data sources they would use to track progress. A challenge was also noted.

Expected Challenge

Based on parental concerns noted during the self-assessment process, the program noted a need to assist the LEA leadership staff in building stronger relationships with families to support their children's continued development.

topic 4: pulling it all together

Table 4.1: Example 1 – ACE Head Start Objectives, Expected Outcomes, and Data/Tools/Methods (Strengthening Transitions to Kindergarten)

Objectives	Expected Outcomes	Data, Tools, or Methods for Tracking Progress
<p>1. ACE Head Start program will develop a process for data sharing between ACE and its LEAs. By the end of year one, identify and obtain signed memorandums of understanding (MOUs) from two LEAs for the purpose of piloting a data sharing process. With these two LEAs, share data about family home language and child progress on language and literacy development in both the family's home language and English.</p> <p>By year five, ACE will share child and family language usage data with all eight LEAs, as detailed in formal signed MOUs with each LEA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child outcomes data, including home and English language skills and abilities data from the program's child assessment system, will be electronically transmitted with parental permission, to each receiving school • Through the school system, the Head Start program will have access to aggregated longitudinal data about Head Start children's continued progress through third grade including kindergarten entry assessment data • Through joint review of data, the school system will have a better understanding of the needs of Head Start children and families as they transition to the schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instrument to monitor data sharing between ACE and schools (as outlined in MOUs) • Longitudinal data received from schools • Reports from school system representatives on their understanding of Head Start children and family needs
<p>2. ACE Head Start program will complete and sign transition plans with all receiving schools. ACE will have signed transition plans with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 percent of its receiving schools by the end of year one • 40 percent by the end of year two • 60 percent by the end of year three • 80 percent by the end of year four • 100 percent by the end of year five 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All children will visit receiving classrooms prior to entering • Families have increased confidence and engagement with the receiving schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed transition plans • Site visit logs • Parent focus group and survey summaries • Reports from kindergarten teachers about the success of the visits
<p>3. ACE Head Start program will strengthen parents' understanding of the importance of their role in supporting their children's transition to school. Head Start will ensure that families know about the language instruction offered by the receiving school. As measured by parents' participation in transition events, ACE will increase each of the following by 20 percent per year:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/family members will be more engaged during kindergarten registration and on-site visits to the school their child will attend • Parents/family members, and in particular families whose primary language is not English, will increasingly cite being satisfied with their child's transition to kindergarten 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindergarten registration and data from site-visit logs • Reports from kindergarten teachers • Parent satisfaction surveys • Results of parent focus group on transition pilot • Results from parent self-report

Table 4.1: Example 1 – ACE Head Start Objectives, Expected Outcomes, and Data/Tools/Methods (Strengthening Transitions to Kindergarten) *Cont'd*

Objectives	Expected Outcomes	Data, Tools, or Methods for Tracking Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of parents who attend kindergarten registration • Number of parents who attend Head Start parent meeting with Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) representatives • Number of parents who accompany their children on site visits to the school their child will attend (data based on sign-in list and information shared by parents with program staff) • Number of parents who utilize library resources over the summer months to sustain children's development and learning from the prior school year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children will show less "summer fadeout" when they enter kindergarten, and they will exhibit fewer challenging behaviors during the first two months of school • Children with special health care needs will be able to attend school, as schools will be better prepared and able to receive them • Parents of children with special health care needs will know who to communicate with and will be able to communicate more frequently with their child's school personnel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of attendance data from receiving schools, including disaggregated data for children with special health care needs • Analysis of parent satisfaction survey, including disaggregated data from parents of children with special health care needs
<p>4. ACE Head Start program will ensure that Head Start children with special health care needs successfully transition to the receiving school(s) as measured by an increase in the percentage of parents making at least one contact with school personnel to discuss their child's individual health needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In year one, parent contact with the receiving school will increase from 35 percent to 55 percent • Parent contact with the receiving school will increase by an additional 10 percent each subsequent year following year one 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase kindergarten registration from the prior year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindergarten registration reports

Remember that this is an example. If your program has a goal related to transition to school, you might write it differently. You are also likely to have different objectives and expected outcomes that are based on your own program's unique strengths and needs.

topic 4: pulling it all together

ACE Head Start program then created action plans for each of the objectives. Table 4.2 provides ACE's action plan for Objective 3: *ACE will strengthen parents' understanding of the importance of their role in supporting their children's transition to school as measured by their participation in transition events.*

Table 4.2: Example 1 – ACE Head Start Action Plan (Strengthening Transitions to Kindergarten)

Action/Strategy	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline	Financial Supports
1. Work with receiving schools to ensure that kindergartens hold registration events at places and times convenient for Head Start parents; ensure that schools translate materials and engage interpreters as needed.	Head Start director	Late fall	Budget for interpreters
2. Co-create a “Kick Off to Kindergarten” brochure and social media campaign for and with parents; provide the brochure in the home languages of all children in the program.	Education manager and parents whose children have transitioned, including some who do not speak English and/or are recent immigrants	Late fall	Work with LEAs to jointly fund the cost of the brochure design, social media campaign, translation, and printing
3. Distribute brochures and social media information to all families whose children are entering kindergarten.	Teachers, family child care providers, and home visitors	Early winter	Budget for supplies and mailing of brochures to families unable to attend events in person
4. During home visits and at parent committee meetings, reinforce with families the importance of their role in helping their child(ren) make a smooth transition to kindergarten. Ensure that staff have conversations in families' home languages about opportunities for family engagement in the new school.	Family engagement staff and home visitors	Winter	Budget for interpreters as needed
5. Provide parents with a packet of materials that includes information in their home language about all health screening and other health-related kindergarten requirements. Also help parents compile their child's kindergarten health records.	Health services staff, family engagement staff, and home visitors	Prior to kindergarten registration events	Work with LEAs to jointly fund the cost of parent informational materials on health-related kindergarten requirements. Budget for program's portion of translation, printing, and purchase of folders.

Table 4.2: Example 1 – ACE Head Start Action Plan (Strengthening Transitions to Kindergarten)
Cont'd

Action/Strategy	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline	Financial Supports
6. Work with parents to initiate a summer “bookbag” project with local libraries. Participate in kindergarten registration events and distribute the book backpacks during these events.	Education manager, family engagement staff, and community partnerships manager	Spring	Work with local libraries to obtain community funding for summer book backpacks
7. Discuss transportation issues and any potential challenges that may occur.	Family engagement staff and home visitors	Late spring	Budget for transportation assistance (e.g., bus tokens)
8. Invite parent association representatives from receiving elementary schools to come to a parent meeting; make sure interpreters are available.	Director and community partnerships manager	Early spring	Budget for interpreters and snacks for meeting
9. Set up visits for transitioning parents and children to visit the child’s elementary school; make sure interpreters are available.	Education managers with teachers and home visitors	Late spring	Budget for interpreters
10. Conduct focus groups with a diverse group of families to discuss the transition process and obtain their feedback.	Family engagement staff	Late spring	Budget for meetings and childcare as needed
11. Review what worked well in the transition-to-kindergarten process and identify any areas for improvement.	Management team with input from all staff	Very late spring	Budget for data management
12. Revise the transition-to-kindergarten procedures and processes as needed.	Management team	Review during ongoing monitoring	Budget for adjustments as needed

topic 4: pulling it all together

Example 2:

School Readiness Goal: English and Spanish Language Acquisition

This example shows how a Head Start program—after it has collected and analyzed birth to 5 school readiness data from multiple years—proceeds to set a new program goal about language acquisition. Its planning process is outlined in this scenario. Table 4.3 delineates the steps the program will take based on its planning and review process.

