Early Childhood National Centers

NATIONAL CENTER ON
Program Management and Fiscal Operations

Community Assessment:
The Foundation for Program Planning in Head Start

August 2019

Dear Colleagues,

Community-wide strategic planning and needs assessments are an essential first step in designing responsive programs that meet the needs of children and families. Community assessments provide a starting point for understanding community strengths and identifying gaps in services. They also helps mobilize necessary resources. When used in conjunction with other program data, the community assessment informs decision-making in many areas. It helps answer the questions:

- Who will be served?
- What will calendar and program options look like?
- How will the program work collaboratively to coordinate and individualize services?
- What partnerships will enhance services?
- What are the goals that will lead to quality outcomes for children and families?

The Head Start Program Performance Standards direct programs to complete a community assessment at least once over the five-year grant period. In addition, an update is required annually to identify changing demographics so programs can adapt and grow with their communities.

Community Assessment: The Foundation for Program Planning in Head Start is a step-by-step guide to implementing this crucial planning process. Throughout you will find a special recurring feature that offers targeted advice to new leaders who are taking their first forays into community research and seasoned administrators who are looking to sharpen their skills. The appendix offers a small library of worksheets, tools, and resources to support your data collection and analysis.

Use this resource to maximize your efforts as you generate the data needed to craft responsive programs and pursue our Head Start mission.

Office of Head Start

contents

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

community assessment

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introduction
to the community assessment

Getting Started

The community assessment (CA) is an important undertaking for every Head Start grantee—and one that you will repeat regularly over the life of your program. Get started by reviewing the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) guidance related to the community assessment. Consider how the community assessment will be beneficial for your community. Engage your staff and partners in discussions about the community assessment requirements and how the data gathered will be used to inform strategic planning, goal setting, and decision-making. Use these early conversations to educate your stakeholders and generate excitement about the benefits of conducting a community assessment.

Learning Objectives

To effectively serve children and families, your program needs to understand their experience and the community around them. The community assessment is how you gain that knowledge. In this chapter you will learn:

- What a community assessment is
- What is included
- When it is required
- Why it is done
- How it is done

> Community assessment data informs policies, programs, and practices, allowing resources to be allocated in ways that ensure equity and optimal child outcomes.

What Is a Community Assessment?

The community assessment (CA) is the collection and analysis of data related to the needs and characteristics of Head Start-eligible children and families in the grantee service area (i.e., geographic area). It identifies program and community resources available to meet their needs and specifies where there are gaps. It provides important community demographic data you can use to direct your recruitment efforts to those children and families most in need of Head Start services.

The community assessment also helps you identify and understand the most significant issues and trends affecting families with young children in your service area. For example, it might identify a low-income housing shortage that could result in under-enrollment for your program. It could reveal a population shift from one geographic area to another, so the location of centers might need to be reassessed.

Ultimately, the information from the community assessment is used to inform programmatic decisions, including planning, service delivery, and evaluation, both at the grantee level and the federal level. Areas where the community assessment report impacts grantee level decisions include recruitment and selection criteria, staffing patterns, program options, location of centers, and how services will be delivered to children and families. Findings from your community assessment may also influence your program's long-range goals and short-term objectives.

On a federal level, community assessment findings gathered across grantee programs may point to emerging or changing needs within specific populations or geographic areas, which may in turn drive new priorities at a national level. For example, community assessments across a region may indicate a need to increase support for dual language learners or target training for staff coping with the aftermath of natural disasters.

Determining community strengths, needs, and resources, 45 CFR §1302.11 describes the regulations that guide the community assessment.

What Is Included in a Community Assessment?

The HSPPS require the community assessment to use data that describes community strengths, needs, and resources (45 CFR §1302.11(b)). At a minimum, the community assessment must include:

A. Demographic information about eligible infants, toddlers, preschool age children, and expectant mothers

B. Information about the education, health, nutrition, and social service needs of eligible children and their families

C. Work, school, and training schedules of parents with eligible children

D. Information about other child development services, child care centers, and family child care programs that serve eligible children

E. Resources available in the community

F. Strengths of the community

Programs are required to publish and disseminate an annual report that includes a summary of the program's most recent community assessment findings (45 CFR §1302.102(d)(2)). More detailed information about all the community assessment requirements is found throughout this guide.

Tell Me More!

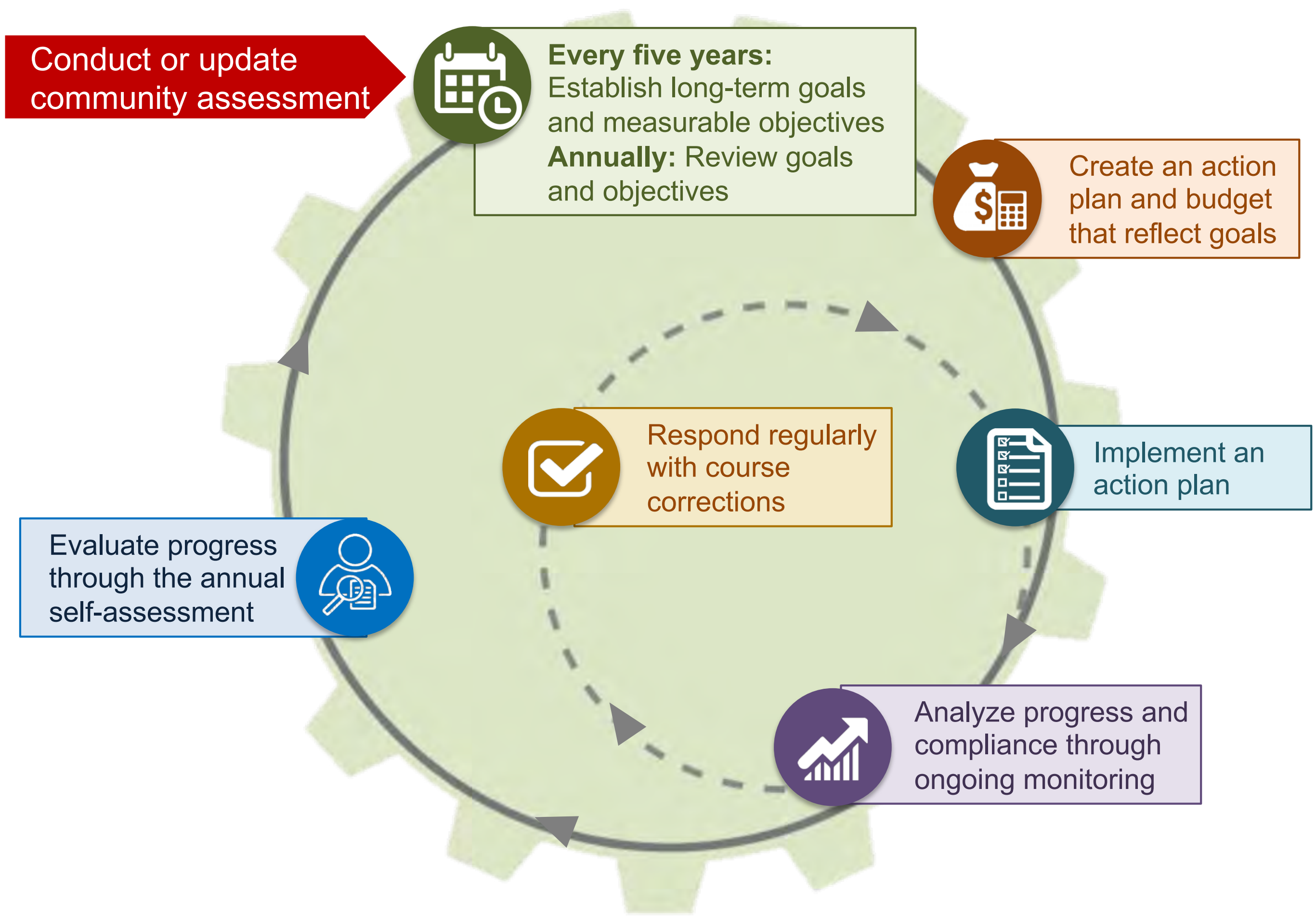
See Appendix C–1 for community assessment requirements in the HSPPS or Appendix C–2 for community assessment requirements in the Head Start Act.

When Is a Community Assessment Required?

As cited in the HSPPS, in order to design a program that meets community needs and builds on strengths and resources, a program must conduct a community assessment at least once over the five-year grant period. In addition, a program must annually review and update the community assessment to reflect any significant changes (45 CFR §1302.11(b)(2)).

Figure 1.1 provides a graphic representation of the community assessment process with a suggested sequence of events. This diagram shows how the community assessment relates to the program planning process and the grant application.

Figure 1.1 Program Planning Cycle



Why Conduct a Community Assessment?

Through the community assessment process, programs are able to provide the Office of Head Start (OHS) with information about the changing needs of eligible children and families. This process also establishes baseline information and a current snapshot of the community. This, in turn, enables programs to project trends, develop strategies, and support continuous quality improvement.

The following pages describe eight basic reasons why programs conduct a comprehensive community assessment. Some reasons have to do with the program's funding requirements and internal planning; others relate to the program's external relationships with the community. However, all reasons point to this essential question: *How can Head Start ensure that the correct services are provided to the appropriate population?* ■

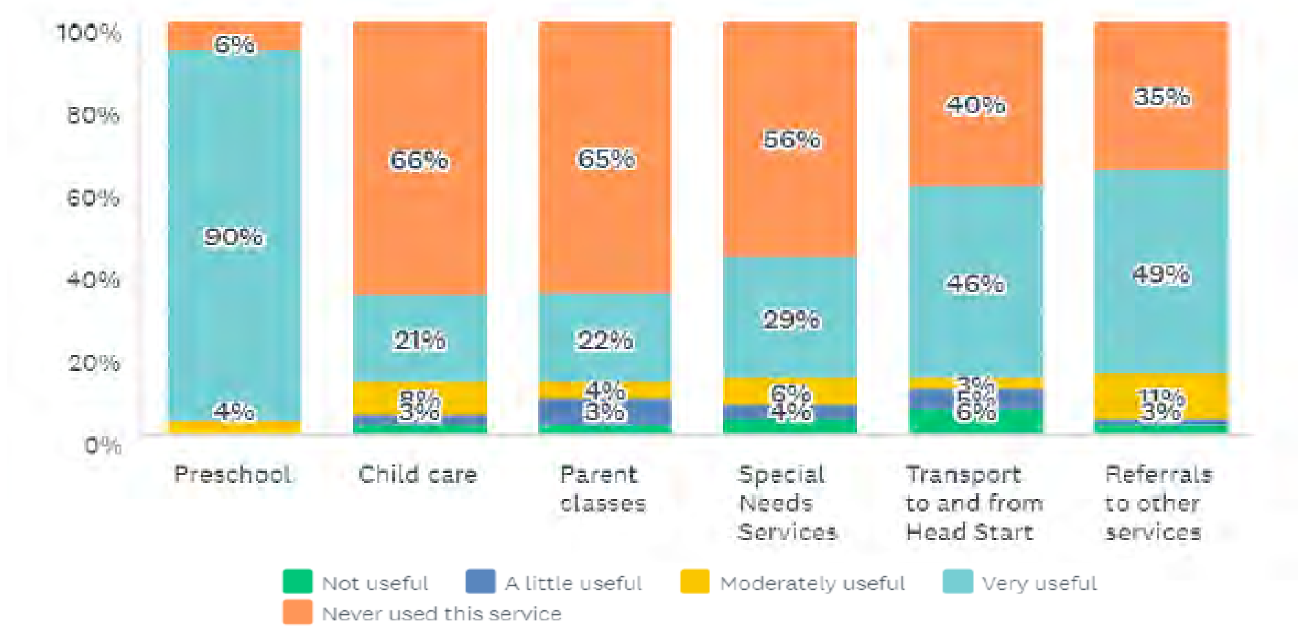
? *What are the primary reasons your program conducts a community assessment? How does this motivation influence your community assessment report?*

1. Meet Federal Regulations

- The Head Start Act sets forth requirements related to community-wide strategic planning.
- The community assessment process meets requirements in the HSPPS.
- Aggregated community assessment data informs the OHS of child, family, and community needs.

▼ *Community needs should drive program services. Data from external and internal sources, as shown in this graph, can identify the services communities value most.*

How Provided Services Are Valued



Source: Explorers Academy, Head Start, Inc Five-Year Community Assessment, February 2018, page 75.

2. Make Decisions and Program Planning

- Community assessment data is integral in establishing long-term goals and measurable objectives.
- Program leadership, including governing body/Tribal Council, Policy Council, and program management, are required to use data from the community assessment in making decisions about program options, program calendar, types of services and collaborative partnerships, location of centers, recruitment areas, and recruitment and selection priorities.
- Community assessment data is used for designing and implementing comprehensive services that meet the needs of eligible children and families in a culturally competent manner. The community assessment provides data on child and family needs and strengths that help inform the program's coordinated approach to service delivery. (45 CFR §1302.101(b)(2) and (3)).
- Community assessment data helps with decision-making around enrollment criteria, such as what ages of children will be served, whether 3-year-olds must be prioritized, or if higher income private pay families will be enrolled in non-Head Start slots (45 CFR §§1302.14(a)(3) and 1302.11(b)(3)). These can be essential components of a program's selection criteria.
- Community assessment data informs policies, programs, and practices, allowing resources to be allocated in ways that ensure equity and optimal child outcomes.
- Through the community assessment, programs can determine the skills and competencies needed in the existing workforce, as well as gaps in professional development that need to be addressed to better serve children and families. This data helps inform the program's coordinated approach to professional development (45 CFR §1302.101(b)(1)).

3. Educate Staff and Stakeholders

- A comprehensive community assessment is an effective way to educate staff, parents, advisory groups, the governing body, community members, and consultants about the needs, strengths, and characteristics of families, trends in the community, and how the grantee has designed its services.
- The community assessment can be used to orient new staff and volunteers and, with consideration of other program data, to plan training.

NEW DIRECTOR TIP

Equity and Community Assessments

Creating equitable learning opportunities for young children is fundamental to responsive program planning. Consider how your community assessment can help you recognize and build on each child's unique set of individual and family strengths, cultural background, home language, abilities, and experiences.

NEW DIRECTOR TIP

Trends

Identifying trends is an important part of program planning. Being aware of changes in your community facilitates the development of goals that support responsive program services.

- The community assessment can help other agencies and organizations ensure their services are responsive to community needs. As part of this process, information from the community assessment can be used to establish memoranda of understanding (MOUs) between the Head Start program and other parties as a way to support continuity of service delivery.

4. Address Changing Priorities and Policies

- Community assessment data supports strategic responses to evolving priorities identified by OHS based on the latest evidence and research findings.
- Community assessment data supports strategic responses to changes in federal or state legislation and policy initiatives.

5. Respond to Trends and Changes in the Community

- The community assessment process, including the annual review and update of data, identifies community trends and changes.
- The community assessment helps identify the impact of demographic, social, and environmental changes—such as changes in the economy, local infrastructure, and natural disasters—on the Head Start program and eligible children and families. These events can impact a program in a variety of ways, including causing it to temporarily close, relocate, or adopt a different approach for service delivery.
- As a strengths-based process, the community assessment can help you anticipate and successfully address the impact of changes, such as identifying potential new partners. It provides information programs and staff need to design daily activities and experiences that meet the needs of children, neighborhoods, and communities.

6. Mobilize Community Resources

- The community assessment aids in identifying a range of existing community resources.
- The community assessment process identifies gaps in available services for Head Start-eligible families.
- Community assessment reports share information and opinions from employers, community groups, and a range of organizations throughout the community.
- With community assessment information about community need and available resources, social service agencies, healthcare providers, refugee and immigrant agencies, community support agencies (e.g., United Way), local school districts, and state child care and child welfare agencies can better coordinate programs and services to support low-income children and families.

7. **Maximize Community Partnerships**
    - Head Start programs must establish ongoing collaborative relationships and partnerships with community organizations to facilitate access to community services that are responsive to the needs of children and families (45 CFR §1302.53(a)(1)).
    - The community assessment reinforces the need for concerted efforts and provides information to help establish community-wide priorities.
    - The community assessment can be used to identify new community partners.
    - Working together with partners can result in improved service delivery, optimal use of existing resources, and the expansion or creation of new services.
8. **Increase Financial Resources**
    - A comprehensive community assessment can be used to support private, state, or federal funding applications that require demographic information and needs assessment results.
    - The community assessment can be used to identify and reinforce the need for new programs.
    - Findings from the community assessment can be used to support requests to local businesses for funds, supplies, or other in-kind contributions. ■

? *Which of these eight reasons for community assessments do you most value?*

How Is a Community Assessment Done?

The first step in preparing to conduct a community assessment is to create a team to lead the process. Team building is discussed in depth in the next chapter. In addition to reviewing this guide, the members of this team should familiarize themselves with HSPPS 45 CFR §1302.11(b) and other regulations that pertain to the community assessment (see Appendix C–1) and the grant application process, including requirements and timelines.

Now that your program staff understands what a community assessment is and how it can benefit your community, children, and families, it's time for Step 1: Plan and Organize. The process begins in earnest as you assemble your all-important community assessment team, the core group of people who will oversee the entire process.

The Benefits of a Community Assessment

Community-wide strategic planning and needs assessments are an essential first step in designing responsive programs that meet the needs of children and families and advance equity for all.

Community Assessments...

Identify community strengths.

Mobilize necessary resources.

Expose gaps in services.

Inform decision-making.

- *Who will be served?*
- *What do program options look like?*
- *How will the program work collaboratively to coordinate and individualize services?*
- *What partnerships will enhance services?*

Establish the goals that lead to quality outcomes for children and families.

step 1
plan and organize

Getting Started

The process of developing the plan for conducting the community assessment is critical. Not only does your plan have to provide a solid foundation for involving key stakeholders from the start, but it will also be your road map throughout the process. A well-articulated plan ensures that your community assessment is thorough, accurate, and efficient. Although it requires an investment of time at the beginning, the community assessment plan will save you time and effort over the long-run. Your first task will be to identify your planning team, preferably to include staff, parent representatives, governing body and policy group representatives, and community partners. Head Start families and the broader community are more likely to trust a process and support the results when the plan behind it is driven by a representative planning team.

Learning Objectives

Step 1 provides an overview of all the steps and tasks involved with planning the community assessment process. You will learn how to:

- Form the community assessment team
- Determine what information to collect
- Establish a timeline and assign responsibilities
- Prepare for the community assessment process and inform key stakeholders

Establishing the Community Assessment Team

A team approach to conducting the community assessment is beneficial because it distributes the effort among many people and adds a variety of perspectives. The community assessment team plans and implements the process, interprets the data, and presents a report of findings for review by the agency's governing body and Policy Council. Ideally, the team will include representation from within the program, including those that reflect the diversity of the communities or populations served, as well as external partners. As soon as the community assessment team is formed, a team leader should be selected. This person will be the primary point of contact throughout the process.

" A team approach to conducting the community assessment is beneficial because it distributes the effort among many people and adds a variety of perspectives.

When determining the team structure your program will implement, remember that your goal is to obtain an accurate and comprehensive community assessment while encouraging the effective participation of team members. Ensure all participants are orientated to the process and their role, as well as understand the importance of the community assessment and its impact on the provision of Head Start services to children and families. Team members will benefit from actively participating in the community assessment. They will become better informed about their community, the Head Start program, and the direction forward. Generally, the community assessment team should include:

- Head Start director
- Grantee agency representatives, if applicable
- Key program staff
- Governing body and Policy Council representatives
- Parents
- Community partners

It is helpful to have at least one team member who is skilled at working with numerical (quantitative) data.

Table 1: Key Roles and Responsibilities of Community Assessment (CA) Team Members

Head Start director	• *Ensures the CA is fully and accurately conducted* • *Uses the CA data to inform the program's long-range goals and short-term objectives* • *Ensures information from the CA is used in program development and strategic planning and referenced in the grant application*
Grantee agency representatives if applicable	• *For some grantee agencies, the executive director assumes responsibility for leading the CA process, and the Head Start program director is the leader or co-leader* • *Collects CA information for non-Head Start programs the agency may also sponsor*

Key program staff (e.g., managers and other staff)	• *Represents all program areas* (e.g., education, health, family services, disabilities, transportation, and administration) The information gathered and analyzed in the CA should reflect a perspective that encompasses all aspects of the Head Start's program and services. • *Contributes important information and insights to the CA* It is beneficial to establish a process for communicating with all program staff throughout the CA (whether or not they are official CA team members). This includes both sharing information learned through the CA as it emerges, as well as engaging staff in providing feedback related to the key CA questions. Everyone in Head Start shares responsibility for learning about the community, its families, and its resources. • *Brings perspectives from various sources of information* It is beneficial to have the participation of both key management staff and staff at different levels within the organization.
Governing body and Policy Council representatives	• *Involve the governing body, Policy Council, Policy Committee at the delegate level, and advisory committees in the CA process* Advisory committees might include the Parent Committee (45 CFR §1301.4(a)) and/or the Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC). • *Kept informed regarding the CA progress and have opportunities to ask questions and provide input (45 CFR §1302.40(b))* • *Review the findings with appropriate decision-making bodies before the complete document is finalized when possible*
Parents	• *Serve as key advisors and important sources of information in the CA process* • *Act as decision-makers as members of Policy Council or Policy Committee* • *Represent information and views from eligible families in the service area* • *Collect data and views from other parents and community members,* including information about trends in the local economy, child health status, and service needs that impact Head Start planning and programming
Community partners	• *Represent and bring information from social service agencies, city or county government, public schools, child care programs, health agencies, and other organizations with knowledge about Head Start-eligible families* • *Share their own needs assessments and community data* While information provided by partners cannot replace the Head Start CA, it may include detailed information on issues relevant to Head Start-eligible children and families, as well as organizational and program staff. • *Broaden partnerships* The CA process is an opportunity to create new and strengthen existing partnerships and increase awareness about how the Head Start program contributes to and supports the local community.

NEW DIRECTOR TIP

Getting Help

It may be helpful to review a completed community assessment report. Your regional office and/or T/TA staff may be able to help you with this and provide support to you in designing your community assessment process. You can find inspiration in the community assessment reports posted on the Internet. A Google search for "Head Start Community Assessment" provides a long list of reports to review.