SCENARIO

The Always Be Conscientious (ABC) Head Start/Early Head Start program with home-based and preschool center-based options, has had its infant/toddler and preschool school readiness goals in place for the past two school years. These goals are aligned with the ELOF and ABC's governing body and Policy Council have approved them. The program has collected and compared child assessment data, adult-child interaction scores (Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) Pre-K) home visitor practices that help parents support their infants' and toddlers' development (Home Visit Rating Scales (HOVRS) scores), performance on kindergarten entrance assessments, and data from other sources to determine progress on the school readiness goals. The program examined progress each quarter and at the end of the year, and it also collected data on trends over time.

During Ongoing Monitoring

The staff reviewed and compared child assessment reports and discovered that infants and toddlers in the home-based program consistently reached age-level scores on the program's ongoing child assessment tool in emerging language and literacy development (both home language and English). However, the preschool children, including those who transitioned from the Early Head Start home-based program, consistently scored below the norm on the vocabulary portion of the school district's kindergarten readiness assessment. ABC's aggregation of last year's data showed that mean scores of preschool children were below typical scores for similar children (e.g., age, socio-economic status, and culture and language background) for all language measures. This was also true for the previous year. While children did make progress on language measures, the majority of children transitioning from Head Start to kindergarten did not reach age-level scores. By reviewing subgroups within the program, the staff could see variability among the classrooms. In a small number of classrooms, children scored at or above age level. The staff determined that they could use the data to make both program-wide and individual classroom adjustments.

During Self-assessment

ABC's self-assessment team reviewed the multiyear school readiness data for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers and disaggregated the school readiness results by subgroups:

- Ages of children
- Classrooms
- Home visitor caseloads
- Experience and educational levels of teachers and home visitors
- Presence of bilingual staff who can support continued development of home language and acquisition of English
- Children in their first year of Head Start
- Children in their second year of Head Start
- Children who transitioned into Head Start from ABC's Early Head Start home-based program versus those who did not
- Children who are DLLs

After reviewing the data and discussing what worked in the preschool classrooms where children had the higher scores, the self-assessment team recommended the following actions.

- Focus ABC's professional development for the upcoming year on language and literacy, with an emphasis on increasing preschool children's vocabularies in their home language and in English.
- Select and implement a supplemental curriculum enhancement to strengthen the language components of teaching and learning.¹
- After assessing intensive coaching needs for all teachers, identify specific classroom teachers who would most benefit from intensive coaching on supporting children's language development. The team also recommended that teachers in the classrooms with consistently higher-scoring children: 1) assist with planning language experiences and supports across all program areas; and 2) engage in peer coaching with other teachers not in need of intensive coaching.
- Offer targeted professional development for home visitors to help them continue to: 1) support families' use of effective language and literacy practices with their infants and toddlers; and 2) encourage families' use of their home language (Spanish) once their children transition to the Head Start program.
- Review Human Resources' system for recruitment and hiring practices of bilingual staff.
- Extend outreach to local colleges who have Spanish-speaking students to volunteer.
- Monitor budget implications for the above.

During Planning

The ABC planning committee accepted the self-assessment team's recommendations and set the following new goal, objective, outcome, and expected challenge.

topic 4: pulling it all together

School Readiness Goal

Children will demonstrate an understanding of, as well as use, a variety of words in English and Spanish to communicate their ideas, feelings, and questions. They will also express knowledge of word categories and relationships among words during play, routines, learning activities, and conversations with others. *Connects to P-LC6 and P-LC7 in the ELOF Language and Communication domain.*

Objective

To strengthen the ability of teachers and parents to improve the vocabulary of enrolled preschool children in their home language (Spanish) and English as measured by improved scores on child assessment measures. Mean scores will improve by 50 percent by the end of the program year.

Expected Outcome

Children will enter kindergarten with age-appropriate receptive and expressive vocabulary in their home language (Spanish) and English.

Expected Challenge

Because LEAs have different kindergarten readiness expectations, it will be important to ensure all kindergarten-eligible children meet the language and literacy readiness expectations of the local schools they will attend.

This program organized and wrote its action plans according to area (e.g., teaching and learning; parent and family engagement; community engagement; health services; and program management) to ensure that staff understood their specific roles and responsibilities in relation to accomplishing this goal. This action plan is included as Table 4.3.



Table 4.3: Example 2 – ABC Head Start Action Plan (English and Spanish Language Acquisition)

Program Actions/Strategies that Support Both Goals and Objectives	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline	Financial Supports	Data, Tools, or Methods for Tracking Progress
Teaching and Learning				
1. Establish a year-long professional development (PD) plan focused on vocabulary integrating English and Spanish in play, routines, and learning activities.	Education manager and coach	August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure T/TA funds to support PD plan, including intensive coaching through TLC Budget for new language curriculum supplement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scores on child assessment measures Child assessments that also measure the growth in home language
2. Provide small-group intensive coaching using Teachers Learning and Collaborating (TLC) materials focused on language-based responsive processes (e.g., 15-minute in-service suites, <i>Language Modeling and Conversations</i> ; Language and Literacy ELOF Effective Practice Guides; Planned Language Approach (PLA) materials; and, when appropriate, the programs and strategies that support children who are DLLs.)	Site managers supervised by new coach	Early fall		
3. Review current curriculum and consider adding a language and literacy enhancement; ensure current curriculum is responsive to children who are DLLs.	Education manager, site manager, coach, teachers	Late fall		
4. Observe classrooms; support staff use of meaningful vocabulary that increases in complexity over time in both Spanish and English.	Coach	Winter/spring		
5. Observe home visitors; support their efforts to encourage families to: 1) use their home language with their infants and toddlers; and 2) continue to speak their home language while their children are transitioning to and in Head Start. HSPPS require home visitors to help parents recognize that bilingualism and biliteracy are strengths.	Home-based supervisor	Fall, winter, spring, summer		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scores on child assessment measures Child assessments that also measure the growth in home language HOVRS scores

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Table 4.3: Example 2 – ABC Head Start Action Plan (English and Spanish Language Acquisition) *Cont'd*

Program Actions/Strategies that Support Both Goals and Objectives	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline	Financial Supports	Data, Tools, or Methods for Tracking Progress
Parent and Family Engagement				
1. Conduct family events focused on the importance of talking with children in the home language; read books and use vocabulary in the home language. Share dialogic reading strategies. Use Importance of Home Language Series (from the PLA) and other culturally and linguistically responsive strategies to develop trainings.	Family support manager	Fall, winter, spring, summer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure supply budget will cover cost of book bags 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track parent participation in each effort • Disaggregated child assessment data for children whose parents participate in each effort • Track any increase in book reading in home language and English, as reported by families
2. Partner with families to create and use “bookbags” to send back and forth between home and Head Start, or to leave with families to use in their homes. These bags include a selection of books that are culturally responsive and are in the home language and English. Refer to resources on the ECLKC website to identify culturally appropriate bilingual books and books in languages other than English. Books in English for infants and toddlers are included when determined appropriate by families and home visitors.	Family support manager, teachers, home-based supervisor, home visitors	Fall		
3. Invite families to tape their favorite books or stories in their home languages for use within programs.	Family support manager and site managers	Late fall		
4. Collect favorite “words of the week” (in English and home languages) from staff and families to use in newsletters and/or to post in classrooms.	Family support manager, site manager, teachers, and home visitors	Winter		

Table 4.3: Example 2 – ABC Head Start Action Plan (English and Spanish Language Acquisition) *Cont'd*

Program Actions/Strategies that Support Both Goals and Objectives	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline	Financial Supports	Data, Tools, or Methods for Tracking Progress
Community Engagement				
1. Develop a partnership with the local library system to increase use of libraries by families and increase visits to the program by children’s librarians. Share resources with libraries on selecting culturally appropriate books in languages other than English.	Head Start director and community engagement manager	Spring	• N/A	• Signed MOU • Parent self-reports • Aggregate: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ with library cards◦ borrowing books◦ participating in events • Library report of numbers of visits to centers • Family reports are tracked to reflect any increase in book reading in home language and English, as appropriate
2. Pilot library initiative at two local libraries and encourage children to check out books in Spanish and English.	Education manager	All year		
Health Services				
1. Coordinate with attendance initiative to make sure children attend school regularly.	Health manager	Fall	• N/A	• Attendance records • Screening results • Disaggregate child assessment data of children most often absent from school • Teachers survey on health vocabulary
2. Provide teachers with age-appropriate, health-related vocabulary in home languages and in English.	Health manager and site managers	Winter		
3. Review results of hearing screenings to make sure that children who did not pass their hearing screening were referred for evaluation and services when indicated.	Health managers and site managers	Late fall		



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Table 4.3: Example 2 – ABC Head Start Action Plan (English and Spanish Language Acquisition) *Cont'd*

Program Actions/Strategies that Support Both Goals and Objectives	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline	Financial Supports	Data, Tools, or Methods for Tracking Progress
Program Management				
1. Recruit and hire coaches with expertise in working with children who are developing one or more languages. Also, when possible, recruit and hire bilingual coaches and other bilingual staff.	Head Start director and governing body	July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek new funding for coaches • Budget for more staff time/ substitutes • Budget for new language and literacy curriculum enhancement and for staff training on the curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated budget • PLA planning document compiled • Disaggregated child assessment data on children who are DLLs with teachers who have bilingual coaches
2. Ensure that teachers selected to assist with planning language experiences and provide peer coaching to teachers receive appropriate support and training on being a peer coach.	Head Start director and education manager	August ongoing		
3. Hire substitute staff to ensure that teachers have time to participate in coaching and to attend other trainings.	Human resource director	August		
4. Report regularly to governing body, Policy Council, and other stakeholders on progress in meeting goals.	Head Start director and education manager			
5. Identify and purchase a new language and literacy curriculum enhancement that is responsive to all children, including children who are DLLs. Train teachers on the curriculum and check fidelity of curriculum implementation.	Head Start director and education manager			
6. Provide training for teachers and families on dialogic reading.	Education manager and consultants			
7. Ensure that management staff and other key personnel participate in the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning's PLA and Practice-Based Coaching trainings.	Director, management team, and site directors			

Example 3:

Comprehensive Health Services: Asthma Management to Promote Regular Attendance

It is essential that Head Start programs implement effective health and safety practices to ensure children are safe at all times. You might identify health and safety practices as a stand-alone goal or as an objective for another program goal, such as general health.

This example shows how a Head Start program sets a health services goal aimed at establishing a comprehensive asthma approach to promote regular attendance and maximize all children's learning opportunities.

SCENARIO

The Healthy Beginnings Head Start/Early Head Start Program is preparing their five-year application. The program operates four centers for infants, toddlers, and preschool children whose families live in two urban communities within their service area. In addition to collecting and aggregating attendance data to determine the monthly average daily attendance rate, the program also disaggregates attendance data by site, classroom, and individual children to identify children who are at risk of missing 10 percent of program days.

Community Assessment Report

During the community assessment, the health manager conducted a health assessment of communities in the program's service area to understand the health needs of children and adults, as well as available resources, gaps in services, and barriers to care. She reviewed multiple sources of health data collected at the local and state levels and found that the prevalence of pediatric asthma in their state was one of the highest in the country. She also conducted interviews with members of the Health Services Advisory Committee, local boards of health, and other key informants. During these discussions, she learned that local health care providers were seeing an increase in the number of children with asthma. This was consistent with the health data she had collected, disaggregated, and analyzed on children with special health care needs enrolled in the program during the last four years. The number of children who received medical treatment for asthma was also trending up. In addition, a multi-year comparison of the grantee's Program Information Report (PIR) revealed that the percentage of children with asthma in their program was higher than the national percentage. One challenge she identified was the lack of any local asthma organization that program families could attend; the closest one was an hour and a half away.

During Ongoing Monitoring and Continuous Program Improvement

The health manager disaggregated and analyzed attendance data for children with asthma and other special health care needs. She noted that 90 percent of children with asthma were absent frequently. They were in the group of children identified as being at risk of missing 10 percent of program days.

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During the Annual Self-assessment

The health manager talked with teachers who had children with asthma in their classrooms. Teachers reported feeling comfortable implementing individual healthcare plans, but not confident about identifying triggers in their classrooms that might aggravate a child's asthma.

The health manager also talked with the families of children with asthma. Many families did not fully understand asthma and wanted more information about their child's health condition. Several families with limited English proficiency said they would like information in their home language.

The health manager shared this information with members of the Health Services Advisory Committee. The committee in turn suggested several strategies that included connecting the program to a local business that had previously funded community health initiatives.

During Planning

After further discussion with the self-assessment team and members of the Policy Council and governing body, the program developed the following health program goal, outcome and expected challenge for their five-year project period.

Program Goal

The Healthy Beginnings Head Start Program will develop a comprehensive asthma approach to maximize all children's learning opportunities and promote their regular attendance in program activities.

Expected Outcome

Children with asthma will increase the number of days they participate in program activities.

Expected Challenge

Children with asthma have higher rates of absenteeism.

As shown in Table 4.4, the planning team developed three SMART objectives and corresponding expected outcomes for their goal. They also decided on the data sources the program would use to track progress.

Table 4.4: Example 3 – Healthy Beginnings Objectives, Expected Outcomes, and Data/Tools/Methods (Asthma Management to Promote Regular Attendance)

Objective	Expected Outcomes	Data, Tools, or Methods for Tracking Progress
<p>1. Develop an asthma policy and related procedures that include staff training on asthma, how to implement an Asthma-Friendly Child Care Checklist in all classrooms, and how to complete Child Enrollment/Attendance/Symptom Records for children with asthma.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop policy within three months. • Within six months, train education staff in all four centers on the new policy and how to implement the checklist and recordkeeping procedure. • By the end of year two and in each subsequent year, implement the checklist on a biannual basis in 100 percent of classrooms in the centers and complete Enrollment/Attendance/Symptom Records for children with asthma. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers will maintain asthma-friendly classrooms that minimize children's exposure to asthma triggers. • The program will use Child Enrollment/Attendance/Symptom Records to track attendance data and the reason for missed days. • Education and facility managers will use checklist data to make facility improvements as needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program policy and procedures • Checklists • Training logs • Attendance data and Child Enrollment/Attendance/Symptom Records for children with asthma
<p>2. Develop a two-year local health initiative with the ABC Healthy Living Company to: 1) implement an individualized asthma education home visiting program for families with children with asthma; and 2) mentor family services staff to sustain the program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within three months, develop a written agreement and budget for the initiative. • Within six months, hire an asthma educator. • By the end of year one, offer an educational home visit to all program families. • Continue to provide educational home visits in year two, and train and mentor selected staff on how to conduct an educational home visit by the end of year two. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families will receive educational materials including an Asthma-Friendly Home Checklist for Families in English and Spanish and other languages as needed. • Families will have a better understanding of their child's health condition and management strategies. • Program staff will build their capacity to provide asthma education to families on an ongoing basis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed agreement and funding received • Case management notes • Checklists • Staff training logs • Attendance data and Child Enrollment/Attendance/Symptom Records for children with asthma
<p>3. Work with the local hospital and the regional chapter of the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America to establish a local support group to offer asthma education and support to program families and other members of the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish the local support group within four months. • Hold the first meeting within six months. • Hold quarterly meetings in years two-five and invite all program families who have children with asthma to attend. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program families and the community will benefit from a local collaboration to address community health concerns. • Program families will have access to educational resources and support to help them manage their child's asthma. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting agendas • Family surveys • Attendance data and Child Enrollment/Attendance/Symptom Records for children with asthma

topic 4: pulling it all together

The Healthy Beginnings Head Start Program then wrote a detailed action plan for each of their three SMART objectives. The action plan for Objective 2 is included in Table 4.5.