As your program grows its internal expertise to implement a comprehensive community assessment process, a consultant can support your efforts. If this is the case, select a consultant who knows Head Start and has worked with similar agencies. The consultant should serve as a partner through each step of the community assessment process, providing ongoing updates and keeping you informed along the way. If a consultant is used, the community assessment team will maintain a key role by overseeing the process, leading the way forward, and ensuring the final report meets the team's expectations.

As the community assessment team begins its work, the members may want to use brainstorming techniques to discuss the following questions and determine implementation activities.

1. What is the purpose of the team?
2. What tasks will the team need to perform?
3. What skills are required to perform the team's tasks? Based on the tasks and skills identified, does the team need to increase its capacity by adding other individuals to the team?
4. Who are the individuals responsible for performing each task?
5. What are the completion dates for each task?
6. What does the team need in order to stay motivated?
7. What kind of guidance, support, and resources do the team need?

Specify Information to be Collected

Use Data that Describes Community Strengths, Needs, and Resources

According to the HSPPS 45 CFR §1302.11(b)(1)(i-vi), "the community assessment must use data that describes community strengths, needs, and resources and include, at a minimum:

(i) The number of eligible infants, toddlers, preschool age children, and expectant mothers, including their geographic location, race, ethnicity, and languages they speak, including:

(A) Children experiencing homelessness (when feasible, this data should be gathered in collaboration with McKinney-Vento Local Education Agency Liaisons (42 U.S.C. 11432(6)(A));

(B) Children in foster care; and

(C) Children with disabilities, including types of disabilities and relevant services and resources provided to these children by community agencies;

(ii) The education, health, nutrition, and social service needs of eligible children and their families, including prevalent social or economic factors that impact their well-being;

(iii) Typical work, school, and training schedules of parents with eligible children;

(iv) Other child development services, child care centers, and family child care programs that serve eligible children, including home visiting, publicly-funded state and local preschools, and the approximate number of eligible children served by other service providers;

(v) Resources that are available in the community to address the needs of eligible children and their families, as well as gaps in service delivery or lack of accessibility to services; and,

(vi) Strengths of the community."

After you have collected and analyzed all relevant information, you will be able to use the data for goal-setting and decision-making, as required in the HSPPS. Use the community assessment findings to prioritize key issues; determine the unmet need for Head Start and Early Head Start services among eligible children; identify vulnerable populations; and locate recruitment areas. You will present information about your service area and your conclusions in a written summary report.

> “ The community assessment must provide information on the entire service area, not just on recruitment areas.

Focus on the Service Area

Keep in mind that the community assessment must provide information on the entire service area, not just on recruitment areas.

- Service area: Geographic area identified in an approved grant application within which a grantee may provide Head Start services. A program must propose a service area in the grant application and define the area by county or sub-county (45 CFR §1302.11(a)(1)).
- Recruitment area: Geographic locality within which a Head Start program seeks to enroll Head Start children and families. The recruitment area can be the same as the service area or it can be a smaller area or areas within the service area (45 CFR §1305.2).

The community assessment addresses the entire service area, which may include places that are not currently identified for recruitment. Maps submitted as part of the community assessment document should show both the service area and recruitment areas.

NEW DIRECTOR TIP

What Data to Collect

Resources in Appendix A can help you plan for the collection of the required data and identify data collection needs unique to your community. Check out the Community Assessment Matrix and Data Collection Sources by Topic Worksheet.

Establish the Community Assessment Timeline

The length of time it takes to gather information for the community assessment and then to write the report will vary depending on the size and complexity of the Head Start grantee, the community at large, and the service area. The community assessment timeline must include enough time for a report to be written. In addition, because the community assessment provides the evidence and rationale for a variety of programming decisions, the process must be timed to enable the findings to be used to inform the grant application. For example, proposed changes to program options or calendar, locations, or recruitment criteria that are presented in the grant application must be guided by information previously gathered and analyzed in the community assessment report.

Time will also be needed throughout the five-year grant period for an annual update, which helps programs monitor their progress or modify their strategic plans.

> Be strategic and plan ahead as you establish your community assessment process.

Prepare for the Community Assessment Process

You need to be strategic and plan ahead as you establish your process.

- Decide on the structure you will use. For example, the team might be a work group composed primarily of members of existing committees and functioning groups in the Head Start program, or it could involve the creation of a new community assessment committee.
- Select team members from the agency and from the community at large.
- Make sure each staff member's time has been "freed up" or partially reassigned by their supervisor so they have the necessary time to devote to the community assessment.
- Ensure all participants are orientated to understand the importance of the community assessment and its impact on the provision of Head Start services to children and families.
- Identify the resources you will need to implement the process; examples include the translation of key pieces of information for parents, additional clerical support, and scheduling meetings in conjunction with other activities.

When planning and organizing for your community assessment, remember that the calendar is your friend.

Inform Key Stakeholders About the Community Assessment Process

These organizational tools will help you communicate efficiently and effectively with the community assessment team and others throughout the process:

- Draw up a plan that includes the tasks and time frames assigned to each team member. Distribute this as a chart to all team members so they can stay informed about the overall process.
- Keep a calendar to help your team, the Policy Council and the governing body/Tribal Council to stay informed. Define the tasks that will be under way each month and note the expected completion dates. You can add other important program-wide tasks to the calendar, such as the Program Information Report (PIR), OHS monitoring reviews, and program self-assessment.
- Communicate the plan. Prior to its implementation, the team leader can consult with the governing body/Tribal Council and Policy Council to get ideas and assistance from the members, hear concerns that might need to be resolved, and review ongoing communications. ■

? *How does your program inform key stakeholders of the community assessment process?*

Once you have established your planning team, community assessment timeline, and main tasks, it is time to move onto Step 2, where you will clarify what you want to learn. Specifically, think about what questions you want answered and how best to gather accurate data that will inform those answers.

A Closer Look

The Community Assessment Team

A team approach to conducting the community assessment is beneficial because it distributes the effort among many people and adds a variety of perspectives.

Head Start Directors ensure that the community assessment is fully and accurately conducted.

Managers and Key Staff represent all program areas and engage staff in providing feedback related to the key questions. It is beneficial to include staff who have experience working with quantitative data.

Representatives from Policy Groups
involve various governing bodies and provide regular updates during the process.

Parents
serve as key advisors and represent information and views from eligible families.

Community Partners
bring information from social service agencies and other organizations with knowledge about Head Start-eligible families.

Buy-in from the immediate and larger community is more likely when the process is driven by a representative planning team.

step 2
design the work

Getting Started

Once your community assessment team is in place, you are ready to establish your primary questions, or what you want to learn through the community assessment. Begin Step 2 by reviewing the HSPPS to identify the core areas you will be exploring. The HSPPS set out three types of information you are required to gather about Head Start-eligible children and families, as well as three types of information specific to your community. Within these categories, you will develop the primary questions that explore issues unique to your families and region. Do not confuse the primary questions to be asked through the community assessment (e.g., “How are community demographics changing?”) with the specific survey or interview questions you will be developing in Step 3.

Learning Objectives

There are many things you can learn through a community assessment, and what your team prioritizes will affect how you gather data and from whom. In Step 2 you will learn how to:

- Align community assessment data collection with the HSPPS requirements
- Develop the primary questions to be answered
- Identify internal and external sources of data
- Distinguish between open- and closed-ended questions, as well as quantitative and qualitative data.

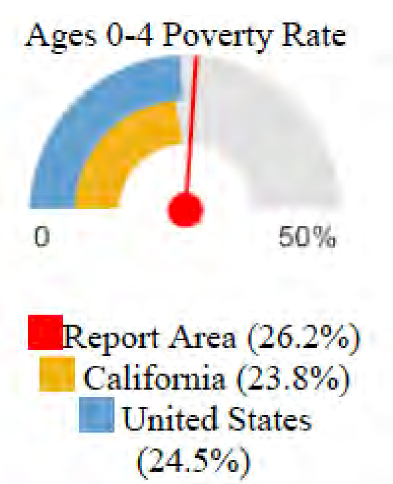
Review the HSPPS Requirements

As cited in the HSPPS, six types of information about your service area must be included in the community assessment.

1. **Demographic Makeup of Head Start-Eligible Children and Families.**

This information is used to create a portrait of the families eligible to be served by your program. Demographic data which must be collected is found in HSPPS [45 CFR §1302.11(b)(1)(i)(A-C)](). It includes the number of eligible infants, toddlers and preschool age children, and expectant mothers, including their geographic location, race, ethnicity, and languages spoken.

A wealth of data is readily available from federal and state data warehouses. Organizations like Community Commons provide easy-to-use, democratized access to this data. For example, they provided this per county data on children ages 0–4 living in poverty.



Data also must be collected about three specific populations: children experiencing homelessness, children in foster care, and children with disabilities. To gather information about children experiencing homelessness, you must work, to the extent possible, in collaboration with the McKinney-Vento local education agency liaisons (42 U.S.C. 11432(6)(A)). Community assessment data about children with disabilities must identify the types of disabilities, relevant services, and resources provided to these children by community agencies (45 CFR §1302.11(b)(1)(i)(C)).

Demographic data will be collected through both internal and external sources. External data will help you estimate the number of eligible children and families and learn about their cultures, strengths, and needs. There are many benefits to working with community partners to gather some of the external data.

When analyzing demographic data, be sure to report the number of children who are currently enrolled in Head Start as well as those who are eligible but not being served. This will help you establish estimates of enrollment needs, as well as make decisions about enrollment practices. For example, if the community assessment identifies slots for children experiencing homelessness or children in foster care as a clear need, that program will be allowed to reserve one or more enrollment slots when a vacancy occurs for pregnant women and children experiencing homelessness and children in foster care (45 CFR §1302.15(c)). In order to provide a comprehensive picture of the population in the

Children Ages 0-4 Living In Poverty			
Report Area	Ages 0-4 Total Population	Ages 0-4 In Poverty	Ages 0-4 Poverty Rate
Service Area	8,889	2,328	26.2%
Del Norte County, CA	1,655	498	30.1%
Humboldt County, CA	7,234	1,830	25.3%
California	2,472,442	587,696	23.8%
United States	19,605,884	4,795,039	24.5%

Source: Northcoast Children's Services, Community Needs Assessment Report for the 2017–18 Year, page 22.

service area, information about changing and underserved populations is necessary. Remember, your community assessment must include demographic data from across the entire service area. It is particularly helpful to highlight the needs of enrolled children and their families, as well as community-based services available to them. Reviewing data over time can be especially effective in identifying demographic trends such as birth rates and population shifts.

2. Education, Health, Nutrition and Social Service Needs of Head Start-Eligible Children and Families

As set forth in the HSPPS, the community assessment must include data that identifies prevalent social or economic factors affecting the well-being of children and families (45 CFR §1302.11(b)(1)(ii)). This includes identifying community issues that impact on children's nutritional health needs (45 CFR §1302.42(b)(4)). The goal is to present a balanced, comprehensive assessment of the needs by drawing on a variety of information gathered from both internal and external sources.

Internal data collected from program staff, parents, and local service providers will give your Head Start program an in-depth understanding of family and child needs. In addition, your program will draw on existing information, such as data from the PIR, minutes of advisory committees, and family assessment data. These are just a few examples of accessible internal information.

External data, drawn from community partners, media outlets, and websites, provides information about the needs of the community at large and newer populations your program might serve.

3. Work, School, and Training Schedules of Parents with Eligible Children

The community assessment must include the typical work, school, and training schedules of parents with eligible children (45 CFR §1302.11(b)(1)(iii)). This information is needed as you make decisions about your program's structure and calendar (45 CFR §1302.20(a)(1-2)).

It is beneficial to gather schedule data from parents already served by your program, as well as from parents whose eligible children are not enrolled. You may reach out to a variety of organizations to help gather this data, including teen parenting programs, adult education programs, educational institutions (e.g., community colleges, trade schools, and other higher education programs), technical training programs, and state agencies.

NEW DIRECTOR TIP

State Collaboration Directors

Your Head Start State Collaboration Director can connect you with state-level data sources.

"The goal is to present a balanced, comprehensive assessment of the needs by drawing on a variety of information gathered from both internal and external sources.

> Your community assessment report will include a discussion of trends that you anticipate will affect your program throughout the grant cycle. Head Start programs can use these trends to predict the potential influx of new families and to assist in program planning.

4. Other Early Childhood Education Programs that Serve Eligible Children.

Information about other child development services, child care centers, and family child care programs that serve eligible children must be included in the community assessment. Details about home visiting services and publicly funded state and local preschools must also be included, along with an estimate of the approximate number of eligible children served in these various settings (45 CFR §1302.11(b)(1)(iv)). Across many population groups, young children may be cared for by relatives or neighbors. This is sometimes referred to as "family, friend, and neighbor" care. Because these arrangements are often unlicensed and informal, they may not appear in official child care counts. Nevertheless, it is important for the community assessment to estimate their prevalence as it may indicate a need for additional child care services for eligible families.

It is beneficial to consider such factors as location, schedule, and duration of services; vacancy and waiting list statistics; affordability and accessibility of care services; ages served; and the scope and quality of services. By including an analysis of this data, your program will be better positioned to meet its requirement to take an active role in promoting coordinated systems of comprehensive early childhood services to low-income children and families (45 CFR §1302.53(b)).

5. Community Resources

The community assessment is required to provide an overview of community resources that address the needs of eligible children and their families (45 CFR §1302.11(b)(1)(v)). When gathering information about programs that help eligible families, you will want to consider supports related to nutrition, housing, employment, education, health, transportation, finances, and other services.

By compiling a thorough description of available community resources, your program can determine which services can be provided by Head Start and which are best provided by your community partners. You will also use this information as you establish collaborative relationships and partnerships with community organizations through formal mechanisms, such as joint agreements, procedures, or contracts. As outlined in the HSPPS 45 CFR §1302.53(a), such formal agreements can be used to arrange on-site delivery of services and facilitate access to a range of community programs that are responsive to children's and families' needs, family partnership goals, and community needs.

It is important to know which services are being used by families already enrolled, as well as for families who are not being served. This helps to identify who may be most in need of your program's support. Sometimes low-income families face obstacles as they seek to find and access community resources. It is beneficial to compare the views of the families and the community institutions in order to identify needs and gaps in services. You may find that in spite of the existence of many community services, eligible families are not using them. The families may not know about them; they may not find them "user friendly;" or they may encounter language or other barriers.

6. Community Strengths

Identifying the strengths of the community is an integral and required component of the community assessment (45 CFR §1302.11(b)(1)(vi)). Knowing these strengths will help programs identify what supports and services can be accessed by eligible families as well as what supplemental supports may need to be provided by the grantee.

In the course of the community assessment, you will also collect information about trends and changes in your service area. You will review this information to determine whether population counts or percentages have changed and, if so, how they have changed (e.g., increased, decreased); the reasons for the changes; and whether your program's internal data (e.g., PIR, enrollment forms) indicates similar changes or trends.

This process can place your program in the best position to serve those eligible children and families who are most in need of services. Contact local employers, city or county governments, and community partners to obtain information on local employment and housing trends. Document changes in area jobs, such as in the agricultural, construction, or service sectors. Your community assessment report will include a discussion of trends that you anticipate will affect your program throughout the grant cycle. Head Start programs can use these trends to predict the potential influx of new families and to assist in program planning. ■

NEW DIRECTOR TIP

Identifying Gaps

When identifying community resources, it's important to identify where the gaps in services are. Consider the following:

- Are there agencies with long waiting lists or a complete lack of services for a particular area of need?
- What barriers exist for families and are those barriers different or unique for certain cultural or ethnic groups?
- Are community service providers aware of the challenges and barriers unique to Head Start families?
- What are the potential partnerships that could alleviate gaps or barriers?

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How has your program's service area changed in the past five years? Were any of these trends anticipated in past community assessment reports? How can you learn from that in future community assessment reports?

Tell Me More!

To learn more about preparing and collecting data see the webinar: [Measuring What Matters: Making Progress toward Expected Family Outcomes](#).

Develop Questions to Ask

The kinds of information you are required to gather in the community assessment shape the questions you will ask. For example, you will need to ask families about the services they are receiving from Head Start in order to assess whether their needs are being met. You will have to ask child care providers about their enrollment of different age groups and children with disabilities. In other words, once you identify the data you want to report about your service area, you will be able to figure out how to get that data by asking the right questions.

The community assessment will inform decisions in many areas, including program goals and objectives; services and program options; recruitment and service areas; program locations; and criteria for recruitment and selection. The community assessment report provides a rationale for changes in program options, locations, and other matter, assuming the evidence gathered during the community assessment process supports the need for those changes.

Five Key Considerations in Assessment Design

In preparing to collect data, the team should consider and discuss how to use both internal and external data to address these five key considerations in assessment design:

1. What data needs to be collected?
2. What sources can be used to obtain the data? Will new worksheets or reports need to be created to capture data?
3. What issues or challenges might affect data collection efforts?
4. In light of the potential issues or challenges, are there alternative methods that could be used to collect data? (Data collection methods are discussed in Step 3.)
5. How will the data be displayed or disseminated after it is collected and analyzed? Visualizing this ahead of time will help frame how the data is collected and organized.

Identify Internal and External Data

One useful framework for designing data collection is to identify your sources of data. This includes determining where you will go to get the information you need, including:

- Internal data: Both past and current program data.
- External data: Information from resources outside your program and agency.

Tell Me More!

See Appendix A–5 Data Collection Sources by Topic Worksheet for more information about internal and external data sources.

Table 2.1: Types and Sources of Internal and External Data

Types of Internal Data	Types of External Data
• Child outcomes • Demographics on children and families on the waiting list • Demographics on enrolled children and families • Existing community partnerships • Family engagement outcomes • Fiscal reports • Health records • Facility maintenance records • Staff qualifications and professional development needs and outcomes	• Child welfare data • Community resources for child care and child development • Community safety data • Demographics of the service area (e.g., race, ethnicity, household income, employment, poverty levels, housing and homelessness, and education levels) • Environmental issues • Health and education issues • Number of children with disabilities and the types and services they require
Sources to Obtain Internal Data	**Sources to Obtain External Data**
• Enrollment forms • Family Partnership Agreements • Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) • Human resources records • Ongoing monitoring reports • Progress reports on program goals • Meeting notes (e.g., minutes of governing body, Policy Council, advisory committees, and staff meetings) • PIR Report • Program self-assessment • Family assessment data • Transportation logs	• Federal, state, and city departments of —Health and Human Services —Education —Labor • Faith-based institutions • Federal monitoring reviews • Local economic development agencies • Local media sources • Nonprofit services • Local and regional environmental planning agencies • Public school systems and local colleges • State, county, and local governments • U.S Census Bureau

Using Open-Ended and Closed-Ended Questions

Designing questions that elicit useful answers is critical to conducting a quality assessment. A best practice is to design both open-and closed-ended questions in order to get a range of information.

- Open-ended questions allow respondents to provide more complex, thoughtful answers, often based on their own feelings or experiences. Such questions tend to obtain a range of opinions because they are less leading than closed-ended questions. Open-ended questions often begin with words such as “Why” and “How,” or phrases such as “What do you think about…,” “What has been your experience with…,” or “Can you tell me about….” Open-ended questions allow respondents to tell you anything they feel is relevant, which may also mean you discover things that are new or unexpected.
- Closed-ended questions provide respondents with a limited set of possible answers. Questions that can be answered by a simple “yes” or “no” are closed-ended questions, as are questions that provide a pre-determined checklist of items to be selected. “Did you use mental health services?” is an example of a closed-ended question. Another example is a question that asks respondents to rate a service: “On a scale of 1–5, how would you rate the educational program of Head Start?” Typically, closed-ended questions are easier for respondents to answer, and the data gathered is easier to compare and analyze statistically.

“ Using a combination of open- and closed-ended questions will help you obtain rich data and a range of valuable insights.

By using a combination of open- and closed-ended questions you will be able to obtain rich data and a range of valuable insights about eligible families, community resources, and your program. Relying on just one question format would not provide the same variety of in-depth information.

An Important Distinction: Quantitative and Qualitative Data

As you plan for data collection, it is also important to distinguish between quantitative and qualitative data. In addition to being collected in different ways, these data are also expressed differently.

- Quantitative data is expressed in numerical terms.
- Qualitative data is represented in words, collected either verbally or in writing.

In order to have a high-quality community assessment, it is necessary to collect and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data. If you can visualize ahead of time how the data might be displayed in graphs, tables, or charts, you will have a frame of reference for organizing your information. ■

Have your program's previous community assessment reports had a good mix of qualitative and quantitative data? What are the benefits of each kind of data?