Objective 2

The Healthy Beginnings Head Start Program will develop a two-year local health initiative with the ABC Healthy Living Company to: 1) implement an individualized asthma education home visiting program for families with children with asthma; and 2) mentor family services staff to sustain the program.

Table 4.5. Example 3 – Healthy Beginnings Action Plan for Objective 2 (Asthma Management to Promote Regular Attendance)

Program Action Steps/Strategies	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline	Financial Supports
1. Develop a written agreement with the ABC Healthy Living Company to fund a two-year local health initiative to provide educational support to Head Start program families who have children with asthma.	Head Start director and health manager	Within three months	Budget for the health initiative
2. Hire an asthma educator to conduct home visits with program families.	Health manager and Policy Council parents	Within six months	
3. Select educational materials and translate them into the languages spoken by program families as needed.	Health manager and asthma educator	Within nine months	Budget for materials and translations
4. Conduct home visits.	Asthma educator	By the end of year one	
5. Train family service staff on educational materials.	Asthma educator, health manager, and family service staff	Year two, first quarter	
6. Conduct joint home visits with family service workers to mentor staff, ensure they know how to use the educational materials appropriately, and coordinate with the health manager.	Asthma educator, health manager, and family service staff	Year two, second quarter	
7. Mentor interested staff to build their capacity to provide asthma education and support.	Asthma educator, health manager, and family service staff	Year two, third and fourth quarters	
8. Continue to offer educational home visits.	Family service staff and health manager	Years three to five	Budget for materials

Example 4:

Parent, Family, and Community Engagement: PFCE / Community Job Losses

SCENARIO

Community Assessment and Ongoing Community Engagement

In their annual update of their community assessment, All of Us Together, Inc. learned that two of the largest employers in the community will be closing. This may affect more than half the families in the program. Knowing this will have different impacts on families as they deal with stresses related to unemployment, staff wanted to know, “How can we make a positive difference for our families during this time of change?” A planning committee involving staff, members of the governing body, family members, and community partners was formed. The committee developed and asked all enrolled families to complete a survey about family well-being. The staff aggregated data from the survey and found that families were already feeling a high level of anxiety about the impending layoffs, including wanting to know how to best support their children.

Planning Update

The collected program data assisted staff in looking at ways they could support parents to connect with community resources for alleviating anxiety and finding other options for job opportunities throughout the five-year project period.

During Ongoing Monitoring and Continuous Program Improvement

Staff compared the new information about family well-being to other previously reviewed sources to develop the following goal, objectives, expected outcomes, data for tracking progress, expected challenges, and action plan.

Program Goal

All of Us Together will partner with families and work with community partners to support families’ progress toward improved well-being and stronger financial stability. We will pay special attention to the families impacted by the job loss and the changes that these families will experience over the next two to five years as a result of the job loss.

This goal is tied to the Family Well-Being Family Engagement Outcome of the PFCE Framework.

- **Family well-being:** Families are safe, healthy, have opportunities for educational advancement and economic mobility, and have access to physical and mental health services, housing and food assistance, and other family support services.

Expected Challenges

Special effort may be required to motivate parents to participate and stay engaged in the job cross-training and apprenticeships. Parent may likewise require support to be ready to fill positions as they become available.

topic 4: pulling it all together

Table 4.6. Example 4 – All of Us Together, Inc. Objectives, Expected Outcomes, and Data/Tools/Methods (PFCE/Community Job Losses)

Objective and Connection to the PFCE Framework	Expected Outcomes	Data, Tools, or Methods for Tracking Progress
<p>1. Develop MOUs with no fewer than five key community partners that have the capacity to offer job cross-training and apprenticeships by the end of year one of the five-year project period.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program impact areas: community partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents who experience job loss will re-enter the workforce resulting in families being more financially stable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signed MOU agreements Meeting agendas and minutes Parent interviews and focus groups PIR data on employment
<p>2. Within one month of the start of the program year and continuing throughout the program year, ensure that 100 percent of parents have information about support services available in the community (including mental health counseling, treatment for substance use, and job training) to better cope with job loss.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program foundation: continuous program improvement Program impact areas: family partnerships, community partnerships Outcomes: family well-being, connection to peers and community, parents as learners, parents in transition, parents as advocates and leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families will access community-based support services that provide them with increased stability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent meeting attendance, agendas, and minutes Copies of flyers and brochures distributed via parent meetings and through “cubby conversations” Job and health fair promotional material Family pre and post satisfaction survey Case management notes Parent interviews and focus groups PIR data on provided or referred community services
<p>3. Within one month of the start of the program year and continuing throughout the program year, ensure that 100 percent of classroom, family services, and enrollment staff know about resources available in the community to help support families experiencing these stressors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program impact areas: family partnerships, community partnerships Outcomes: family well-being, connection to peers and community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program staff and community-based organizations will increase their understanding of the needs of families that experience job loss. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff training sign-in sheets, agendas, and notes Program training calendar Coaching and reflective supervision agendas or outlines Professional development plans and files Community partner surveys
<p>4. By year two of the five-year project period, deliver training in mental health consultation, reflective practice, and supervision to 100 percent of classroom, family services, and enrollment staff to ensure that staff have a better understanding of how job loss and job transition influence stress and can lead to health issues such as depression and anxiety as well as substance use disorders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program foundations: professional development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents who are impacted by mental health issues related to job loss will receive intervention services that will reduce the negative impact of the job loss. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff training sign-in sheets, agendas, and notes Program Training Calendar Coaching and reflective supervision agendas or outlines Professional development plans and files Family pre and post satisfaction surveys Parent interviews

Table 4.7. Example 4 – All of Us Together Action Plan (PFCE/Community Job Losses)

Action/Strategy	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline	Financial Supports
1. Facilitate a working group (inclusive of community organizations) to create a standardized MOU template that is specific to job training, including apprenticeships.	Head Start operations manager	Immediately—one month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of space for meeting • Meeting materials • Food/coffee estimated at \$250
2. Meet with community college, State Department of Labor, and other workforce development entities to obtain signed MOUs.	Head Start director	Months two to three and ongoing thereafter	Travel costs estimated at \$100
3. Place a resource list on our agency website of support services available in the community. Update no less than quarterly.	Family services manager and I/T manager	Months one to six and ongoing thereafter	Funds for increased website capacity estimated at \$1,500
4. Create a brochure listing support services available in the community.	Management team	Month two and ongoing thereafter	Translation services, printing estimated at \$5,000
5. Distribute a resources brochure to each enrolled family.	Family services staff	Month two and ongoing thereafter	Translation costs \$800
6. Distribute resources brochure to each family applying for services.	ERSEA staff	Month two and ongoing thereafter	
7. Deliver training in mental health consultation, reflective practice, and supervision.	Management team	Annually during pre-service, and as part of new employee orientation	Trainers, materials, classroom substitutes, and training space rental estimated at \$500
8. Research funding sources and implement a system to support short-term financial needs of families experiencing job loss.	Head Start director	Year two and ongoing thereafter	Costs for meetings, developing materials, staff training estimated at \$500

Engaging families and key stakeholders in the goals-setting process supported the implementation of the action plan by ensuring shared responsibility and support throughout the process. As part of ongoing communication with the Regional Office, the program also engaged in regular discussions about the program's progress toward this and other program goals. The program stayed in close contact with its training and technical assistance provider to discuss its ongoing planning and to identify or access training and resources to implement its plan to support family well-being.

topic 4: pulling it all together



How will these examples inform your program goals, action plans, and tracking procedures?