Table 2.2: Displaying the Data

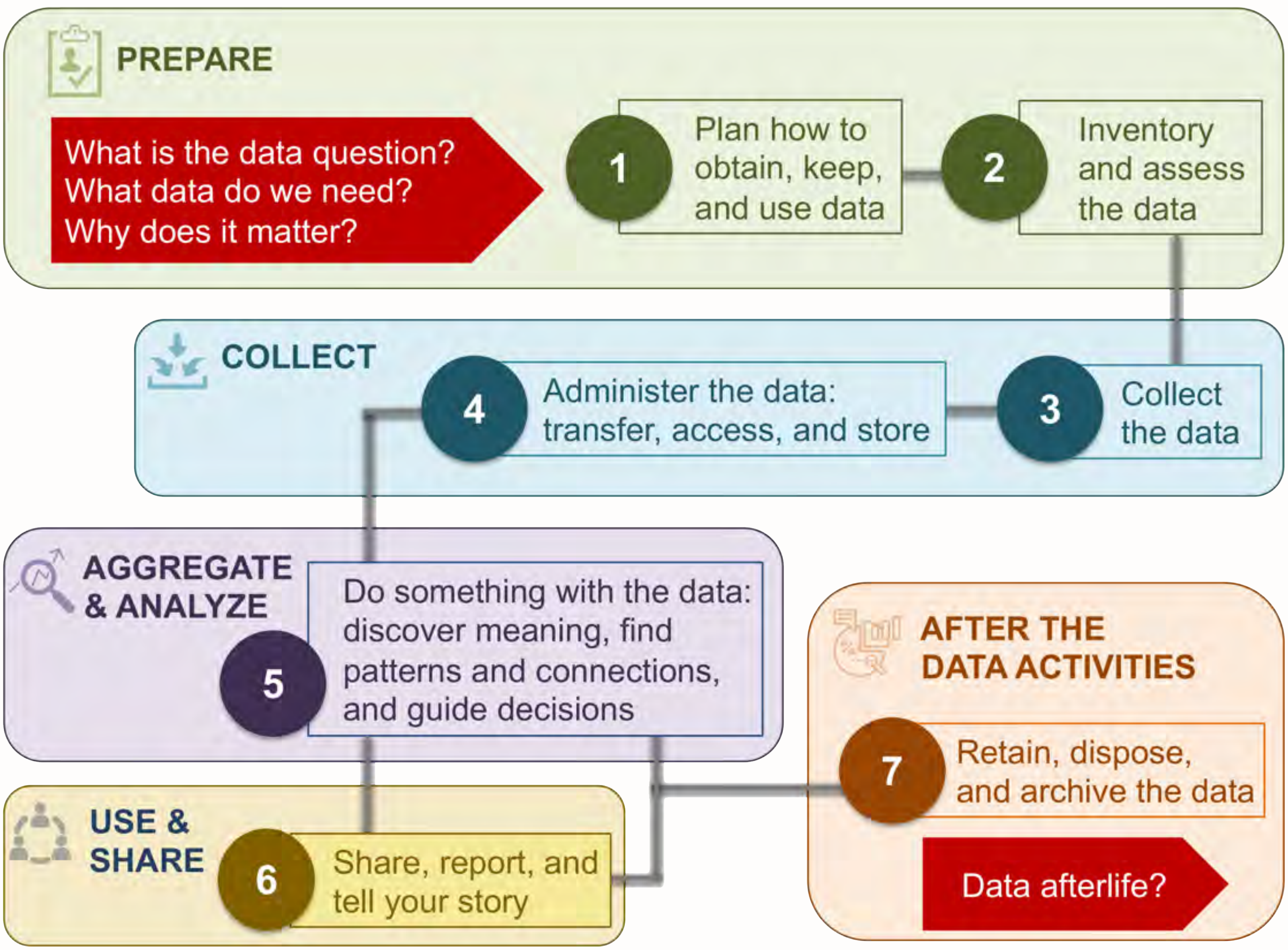
Data that are...	can be explained in a...
in **numbers** or **percentages**	table, pie chart, graph
in written or spoken **words**	narrative, case study, table
geographic	map, diagram, photograph

Everything you have done so far has laid a solid foundation for Step 3, Gather Data. This next phase will establish the method you will use to gather the data, who you will engage, and what questions you will ask.

A Closer Look

Responsible Data Management

A community assessment is a data-rich undertaking. That data needs to be treated in a respectful way that upholds the rights of the people whose data is collected. This graphic provides a framework for exploring these issues and highlights overarching principles that guide responsible data management.



How might this Responsible Data Management graphic inform and reshape your program's community assessment process?

PREPARE

1. Plan How to Obtain, Keep, and Use the Data

Be clear about the purpose of collecting the data. How will the data be used, collected, and stored? How will personally identifiable information (PII) be protected?

2. Inventory and Assess the Data

A thorough inventory of the data collected is important for all stakeholders involved. What data already exists and what is needed? Who will collect the data and how will it be analyzed? When will the data be purged?

COLLECT

3. Collect the Data

Carefully train the data collectors on the protocols they will follow and the technology they will use. Assess the risk for security and confidentiality. Before the collection occurs, make sure families know what data will be collected and how it will be used and protected.

4. Administer the Data: Transfer, Access, and Store

The HSPPS require grantees to develop procedures that support the availability, usability, integrity, and security of the data. These procedures need to be systematic and operationalized.

AGGREGATE & ANALZYE

5. Do Something with the Data

To find meaning and direction in the community assessment, grantees must carefully aggregate and analyze the data they collect. Identifying patterns, connections, and trends helps grantees craft responsive options and services for the communities they serve.

USE & SHARE

6. Share, Report, and Tell Your Story

To inform stakeholders and rally consensus, the findings need to be shared through accessible and compelling reports. In addition, grantees must adhere to the detailed reporting requirements in the HSPPS.

AFTER THE DATA ACTIVITIES

7. Retain, Dispose, and Archive the Data

Data lives on long after its findings are shared. Deleting digital documents is not the same as shredding paper documents. Grantees should have a plan for how digital data will be securely archived or purged from various devices and systems.

step 3
gather data

Getting Started

With a sound community assessment plan in place, you are ready to design your data collection plan and collect data. This will include contacting the data sources you identified in Step 2 and asking them questions to obtain the information you need. Before you begin administering surveys or conducting focus groups and interviews, however, make sure to identify existing data sources and what information they can provide. By gathering information from easily available internal and external sources first (e.g., your own PIR data or U.S. Census data), you can make sure to focus your more time-intensive data collection methods, such as surveys and interviews, on gathering information that is not available any other way.

Learning Objectives

Your team's ability to effectively collect and manage data will have a direct impact on the quality of your community assessment. Through Step 3, you will develop a deeper understanding of the data collection process, including:

- Data collection methods
- Creating worksheets and surveys
- Logistics and cultural considerations
- Managing the data

Tell Me More!

For a worksheet that can be used to help as data is being collected and reviewed see Appendix A–3: Community Assessment Analysis Worksheet.

NEW DIRECTOR TIP

State and Regional Associations

Grantees in many states and regions have partnered together to gather and aggregate the statewide Head Start Data needed for community assessments.

NEW DIRECTOR TIP

Existing Community Assessments

Do not overlook existing community assessments done by other organizations. United Way, health organizations, and other local coalitions and agencies may have community assessment data that will complement the data that you collect enabling further comparisons and insight.

Decide on Data Collection Methods

There are a number of methods and strategies that can be used to obtain information from internal and external sources. Some data collection sources are already in place, such as the questions addressed during your program self-assessment and the interview questions answered by families when they are developing their Family Partnership Agreement.

You will select data collection methods that are likely to provide answers to the key questions you identified in Step 2. Make sure that whatever methods you select will enable you to supply information about your service area as required in the HSPPS 45 CFR §1302.11.

There are also a number of methods and strategies that you can use to gather information. It is a good idea to include both verbal and written strategies. For example, some families may prefer to speak with a team member as they discuss the Head Start program; others may prefer to fill out a survey. An important consideration is to think about which method is likely to result in the best quality data.

In addition, if you want to obtain answers from a large group of people, consider which method is likely to elicit a high number of responses. A long written survey may take too much time for busy parents, while a 15-minute phone call might be a quicker way to ask the same questions. Also, a written survey might be intimidating for parents who are uncomfortable with English reading and writing.

Table 3.1 presents commonly used community assessment data collection methods. Keep in mind that it is sometimes appropriate to combine methods to gather additional detail. For example, after a focus group session, participants could be asked to fill out a survey.

Table 3.1: Data Collection Methods

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Written Survey or Questionnaire	• Can be widely distributed to large numbers of respondents • Can be translated into multiple languages	• Return rate may be low • Requires reading and writing • May require materials to be translated
In-person Interview	• Allows for in-depth responses • Can support language and literacy needs • Allows for more personal connections	• Time consuming to conduct • Time consuming to analyze the responses • May require interpreters to be available
Phone Interview	• Allows for in-depth responses • Can support language and literacy needs • Allows for more personal connections	• Time consuming to analyze the responses • May require interpreters to be available • Requires participants to have access to telephone
Focus Group	• Can select participants to ensure a variety of views • Small enough to allow each person to speak • Can foster a sense of community	• Needs a facilitator and meeting space • Time consuming to analyze the responses • May require interpreters to be available
Large-Group Meeting	• Can offer a variety of perspectives • Can foster a sense of community	• Needs a facilitator and meeting space • Time consuming to analyze the responses • May require interpreters to be available • May have low participation rate • Some participants may feel uncomfortable speaking in a large group

Plan Data Collection Logistics, Including Cultural Considerations

It is important to inform staff, parents, and key stakeholders about the community assessment's purpose and process. Programs use data to direct continuous improvement related to curriculum choice and implementation, teaching practices, professional development, program design, and other program decisions, including changing or targeting the scope of services. If staff, parents, and community partners understand that the community assessment is an important part of the Head Start program's work, it will be easier to collect and use the information. Everyone will understand its purpose and, therefore, be more likely to participate. Keeping participants informed along the way also will spur their interest and motivation.

Assuring participants' confidentiality is an essential part of gathering written or verbal information. Let all participants know that the process is confidential; individual names will not be included in the community assessment report; findings are reported for groups, not individuals; and that participation is optional. State this protocol about confidentiality up front and repeatedly. Ideally, this understanding can be extended to external stakeholders, who may also be more willing to participate if there is meaningful discussion around the importance of protecting the privacy of shared clients.

Once you have developed your interview or survey questions, there are still a number of decisions to make before you begin.

Tell Me More!

For a tool that can help program staff coordinate their efforts as they gather information see Appendix A–1: Community Assessment Matrix.

Tell Me More!

Appendix B includes information about the development and use of surveys and questionnaires, as well as samples of parent and community partner surveys.

Interviews and Focus Groups

- **Will you take handwritten notes or record your conversations?**
  Recordings are useful if you want to include quotes from participants in the community assessment report, but it will take time to review them. Some people may not participate openly because they do not want a recording made of what they have said. Remind them that the information you gather is confidential. Software can now record and transcribe notes at the same time. But if they prefer not to be recorded, take notes instead.

- **How long will an interview take?**
  Before interviews, tell participants how much time you may need. Most people begin to tire and lose interest after an hour of being interviewed in person or after 15 minutes on the phone.

NEW DIRECTOR TIP

Internal Data

Be sure to include internal data on family needs, strengths, and demographics. Consider a separate survey or focus group for staff. You have valuable, readily available information.

- **Will you ask the same questions of all the respondents? Or, will you ask the same general guiding questions and then follow up depending on what the respondents say?** The latter approach enables you to collect comparable information while allowing more freedom and adaptability in how you obtain that information from different respondents. If the questions differ too much from one person to the next, however, it will be much harder to analyze and compare the answers.

> “Creating opportunities for everyone, regardless of literacy level, to have a voice in the community assessment process is critically important.

Surveys and Questionnaires

- **How long will it take to fill out the survey?** Consider how busy respondents are and how much reading and writing are required. Also, keep in mind that some individuals may have limited literacy skills for a variety of reasons. Creating opportunities for everyone to have a voice in the community assessment process is critically important.
- **Is it necessary to have materials translated?** If you are gathering information from non-English speakers, it is important to have the materials translated. Make sure all translated material is accurate and terminology consistent.
- **Are the instructions clear?** Some respondents may not be used to filling out surveys or may have particular issues with concepts like giving a numerical response to a question. It may be helpful to demonstrate or give an example of how to answer these types of questions.

NEW DIRECTOR TIP

Pilot Data Collection Tools

When developing a survey or questionnaire, consider piloting it with a small group of your intended audience. They can provide feedback to ensure your questions are clear and your instructions are easy to follow.

Cultural Considerations

Ideally, team members will be able to communicate with families in their primary language; if this is not feasible, make sure to have interpreters available. One possible strategy is to have family advocates or home visitors distribute and collect family surveys. If they can directly assist adults who have reading difficulties or who prefer an interview format, this will increase the survey response rate and support the staff person’s involvement in the process.

As you plan to conduct the community assessment, make sure to understand and observe the social customs and practices of families whose cultural and linguistic backgrounds differ from your own. Some populations may be cautious about engaging with you, particularly if they don’t know why you are approaching them. In these situations, seek out trusted individuals who can introduce you rather than simply showing up and introducing yourself.

> “By building an in-depth understanding of how to effectively and respectfully interact with people from a wide range of cultures, you will establish a foundation for engaging diverse groups in your program after the community assessment is completed.

NEW DIRECTOR TIP

On-the-Ground Perspective

Consider the benefits of systematically walking or driving through your service area. This provides a firsthand understanding of public transit access, movement patterns, and cultural resources.

There is no one correct approach to interacting with people from different backgrounds; expectations around personal interactions are as many and as diverse as the groups involved. For example, individuals from some cultures may expect interactions with you to be reciprocal, with you beginning by sharing something about yourself, your family, your affiliations, and where you are from. In these situations, allow time to get acquainted before moving on to business. It is important to build an in-depth understanding of how to effectively and respectfully interact with people from a wide range of cultures. You will not only obtain more useful feedback and data, but you will also establish a foundation for engaging diverse groups in the life of your program after the community assessment is completed.

Collecting data related to community resources and strengths can be particularly challenging. The best advice is to build strong relationships with community agencies and maintain ongoing contact with them. Then, when it is time for the community assessment, they are more likely to participate in the process and provide useful information. In fact, representatives from community organizations might be willing to serve on your team.

There are a number of strategies that might help you collect information about community resources. Send a brief questionnaire to a large number of agencies. The strategy is to use a short questionnaire that is not time-consuming and to reach many agencies because a low response rate is likely. You can include a stamped, self-addressed envelope as an incentive to respond. You can follow up with phone calls or interviews when an agency does return the questionnaire. ■

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What new cultural groups have joined your service area since your program's last community assessment? How will you address their communication needs during the next community assessment?

Photographs and maps from the service area can humanize the data and visually highlight key resources and needs.

Gather and Organize Data

Your community assessment data comes from many places and in a variety of forms. Before starting the data collection process, it is important to approach the issue of data management systemically by addressing the following questions:

- How will you keep track of all the data?
- How will you make the data available to key members of your team?
- How will you ensure certain data is kept confidential?
- How will you collect and integrate data over a period of time?
- How can you set up the system so others can step in if your job responsibilities change?
- Do you want to use a graphic information system (GIS) to link gathered data to the respondent's location?

It is beneficial to have a team member who has experience collecting and reporting internal data, such as entering data for PIR or management reports. This team member can help set up a system for managing the data.

It is likely most data, especially quantitative data, will be stored on a computer. Keep in mind that the data management system needs to be understood by key members of the team, particularly if they will be involved in analyzing the data and making contributions to the community assessment report. ■

Tell Me More!

To help keep track of your data see Appendix A–5.1 [Sample Template for Data Collection](#).

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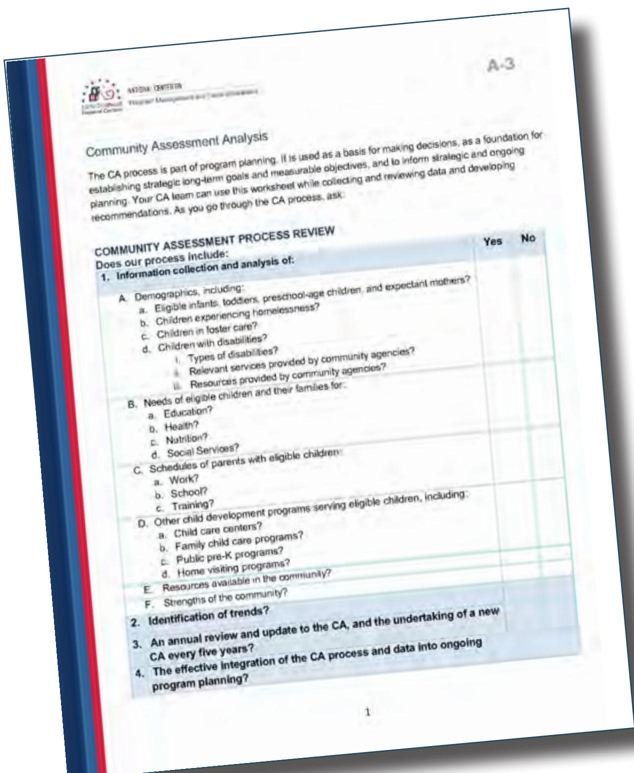
Technology is always evolving. What technical expertise did your previous community assessment team require? What technical expertise does your future community assessment team require?

Once you have mastered data collection, you may feel as though your work is basically done. Data is only valuable, however, if it's been analyzed and understood. Step 4, Analyze and Make Decisions, will help you make sense of the information you have gathered and determine what it means for your program.

Tools for Collecting Data

A host of proven data collection tools can help community assessment teams focus their efforts and act upon their findings.

The **Sample Head Start Parent Survey** offers an efficient way to collect a lot of information fast about the pre-school families programs serve. **See Appendix B–1.1.**



A-3

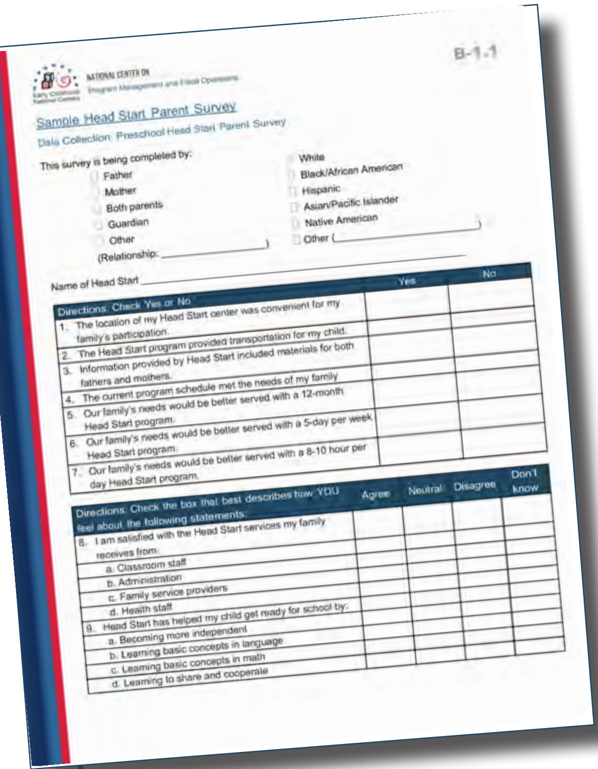
Community Assessment Analysis

The CA process is part of program planning. It is used as a basis for making decisions, as a foundation for establishing strategic long-term goals and measurable objectives, and to inform strategic and ongoing planning. Your CA team can use this worksheet while collecting and reviewing data and developing recommendations. As you go through the CA process, ask:

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT PROCESS REVIEW Does our process include:	Yes	No
1. Information collection and analysis of:		
A. Demographics, including: a. Eligible infants, toddlers, preschool-age children, and expectant mothers? b. Children experiencing homelessness? c. Children in foster care? d. Children with disabilities? i. Types of disabilities? ii. Relevant services provided by community agencies? iii. Resources provided by community agencies?		
B. Needs of eligible children and their families for: a. Education? b. Health? c. Nutrition? d. Social Services?		
C. Schedules of parents with eligible children: a. Work? b. School? c. Training?		
D. Other child development programs serving eligible children, including: a. Child care centers? b. Family child care programs? c. Public pre-K programs? d. Home visiting programs?		
E. Resources available in the community?		
F. Strengths of the community?		
2. Identification of trends?		
3. An annual review and update to the CA, and the undertaking of a new CA every five years?		
4. The effective integration of the CA process and data into ongoing program planning?		

1

The **Community Assessment Analysis** can help establish strategic long-term goals and measurable objectives. **See Appendix A–3.**


B-1.1

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Sample Head Start Parent Survey

Data Collection: Preschool Head Start Parent Survey

This survey is being completed by:

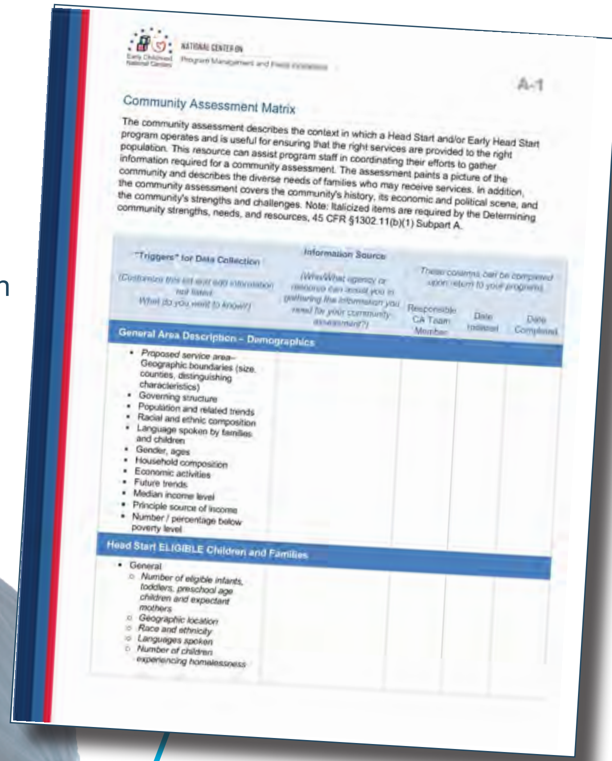
- Father
- Mother
- Both parents
- Guardian
- Other (Relationship:)

- White
- Black/African American
- Hispanic
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Native American
- Other ( )

Name of Head Start

Directions: Check Yes or No	Yes	No
1. The location of my Head Start center was convenient for my family's participation.		
2. The Head Start program provided transportation for my child.		
3. Information provided by Head Start included materials for both fathers and mothers.		
4. The current program schedule met the needs of my family		
5. Our family's needs would be better served with a 12-month Head Start program.		
6. Our family's needs would be better served with a 5-day per week Head Start program.		
7. Our family's needs would be better served with a 8-10 hour per day Head Start program.		