While engaging with families and community partners to achieve its goal, the program continues to be intentional about documenting all activities put in place (measure of efforts) and capturing the changes observed and reported by parents (measure of effect) while tracking progress, reviewing steps, making needed improvements, and monitoring progress toward supporting the well-being of families in this time of transition. ■



Topic 4 describes how four typical programs integrate goals, expected outcomes, and action plans into their planning process. The first example focuses on strengthening children's transitions to kindergarten. The second outlines an initiative that promotes language and literacy development for preschool children. The third uses a health-related goal to maximize children's learning opportunities. The fourth explores ways that programs partner with families to make progress toward family well-being. As you read these planning scenarios, did you think about your own program? Of course, the specifics differ, but there are lessons to be learned from someone else's experience.

Foundations for Excellence: A Guide for Five-Year Planning and Continuous Improvement, 2nd Edition offers us a shared vocabulary and toolbox of strategies that will support your program's strategic planning. Build on these ideas with other stakeholders in your program and your community partners. Through communication and collaboration we benefit from diverse points of view and together we realize our shared mission of building responsive, empowering programs for children and their families.

Appendices

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Head Start and Data-Informed Decision-Making

“What gets measured... gets managed [improved].
— Peter Drucker

“Not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts can be counted.
— Albert Einstein

Sound planning using data-informed decisions is the bedrock of effective program operations and continuous program improvement.

HSPPS Achieving program goals, 45 CFR § 1302.102, requires programs to establish program goals for the delivery of program services that are responsive to community needs, along with measurable objectives to assess progress towards goals. Collecting and analyzing program data is a critical part of this process. Ultimately, it allows programs to track progress to determine how well programs are fulfilling their commitments to provide quality services to children and families from all backgrounds.

Program data is also essential for demonstrating progress on goals, effectiveness of services, and whether programs are complying with HSPPS and grantee performance requirements. As stipulated in each grantee's baseline Head Start grant application, strategic long-term goals, measurable objectives, and projected outcomes are the basis for the program design approach.

The common refrain, “data rich but information poor,” speaks to a truth for many organizations that collect program data but do not use it in a meaningful way. The authors of *Managing Information Strategically* make this critical distinction between data and information:¹

“Information is not just data collected. Rather it is data collected, organized, ordered, and imbued with meaning and context.”

“Without data you are just another person with an opinion.
— W. Edwards Deming

“Data is not just adding things to your plate. Data is about making sure you have the right things on your plate.
— Unknown

In order for data to become useful to a decision-maker, it must be presented as information that he or she can relate to and act upon. This is exactly why well-presented data—meaning data that clearly aligns with a program's goals and provides a meaningful road map toward progress—is a critical feature of the grant application.

Responding to the HSPPS, Head Start programs have moved beyond simple data collection and are now analyzing, comparing, and using data-informed discoveries to make sound decisions for their programs. Data collection is most effective and useful when:

Appendix A

- 1) Programs collect and analyze data to answer critical questions
- 2) Data turnaround is fast
- 3) Information is presented on an ongoing basis so stakeholders can respond in real time to address emerging issues

By following these three guidelines, data analyses will not only be richer but programs will also be able to use what they learn from the data to answer critical questions, set strategic directions, devise systemic solutions, and continually improve services to children and families.

Data collection is so much more than meeting a reporting requirement. Indeed, good use of data can enhance a program's mission. When staff are able to clearly visualize potential program results and their role in bringing about those results, they are more enthusiastic about analyzing data and tracking agency progress.² Likewise, when data analyses and performance measures lead to successful results, staff also become more vigilant and intentional about data collection. As an added benefit, understanding how their work affects children, families, and their community not only increases staff's passion and energy for the work, but it also leads to more cohesive and effective teamwork.

Peter Drucker, often credited as the father of management theory, described two functions of data:³

- 1) To manage operations
- 2) To guide decisions

Head Start programs use data in both of these ways. Much of the data collected by Head Start programs relates to operations. Programs collect, aggregate, compare and monitor operational data (e.g., attendance or staff turnover) on an ongoing basis to ensure that service delivery is timely, efficient, and effective. Many Head Start programs use their information management systems to track and report data on operations.

Head Start programs are becoming increasingly adept at using data to track progress towards goals and using analytic skills to inform decision-making.

The Head Start planning cycle helps programs use data collection to support integrated, systematic planning. As programs implement their management systems, they should consider how to use data to both inform current work and, through the grant application, to develop and describe a program's future work.

“ A strategy is multi-dimensional planning, multi-team collaboration, and multi-tasking action.
— Pearl Zhu

“ Obstacles, of course, are developmentally necessary: they teach...strategy, patience, critical thinking, resilience and resourcefulness.
— Naomi Wolf

“ Anticipating problems and figuring out how to solve them is, actually, the opposite of worrying: it's productive.
— Chris Hadfield

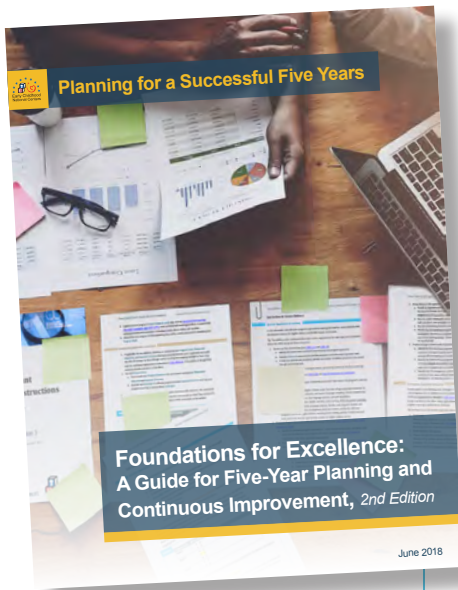
“ Anticipate the difficult by measuring the easy.
— Lao Tzu

¹ McGee, J. V., Prusak, L., & Pyburn, P. J. (1993). *Managing Information Strategically: Increase Your Company's Competitiveness and Efficiency by Using Information as a Strategic Tool*. New York: Wiley.

² Schwartz, T., & Porath, C. (2014, May 30). "Why You Hate Work," *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/01/opinion/sunday/why-you-hate-work.html>. Article includes references to a study which found that employees were more likely to stay with their organizations when they derived meaning and significance from their work.

³ Drucker, Peter (2004, June 21). Peter Drucker on Making Decisions, *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/peter-drucker-on-making-decisions>.

Tips for Using Foundations for Excellence, 2nd Edition



How can programs use the Foundations for Excellence: A Guide for Five-Year Planning and Continuous Improvement, 2nd Edition?