Directions: Check the box that best describes how YOU feel about the following statements:	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Don't know
8. I am satisfied with the Head Start services my family receives from:				
a. Classroom staff				
b. Administration				
c. Family service providers				
d. Health staff				
9. Head Start has helped my child get ready for school by:				
a. Becoming more independent				
b. Learning basic concepts in language				
c. Learning basic concepts in math				
d. Learning to share and cooperate				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A-1

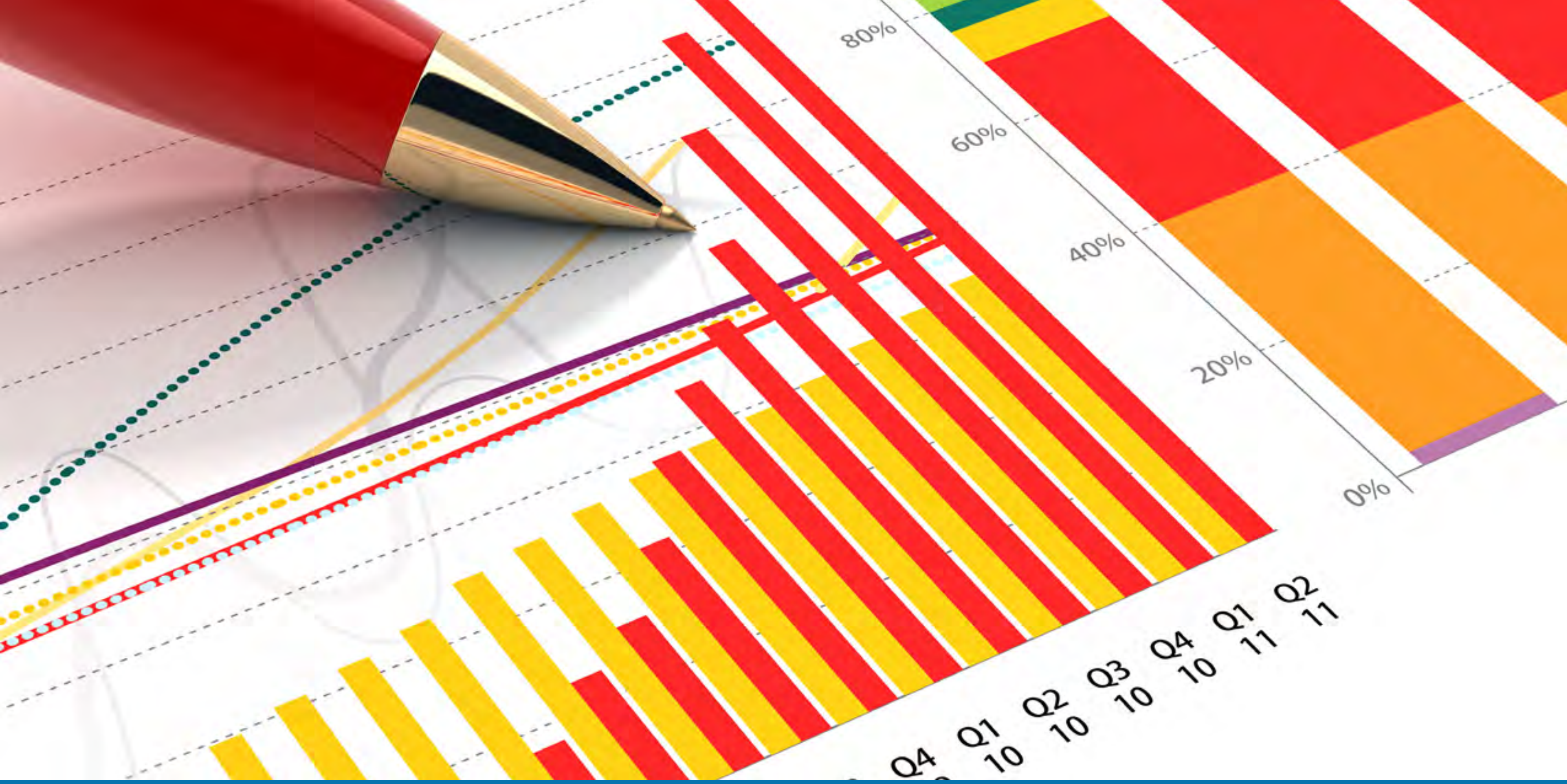
Community Assessment Matrix

The community assessment describes the context in which a Head Start and/or Early Head Start program operates and is useful for ensuring that the right services are provided to the right population. This resource can assist program staff in coordinating their efforts to gather information required for a community assessment. The assessment paints a picture of the community and describes the diverse needs of families who may receive services. In addition, the community assessment covers the community's history, its economic and political scene, and the community's strengths and challenges. Note: Italicized items are required by the Determining community strengths, needs, and resources, 45 CFR §1302.11(b)(1) Subpart A.

"Triggers" for Data Collection (Customize this list and add information not listed. What do you need to know?)	Information Source (Who/What agency or resource can assist you in gathering the information you need for your community assessment?)	These columns can be completed upon return to your program. Responsible CA Team Member	Date Initiated	Date Completed
General Area Description – Demographics				
• Proposed service area—Geographic boundaries (size, counties, distinguishing characteristics) • Governing structure • Population and related trends • Racial and ethnic composition • Language spoken by families and children • Gender, ages • Household composition • Economic activities • Future trends • Median income level • Principle source of income • Number / percentage below poverty level				
Head Start ELIGIBLE Children and Families				
• General ○ *Number of eligible infants, toddlers, preschool age children and expectant mothers* ○ *Geographic location* ○ *Race and ethnicity* ○ *Languages spoken* ○ *Number of children experiencing homelessness*				

The **Community Assessment Matrix** helps staff collect community information and identify the diverse needs of families who may receive services.

See Appendix A–1.



step 4

analyze and make decisions

Getting Started

Even before you have collected all your data, you can begin interpreting the emerging trends. This will enable you to make adjustments in your data collection tools or approaches, as needed, to improve the quality of the responses you are getting or to fill information gaps. For example, if survey respondents are frequently skipping a particular question, consider whether rewording the question would result in more responses. In analyzing the data, ask your team to look deeper than simply tabulating results. What do the findings mean about trends and changes in your community? What patterns are occurring? What possible actions should be taken by your program based on what you have learned?

Learning Objectives

Step 4, Analyze and Make Decisions, is the main payoff of the community assessment. It is the reason you have been doing all this work. In this section you will learn:

- The purpose and procedures of data analysis
- Common data analysis strategies and procedures
- How to use community assessment findings to inform decision-making

Review Data Analysis Purpose and Procedures

Data analysis is conducted through a series of different procedures designed to reveal what the data has to "say." This process of obtaining results from the data you have collected is already a part of what program staff do in the course of their ongoing work. Think about data collection and data analysis as evolving. They are not finite processes, even though they do have to be conducted with timelines and deadlines in mind.

Here are some examples of data analysis techniques that are probably familiar:

- Calculating the percentage of enrolled children whose home language is Spanish
- Tallying the average scores provided by staff asked to rate the effectiveness of an inservice training on a scale of 1–5
- Summarizing the most important comments from parents asked to indicate their preference for half-day versus full-day program options.

> " Data analysis is the process of combining, comparing, and finding patterns in quantitative and qualitative data in order to highlight useful information, answer specific questions, and inform decision-making.

Purpose of Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of combining, comparing, and finding patterns in data to highlight useful information, answer specific questions, and inform decision-making. Quantitative data includes numerical counts, percentages, community demographics, and qualitative data refers to opinions, feelings, themes, ideas. Throughout Step 4, it is crucial to keep in mind the overarching purpose of the community assessment and the reason why your program is analyzing detailed information about the service area:

To design a program that meets community needs, and builds on strengths and resources (45 CFR §1302.11 (b))

Tell Me More!

See Appendix C–1 for community assessment requirements in the HSPPS or Appendix C–2 for community assessment requirements in the Head Start Act.

As you begin to develop your data analysis plan, you will need to make decisions about what kinds of analytic procedures to use and how to present the findings. Although the process may seem overwhelming at times, data analysis is a logical sequence of steps. As you tackle each step sequentially and in a deliberate and thoughtful way, a clearer picture of your community will begin to emerge. If you are unclear about whether it is important to analyze a particular data set, review the HSPPS requirements and ask if the data analysis is addressing the topics set forth in Step 2.

Considerations in Conducting Data Analysis

Planning is an integral part of the data analysis process. It is helpful to identify in advance the resources you will need to implement data analysis. For example, will data from parents or others need to be translated? Will additional clerical, administrative, or technological support be needed? Will you need to plan for staff to work additional hours?

It will help enormously if some team members can devote time to data analysis as it begins to come in, rather than after all the data has been collected. When problems with data quality or gaps in data sets are identified early on, adjustments in collection can be made immediately. In addition, ongoing analysis may enable you to follow up on preliminary results by asking more in-depth questions or contacting additional people with experience or expertise in the emerging issues.

> It will help enormously if team members can devote time to data analysis as data begins to come in, rather than only after all the data has been collected.

Key Considerations in Preparing to Analyze Data

- Ensure all data analysis team members and others on the community assessment team understand the importance of the data analysis and its impact on the provision of Head Start services to eligible children and families.
    - If your program has hired consultants to help with the community assessment, ask them to provide preliminary analysis of collected data at specified intervals.
    - Keep key staff informed of your progress and ask them to support the data analysis process by reviewing preliminary findings. This can allow for early course correction or the inclusion of additional in-depth questions to explore an emerging or new issue.
- Solicit ideas from the governing body/Tribal Council and Policy Council about the data analysis process. Do they have particular questions they would like the data analysis to address? Do they have suggestions about the best ways to format the data, such as in graphs, tables, or maps? As the data analysis gets under way, continue to solicit their suggestions.
- Include a strategy to update the governing body/Tribal Council, Policy Council, and other key players about the progress and findings emerging from the data analysis. Ensure the results are useful and presented in a format that can be understood by a layperson. In particular, ask if the visual presentations, such as tables and graphs, are effective and comprehensible.
- Identify tools that support data analysis.

Tell Me More!

The Dual Language Learners Program Assessment (DLLPA) helps programs assess their systems and services to ensure the full and effective participation of children who are DLLs and their families. The DLLPA also supports fully integrated culturally and linguistically responsive practices.

Select Data Analysis Strategies and Procedures

How do you decide which data analysis procedures to use? The wording of the questions you asked and the actual data collected will influence your choice of analytical procedures to use and the results that will follow. Because most community assessments gather both quantitative and qualitative data, programs need to use a variety of analytical procedures that match the data collected. One community assessment consultant stated,

> *Only using statistics to get a sense of what's going on in a service area is like looking through a dirty window. You have to go outside to really get the clearest view of what's happening in the neighborhood. You have to walk around and talk to people.*

Many techniques and procedures for data analysis exist. Decisions about which to use at what times depends on the data collected and the type of insights you wish to gain from its analysis. Appendix B has several resources regarding data analysis, including information about:

- Data analysis techniques
- Displaying the data
- Attributes of good data display
- Annotated data bibliography
- Glossary of data analysis terms and concepts

Tell Me More!

For an overview of some of the most commonly used data analysis procedures, see Appendix B–2: Data Analysis Techniques.

Interpret the Data

It is important to have a process that allows for ongoing and in-depth analysis of questions. The interpretation of the data relies on a full understanding of the processes, procedures, and actions involved as well as the analysis of the data. Decision-making is enhanced by having quality data, conducting a thorough analysis, and allowing adequate time for interpretation. Moving to action too soon will prevent you from examining an issue from multiple angles, thoughtfully reflecting on emerging findings, and obtaining feedback from others.

“ Moving to action too soon will prevent you from examining an issue from multiple angles, thoughtfully reflecting on emerging findings, and obtaining feedback from others.

Make Decisions

The HSPPS state that the information gathered in the community assessment must guide a number of decisions in order to design a program that meets community needs and builds upon its strengths and resources (45 CFR §1302.11(b)). Specifically, data analysis must inform decisions regarding:

- Identifying children from diverse economic backgrounds that would be supported by other funding, including private pay in addition to the program's eligible funded enrollment (45 CFR §1302.11(b)(3))
- Establishing ongoing collaborative relationships and partnerships with community organizations to facilitate access to community services that are responsive to children's and families' needs, family partnership goals, and community needs and resources (45 CFR §1302.53(a)(1))
- Establishing goals and measurable objectives, including strategic long-term goals (45 CFR §1302.102(a)(1))
- Choosing a program option and developing a program calendar (45 CFR §1302.20(a)(1-2))
- Establishing, modifying, and revising selection criteria (45 CFR §1302.14(a)(1))
- Designing and implementing program-wide coordinated approaches that ensure the full and effective participation of children who are dual language learners, children with disabilities, and their families (45 CFR §1302.101(b)(2-3))
- Identifying community nutrition issues that may impact child health status (45 CFR §1302.42(b)(4))
- Determining whether to reserve enrollment slots for children experiencing homelessness or children in foster care (45 CFR §1302.15(c))
- Petitioning for a waiver to allow eligibility to be determined using a different method or alternative criteria based upon community assessment and other data sources (45 CFR §1302.12(a)(3))

Your community assessment data, when examined with internal data from ongoing monitoring and self-assessment, can guide other decisions such as facility and transportation needs.

Tell Me More!

See Appendix D–6 for a Glossary of Data Analysis Terms and Concepts.

Tell Me More!

Topic 4 in Foundations for Excellence: A Guide for Five-Year Planning and Continuous Improvement, 2nd Edition *offers four case studies that model how data from community assessments can drive program goals, objectives, and action plans.*

Figure 4.1 identifies six decision areas informed by community assessment data. It is important to use the community assessment data analysis to establish priorities, develop recommendations, and make decisions within each of these areas.

Tell Me More!

For a tool to help program staff coordinate their efforts as they gather information, see Appendix A–1: Community Assessment Matrix.

Long-Term Goals and Measurable Objectives

HSPPS 45 CFR §1302.102(a)(1-4) requires Head Start programs, in collaboration with the governing body/Tribal Council and Policy Council, to establish goals and measurable objectives that include:

- Strategic long-term goals for ensuring programs are responsive to community needs identified in the community assessment
- 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 aligned with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five (ELOF); state and tribal early learning standards, as appropriate; and the requirements and expectations of schools Head Start children will attend
- Effective health and safety practices to ensure children are safe at all times

Community assessment findings related to immediate child, family, and community needs will be used by the Head Start agency to develop program goals and objectives. Keep in mind that program goals are broad statements that move the program forward in its mission and demonstrate the agency's commitment to continuous quality improvement and the establishment of strong management, fiscal, and service delivery systems. Program goals are paired with objectives, which also identify resources needed to carry out the objectives. When its objectives are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely (SMART), the program can effectively assess its progress toward achieving planned changes within the specified timeline.

Program Options and Calendar

Head Start programs must choose to operate one or more of the following program options: center-based, home-based, family child care, or an approved locally-designed variation. In order to operate a locally-designed program option, a program must request and be approved for a waiver (45 CFR §1302.24)). The program options chosen must be based on the needs of children and families, as supported by data identified in your community assessment (45 CFR §1302.20(a)(1)).

As you review program options, you need to consider the following data:

- What families say they want or need
- Availability of child development, child care centers, and family child care programs in your service area and the number of Head Start children who use them (or who are on their waiting lists)
- Typical work, school, and training schedules of parents with eligible children
- Estimates of population growth for Head Start-eligible families

As required in 45 CFR §1302.20(a)(2), Head Start programs must consider the results of the annual community assessment in choosing a program option and developing a program calendar. Specifically, programs must determine whether child and family needs would be better served by:

1. Converting existing slots to full school day or full-working day slots
2. Extending the program year
3. Converting existing Head Start slots to Early Head Start slots

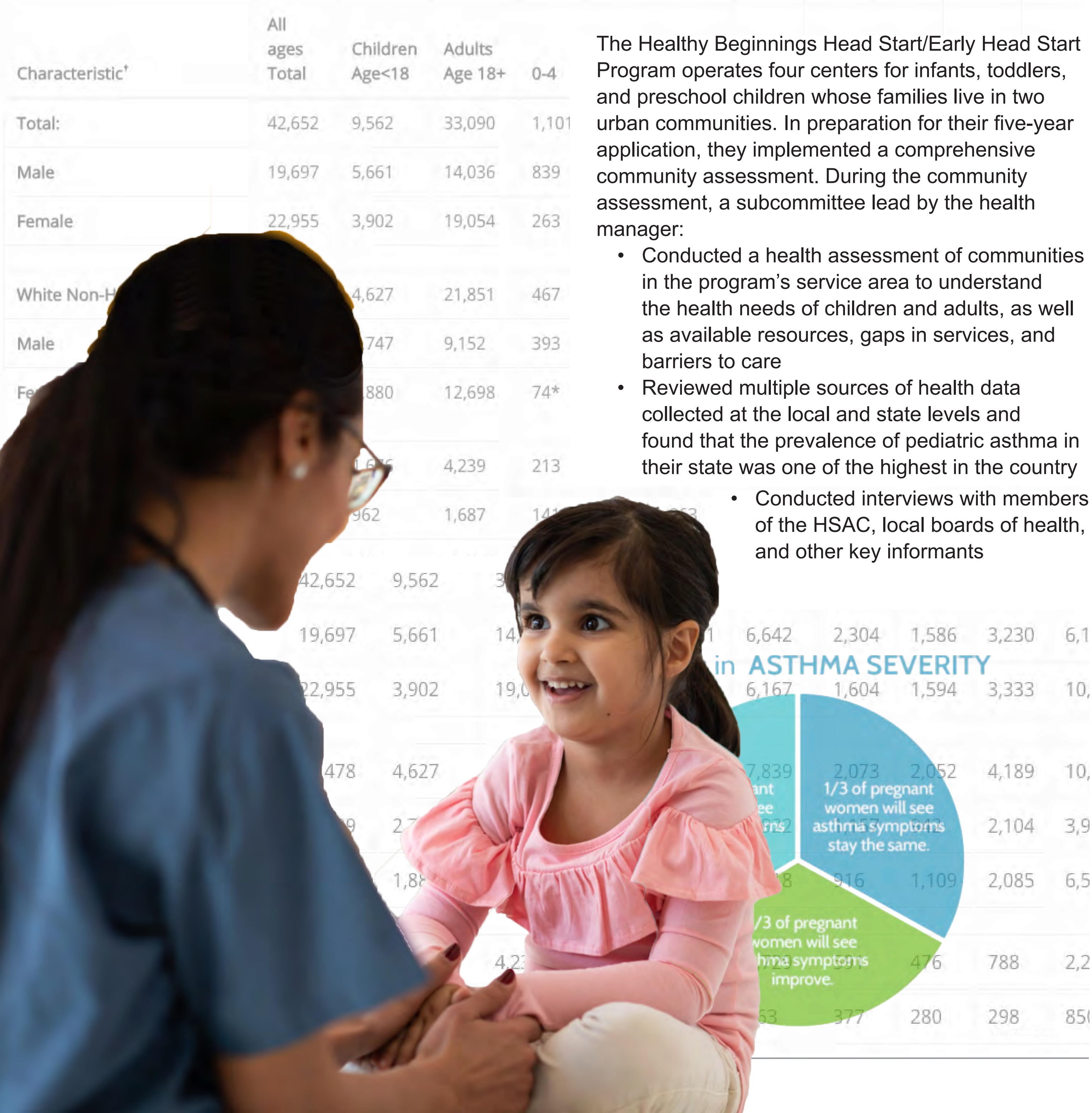
In addition, programs must seek other ways to promote continuity of care and services and identify alternative revenue sources to support full-working-day services. If no additional funding is available, program resources may be used. ■

? *How did previous community assessment impact your program's options and calendar? What additional changes do you anticipate with your next community assessment and what data will help you affirm or refute this expectation?*

How a Community Assessment Informed Program Planning

Learn how a health services need identified through a community assessment informed program planning and promoted regular attendance.

Collect Data



The Healthy Beginnings Head Start/Early Head Start Program operates four centers for infants, toddlers, and preschool children whose families live in two urban communities. In preparation for their five-year application, they implemented a comprehensive community assessment. During the community assessment, a subcommittee lead by 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
- 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
- Conducted interviews with members of the HSAC, local boards of health, and other key informants

Aggregate and Analyze

Through this assessment, the health manager learned 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 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 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 a local asthma organization families could attend; the closest one was an hour and a half away.

Data collection established additional findings.

- After analyzing attendance data, the subcommittee noted that 90 percent of children with asthma were frequently absent. They were in the group of children identified as being at risk of missing 10 percent of program days.
- After talking with teachers, the subcommittee learned the teachers felt comfortable implementing individual healthcare plans, but were not confident about identifying triggers in their classrooms that might aggravate a child's asthma.
- After meeting with families, the subcommittee discovered 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.

Use and Share Data

The community assessment subcommittee shared their findings with the HSAC and offered some recommendations. The committee, in turn, suggested several strategies which included connecting the program to a local business that had previously funded community health initiatives. Following up on these strategies, Healthy Beginnings developed a comprehensive approach to asthma management that maximized learning and promoted regular attendance. This included:

- Developing an asthma policy that included 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
- Implementing a two-year local health initiative with the ABC Healthy Living Company to establish an asthma education home visiting program for families with children with asthma
- Working with the local hospital and the regional chapter of the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America to establish an asthma education support group for program families and other members of the community

To learn more about this case study and how this community assessment informed program planning see Foundations for Excellence: A Guide for Five-Year Planning and Continuous Improvement, 2nd Edition.

Service Areas, Recruitment Areas, and Program Locations

> Your community assessment will provide detailed information about the location of eligible families, including populations that may be underserved.

In the grant application, each program must propose a service area and define that area by county or sub-county, such as a municipality, town, census tract, or jurisdiction of a federally-recognized Indian reservation (45 CFR §1302.11(a)(1)). The community assessment is a valuable tool for helping programs identify their service area and any need for changes to the service area. If a program decides to change its service area after the grant has been approved, the program must submit a new service area proposal to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) for approval. Service areas can be vast. It is helpful to use the community assessment to identify areas with the greatest need for service, even if your program is not currently serving children in those areas. Focus your recruitment efforts there.

Your community assessment will provide detailed information about the location of eligible families, including populations that may be underserved. You will have current information about attendance and waiting lists at Head Start locations, as well as data regarding other child development programs in the community. If waiting lists are small or attendance is poor at some sites, you may need to reconsider the locations.

Identifying historical and geographic trends is fundamental to program planning. This data on children under age 5 can inform where services are most needed and may suggest future need.

Figure 22: Children under Age Five

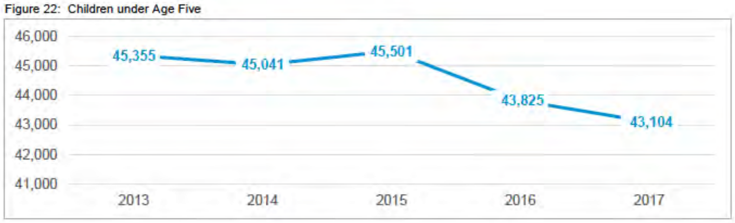
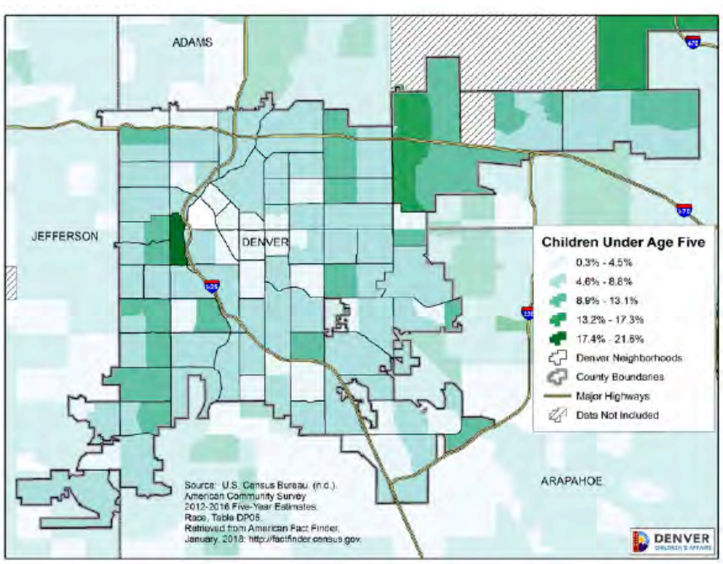


Figure 23: Children under Age Five



Source: Denver Great Kids Head Start Community Assessment 2018, page 18.