Foundations for Excellence, 2nd Edition highlights how sound planning practices support effective Head Start programs and shows programs what Head Start expects from strategic planning. Study each topic with an eye to how it can support your program throughout the planning process. Here are some ideas for making the most of this guide. Use them to spark discussion, establish a shared understanding of key concepts, and identify ideas that need further exploration.

- **Support the development of both the baseline and continuing Head Start grant applications.** As a companion to the Head Start Grant Application Instructions, Foundations for Excellence, 2nd Edition supports programs in writing successful grant applications. Topic 1 highlights the vocabulary you will need to use. Topic 4 models how to use it. Throughout this guide there are tips and strategies for implementing systems thinking and organizational change.
- **Evaluate and measure current program goals and objectives.** Topic 1, Nuts and Bolts of Strategic Planning, and Topic 3, Achieving Program Goals that Support Child and Family Outcomes, highlight key vocabulary and provide useful ideas for evaluating program goals, measurable objectives, and action plans. Focus especially on writing SMART objectives. Note in particular the “M” in SMART, which stands for “measurable.” The grant application instructions require programs to report on their progress in each continuation application, and you can only point to progress on something you’ve measured.
- **Set program goals, write objectives and outcomes, and develop action plans.** Topic 3 will help program staff recognize the relationship between goals and objectives. It describes how to keep goals alive and how program goals, including school readiness goals, intersect to ensure comprehensive, high-quality services. Topic 4, Pulling it All Together, provides samples of program goals and measurable objectives and further connects the goals and objectives to an action plan. Both topics model how programs can use the planning forms provided in the appendices.

Appendix B

- **Plan and conduct leadership training related to oversight roles of the governing body/Tribal Council and Policy Council.**

HSPPS 45 CFR §§ 1301 and 1302 outline the responsibilities of Head Start program leadership (e.g., governing body/Tribal Council, Policy Council and key management staff) in overseeing and participating in the program planning process. Topics 1 and 2 unpack these concepts and discuss the key responsibilities around the program planning cycle. This will support leadership as they develop, plan, and evaluate their programs during the five-year project period. Discuss this guide with your leadership team to arrive at a shared understanding of the information and how best to proceed.

- **Discuss community assessment results with your program's management team.** Topic 2, Five-Year Planning in Head Start, describes how to use strategic planning tools, such as the community assessment, to envision a desired future. Topic 4 in turn models how to integrate program goals, objectives, and expected outcomes to address real-world issues. Together, these topics can help you develop and use a responsive community assessment.

- **Evaluate your strategic planning process.** Topic 2 supports programs as they consider ways to refresh their strategic planning process. In addition to describing key elements in the strategic planning process, it also highlights ways to rally stakeholder consensus as programs establish long-term goals.

In using this guide, consider both “effort” and “effect.” Identify the ways that you will measure progress towards achieving your program goals, objectives, and outcomes. In addition to collecting data that shows how much your program does and how frequently it does it (measures of effort), think about measures of changes in knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors (measures of effect). Measures of effect can help you understand the positive difference you are making for children and families.



Glossary of Program Planning Terms

Terms and Definitions

Action Plan: A defined set of steps that outline what a program will do to meet its goals and objectives; a description of the steps, services, and other actions needed to accomplish goal(s). An action plan often includes measures of progress to help a program know what difference it is making; it includes what will be done, who is responsible, and the timeline for completion.

Action Steps: Individual steps that outline what a program will do to accomplish its goals and objectives.

Baseline Data: An initial collection of information that can be used for comparative purposes. Baseline data can be used as a starting point to understand any changes that happen over time.

Challenge: Information describing obstacles to achieving program goals and objectives. When forecasting an anticipated barrier to achieving the goals and objectives “expected” challenge is used. Typically identified in the baseline application.

Data: Facts or information used to calculate, analyze, plan, or report something.

Effect: “Measures of effect” determines changes in knowledge, attitude, or behavior as a result of the activity. They track whether a program’s activities have made a difference.

Effort: “Measures of effort” count what and how much a program provides. They describe whether and to what extent activities were carried out as planned.

Evidence: Facts, information, documentation, or examples given to support an assertion.

Goals: Broad, aspirational statements that describe what the program seeks to accomplish. In Head Start, program goals may include the provision of educational, health, nutritional, and family and community engagement program services.

Appendix C

Impact: The influence or effect. This term is often used to signify the findings from an experimental or quasi-experimental research study. Impact refers to how the program, children, families, and/or community changed over the five-year project period as a result of what the program did.

Objectives: Activities to be completed to achieve a goal. They should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely (SMART). They are achievable in the short term.

Outcome: Something that happened as a result of an activity or a process; the actual results achieved each year. When referencing a result that is hoped to happen in the future, the term “expected” outcome is used. Typically identified in the baseline application.

Progress: Forward movement toward the achievement of goals, objectives, and expected outcomes.

School Readiness Goals: The expectations of children’s status and progress across domains of language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge, approaches to learning, physical well-being and motor development, and social and emotional development that will improve their readiness for kindergarten.

Strategic Long-Term Goals: Look to the future and reflect what a program values and wants to accomplish. Strategic long-term goals are profound and require a significant amount of time to achieve.

Head Start Program Performance Standards References

Program Management and Quality Improvement

Management system, 45 CFR § 1302.101

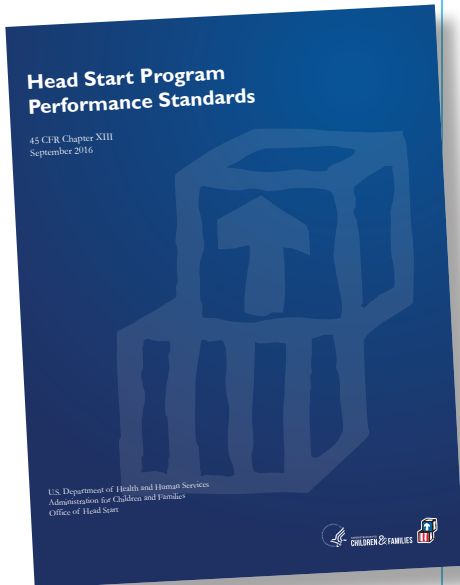
(b) Coordinated approaches. At the beginning of each program year, and on an ongoing basis throughout the year, a program must design and implement program-wide coordinated approaches that ensure:

- (1) The training and professional development system, as described in § 1302.92, effectively supports the delivery and continuous improvement of high-quality services;
- (2) The full and effective participation of children who are dual language learners and their families;
- (3) The full and effective participation of all children with disabilities, including but not limited to children eligible for services under IDEA, by providing services with appropriate facilities, program materials, curriculum, instruction, staffing, supervision, and partnerships, at a minimum, consistent with section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act; and,
- (4) The management of program data to effectively support the availability, usability, integrity, and security of data. A program must establish procedures on data management, and have them approved by the governing body and policy council, in areas such as quality of data and effective use and sharing of data, while protecting the privacy of child records in accordance with subpart C of part 1303 of this chapter and applicable federal, state, local, and tribal laws.

Achieving program goals, 45 CFR § 1302.102

(a) Establishing program goals. A program, in collaboration with the governing body and policy council, must establish goals and measurable objectives that include:

- (1) Strategic long-term goals for ensuring programs are and remain responsive to community needs as identified in their community assessment as described in subpart A of this part;
- (2) Goals for the provision of educational, health, nutritional, and family and community engagement program services as described in the program performance standards to further promote the school readiness of enrolled children;



Appendix D

(3) School readiness goals that are aligned with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five, state and tribal early learning standards, as appropriate, and requirements and expectations of schools Head Start children will attend, per the requirements of subpart B of part 1304 of this part; and,

(4) Effective health and safety practices to ensure children are safe at all times, per the requirements in §§ 1302.47, 1302.90(b) and (c), 1302.92(c)(1), and 1302.94 and 1303 subpart F, of this chapter.

(b) Monitoring program performance. (1) Ongoing compliance oversight and correction. In order to ensure effective ongoing oversight and correction, a program must establish and implement a system of ongoing oversight that ensures effective implementation of the program performance standards, including ensuring child safety, and other applicable federal regulations as described in this part, and must:

(i) Collect and use data to inform this process;

(ii) Correct quality and compliance issues immediately, or as quickly as possible;

(iii) Work with the governing body and the policy council to address issues during the ongoing oversight and correction process and during federal oversight; and,

(iv) Implement procedures that prevent recurrence of previous quality and compliance issues, including previously identified deficiencies, safety incidents, and audit findings.

(2) Ongoing assessment of program goals. A program must effectively oversee progress towards program goals on an ongoing basis and annually must:

(i) Conduct a self-assessment that uses program data including aggregated child assessment data, and professional development and parent and family engagement data as appropriate, to evaluate the program's progress towards meeting goals established under paragraph (a) of this section, compliance with program performance standards throughout the program year, and the effectiveness of the professional development and family engagement systems in promoting school readiness;

(ii) Communicate and collaborate with the governing body and policy council, program staff, and parents of enrolled children when conducting the annual self-assessment; and,

(iii) Submit findings of the self-assessment, including information listed in paragraph (b)(2)(i) of this section to the responsible HHS official.

(c) Using data for continuous improvement. (1) A program must implement a process for using data to identify program strengths and needs, develop and implement plans that address program needs, and continually evaluate compliance with program performance standards and progress towards achieving program goals described in paragraph (a) of this section.

(2) This process must:

(i) Ensure data is aggregated, analyzed and compared in such a way to assist agencies in identifying risks and informing strategies for continuous improvement in all program service areas;

(ii) Ensure child-level assessment data is aggregated and analyzed at least three times a year, including for sub-groups, such as dual language learners and children with disabilities, as appropriate, except in programs operating fewer than 90 days, and used with other program data

described in paragraph (c)(2)(iv) of this section to direct continuous improvement related to curriculum choice and implementation, teaching practices, professional development, program design and other program decisions, including changing or targeting scope of services; and,

(iii) For programs operating fewer than 90 days, ensures child assessment data is aggregated and analyzed at least twice during the program operating period, including for subgroups, such as dual language learners and children with disabilities, as appropriate, and used with other program data described in paragraph (c)(2)(iv) of this section to direct continuous improvement related to curriculum choice and implementation, teaching practices, professional development, program design and other program decisions, including changing or targeting scope of services;

(iv) Use information from ongoing monitoring and the annual self-assessment, and program data on teaching practice, staffing and professional development, child-level assessments, family needs assessments, and comprehensive services, to identify program needs, and develop and implement plans for program improvement; and,

(v) Use program improvement plans as needed to either strengthen or adjust content and strategies for professional development, change program scope and services, refine school readiness and other program goals, and adapt strategies to better address the needs of sub-groups

Education and Child Development Program Services

Purpose, 45 CFR § 1302.30

All programs must provide high-quality early education and child development services, including for children with disabilities, that promote children's cognitive, social, and emotional growth for later success in school. A center-based or family child care program must embed responsive and effective teacher-child interactions. A home-based program must promote secure parent-child relationships and help parents provide high-quality early learning experiences. All programs must implement a research-based curriculum, and screening and assessment procedures that support individualization and growth in the areas of development described in the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five and support family engagement in children's learning and development. A program must deliver developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate learning experiences in language, literacy, mathematics, social and emotional functioning, approaches to learning, science, physical skills, and creative arts. To deliver such high-quality early education and child development services, a center-based or family child care program must implement, at a minimum, the elements contained in §§ 1302.31 through 1302.34, and a home-based program must implement, at a minimum, the elements in §§ 1302.33 and 1302.35.

Education and Child Development Program Services

Parent and family engagement in education and child development services, 45 CFR § 1302.34

(a) Purpose. Center-based and family child care programs must structure education and child development services to recognize parents' roles as children's lifelong educators, and to encourage parents to engage in their child's education.

Appendix D

(b) Engaging parents and family members. A program must offer opportunities for parents and family members to be involved in the program's education services and implement policies to ensure:

- (1) The program's settings are open to parents during all program hours;
- (2) Teachers regularly communicate with parents to ensure they are well-informed about their child's routines, activities, and behavior;
- (3) Teachers hold parent conferences, as needed, but no less than two times per program year, to enhance the knowledge and understanding of both staff and parents of the child's education and developmental progress and activities in the program;
- (4) Parents have the opportunity to learn about and to provide feedback on selected curricula and instructional materials used in the program;
- (5) Parents and family members have opportunities to volunteer in the class and during group activities;
- (6) Teachers inform parents, about the purposes of and the results from screenings and assessments and discuss their child's progress;
- (7) Teachers, except those described in paragraph (b)(8) of this section, conduct at least two home visits per program year for each family, including one before the program year begins, if feasible, to engage the parents in the child's learning and development, except that such visits may take place at a program site or another safe location that affords privacy at the parent's request, or if a visit to the home presents significant safety hazards for staff; and,
- (8) Teachers that serve migrant or seasonal families make every effort to conduct home visits to engage the family in the child's learning and development.

Federal Administrative Procedures

Basis for determining whether a Head Start agency will be subject to an open competition, 45 CFR § 1304.11

(b) An agency has been determined by the responsible HHS official based on a review conducted under section 641A(c)(1)(A), (C), or (D) of the Act during the relevant time period covered by the responsible HHS official's review under § 1304.15 not to have:

- (1) After December 9, 2011, established program goals for improving the school readiness of children participating in its program in accordance with the requirements of section 641A(g)(2) of the Act and demonstrated that such goals:
 - (i) Appropriately reflect the ages of children, birth to five, participating in the program;
 - (ii) Align with the Birth to Five Head Start Child Outcomes Framework, state early learning guidelines, and the requirements and expectations of the schools, to the extent that they apply to the ages of children, birth to five, participating in the program and at a minimum address the domains of language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge, approaches toward learning, physical well-being and motor development, and social and emotional development;
 - (iii) Were established in consultation with the parents of children participating in the program.

Family and Community Engagement Program Services

Family engagement, 45 CFR § 1302.50

(a) Purpose. A program must integrate parent and family engagement strategies into all systems and program services to support family well-being and promote children's learning and development. Programs are encouraged to develop innovative two-generation approaches that address prevalent needs of families across their program that may leverage community partnerships or other funding sources.

(b) Family engagement approach. A program must:

- (1) Recognize parents as their children's primary teachers and nurturers and implement intentional strategies to engage parents in their children's learning and development and support parent-child relationships, including specific strategies for father engagement;
- (2) Develop relationships with parents and structure services to encourage trust and respectful, ongoing two-way communication between staff and parents to create welcoming program environments that incorporate the unique cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds of families in the program and community;
- (3) Collaborate with families in a family partnership process that identifies needs, interests, strengths, goals, and services and resources that support family well-being, including family safety, health, and economic stability;
- (4) Provide parents with opportunities to participate in the program as employees or volunteers;
- (5) Conduct family engagement services in the family's preferred language, or through an interpreter, to the extent possible, and ensure families have the opportunity to share personal information in an environment in which they feel safe; and,
- (6) Implement procedures for teachers, home visitors, and family support staff to share information with each other, as appropriate and consistent with the requirements in part 1303 subpart C, of this chapter; FERPA; or IDEA, to ensure coordinated family engagement strategies with children and families in the classroom, home, and community.