The chosen recruitment area should include as many eligible children as possible. The concentration of families and the availability and accessibility of facilities are additional factors to consider when making this recommendation. Include maps in your report that show the current service and recruitment areas, as well as maps of proposed changes.

Decisions about center locations can be difficult to make. Your considerations include staffing patterns, budget considerations, the availability of sites, and their accessibility to families. Sometimes, programs need to make difficult recommendations based on changing patterns of residence or employment. Your data analysis may indicate your program should consider closing a center or relocating services closer to where families live and work. On the other hand, your data analysis may indicate that more eligible families are arriving in the service area. If findings result in the need for expansion of services, be creative in seeking solutions, such as partnering with community-based programs or seeking funding from other sources if Head Start funding is not available.

Recruitment, Selection Criteria, and Enrollment Priorities

According to the HSPPS, each year, programs must establish selection criteria based on community assessment data that affect how participant selection is prioritized. Factors to be considered when establishing selection criteria include (45 CFR §1302.14(a)(1)):

- Community needs identified in the community assessment
- Family income
- Whether the child is experiencing homelessness or is in foster care
- The child's age
- Child's eligibility for special education, early intervention services, or related services, as determined under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (20 U.S.C. 1400, et seq.)
- Other relevant family or child risk factors

The community assessment is designed, in part, to identify which children and their families are most in need of Head Start services. As a result, your program may need to revise its recruitment and selection criteria to better reach these populations. Likewise, changes in enrollment may require relocating existing centers or redesigning program options.

As population shifts or changes in population needs begin to emerge within communities, the Head Start program should reflect that change in its recruitment and selection priorities. There are several factors identified in the HSPPS regarding the establishment of recruitment and selection criteria based on the community assessment. A program must take into consideration any significant changes including increased availability of publicly funded pre-kindergarten (including how it meets the needs of the parents and children served, and whether it is offered for a full school day), rates of family and child homelessness, and to community demographics and resources. A program must also consider whether the characteristics of the community allow it to include children from diverse economic backgrounds who would be supported by other funding sources, including private pay, in addition to the program's eligible funded enrollment (45 CFR §1302.11(b)(3)).

If the community assessment finds need, the HSPPS do allow for a program to reserve one or more enrollment slots when a vacancy occurs for pregnant women and children experiencing homelessness and children in foster care (45 CFR §1302.15(c)). It is understood that children in these situations could benefit greatly from the comprehensive services offered by Head Start. ■

NEW DIRECTOR TIP

Know Your Community

Your community assessment can help you better understand the language and literacy needs in your community so that you can be more effective in your recruitment strategies. It can also help you identify key recruitment sites and organizations across the service area.

? *How does your program identify and recruit families with the greatest need? What additional data might help you further focus your efforts?*

Tell Me More!

To ensure decisions are data-informed use the Appendix A–4: Identifying Data and Data-Based Decisions Worksheet.

Services and Coordinated Approaches

The community assessment enables programs to make informed decisions about service delivery. It amplifies the voices of families in the community. It also provides specific data to help programs understand demographic changes, such as new or underserved populations in the service area, and identifies ways in which programs might address newly identified needs. Community assessment data can inform the development and implementation of the program's coordinated approach to service delivery for children who are DLLs, children with disabilities, and their families (45 CFR §1302.101(b)(2 and 3). The community assessment helps programs consider how to use resources to advance cultural competence, foster equity, and reduce disparities. Using a strengths-based approach, the community assessment can help mobilize community resources and partnerships. You should use the community assessment to gauge the specific types of services and resources needed.

Through the community assessment, a program can determine the skills and competencies needed in the existing workforce, as well as gaps in professional development. When making decisions based on the community assessment, a review of staffing and workforce issues should be included. Does your staff have the knowledge and skills required to implement the services? Do they have the support and resources they need? What professional development needs might arise? How are they connected to the community? Are they culturally and linguistically responsive to children and families in the community? Community assessment data can be instrumental in designing and implementing a coordinated approach to training and professional development that effectively supports the delivery of high-quality services (45 CFR §1302.101(b)(1).

Collaborative Partnerships

As noted throughout this guide, all programs must establish community relationships and partnerships with local organizations to facilitate access to services that are responsive to children and families (45 CFR §1302.53(a)). The community assessment findings will help programs make informed decisions about whether and with whom to establish agreements, procedures, and contracts. Based on community assessment data, discussions with potential partners can focus on where services might best be delivered and how to coordinate those services to meet the unique needs of eligible children and families.

Programs are also required to promote the coordination of systems of comprehensive early childhood services to low-income families (45 CFR §1302.53(b)). Using the community assessment data, programs can determine appropriate partners for service provision, information-sharing, and ongoing communication.

Establish Priorities and Recommendations

You will need to prioritize your decisions and recommendations based on the community assessment data. This is especially true if your list of recommendations is lengthy or costly. Provide your rationale for prioritizing one recommendation over another. Some reasons you might give include:

- It can be implemented more easily.
- It addresses a greater need.
- It responds to a trend that, in the next few years, will impact the program. By putting the recommendation into place now, your program will be prepared.
- It involves working with a community partner and the time is right for you to collaborate due to leadership, funding, or shared mission. By partnering now, you can maximize your resources and offer improved service delivery to families and children.

“ You will need to prioritize your decisions and recommendations based on the community assessment data.

Identifying Trends

Trend data gathered through the community assessment can be particularly valuable in helping you frame and prioritize recommendations. Your report needs to refer to trends when they are relevant. Typically, such trends are revealed in interviews or survey questions that ask respondents to reflect on changes over time, such as, “What changes have you noticed over the last three to five years?” You might ask mental health providers or food banks if they have observed population shifts or changes in their clients’ needs. These kinds of questions look at the big picture, and give you a sense of what trends might affect your Head Start program in the future. For example, discussions with local school officials may indicate that a state-funded preschool program is going to expand in the next few years and offer preschool services to all low-income 4-year-olds. As a result, your program may decide to coordinate with the state programs to provide a broader range of services and options to families or to prioritize 3-year-olds for upcoming enrollment opportunities.

Census and PIR data spanning a period of time can also point to demographic and family changes. Estimates of eligible populations are another source of trend data and can help you forecast future program services. ■

? *How does your program decide how the findings will be prioritized?*

You have analyzed the data, drawn meaning from the results, and established priorities and recommendations based on the community assessment findings. Step 5, Communicate and Incorporate, will lead you to the finish line and beyond, as you prepare the community assessment report and embed its findings into your ongoing program planning.

A Closer Look

Telling Your Story with Data

Effective visualization helps users analyze and reason about data and evidence. It makes complex data more accessible, understandable, and usable. It engages the reader, supports multiple learning styles, and reveals trends at a glance. Consider these graphics from real Head Start community assessment reports.

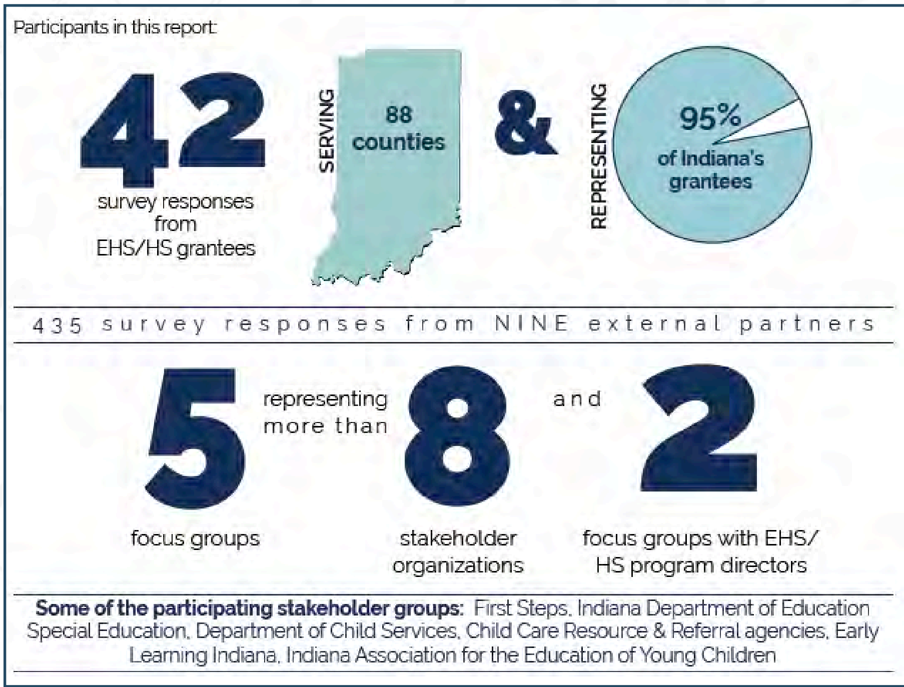
	COULD NOT ACCESS SERVICE	DIFFICULT TO ACCESS NEEDED SERVICE	OK TO ACCESS NEEDED SERVICE	EASY TO ACCESS NEEDED SERVICE	DO NOT NEED THIS TYPE OF SERVICE	TOTAL
Child care	6% 5	7% 6	19% 15	26% 21	42% 34	81
Early education	4% 3	5% 4	25% 20	43% 34	24% 19	80
Medical/ Health	0% 0	6% 5	21% 16	32% 25	41% 32	78
Children's mental health	1% 1	13% 10	14% 11	26% 20	46% 36	78
Adult mental health	4% 3	12% 9	12% 9	13% 10	59% 44	75
Special needs	1% 1	9% 7	13% 10	18% 14	59% 46	78
Addiction/ substance abuse	1% 1	5% 4	6% 5	9% 7	78% 62	79
Domestic violence	1% 1	4% 3	8% 6	9% 7	78% 60	77
Food/ nutrition	0% 0	8% 6	17% 13	29% 23	46% 36	78
Housing assistance	3% 2	8% 6	13% 10	18% 14	59% 47	79
Transportation	5% 4	8% 6	15% 12	16% 13	56% 44	79
Affordable phone/ internet	3% 2	13% 10	14% 11	14% 11	57% 45	79
Financial assistance	4% 3	14% 11	17% 13	16% 12	49% 37	76

Comments (0)

Either or Both?

These two charts share the same data. The colorful bar graph quickly exposes key trends and offers food for thought. The chart of numerical data lets you dig into the specifics. Together they can drive research and inform decision-making.

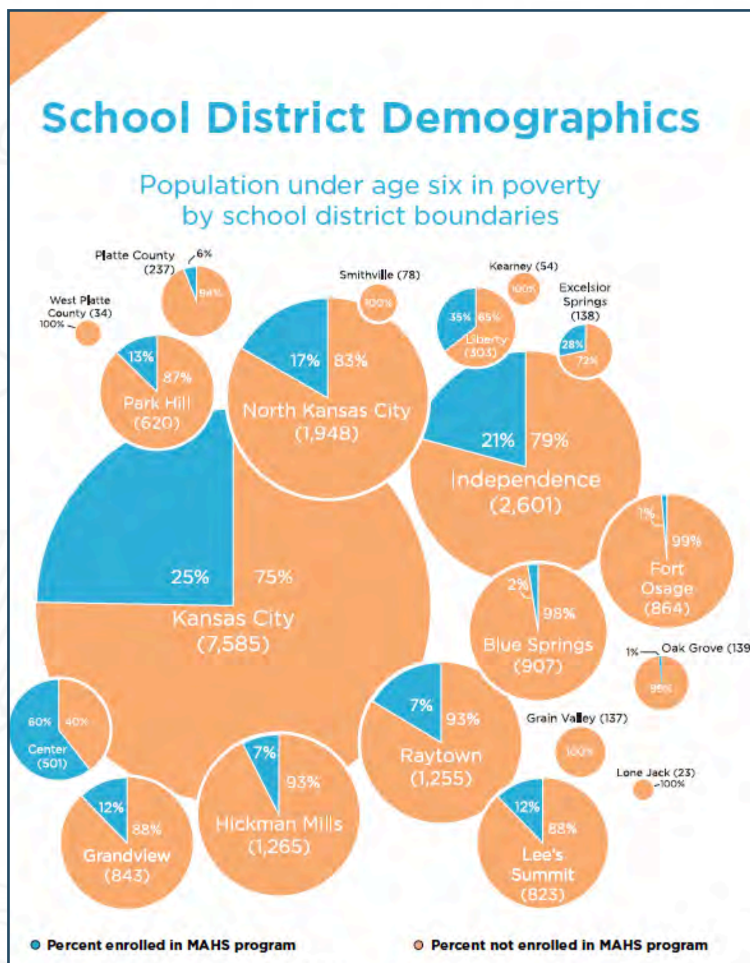
Source: Explorers Academy, Head Start, Inc Five-Year Community Assessment, February 2018, page 78.



Source: [2018 Indiana Early Head Start and Head Start Needs Assessment Report., page 5](#).

The Power of Big Numbers

Community assessment reports commonly list their research methodologies and participants. This display reveals what advertisers have long known, big numbers grab the reader's attention. You looked here first didn't you? Used wisely, prominent numbers are "brain candy."



Source: [MARC (Mid-America Regional Council) 2017–2018 Mid-America Head Start Community Assessment, page 7.](#)

Data Maps

Smart infographics balance data and visualization. This graphic shows the percentage of children enrolled in programs in relation to the total number of children under the age of 6 living in poverty. At a glance you can see which communities are served and where there may be gaps in service.

step 5
communicate and incorporate

Getting Started

As you turn toward preparing the community assessment report, consider whether there are additional ways you would like to present the information to your community and key stakeholders, as well as individuals who participated in your data collection activities. You may want to report to the entire community or limit the results to your agency and OHS. Depending on your audience, you might decide to hold a meeting to discuss the results or augment the written report with a PowerPoint presentation, short video recap, or community fact sheet. Be sure to summarize the results in accessible, clear language accompanied by easy-to-interpret charts, tables, graphs, and photographs.

Learning Objectives

Documenting the community assessment process, findings, and recommendations will enable your staff, partners, OHS, and other key stakeholders to benefit from what you have learned. It will also help them understand the reasoning behind certain program decisions. In this chapter, you will learn how to:

- Prepare the community assessment report
- Communicate the data and recommendations
- Review and update the community assessment
- Integrate the community assessment process into ongoing strategic and program planning

“ Above all, keep asking yourself if the community assessment report is providing information that helps answer this essential question: How can Head Start ensure the correct services are provided to the appropriate population?

Prepare the Community Assessment Report

As you can see, there is a great deal of information gathered and analyzed for the community assessment. Not every detail or piece of raw data needs to be included in the report. In fact, the team will have to make decisions about what information to include and, in particular, how to analyze and summarize what is included. Visual presentations, such as charts and graphs, can help immensely.

If you have used an outside consultant to collect and analyze data, it is likely they will also be involved in writing the report. To ensure your report includes all the essential components of the community assessment, be sure to work closely with the consultant to prepare the report outline and review and edit the complete draft report. Ultimately, the report must meet the needs of your group and core stakeholders. Communicating with the consultant throughout the process will ensure the final product meets your unique situation.

There are many ways to present all the information gathered and analyzed for the community assessment. Figure 5.1 provides a sample community assessment outline and page estimate; this sample report contains approximately 50 pages, with appendices.

Table 5.1: Sample Community Assessment Outline

I. Executive Summary	
1–2 pages	Highlights your methods of data collection and analysis, major findings, and recommendations.
II. Table of Contents	
1 page	Identifies the sections of the report and corresponding page numbers.
III. Overview of the State of the Grantee	
3–5 pages	Summarizes the program history, location of the sites, staffing patterns, and other general information. A map may be included to show the service and recruitment areas as well as program locations.

IV. Methodology	
2–3 pages	Describes the planning process, data collection methods, and data analysis.
V. Service Area Data	
6–10 pages	Details basic geographic, economic, and demographic features, including required data on the number of eligible children and expectant mothers, children experiencing homelessness, children in foster care, and children with disabilities.
VI. Identified Needs	
8–11 pages	Discusses the education, health, nutrition and social service needs of eligible children and their families, including prevalent social or economic factors that impact their well-being.
VII. Community Resources and Strengths	
8–11 pages	Includes required information on other child development programs, resources available in the community, and community strengths. Addresses issues of availability and access to resources for families.
VIII. Observations and Recommendations	
5–7 pages	Uses the findings in the community assessment to make recommendations about the program and to identify trends in the service area. Five-year goals can be included in this section.
IX. Appendices	
As needed	Includes surveys, interview questions, other documents, and supplemental data.

Depending on the data you have gathered and the recommendations you propose, you may want to structure the community assessment report somewhat differently. Above all, keep asking yourself if the community assessment report is providing information that helps answer this essential question: How can Head Start ensure that the correct services are provided to the appropriate population?

Create a Professional Presentation

Your community assessment report should be visually appealing, reader-friendly, and professional. These are key characteristics of effective written presentations. As you write the report, always keep in mind your intended audience; this includes varied groups, such as federal officials, community partners, staff, parents, and others. Some may know little or nothing about your program or Head Start, so it is important to provide sufficient context that the published report can stand on its own, without added background information. Here are some tips for creating an effective presentation.

- Write in a logical, organized way.
- Add maps, charts, and illustrations for clarity. Information displayed visually may be more easily understood by community members, Head Start staff, and parents.
- Make sure your conclusions are supported by the data analysis and synthesis.
- Ensure the sections of the report read smoothly and easily. This is particularly important if multiple authors contributed to writing the report.

Tell Me More!

For help determining whether your community assessment report is complete, well organized, and readable, see the Appendix A–2: Community Assessment Report Checklist.

Here are some tips for making your document reader-friendly.

- Use accessible written conventions, (e.g., short paragraphs, headings for major sections, page numbers).
- Provide visual displays of the data to accompany the text (e.g., charts, graphs, maps).
- Define Head Start-specific terms, abbreviations, and acronyms. The reader may not be familiar with the Head Start community, service area, terms, or abbreviations commonly used by Head Start programs. Consider providing a glossary of terms.
- Provide reference citations for internal and external data. Use a standard style for citations (e.g., report title, authors, date of publication, etc.). Sources can either be entered as footnotes or as in-line citations, with the full reference included in the report's bibliography.
- Format charts, graphs, and other patterns with an eye toward high-contrast color combinations that are engaging and easy to see.

Tell Me More!

See Appendix B–4, Attribute of Good Data Display, for checklists of structural and functional attributes to consider when preparing data for presentation or distribution.

Follow these conventions for tables, charts, and graphs.

- Include a title for each table, chart, and graph.
- Use tables to present columns or lists of data.
- Number tables in consecutive order (i.e., Table 1, Table 2, etc.).

- Label each visual display of results, such as a graph, map, or pie chart, as a figure, and number each figure in consecutive order (e.g., Figure 1, Figure 2, etc.).
- Place each table and figure close to the appropriate text.

Considerations for Maps

Maps are often included in the community assessment because they are helpful in presenting complex data in a way that can be easily understood. Population patterns, for example, can be displayed on maps of the service and recruitment areas. By showing the location of Head Start centers on maps, information about eligible families and their access to programs can be presented visually along with the explanatory text.

Maps need to be clear, with readable symbols, shading, and legends to differentiate items. Maps most often include features such as:

- Service area boundaries
- Recruitment areas
- Locations of existing Head Start centers, including those under construction, and family child care homes with the funded enrollment of each site
- Locations of other child development programs in the service area

Reporting Community Resources and Strengths

The community assessment must include data on community strengths, as well as resources available in the community to address the needs of eligible children and their families. To adequately detail the availability of programs for Head Start families, the community assessment report should start by providing a list of all the agencies and organizations that serve low-income families and children, with a brief description of what they do (as might appear in a directory that you distribute to parents).

Beyond this, however, the community assessment is expected to go further by discussing which agencies are currently providing needed services. If available, it provides data on how many Head Start-eligible families these programs and agencies are serving, their capacity for expanding services, whether they are a Head Start partner, their fee structure, the availability of interpreters, and other similar data necessary for assessing available resources. You can also identify the gaps in services, where community resources for low-income populations are sparse or non-existent. Providing this information in the form of charts enables readers to make easy comparisons across agencies and organizations.

Tell Me More!

For additional ideas on how to present data, see [Appendix B–5] for an annotated data bibliography.

Presenting Recommendations

There are many ways to present recommendations in your community assessment report. However this is done, you will want to make sure all the results and recommendations connect to the data collected and included in the report. It is helpful to frame each recommendation by establishing the relationship between the data and the recommendation. Consider using a phrase similar to “Our community assessment has revealed that…; and therefore, our program will….”

When presenting recommendations, ask yourself:

- Have all the issues emerged from the analysis of the data?
- Do our recommendations identify and prioritize the key issues or problems facing children and families that need to be addressed by the Head Start program?
- Have we described our system for prioritizing or determining the key issues?
- Have all sources of information been cited?
- Has objective and research-based data been included to support decisions based on future trends?

NEW DIRECTOR TIP

Responsive Reports

There are many ways to share the results of your community assessment. Consider your audience when determining what you will share and in what context. An infographic is a great way to provide a summary for community partners, highlighting major findings and priority areas for your agency.

Communicate the Community Assessment Data and Recommendations

Now that your team has worked hard to generate a comprehensive and detailed report, it is time to share it with others. Remember, data should be meaningful and actionable. You will want to design different reports for different audiences. Consider a key synopsis on specific topics or a separate executive summary.

A number of audiences will be interested to learn about the data and recommendations.

- The governing board/Tribal Council and Policy Council must review the report before it is shared with others.
- Regional Office staff will review the community assessment report and use it to help them understand and make decisions about your program. They will want to know about demographic information and how your program anticipates responding to trends. Details from the community assessment report, including the long-term goals and measurable objectives, are included in the Head Start grant application.