Sample Tools and Templates

Programs write their five-year plans and action plans in different ways. Topic 4 offers examples of what a program's goals, objectives, expected outcomes, and plans could look like based on the data that the program collects through its community and self-assessments. The sample forms that follow may be helpful as you write your own plans. Writing measurable objectives and expected outcomes and considering the data to collect to understand your progress will serve you well in completing your baseline and continuation applications for the five-year project period.


Action Plan

Program Goal:

Objective:

Expected Outcome(s):

Expected Challenge(s):



Early Childhood
National Center

Action/Strategy	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline	Financial Supports
1)			
2)			

Action Plan

Program Goal:

Objective:

Action Plan

Program Goal:

.....

Objective:


.....

Expected Outcome(s):

.....

Expected Challenge(s):

.....



Early Childhood
National Centers

Program Actions/Strategies that Support BOTH Goals AND Objectives	Who	Timeline	Financial Supports	Data, Tools, or Methods for Tracking Progress
Teaching and Learning				

Action Plan



Program Goal:

Objective No. ____:

Expected Outcome(s):

Expected Challenge(s):

Action/Strategy	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline	Financial Supports
1)			
2)			

Action Plan (Cont'd)

Action/Strategy	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline	Financial Supports
3)			
4)			
5)			

Action Plan



Program Goal:

Objective No. ____:

Expected Outcome(s):

Expected Challenge(s):

Program Actions/Strategies that Support Both Goals and Objectives	Who	Timeline	Financial Supports	Data, Tools, or Methods for Tracking Progress
Teaching and Learning				

Action Plan (Cont'd)



Program Actions/Strategies that Support Both Goals and Objectives	Who	Timeline	Financial Supports	Data, Tools, or Methods for Tracking Progress
Parent and Family Engagement				

Action Plan (cont'd)

Program Actions/Strategies that Support Both Goals and Objectives	Who	Timeline	Financial Supports	Data, Tools, or Methods for Tracking Progress
Community Engagement				

Action Plan (Cont'd)

Program Actions/Strategies that Support Both Goals and Objectives	Who	Timeline	Financial Supports	Data, Tools, or Methods for Tracking Progress
Health Services				

Action Plan (Cont'd)



Program Actions/Strategies that Support Both Goals and Objectives	Who	Timeline	Financial Supports	Data, Tools, or Methods for Tracking Progress
Program Management				

Resources

ECLKC website at <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/> offers a variety of resources to support and build on the learning in Foundations for Excellence: A Guide for Five-Year Planning and Continuous Improvement, 2nd Edition. Below are the resources referenced throughout these topics. Review the offerings on the ECLKC for additional resources to meet your individual needs.

- **Building Partnerships: Guide to Developing Relationships with Families**
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-engagement/developing-relationships-families/building-partnerships-guide-developing>
Explore the role that Positive Goal-Oriented Relationships play in effective PFCE. This guide offers definitions, tools, and guides for reflective practice and supervision.
- **The Family Partnership Process: Engaging and Goal-Setting with Families**
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/publication/family-partnership-process-engaging-goal-setting-families>
Strong, healthy families give their children the best chance at success in school and in life. The Family Goal-Setting Guide explores how strong partnerships can positively influence the goals families set in the Family Partnership Process.
- **Five Steps to Community Assessment: A Workbook for Head Start and Early Head Start Programs Serving Hispanic and Other Emerging Populations**
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/program-planning/article/five-steps-community-assessment-workbook-head-start-early-head-start>
In this workbook, find a five-step community assessment process. Use it to help programs identify new or under-served populations in the service area, assess their needs, and identify available resources.
- **Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF)**
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/head-start-early-learning-outcomes-framework>
The ELOF presents five areas of early learning, referred to as central domains. The Framework is designed to show the continuum of learning for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. It is grounded in comprehensive research around what young children should know and be able to do during their early years.
- **Head Start Management Systems Wheel**
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/organizational-leadership/article/management-systems>
The Head Start Management Systems Wheel was developed to support Head Start programs in systems thinking. Learn more about the 12 program management, planning, and oversight systems. Find out how these systems are critical to high-quality service delivery.
- **Management Matters: Head Start Program Planning Cycle**
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/organizational-leadership/management-matters/head-start-program-planning-cycle>
View this narrated presentation to learn about the program planning cycle's step-by-step process. Programs should consider this process as they plan and implement responsive services.
- **Parent, Family, Community, Engagement (PFCE) Interactive Framework**
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/pfce-interactive-framework>
The PFCE Framework is designed to help Head Start programs achieve outcomes that lead to positive and enduring change for children and families. Use the interactive Framework to find research, resources, and regulations related to program foundations, program impact areas, family engagement outcomes, and child outcomes.

Endnotes and Sources

Topic 1

- ¹ Throughout this document, the term “Head Start” refers to both Head Start and Early Head Start programs and services for children and families.
- ² FranklinCovey. Goals—4 disciplines of execution, *YouTube*, 2 Mar. 2012, www.youtube.com/watch?v=vQnOMY98fGg.
- ³ Marquardt, M. J. (2014). *Leading with questions: How leaders find the right solutions by knowing what to ask*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- ⁴ Lynch, Pat (2011). Three key elements for addressing organizational challenges effectively. *Business Alignment Strategies, Inc.* Retrieved from <http://www.businessalignmentstrategies.com/articles/three-key-elements-for-addressing-organizational-challenges-effectively.php>
- ⁵ Senge, P. M. (1990). *The fifth discipline: the art and practice of the learning organization*. New York: Doubleday.
- ⁶ Sinek, S. (2013). *Start with why: how great leaders inspire everyone to take action*. London: Portfolio/Penguin.

Topic 2

- ¹ Throughout this document, the term “Head Start” refers to both Head Start and Early Head Start programs and services for children and families.
- ² Kenny, G. (2016, June 21). Strategic Plans are less important than strategic planning. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2016/06/strategic-plans-are-less-important-than-strategic-planning>
- ³ HSPPS 45 CFR §§ 1302.102(a)(3) and 1304.11(b)(1)(i)-(iii).
- ⁴ *Art and Science of Participation: Facilitated Planning* [Lecture]. (2005). The Canadian Institute of Cultural Affairs. Retrieved from https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/documents/PDF/GuideStrategicPlanning-CdnInstOfCulturalAffairs2005.pdf
- ⁵ Feedback and Capacity Planning Workshop [Lecture]. (2003). *Participatory Capacity Building*. Retrieved from <http://www.toolkitsportdevelopment.org/html/resources/0D/0D177780-D6AF-44EB-8FD4-BDEF07BC160C/H4.pdf>
- ⁶ Riles, Eric. (2012, March 16), The 5 Whys. *Harvard Business Review YouTube Channel*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JmrAkHafwHI>
- ⁷ Vermeulen, F. Sivanathan, N. (2017). Stop doubling down on failing strategies, *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2017/11/stop-doubling-down-on-your-failing-strategy>

Topic 3

- ¹ HSPPS 45 CFR §§ 1302.102(a)(3) and 1304.11(b)(1)(i)-(iii).
- ² HSPPS 45 CFR § 1302.102(c)(2)(ii)–(iii).
- ³ HSPPS 45 CFR § 1302.16(a)(2)(iv).
- ⁴ HSPPS 45 CFR § 1302.52(b).

Topic 4

- ¹ HSPPS 45 CFR § 1302.32(b).

Notes



ADMINISTRATION FOR
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