- Program staff will be interested in gaining a better understanding of the children, families, and communities they serve. They will also want to know if their roles and responsibilities may change as a result of the findings. The report should help them to understand whether program options, locations, and annual calendar may change or whether there will be different staffing needs.
- Parents will find the report helps them understand more about the program. In reviewing it, they may have questions, including whether program services will be changed or what new service providers have been identified in the community.
- Community organizations also will want to hear about the findings because their roles may be expanded if there are shifting population patterns or service trends.
- If the Head Start program is part of a larger agency, the governing board may want to have additional discussions on the findings and implications, not only for Head Start, but for other programs in the agency.
- Programs must include a summary of their most recent community assessment in their annual report.

While your community assessment will provide a unique portrait of your program and the community it serves, you can find inspiration in completed reports posted on the Internet. A Google search for "Head Start Community Assessment" provides a long list of reports to review.

> Programs will need to set aside time throughout the five-year grant period for the community assessment annual update to make sure the data is still relevant, and to use it in strategic planning.

Review and Update the Community Assessment

Programs will need to set aside time throughout the five-year grant period for the community assessment annual update to make sure the data is still relevant, and to use it in strategic planning. It is important to be intentional about using data to inform decisions, especially those that will help improve program quality and achieve better outcomes for enrolled children and families.

On an annual basis, programs must review and update the community assessment to reflect any significant changes. Changes may include increased availability of publicly-funded pre-kindergarten, the extent to which the community's pre-kindergarten meets the needs of the parents and children served by the program, and whether it is offered for a full school day. The annual review must also identify rates of family and child homelessness and significant shifts in community demographics and resources (45 CFR §1302.11(b)(2)). In addition, the review should also examine the demographic, economic, environmental, and resource changes that impact your program and the community. Another source of change may be new legislation that affects the availability of housing, medical, educational, or transportation services to the low-income families served by your program.

These interim reviews require an abbreviated community assessment process that will include planning, designing data collection, data-gathering, analysis, and decision-making. The following steps are recommended as you undertake the annual review and update the community assessment:

- Set up a team with a membership structure that is the same or similar to the original team.
- Follow a sequence of steps similar to those used for the original community assessment, although you may be able to shorten the overall timeframe.
- Design your data collection to focus on potential changes impacting your program and populations served. You are required to report significant changes.
- Collect information from internal and external sources, including your partners and collaborating agencies.
- Review how the new information might impact the recommendations previously made and any final decisions that followed.
- Incorporate new data into the planning cycle. It may be it necessary to add a new goal or modify objectives to align with existing goals.

Incorporate the Community Assessment Process into the Program's Ongoing Planning

Program planning is an active and dynamic process, and the community assessment is an essential data source for that process. Effective Head Start programs engage in a cyclical planning process. As the graphic of the program planning cycle shows programs use the five-year and annual planning process to develop, monitor, and evaluate the effectiveness of program, school readiness, and training and technical assistance plans.

The community assessment process requires programs to:

- Gather internal and external data about the needs of the children, families, and communities in the service area
- Analyze and interpret the data
- Make decisions based upon the data
- Establish strategic goals and measurable objectives

Program planning is informed by goals, which are based on information gathered during the community assessment process. These long-term goals set the course for continuous improvement and innovation. On an annual basis, programs review progress toward their goals to ensure they are effectively meeting the needs of children, families, and their community throughout the five-year project period. Each year, the program planning team uses its planning process to affirm goals set in the first year. The team may also use its annual planning process to set new goals as needed in response to incoming data that reflects an emerging child, family, or community need. ■

? *How does your program incorporate the community assessment process into ongoing planning?*

Check out the appendices for a wealth of information, worksheets, tools, and other resources to help you implement your community assessment. Remember, a community assessment is not a one-time event in the life of your program but part of your annual planning cycle and continuous improvement process.

Appendices

NATIONAL CENTER ON
Program Management and Fiscal Operations

Early Childhood National Centers

Community Assessment Matrix

The community assessment describes the context in which a Head Start and Early Head Start program operates and is useful for ensuring that the right services are provided to the right population. This resource can assist program staff in coordinating their efforts to gather information required for a community assessment. The assessment paints a picture of the community and describes the diverse needs of families who may receive services. In addition, the community assessment covers the community's history, its economic and political scene, and the community's strengths and challenges. Note: Italicized items are required by the Determining community strengths, needs, and resources, 45 CFR §1302.11(b)(1) Subpart A.

"Triggers" for Data Collection (Customize this list and add information not listed. What do you want to know?)	Information Source (Who/What agency or resource can assist you in gathering the information you need for your community assessment?)	These columns can be completed by members of your team		
		Responsible CA Team Member	Date Initiated	Date Completed
General Area Description—Demographics				
Proposed *service* area–Geographic boundaries (size, counties, distinguishing characteristics) • Governing structure • Population and related trends • Racial and ethnic composition • Language spoken by families and children • Gender, ages • Household composition • Economic activities • Future trends • Median income level • Principle source of income • Number / percentage below poverty level				
Head Start ELIGIBLE Children and Families				
• General o Number of eligible infants, toddlers, preschool age children and expectant mothers o Geographic location o Race and ethnicity o Languages spoken o Number of children experiencing homelessness o Number of children in foster care o Household composition o Principle source of income				

“Triggers” for Data Collection (Customize this list and add information not listed. What do you want to know?)	Information Source (Who/What agency or resource can assist you in gathering the information you need for your community assessment?)	These columns can be completed by members of your team		
		Responsible CA Team Member	Date Initiated	Date Completed
o Median income level / employment o Number of children living below poverty level o Number of public assistance recipients o Number of children who are DLLs				
Education Needs of Eligible Families				
• Education • Adult educational attainment • Drop-out rates • Information on functional literacy levels				
Health and Social Service Needs of Eligible Families				
• Incidence of child abuse and neglect • Reports of domestic violence • Number of children *with disabilities, including types of disabilities* • Rates of drug and alcohol abuse • Number of children born to addicted mothers • Infant and child death rates • Number of low-birth weight babies • Teen pregnancy rates • Number / percentage of women receiving prenatal healthcare • Immunization rates among school children • Prevalent health problems • Communicable diseases • Air and water quality				
Nutrition Needs of Eligible Families				
• Number / percentage of children receiving free lunch and breakfast • Number / percentage of food stamp recipients • Number / percentage who participate in Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program participants				

"Triggers" for Data Collection (Customize this list and add information not listed. What do you want to know?)	Information Source (Who/What agency or resource can assist you in gathering the information you need for your community assessment?)	These columns can be completed by members of your team		
		Responsible CA Team Member	Date Initiated	Date Completed
• Number / percentage who participate in food distribution programs • Availability of low-cost food				
Housing and Homelessness				
• Overcrowding / availability • Affordability • Conditions • HUD housing • Utilities • Homeless count • Mobility • Other prevalent social or economic factors				
Child Care Availability				
• Number of child development centers, child care centers, and family child care programs, including home visiting, publicly funded state and local preschool programs • Approximate number of Head Start-eligible children served in identified programs • Number or percent of working mothers • Typical work, school, or training schedules				
Transportation and Communication				
• Vehicle ownership • Relevant aspects of road conditions, climate, and weather relating to jobs, services, and isolation • Availability as in jobs, services, and isolation of public transportation services • Percentage of population with telephones / cell phones / televisions / computers				
Resources Available to Address Needs of Eligible Children and Families				
• Social services and mental health services • Health, dental health, and nutrition resources • Disability services and resources				

<table>
<tr><th rowspan="2">“Triggers” for Data Collection (Customize this list and add information not listed. What do you want to know?)</th><th rowspan="2">Information Source (Who/What agency or resource can assist you in gathering the information you need for your community assessment?)</th><th colspan="3">These columns can be completed by members of your team</th></tr>
<tr><th>Responsible CA Team Member</th><th>Date Initiated</th><th>Date Completed</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Community Strengths</td></tr>
<tr><td>• Positive community attributes</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Head Start ENROLLED Children and Families</td></tr>
<tr><td>• Recruitment area
• Center location
• Number and location of enrolled children
• Ages of enrolled children
• Tribal / racial/ethnic composition of enrolled children
• Number of enrolled children who are DLLs
• Attendance/waiting lists / over-income children
• Parent involvement and recruitment experience
• Number of foster children enrolled
• Number of homeless children enrolled
• Number of enrolled children with disabilities
• Types of disabilities (by diagnostic category) of enrolled children
• Resources provided to enrolled children with disabilities by other agencies</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Head Start Staff</td></tr>
<tr><td>• Racial, ethnic, tribal composition
• Languages spoken
• Educational attainment</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Relevant Opinions of Community Needs</td></tr>
<tr><td>• Opinions of parents
• Prevalent community problems
• Knowledge of existing resources
• Accessibility of available resources
• Adequacy of services provided by existing resources
• Additional resources needed
• Opinions of community leaders / institutions</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Community Assessment Annual Update

The Head Start Program Performance Standards require programs to review and update the community assessment annually to reflect any significant changes including increased availability of publicly-funded pre-kindergarten (including an assessment of how the pre-kindergarten available in the community meets the needs of the parents and children served by the program, and whether it is offered full school day), rates of family and child homelessness, and significant shifts in community demographics and resources. Determining community strengths, needs, and resources, 45 CFR §1302.11(b)(2) Subpart A.

Source: Adapted from AIAN Region QIC Resource

Community Assessment Report Checklist

Assess to what extent your community assessment report is complete, well-organized, and readable. Teams can use the tool to help ensure the quality of the community assessment report and as a discussion guide. It lists items that should appear in the report, including text, maps, and charts. When you ask staff or the governing body to review your community assessment report, they can use the checklist and provide you with feedback.

If checklist items are missing or incomplete, the team should take note and try to make corrections. At some point, you might want to include additional items on the checklist that you know are important indicators of the quality of your community assessment report.

Grantee/Delegate Agency: ______________________________

Name of Reader: ______________________________

Check the "yes" box if the item is included in the community assessment report. Check "no" if it is missing entirely or incomplete. Page references may be noted. If the information/data are located in another section of the community assessment report, indicate those page numbers.

	Yes	No	Page No.	Notes:
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY				
1-2 pages in length	☐	☐		
Overview of the grantee and communities in the service area	☐	☐		
Summary of the community assessment process (e.g., data gathering and data analysis)	☐	☐		
Major findings	☐	☐		
Recommendations (prioritized)	☐	☐		
OVERVIEW OF STATE OF THE GRANTEE				
Relevant information, details, and maps	☐	☐		
Grantee type, history, and other programs administered	☐	☐		
Delegate agencies (if applicable)	☐	☐		
Eligibility criteria specified	☐	☐		
Number of eligible children and families to be served according to the Notice of Award	☐	☐		
Actual number of enrolled children and families including cultural and linguistic features	☐	☐		
Program options offered	☐	☐		

	Yes	No	Page No.	Notes:
Locations of centers, family child care, homes, central office, and other offices	☐	☐		
Service Area Maps				
Service area	☐	☐		
Recruitment area	☐	☐		
Location of delegate agencies and programs	☐	☐		
Location of communities and population groups	☐	☐		
METHODOLOGY				
Purpose of the community assessment	☐	☐		
Community Assessment Process				
List of community assessment team members, their responsibilities, and how they were selected indicating that they were a cross-representational group	☐	☐		
Role of a consultant, if used	☐	☐		
Overview of any training provided to the community assessement team	☐	☐		
Roles of the Policy Council and the governing board	☐	☐		
Timeline or other evidence indicating that there was ongoing reporting of the community assessment progress	☐	☐		
Sources for the Community Assessment Information				
Internal data sources (include a list if possible)	☐	☐		
External data sources in the community (include a list if possible)	☐	☐		
Census data or other population figures	☐	☐		
Data sources on underserved or new or emerging populations (include a list if possible)	☐	☐		
Methods of Data Collection				
Surveys and/or questionnaires (specify the intended population)	☐	☐		
Interviews and/or focus groups (specify the intended population)	☐	☐		
Use of translation or interpreters when necessary	☐	☐		
Methods of Data Analyses				
Quantitative analyses (e.g., percentages)	☐	☐		

	Yes	No	Page No.	Notes:
Qualitative analyses (e.g., quotes from interviews)	☐	☐		
Estimates and trends	☐	☐		
DATA COLLECTED AND FINDINGS				
Overview of the Service Area and Recruitment Areas				
Employment patterns, noting major businesses and industries	☐	☐		
Housing patterns	☐	☐		
Public school patterns	☐	☐		
Transportation patterns	☐	☐		
Medical and environmental health issues	☐	☐		
Social and economic status of population	☐	☐		
Language and cultural base of population	☐	☐		
Racial and ethnic characteristics of population	☐	☐		
Recent population changes including immigration, new or emerging populations	☐	☐		
Types and locations of child care programs and arrangements for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers	☐	☐		
Types and locations of child care programs and arrangements for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with disabilities	☐	☐		
National, state, and local census data whenever possible	☐	☐		
Information and Demographics on Head Start-Eligible Children and Their Families including New, Emerging, and Underserved Populations				
Housing	☐	☐		
Social and economic status	☐	☐		
Languages and cultures	☐	☐		
Racial and ethnic characteristics	☐	☐		
Recent population changes	☐	☐		
Foster care statistics	☐	☐		
Children with disabilities	☐	☐		
Types of disabilities	☐	☐		
Enrollments in non-Head Start child development programs	☐	☐		
Data sources cited and referenced	☐	☐		
Charts, tables, and other visual displays of data	☐	☐		

	Yes	No	Page No.	Notes:
Strengths and Needs of Head Start-Eligible Children and Families as Defined by the Head Start Program				
Education	☐	☐		
Disabilities services	☐	☐		
Foster care	☐	☐		
Health and mental health	☐	☐		
Nutrition	☐	☐		
Social services	☐	☐		
Housing	☐	☐		
Employment	☐	☐		
Transportation	☐	☐		
Translation and interpretation services	☐	☐		
Other	☐	☐		
Comparison of Strengths and Needs of Head Start-Eligible Children and Families as Defined by the Families Themselves and Local Institutions Serving Them				
Education	☐	☐		
Disabilities services	☐	☐		
Foster care	☐	☐		
Health and mental health	☐	☐		
Nutrition	☐	☐		
Social services	☐	☐		
Housing	☐	☐		
Employment	☐	☐		
Transportation	☐	☐		
Translation and interpretation services	☐	☐		
Other	☐	☐		
Access and Availability of Community Resources				
Education	☐	☐		
Disabilities services	☐	☐		
Foster care	☐	☐		
Health and mental health	☐	☐		
Nutrition	☐	☐		
Social services	☐	☐		
Housing	☐	☐		
Employment	☐	☐		
Transportation	☐	☐		
Translation and interpretation services	☐	☐		
Collaborative Arrangements, Partnerships, and Formal Agreements				
Disabilities services	☐	☐		
Educational services	☐	☐		
Health and mental health services	☐	☐		

	Yes	No	Page No.	Notes:
Social services	☐	☐		
Shared facilities	☐	☐		
Transportation	☐	☐		
Professional development	☐	☐		
DATA REVIEW AND ANALYSIS				
Charts, tables, and other visual displays of data	☐	☐		
Changes from prior years in service and recruitment areas and eligibility and enrollment indicating trends and patterns	☐	☐		
Program Information Report (PIR) data, especially enrollment data, analyzed over several years	☐	☐		
Agency PIR data compared to national	☐	☐		
PIR data	☐	☐		
Data analyzed for significance and impact on the Head Start children and families, the program, and the community	☐	☐		
Major Issues, Trends, and Concerns				
Changes in social policy or legislation, such as eligibility criteria for federal or state benefits	☐	☐		
Influx or relocation of new or emerging populations	☐	☐		
Community development projects	☐	☐		
Business and services closings and openings	☐	☐		
Residential patterns, new construction	☐	☐		
Immigration laws and law enforcement	☐	☐		
Unseasonable weather or natural disaster	☐	☐		
RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRIORITIES				
Key issues facing eligible children and families to be addressed by the Head Start program	☐	☐		
Recommendations prioritized and rationale given for:				
• Long-term goals and measurable objectives	☐	☐		
• Services and program options	☐	☐		
• Recruitment area for grantee	☐	☐		

	Yes	No	Page No.	Notes:
• Recruitment area for each delegate, if applicable	☐	☐		
• Locations for centers and home-based programs	☐	☐		
• Criteria for recruitment and selection	☐	☐		
Financial implications of recommendations	☐	☐		
Priority assigned to serving new, emerging, or underserved populations identified during the community assessment	☐	☐		
STYLE AND FORMAT OF COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT				
Written in a logical, organized way	☐	☐		
Table of contents included	☐	☐		
Thorough and detailed	☐	☐		
Contains maps, charts, and illustrations for clarity	☐	☐		
Provides numerical data that are easy to understand and summarize the information	☐	☐		
Provides qualitative data, such as quotes from interviews that are insightful and make the report interesting	☐	☐		
Offers conclusions supported by the data	☐	☐		
Responds to question: How can Head Start ensure the correct services are provided to the appropriate population?	☐	☐		

For Internal Use Only

Date: ______________________________

Based on the review of the above elements, the community assessment report:

- Includes all the key elements and is acceptable
- Lacks information and needs revision of content
- Is poorly organized or written and needs rewriting

Comments:

Community Assessment Analysis Worksheet

The community assessment process is part of program planning. It is used as a basis for making decisions, as a foundation for establishing long-term goals and measurable objectives, and to inform strategic and ongoing planning. Your community assessment team can use this worksheet while collecting and reviewing data and developing recommendations. As you go through the community assessment process, ask the questions posed in the worksheet:

	Yes	No
COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT PROCESS REVIEW **Does our process include:**		
1. Information collection and analysis of:		
A. Demographics, including: a. Eligible infants, toddlers, preschool-age children, and expectant mothers? b. Children experiencing homelessness? c. Children in foster care? d. Children with disabilities? i. Types of disabilities? ii. Relevant services provided by community agencies? iii. Resources provided by community agencies?	☐	☐
B. Needs of eligible children and their families for: a. Education? b. Health? c. Nutrition? d. Social Services?	☐	☐
C. Schedules of parents with eligible children: a. Work? b. School? c. Training?	☐	☐
D. Other child development programs serving eligible children, including: a. Child care centers? b. Family child care programs? c. Public pre-K programs? d. Home visiting programs?	☐	☐
E. Resources available in the community?	☐	☐
F. Strengths of the community?	☐	☐
2. Identification of trends?	☐	☐
3. An annual review and update to the community assessment, and the undertaking of a new community assessment every five years?	☐	☐
4. The effective integration of the community assessment process and data into ongoing program planning?	☐	☐

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT TRENDS What trends do we see in:		
Demographic makeup of the service area?	☐	☐
Demographic makeup of eligible children and families, including those who are experiencing homelessness, those in foster care, and those with disabilities?	☐	☐
Number and types of disabilities and related resources?	☐	☐
Education needs of eligible children and families?	☐	☐
Health needs of eligible children and families?	☐	☐
Nutrition needs of eligible children and families?	☐	☐
Social service needs of eligible children and families?	☐	☐
Schedules of parents with eligible children?	☐	☐
Other child development programs?	☐	☐
Community resources?	☐	☐
Community strengths and needs?	☐	☐

IMPACT OF COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT TRENDS How do the community assessment trends impact our:	
Long-term goals and measurable objectives?	
Program options and locations?	
Program calendar?	
Target recruitment areas?	
Enrollment priorities?	
Collaborative relationships and partnerships?	

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATIONS What recommendations do we have for our:	
Recruitment and selection criteria?	
Long-term goals and measurable objectives?	
Organizational development and design?	
Financial objectives?	
Collaborative relationships and partnerships?	
Workforce needs and staff development?	
Possible change of location or identification of new facilities?	

IMPACT OF COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATIONS How do our recommendations impact our:	
Strategic plan?	
Ongoing monitoring activities?	
Coordinated approaches?	
Budget?	
TA and staff development plans?	
Organizational development plan?	

Identifying Data and Data-Based Decisions Worksheet

Complete this worksheet as your team prepares the community assessment report. Follow the steps below:

1. List the discoveries identified through internal and external data collection.
2. Identify the source or data-gathering techniques, such as surveys and focus groups.
3. Note where the data have supported a recommendation in the community assessment report.
4. If your analysis indicates a decision was made without supporting evidence, then go back to find supporting evidence or reconsider your decision.

Evidence		Types of Decisions Required by Head Start Regulations Based on Community Assessment Data					
Data Discovery from Internal or External Data	**Data Collection Technique or Source**	**Strategic Long-Term Goals and Measurable Objectives**	**Program Options and Calendar**	**Recruitment Areas and Program Locations**	**Recruitment, Selection Criteria, and Enrollment Priorities**	**Services and Coordinated Approaches**	**Collaborative Partnerships**

Data Collection Sources by Topic Worksheet

Data collection and analysis is the foundation of the community assessment. Review the following categories and demographic elements as data collection is being planned. This will help you identify what data you wish to collect as well as with the design of worksheets and choice of data collection methodologies. At the end of this list, find a sample template for a worksheet you can use to document your data collection.

As you review the categories and demographic elements listed and embark on the data collection process, keep these important points in mind:

- You do not have to collect information for each item listed. Select the ones that will be useful and help you understand your program and your community.
- Depending on the data source, data may be reported in different ways. There is no right or wrong way to report the data.
- Sometimes you can find data broken down by race, gender, age, or location. If this information is helpful to you, use it. For example, census information on the workforce may be broken down according to race and school districts may be able to give you information about the home languages most commonly spoken in the pre-kindergarten classes. If you think such detailed information will help your program identify and serve eligible families, include this information on your worksheet for your community assessment.

Categories	Demographic Elements to Consider				
General Demographics	Total population	0–3 years old	3–5 years old	18 years and older	Median age (years)
	Race	Hispanic or Latino	Household population	Average household size	Average family size
	Owner occupied housing	Renter occupied housing	Subsidized units		
Social Demographics	High school graduate or higher	Bachelor's degree or higher	High school dropout	0–3 years with disabilities	3–5 years with disabilities
	Foreign born	Teenage parents	Enrolled in adult education	Dual language learners	Homeless families with children

Categories	Demographic Elements to Consider				
Economic Demographics	In labor force: 16 years or older	In job training: 16 years or older	Median house hold income	Per capita income	Families below poverty level
	Families below poverty level	Families below poverty level with 0–3-year-olds	Families below poverty level with 3–5-year-olds	Female-headed (single parent) households with children	Male-headed (single parent) households with children
	Grandparent-headed households with children	Individuals below poverty level			
Health	Births	Low birth weight infants	Born to single teen		
	Child deaths	0–3-year-olds who are immunized	3–5-year-olds who are immunized	Children and teens overweight or obese	Children with asthma
	Prevalence rates of infection, communicable diseases, diabetes for children and families low-income families	Smokers 16 and older	Pediatricians who accept low-income families	PA/NP/CNM	Medical clinics
	Hospitals	Without health insurance	With SCHIP	Seek emergency care 5 years and under	Cultural attitudes and perceptions affecting health
	Availability of interpreters	Availability of transportation to services	Environmental factors such as water quality, non-use of seat belts, lead toxicity, etc.		
Mental Health	Mental health providers who serve low-income families	Mental health clinics or other treatment centers	Parent education programs	Prevalence rate of depression	Households with substance abuse
	Cases of reported child abuse and neglect	Households with domestic violence	Incarcerated individuals	Cultural attitudes and perceptions affecting mental health	Bilingual staff
	Availability of transportation to services				

Categories	Demographic Elements to Consider				
Dental Health	Dentists who serve low-income families	Dental clinics	Households with fluoride in water	Prevalence rate of cavities in 0–3-year-olds	Prevalence rate of cavities in 3–5-year-olds
	Cultural attitudes and perceptions affecting dental health	Availability of interpreters	Bilingual staff	Availability of transportation to services	
Disabilities	0–3-year-olds with disabilities	3–5-year-olds with disabilities	Prevalence rates of different disabilities for children 5 and under	Prevalence rates of different disabilities served by school system	Early intervention programs
	Cultural attitudes and perceptions about disabilities	Availability of interpreters	Bilingual staff	Availability of transportation to services	
Nutrition	Enrolled in Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	Receiving food stamps	Served by food banks or other food programs	Mothers who breast fed	Households preferring ethnic cooking
	Local supermarkets	Fast food places	# and type of ethnic food markets	Availability of transportation for services and food shopping	
Child Care and Early Education Programs	Child care centers and early education programs	Low-income 0–3-year-olds served in CC/EEP	Low-income 3–5-year-olds served in CC/EEP	Children 5 years and under experiencing homelessness served in child care programs	3-year-olds served in state-funded pre-K
	4–5-year-olds served in state-funded pre-K	Low-income 0–3-year-olds served in family child care programs	Low-income 3–5-year-olds served in child care programs	Low-income 3–5-year-olds in kith and kin care	Child care programs providing transportation
	Average hours of child care program operations	Availability of interpreters	Bilingual staff		

Transportation	Eligible children provided transportation	Eligible children not provided transportation	Eligible children not provided transportation but may have used it if available	Children who dropped out of Head Start due to lack of transportation	Availability of transportation for 0–3-year-olds with disabilities
	Availability of transportation for 3–5-year-olds with disabilities	Availability of transportation provided by school districts with Head Start children	Partnership with community organizations (e.g., child care, coordinated transportation provid-ers, human service agencies) to provide transportation	Participation with local Transportation Coordination Council (If no, will there be participation in establishing a council?)	Training for transportation staff
Community Resources	Libraries	Book stores (adult and children)	Museums (activities for infants–5-year-olds)	Agencies providing literacy education for dual language learners	3-year-olds served in state-funded pre-K
	Recreational centers	Cultural centers (specify)	Thrift stores	Services that support the inclusion of fathers	Family support services
	Family preservation programs	Senior support services	Crisis assistance programs (e.g., domestic violence shelters)	Legal services	Employment services (e.g., pre-employment prep, workplace literacy programs)

Sample Template for Data Collection

Date:___________________________

Check the data collection topic:

- ☐ General Demographics
- ☐ Social Demographics
- ☐ Economic Demographics
- ☐ Health
- ☐ Mental Health
- ☐ Dental Health
- ☐ Disabilities
- ☐ Nutrition
- ☐ Other: ____________________
- ☐ Other: ____________________
- ☐ Other: ____________________
- ☐ Other: ____________________

Data Source (Specify)	No., Percent, or Yes or No	Comments

Preparing a Survey or Questionnaire

There are advantages to using a survey or written questionnaire to collect certain kinds of community assessment data. It can be administered easily, reach many people and ask for specific information. The simplest type of question asks for a yes or no response. For example, a survey question for parents might be: Did you use any legal services this year? There are other ways of asking questions that many Head Start programs have used, including a rating scale, a rank order and a root and contingency method. You may find that a combination of these types of questions will elicit the information you need.

Rating Scale

Sometimes referred to as a Likert scale, a 5-point scale is often used to collect data. In the example in Table 1. responses range from (1) very satisfied to (5) not satisfied. Scales can be used to gather opinions about the quality of the Head Start services. For example, one program asked formerly enrolled families to express their opinion about the services for children and for families in order to assess where the program needed to improve their service delivery.

Check the appropriate box to show how satisfied were you with the Head Start services you received.

Table 1.

Children's Services	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Service Not Used
Information about my child's progress	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Classroom program	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hearing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dental exams	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Vision services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Rank Order

In this case, the respondent puts the answers in order where 1 = first choice, 2 = second choice, and so on. The advantage to this approach is that more information is gained than from a yes or no response. For example, a Head Start program might ask current and not enrolled Head Start-eligible parents a question about which preschool options they prefer; in addition, Head Start staff could be asked their opinion about which preschool options would be most helpful to families. The responses from families and staff can guide decision-making about Head Start program options, partnering with other child care institutions, or using additional funding streams to meet families' needs.

Preschool Options	Rating
Full day (open 6 hours or more, M–F, Sept. to May)	
Half-day (open for 3.5 hours either morning or afternoon, M–Th, Sept. to May)	
Wraparound (open from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., M–F, full year)	
Home-based (a home visitor visits the home once per week for 1.5 hours; twice a month there is a socialization activity with other families; full year)	

Root and Contingency

With this method, a respondent is asked a general question (the root). Then, detailed questions (the contingencies) are asked based on the initial response. For example, respondents are asked whether their family has needed or used health and human service assistance, and the barriers they experience in seeking help. First, respondents answer the root question (A): whether they or their families needed a service in the past year.

	A In the past year have you or anyone in your family needed...		B If you found help, did you have transportation to get to it?		C If you found help, did it feel comfortable?		D If you found help, did you use the services you found?	
Please check the correct box	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Income assistance; for example, welfare, SSI, unemployment insurance	☐	☐						
Legal assistance; for example, immigration, custody	☐	☐						

If they answered yes, they are asked three subsequent contingency questions: (B) whether they had transportation to access the service they needed; (C) whether the help they sought felt comfortable; and (D) whether they used the services they found.

Sample Head Start Parent Survey

Data Collection: Preschool Head Start Parent Survey

This survey is being completed by:

- ☐ Father
- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Both parents
- ☐ Guardian
- ☐ Other
- (Relationship: ___________________)

- ☐ White
- ☐ Black/African American
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Other (___________________________)

Name of Head Start Program____

Directions: Check Yes or No	Yes	No
1. The location of my Head Start center was convenient for my family's participation.	☐	☐
2. The Head Start program provided transportation for my child.	☐	☐
3. Information provided by Head Start included materials for both fathers and mothers.	☐	☐
4. The current program schedule met the needs of my family	☐	☐
5. Our family's needs would be better served with a 12-month Head Start program.	☐	☐
6. Our family's needs would be better served with a five-day per week	☐	☐
7. Our family's needs would be better served with an eight- to 10-hour per day Head Start program.	☐	☐

Directions: Check the box that best describes how you feel about the following statements	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Don't know
8. I am satisfied with the Head Start services my family receives from:				
a. Classroom staff	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Administration	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Family service providers	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Health staff	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Head Start has helped my child get ready for school by:				
a. Becoming more independent	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Learning basic concepts in language	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Learning basic concepts in math	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Learning to share and cooperate	☐	☐	☐	☐

Directions: Check the box that best describes how you feel about the following statements	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Don’t know
10. Head Start gives my child a:				
a. Safe place to learn	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Clean environment	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Head Start provides me with quality information through:				
a. Newsletters	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Parent handbook	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Parent-teacher conferences and home visits	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Monthly calendars	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Home visits with family service providers	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Website and electronic messaging	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Flyers announcing upcoming events	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Head Start has told me about how to be involved with:				
a. Policy Council	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Parent committee	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Classroom volunteering	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Program events and family gatherings	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Fatherhood events	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. Head Start has provided me with informational support regarding:				
a. Child development	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Community resources	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Personal relationships	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Disabilities	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Mental health	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Health and dental health	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. Head Start has enabled me to:				
a. Define my own life goals	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Accomplish and pursue my goals	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Understand and carry out my role as the primary educator for my child	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. My child’s teacher:				
a. Worked with me to plan my child’s learning and development	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Planned activities around my child’s individual needs	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Helped me have a better understanding of my child’s social and emotional development	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. When I requested help for my child’s social and emotional development, it was:				
a. Delivered in a timely matter	☐	☐	☐	☐

Directions: Check the box that best describes how you feel about the following statements	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Don't know
b. Useful and successful	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Supportive of my family's values	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. Head Start centers are friendly and inviting for fathers	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. Head Start has provided me with information on disabilities. (Circle Yes or No. If No, go to question 20.)	☐ Yes		☐ No	
19. When I requested help for my child's disabilities, the services were:				
a. Delivered in a timely matter	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Useful and successful	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Supportive of my family's values	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. My child attends child care before or after Head Start. (Circle Yes or No.)	☐ Yes		☐ No	
21. There was turnover in the people working with my child and family this year (e.g., teachers, assistant teachers, bus driver, family service providers). (Circle Yes or No.)	☐ Yes		☐ No	

Directions: Check the box that best describes how you feel about the following statement.	Negative	Somewhat Negative	Neutral	Somewhat Positive	Positive
22. This turnover had what type of effect on my family's experience:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

23. My family's biggest stressors this year were: (Check all that apply)

☐ My child's disabilities ☐ Educational or Job Training ☐ Employment ☐ Financial ☐ Housing
☐ Marital or Personal ☐ Medical and Dental ☐ Mental Health ☐ Transportation ☐ Other

24. My biggest concern for my family at this time is:

25. Other comments I have:

Sample Early Head Start Parent Survey

Data Collection: Early Head Start Parent Survey

This survey is being completed by:

- ☐ Father
- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Both parents
- ☐ Guardian
- ☐ Other

(Relationship: ____________________)

- ☐ White
- ☐ Black/African American
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Other (____________________________)

Name of Head Start Program____ -

Directions: Check Yes or No	Yes	No
1. Our home visitor consistently tries to schedule visits at a convenient time for our family.	☐	☐
2. The current home-based services meet the needs of our family.	☐	☐
3. Early Head Start (EHS) provides information and activities both for mothers and fathers.	☐	☐
4. Our family attends group socialization two times a month. If not, why?	☐	☐
5. Our family would prefer a combination of two or three home visits per month with a toddler class two or three times a week.	☐	☐
6. Our family's needs would be better served with a six- to eight-hour per day EHS child care program.	☐	☐
7. Our family would benefit from availability of an opening in a family day care home that meets the Head Start Program Performance Standards.	☐	☐
8. EHS staff have assisted us/our child in staying current with well child exams and finding a dentist.	☐	☐

Directions: Check the box that best describes how you feel about the following statements.	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Don't know
9. I am satisfied with the Head Start services my family receives:				
a. In our home visits	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. At family gatherings	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. At parent meetings	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Overall services of EHS program	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. EHS services have helped me better understand:				
a. My child's social and emotional development	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. My child's language development	☐	☐	☐	☐

Directions: Check the box that best describes how you feel about the following statements.	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Don't know
c. How my child learns concepts (e.g., shapes, sizes, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. My child's motor development	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. The EHS classroom gives my child a:				
a. Safe place to learn	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Clean environment	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. My EHS family educator (home visitor) provides me with quality information through:				
a. Discussions during weekly home visits	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Written information and handouts	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Parent handbook	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Monthly calendars	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Flyers announcing upcoming events	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Information on a parent bulletin board in the classroom	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Online resources	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. EHS has told me about how to be involved with:				
a. Policy Council	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Program events and family gatherings	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Volunteer opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Parent meetings	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Fatherhood events	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Community events	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. EHS has provided our family with helpful information regarding:				
a. Child development	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Community resources	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Health and dental health	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Mental health issues and services	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Crisis assistance	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Services for our child who has some developmental delays	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. EHS has enabled me to:				
a. Define my own life goals	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Accomplish and pursue my goals	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Understand and carry out my role as the primary educator for my child	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. My child's home visitor:				
a. Consistently includes me in planning for the next home visit	☐	☐	☐	☐

Directions: Check the box that best describes how you feel about the following statements.	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Don't know
b. Plans activities around my child's individual needs	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Helped me have a better understanding of my child's social and emotional development	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. When I requested help for my child's social and emotional development, it was:				
a. Delivered in a timely manner	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Useful and successful	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Supportive of my family values	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. When I requested help for my child's disabilities, the services were:				
a. Delivered in a timely matter	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Useful and successful	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Helpful in educating and supporting me as my child's primary advocate	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. EHS services have helped me:				
a. Feel more comfortable talking to my child's health care provider	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Better understand the importance of early dental care	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Be more aware of the relationship I have with my child	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Understand the importance of reading to my child as much as possible	☐	☐	☐	☐

21. My family's biggest stressors this year were: (Check all that apply)

☐ My child's disabilities ☐ Educational or Job Training ☐ Employment ☐ Financial ☐ Housing
☐ Marital or Personal ☐ Medical or Dental ☐ Mental Health ☐ Transportation ☐ Other

22. My biggest concern for my family at this time is:

23. Other comments I have:

24. What I like most about the group socialization is:

25. What I like most about the parent meetings is:

26. Other comments I have:

Early Childhood National Centers

NATIONAL CENTER ON
Program Management and Fiscal Operations

Sample Community Partner Survey

Data Collection: Early Head Start Parent Survey

Our Head Start/Early Head Start program is currently conducting its annual community assessment, which looks at the available local services and the services we provide to families. We are asking you to please take a minute to complete this brief questionnaire and return it in the self-addressed envelope.

County	Community	Agency

Contact Information

Name	Phone	Email

1. In the last year, has your agency seen changes in the following:

	Increase	Decrease	No Change	Comments
Average household income	☐	☐	☐	
Number of low-income families contacting your agency	☐	☐	☐	
Number of individuals or families slightly over your income guidelines	☐	☐	☐	
Number of multigenerational families you serve	☐	☐	☐	
Number of female head of households	☐	☐	☐	
Number of teen pregnancies	☐	☐	☐	
Number of licensed child care providers	☐	☐	☐	
Job availability in community	☐	☐	☐	
Substance misuse in community	☐	☐	☐	
Low-income housing availability	☐	☐	☐	
Homelessness	☐	☐	☐	
Transportation needs	☐	☐	☐	
Services you offer	☐	☐	☐	

2. Are your services free? ☐ NA ☐ Yes ☐ No
3. If No to Question 2: Are your fees based on income? ☐ Yes ☐ No
4. If Yes to Question 3: Do you have a sliding scale based on income? ☐ Yes ☐ No
5. What do you believe are your agency's and community's strengths when working with low-income families?
6. What do you believe are your agency's and community's obstacles when working with low-income families?
7. Are there other concerns you think are issues for our community?
8. What other programs or services do you believe our Head Start and Early Head Start program could offer to better serve our community (e.g., mental health or elderly services)?
9. Do you have suggestions about how Head Start and Early Head Start could collaborate or partner with your agency or community in order to better meet the needs of low-income children and families?
10. Other comments

NATIONAL CENTER ON
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Early Childhood National Centers

Conducting Focus Groups and Large-Group Discussions

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups are small-group discussions led by a trained facilitator. They are structured to surface opinions and perspectives that are representative of a particular demographic group. Focus groups have a number of benefits; but like all information-gathering techniques, they have their downside as well. For instance, while focus groups can be quick to set up and conduct, the information they yield will be skewed if you don't carefully select group participants.

Focus groups are most useful when you:

- Are assessing needs in your community
- Are considering introducing a new service
- Want to evaluate various aspects of a current service or group of services
- Feel that face-to-face engagement with stakeholders will add richness and credibility to your overall data-gathering effort
- Have access to a skilled, neutral facilitator
- Know how to recruit a group of participants that reflects the diverse opinions of the intended demographic
- Need to gather information quickly and inexpensively
- Have a staff member or volunteer who can take extensive notes during the focus group, or record the focus group and transcribe the notes afterward
- Have a small team of individuals, not all of whom were present at the group, to analyze notes, identify themes, and develop conclusions

Finally, before you decide on conducting a focus group, ask yourself what you want to find out that can't be discovered some other way. What nuances in perspective and opinion make a focus group desirable? Going in with a very clear idea of what you want to achieve will improve your chances of success.

Planning a Focus Group

Special considerations:

- **Select participants carefully.** Choose a narrow group of stakeholders and within that group, invite people likely to have a variety of opinions. Not everyone should love your services, and not everyone should be a critic. You want a genuine mix of people. This is especially true if you are conducting only one or two focus groups. Ideally, focus groups include no more than 10 participants each. If your stakeholders comprise many different racial, ethnic, language, or socioeconomic subgroups, you may need up to half a dozen or more focus groups to cover the entire range of stakeholder opinion.

- **Decide about incentives.** Focus groups can be inexpensive to run, particularly if you already have access to a skilled facilitator. But you do need to consider how, or if, you will compensate participants for attending. You may give participants a small cash stipend or gift certificate, or they may simply be happy to share snacks or a meal. Either way, make sure they know in advance what's being offered.

- **Settle on the details.** What day, time, and place works best to ensure the people you want to attend are able to participate? Consider the length of the focus group; 90 minutes is ideal for most groups. Ensure accessibility. For example, will you need a translator? Will you need to offer child care? How about transportation?

- **Prepare your questions.** Focus group questions are usually opened-ended and intended to stimulate thought and conversation. The following suggestions come from the Center for Community Health and Development's Community Tool Box:
    - "What are some of your thoughts about what's going on now?"
    - "What are you satisfied about?" "Why is that?" (Or, "What's going well?")
    - "Are there things you would like to see changed?" (Or, "What's not going well?") "What are they?" "Why is that?" "How should they change?"
    - "What kinds of things would you like to see happen?"
    - "How about this particular aspect (of the topic)? What do you think about that?"
    - "Some people have said that one way to improve X is to do Y. Do you agree with this?" (Or, "How do you feel about that?")
    - "Are there other recommendations that you have, or suggestions you would like to make?"
    - "What haven't we covered?" (Or, "What else is important for you to say before we wind up?")

Recruit participants. Personal outreach works best. Ask colleagues, friends and friends of friends for help in reaching out to stakeholders who don't normally attend meetings and make their opinions known. This is where some of your richest and most interesting information will come from.

Conducting the Group

The facilitator:

- Reviews the purpose of the group and the goals of the meeting
- Introduces the agenda, suggests ground rules, and encourages open participation
- Asks key questions
    - The first question might be very broad, such as "What are your general thoughts about the needs of families in this community?" Questions may get narrower over time, eventually turning to, "How do you feel that service X is working for families? What's going right and wrong with it, from your perspective?"
- Makes sure that everyone gets a chance to be heard
    - You can accomplish this by going around the circle to solicit responses one at a time, or by asking people to raise their hands or nod in agreement when they share an opinion voiced by another member

To keep the discussion moving:

- Summarize what you think you have heard, and ask if the group agrees
- Phrase the same question a different way
- Ask follow-up questions
- Look around the room and make brief eye contact, especially with those who may not be speaking much

After the group, study your findings. What common themes or patterns emerged? Where did you see differences, and why do think you saw them? Do have new questions as a result of your findings? What conclusions can your team agree on?

LARGE-GROUP FACILITATION

Large-group discussions typically include 25-40 people, and can be a highly effective way to get group consensus or make decisions with broad buy-in.

For very large groups, breakout activities are especially important. Facilitators must be adept at managing very quiet and very outspoken members of the group so everyone benefits from the experience and a range of opinions are surfaced. With groups larger than 40 people, facilitators usually require use of microphones and projector screens in order to introduce and collect data during the meeting.

Consider a large-group process when you:

- Need to gather input for a broad constituency
- Have a large-enough venue and the logistical capacity to arrange a large group
- Want to discuss topics that are not highly complicated or inherently emotional
- Have information to present that is well-organized
- Know precisely what you hope to achieve
- Have an expert facilitator and two or three additional staff to assist

Special considerations:

Large-group processes allow people who don't usually exchange viewpoints to come together in one place to share and build on one another's ideas. It's important to invite a wide variety of individuals from across sectors. Be sure to reach out to people who have not been included in past information-gathering processes.

Large group meetings usually last at least half a day. Know your head count in advance, and set up the space so participants can be seated comfortably in small groups, ideally at round tables. Make sure everyone is able to see the front of the room. Distribute materials to tables before the meeting begins. It's easy to lose people's attention in a large-group setting, so make sure your technology is ready to go, you have a portable microphone, coffee, and snacks. Fidget toys help, too.

Conducting the Group

The facilitator:

- Presents the purpose of the meeting and agenda to the group as a whole, regardless of size
- Makes sure that breakout groups of no more than six people each are arranged to create maximum diversity of opinion and perspective
    - Participants may need to be re-seated to created more optimal subgroups.
- Presents the information or data that the group has been convened to discuss
- Poses a series of questions that have been prepared ahead of time
    - Questions are tailored to the issue and group, of course, but a typical framework might be:
        - What are you seeing in this information?
        - What is exciting or interesting to you?
        - What is concerning to you?
        - What do you recommend as a next step?

Each breakout group should be given a handout of the questions and the following instructions:

- Your group will have 20 minutes to discuss the questions
- Choose someone to act as facilitator to lead you through the questions, someone to take notes, and someone to keep track of time
- Agree on one action recommendation as a group

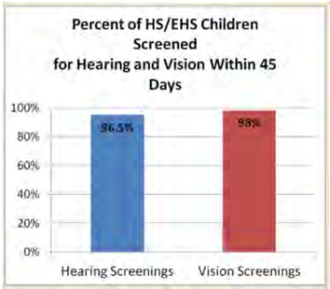
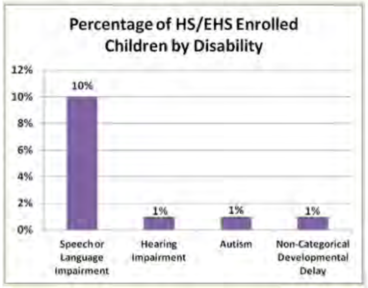
After 20 minutes, bring everyone back together and have breakout groups report their key recommendation. The facilitator should write the recommendations on a flip chart or overhead projector. After the report-out, invite two to three brief questions or comments, signaling to everyone that you want to keep discussion moving.

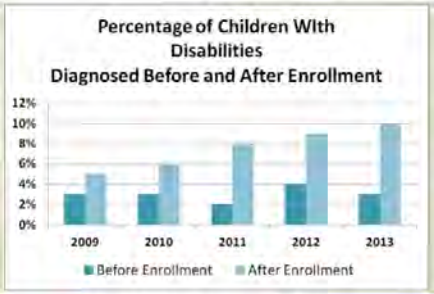
Depending on the agenda, a second round of small-group discussions on other issues could take place; if there is enough time, have people form new breakout groups so they can work with different partners.

There is more than one way to process breakout group responses. The World Café approach is one of the most popular. Find resources about the approach on the organization's website.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis is a process that involves the review, manipulation, and organization of data. It's goal is to identify useful information that will inform decision-making and planning. There are many different types of data, and many methods for analyzing it.

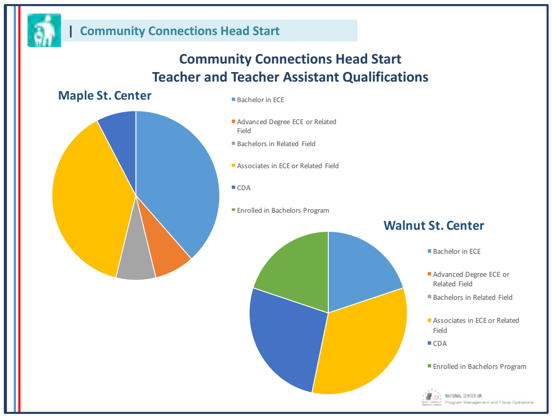
Techniques	Examples of Techniques Used to Analyze Information About Children With Disabilities
Aggregate When you aggregate data, you total data from different sources to get the big picture. For example, teachers aggregate child outcomes data to get an overall picture of their classes. A center director looks at aggregated data from all of the classrooms in one center. Numbers from all centers are totaled to provide program-wide data. Aggregated data can inform program-wide changes in policies and procedures. This big picture view of data is especially useful in sharing information with such audiences as your governing body/Tribal Council and Policy Council. Aggregated data is also appropriate for your annual report to the public. In the Program Information Report (PIR), you submit aggregated data about your grantee to the Office of Head Start (OHS). OHS then aggregates this data to compile an overall view of Head Start in relation to a number of key indicators.	 *This chart indicates that 96.5 percent of the children were screened for hearing and 98 percent were screened for vision within 45 days*
Disaggregate Disaggregating allows you to take different pieces of data and obtain more details. There are many ways to disaggregate data. In this activity, we disaggregated by type of disability. We could disaggregate by program options, which include center-based, home-based, and family child care. We also could have disaggregated the data by the local education agency (LEA) and the appropriate Part C agency or receiving school. Other ways to disaggregate include gender and home language. How do you know	

Techniques	Examples of Techniques Used to Analyze Information About Children With Disabilities
which options to choose? First, know your questions. A Migrant and Seasonal Head Start program, for example, may want to disaggregate child outcomes data about the number of returning children versus the number of newly enrolled children. This can also be done by length of time children spend in the program. When you disaggregate data, you can dig deeper and deeper. Disaggregate program-wide data by site, site data by classroom, and classroom data by child. You can disaggregate five-year data by year, yearly data by month, and monthly data by week. Each time, you get a more magnified view of one piece of data.	*Ten percent of the children have a speech or language impairment. For hearing impairment, autism, or non-categorical language delay, an equal number of children, one percent, have that type of disability.*
Compare When you compare data, you are looking for differences that pinpoint an opportunity or a problem. You can compare results to a target goal, such as Head Start Program Performance Standards requirements. You can compare Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) results with Head Start thresholds, or child outcomes data to national norms. Comparing data over time helps identify trends. This can help you make predictions about the future. Using baseline data, you can track progress towards goals over time. Comparing data from different sources also can provide insights. For example, comparing completion rates of referrals for the various service providers with which your agency works would help you answer the question, "Are referrals and follow-ups completed more frequently with particular community agencies?" In conducting a community assessment, you frequently compare internal data from various sources with external data. Internal data sources may include family enrollment data or data on parent satisfaction with service providers. External data may be gathered from a number of sources, ranging from the U.S. Census data to local public schools.	 *The percentage of children who were diagnosed after enrollment has steadily increased between 2009 and 2013, from five to 10 percent. The number of children diagnosed before enrollment has fluctuated between two and four percent over this time period.*

<table>
<tr><th>Techniques</th><th>Examples of Techniques Used to Analyze Information About Children With Disabilities</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Averages: Mean, Median, Mode, Range
Calculating the mean, median, mode, and range for a series of numbers can aid in your data analysis. The mean is not always a good representation of the center of the data. An outlier (a very high or very low value) can distort the average. For instance, the average income for a community would be skewed if there were even just a few millionaires. Median gives you a number that is more representative of the middle. Your income is likely to be closer to the median income in your community than to the average income if your neighbors are millionaires.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Mean
Mean is the average of a group of numbers. To calculate the mean, divide the total by the number of data points. In this case, 990 divided by 11 equals 90.</td><td><table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Elapsed time between identification of suspected disability and completion of IEP</th></tr>
<tr><th>Child</th><th>Length of time in days</th></tr>
<tr><td>AB</td><td>80</td></tr>
<tr><td>CD</td><td>120</td></tr>
<tr><td>EF</td><td>60</td></tr>
<tr><td>GH</td><td>120</td></tr>
<tr><td>IJ</td><td>30</td></tr>
<tr><td>KL</td><td>70</td></tr>
<tr><td>MN</td><td>102</td></tr>
<tr><td>OP</td><td>158</td></tr>
<tr><td>QR</td><td>45</td></tr>
<tr><td>ST</td><td>85</td></tr>
<tr><td>UV</td><td>120</td></tr>
<tr><td>Total</td><td>990</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Mean: 990 ÷ 11 = 90</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
<tr><td>Median
The median is the middle point in the data. Put a series of numbers in order from lowest to highest and determine the middle value. This is the median. In this example, there are 11 items so the sixth item is the middle or median. If you have an even number of items, the median is calculated by adding the two middle items and dividing by two. It's easy to find the median by counting off from both sides of the data points. However, there is a formula that can be used as well. This is especially useful if you have a lot of data points. Calculate by adding up the number of data points, plus one, divided by two. In this case, there are 11 data points: 11 plus one equals 12; 12 divided by two equals six; and so the sixth number is the median.</td><td>Elapsed time between identification of suspected disability and completion of IEP
30 45 60 70 80 85 102 120 120 120 158</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><th>Techniques</th><th>Examples of Techniques Used to Analyze Information About Children With Disabilities</th></tr>
<tr><td>Mode
The mode is the number repeated the most frequently. In this case, the number 120 appears three times, so it is the mode.</td><td>
<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Elapsed time between identification of suspected disability and completion of IEP</th></tr>
<tr><th>Child</th><th>Length of time in days</th></tr>
<tr><td>TI</td><td>30</td></tr>
<tr><td>QR</td><td>45</td></tr>
<tr><td>EF</td><td>60</td></tr>
<tr><td>AB</td><td>70</td></tr>
<tr><td>CD</td><td>80</td></tr>
<tr><td>GH</td><td>85</td></tr>
<tr><td>ST</td><td>102</td></tr>
<tr><td>UV</td><td>120</td></tr>
<tr><td>KL</td><td>120</td></tr>
<tr><td>MN</td><td>120</td></tr>
<tr><td>OP</td><td>158</td></tr>
</table>
</td></tr>
<tr><td>Range
Range is the difference between the lowest and highest values. The data in this table has been arranged from lowest to highest rather than being displayed in alphabetical order. To determine the range, subtract the lowest number from the highest number. In this case, subtract 30 from 158 to show a range of 128 days. The numbers 30 and 158, the two extremes, are also important to look at. The shortest length of time might provoke you to ask how your program was able to complete the Individualized Education Program (IEP) so quickly in this case and whether there are lessons learned you can apply in other situations. You would also want to learn why one IEP took 158 days to accomplish and consider what could have been done to move the process along more quickly.</td><td>
<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Elapsed time between identification of suspected disability and completion of IEP</th></tr>
<tr><th>Child</th><th>Length of time in days</th></tr>
<tr><td>TI</td><td>30</td></tr>
<tr><td>QR</td><td>45</td></tr>
<tr><td>EF</td><td>60</td></tr>
<tr><td>AB</td><td>70</td></tr>
<tr><td>CD</td><td>80</td></tr>
<tr><td>GH</td><td>85</td></tr>
<tr><td>ST</td><td>102</td></tr>
<tr><td>UV</td><td>120</td></tr>
<tr><td>KL</td><td>120</td></tr>
<tr><td>MN</td><td>120</td></tr>
<tr><td>OP</td><td>158</td></tr>
<tr><td>Range</td><td>158-30=128</td></tr>
</table>
</td></tr>
</table>

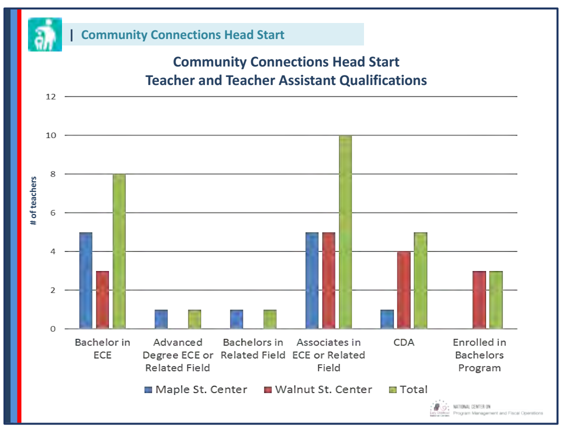
Displaying the Data



Pie Chart

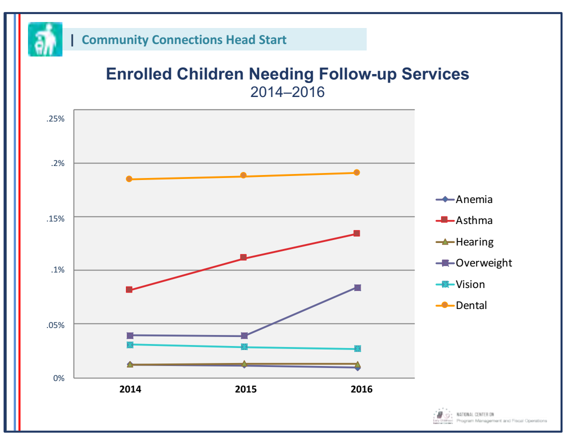
A pie chart shows how often something occurs. Slices or wedges of various sizes show the significance of the occurrence: the larger the slice of the pie, the larger the number of occurrences. The entire pie represents all occurrences.

To create a pie chart, the data must be converted to percentages; each slice represents a percentage of the total. When totaled, the slices equal approximately 100 percent. It is best to use a computer to construct pie charts.



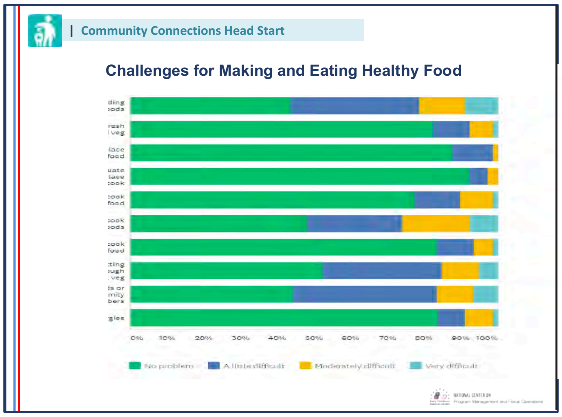
Bar Chart

Use the bar chart to compare many items. It typically presents categories or items along the Y axis, with their values displayed on the X axis. You can also break up the values by another category or group.



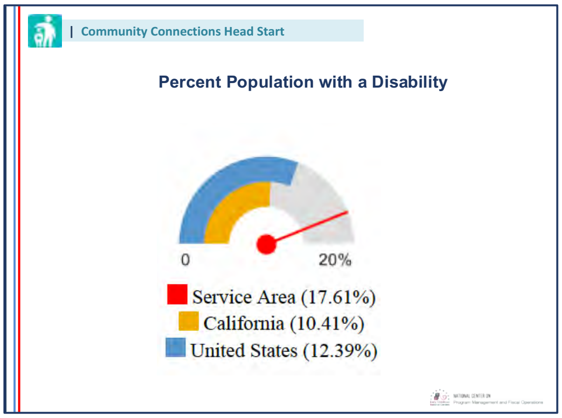
Graph

A graph shows the relationship between two variables. One set of data is plotted on the side of the graph, or the Y axis. Another set is plotted across the bottom, or the X axis.



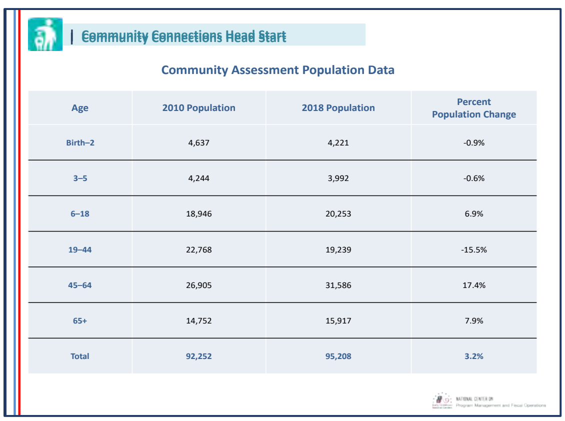
Area Chart

The area chart looks similar to a line chart, and the areas under each line inside it are filled in with various colors. Hence, it is possible to display this chart as stacked for better comparison. It is particularly helpful if absolute or relative values stacked over a time period are required to be displayed.



Indicator

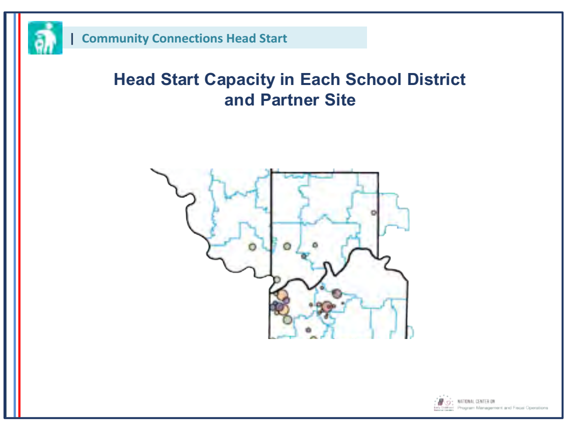
Indicators are particularly useful when you want to give an instant idea of how well the program is doing on a key performance indicators (KPI). Incorporating a simple "gauge indicator" visualization shows you immediately whether you're above or below target, and whether you're moving in the right direction.



Age	2010 Population	2018 Population	Percent Population Change
Birth–2	4,637	4,221	-0.9%
3–5	4,244	3,992	-0.6%
6–18	18,946	20,253	6.9%
19–44	22,768	19,239	-15.5%
45–64	26,905	31,586	17.4%
65+	14,752	15,917	7.9%
Total	92,252	95,208	3.2%

Pivot Table

A pivot table is a data summarization tool used in the context of data processing. Pivot tables are used to summarize, sort, reorganize, group, count, total or average data stored in a database. It allows its users to transform columns into rows and rows into columns.



Scatter (Area) Map

A scatter map helps viewers visualize geographical data across a region as data points on a map. You can show numeric data using circle color and size to represent the value of your data.

Attributes of a Good Data Display

Data Display Quality Checklist

These checklists provide a list of structural and functional attributes to consider when preparing data for presentation or distribution.

Structural Components

Attributes	Attribute Present (Y/N)	Comments
Informative title		
All axes are labeled		
Population size noted		
If data are presented as percentages, the numbers used to calculate the percentages are also provided		
All variables are identified and labels provided		
Dates for data points are provided, if applicable		
A key identifies all symbols, shading, color, etc.		

Functional Components

Attributes	Attribute Present (Y/N)	Comments
Display is uncluttered and free of unnecessary detail and extraneous features		
Uses an appropriate chart style (e.g., pie chart, clustered bar chart, stacked bar chart)		
Communicates the story that the author wants to tell		

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Program Management and Fiscal Operations

Annotated Data Bibliography

Resource	Description	Source
Five Best Practices for Telling Great Stories with Data and Why It Will Make You a Better Analyst	Discover how to use data to tell stories and why it will improve data analysis skills.	Five Best Practices for Telling Great Stories with Data and Why It Will Make You a Better Analyst. (2012). Retrieved from www.tableau.com
Eight Tips for Adding Analytics to Your Marketing Mix	Find eight tips on how to get answers from data.	Schneider, A. Eight Tips for Adding Analytics to Your Marketing Mix. (2012). Retrieved from www.tableau.com
Five Steps for Structuring Data-informed Conversations and Action in Education	Data teams can explore a five-step process for data use: setting the stage, examining the data, understanding the findings, developing an action plan, and monitoring progress and measuring success. The guide includes a series of templates teams can use in the process.	Kekahio, W., & Baker, M. Five Steps for Structuring Data-Informed Conversations and Action in Education (REL 2013-001). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific. (2013). Retrieved from www.ies.ed.gov

Resource	Description	Source
The Results-Based Accountability Guide	Explore this guide to results-based accountability™ (RBA), a process developed by Mark Friedman, founder of the Fiscal Policy Studies Institute. It contains explanations of the RBA "Turn-the-Curve" template and how to develop performance measures and sort them in a quadrant using four criteria: effort, effect, quantity, and quality.	Results Leadership Group. The Results-Based Accountability Guide. (2010). Retrieved from www.clearimpact.com
W. K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook	This handbook was developed for projects funded by the Kellogg Foundation. Part Two includes a description of three steps in designing and conducting evaluations: determining data-collection methods, collecting data, and analyzing and interpreting data. Various data collection methods and data analysis are described. There is also a section on communicating findings and utilizing results.	The Kellogg Foundation. W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook. (1998). Retrieved from www.wkkf.org
Which Chart or Graph Is Right for You?	Discover a variety of chart formats and learn when to use each.	Hardin, M., Hom, D., Perez, R., and Williams, L. Which Chart or Graph is Right for You? (2012). Retrieved from www.theathenaforum.org

Glossary of Data Analysis Terms and Concepts

Term	Definition
Accurate	Data that are correct (free from error), clear, and have adequate detail
Aggregate	A whole formed by combining several elements
Aggregate child-level assessment data	The combined data collected by an agency on the status and progress of the children it serves. Provides summary information about groups of children enrolled in specific classes, centers, home-based or other options, groups, or settings; other groups of children, such as dual language learners, or by specific domains of development
Analysis	An investigation of the component parts of a whole and their relationship in making up the whole
Availability	Data is present and ready for use; obtainable
Baseline	An accurate measurement of existing developmental and process levels prior to implementing change to allow a clear measurement of the impact of inputs and activities
Child-level assessment data	The data collected by an agency on an individual child from one or more valid and reliable assessments of a child's status and progress, including but not limited to direct assessment, structured observations, checklists, staff or parent report measures, and portfolio records or work samples
Code	A method used to label important pieces of information
Compare	To estimate, measure, or note the similarity or dissimilarity between
Correlation	Having a mutual relationship or connection in which one thing affects or depends on another. Two things may correlate but that does not mean the first thing causes the second
Dashboard	A visual display of the most important information needed to achieve one or more objectives which fits entirely on a single page so it can be monitored at a glance
Data	Facts or information usually used to calculate, analyze, or plan something
Disaggregate	To separate into its component parts
Factor	A circumstance, fact, or influence that contributes to a result or outcome
Hypothesis	An idea or theory that is not proven but leads to further study or discussion
Information	Data collected, organized, ordered, and imbued with meaning and context
Integrity	The accuracy and consistency of data over its entire life cycle
Mean	The average of a group of numbers
Median	The middle value of numbers when they are ordered from smallest to largest

Term	Definition
Mode	The value that occurs most frequently in a given set of data
Outlier	A person or thing differing from all other members of a particular group or set; events or observations which do not conform to an expected pattern
Pattern	Something that happens in a regular and repeated way
Personally Identifiable Information (PII)	Data that could identify a specific individual, including but not limited to a child's name, name of a child's family member, street address of the child, social security number, or other information that is linked or linkable to the child
Predictive	Data that is useful to calculate behavior and anticipate the consequences of change
Qualitative	Information from sources such as interviews, open-ended questionnaire items, and focus groups that is represented in verbal or narrative form or anecdotes
Quality Data	Data that are complete, accurate, timely and relevant
Quantitative	Data that are expressed in numerical terms
Range	The difference between the maximum value and the minimum value
Relevant	Data that is connected or has a bearing on the specific issue at hand
Reliability	The trait of being dependable or reliable. Tools that provide dependable and consistent information
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
Security	The protection of information, such as a data base, from destructive forces and from the unwanted actions of unauthorized users
Sum	The whole amount
Themes	A unifying idea that is a recurrent element or a narrative leading to a set of patterns
Timely	Data captured quickly after the activity and made available as soon as possible
Trend	A general direction in which something is developing or changing
Usability	The extent to which data can be used with effectiveness, efficiency, and satisfaction
Validity	The quality of being logically and factually sound
Variable	A characteristic, number, or quantity that changes over time
Variance	The quality of being subject to difference

NATIONAL CENTER ON
Program Management and Fiscal Operations

Early Childhood National Centers

Community Assessment Requirements in the Head Start Program Performance Standards

Determining community, strengths, needs, and resources, 45 CFR §1302.11	(b) *Community wide strategic planning and needs assessment (community assessment).* (1) To design a program that meets community needs, and builds on strengths and resources, a program must conduct a community assessment at least once over the five-year grant period. The community assessment must use data that describes community strengths, needs, and resources and include, at a minimum: (ii) The number of eligible infants, toddlers, preschool age children, and expectant mothers, including their geographic location, race, ethnicity, and languages they speak, including: (B) Children experiencing homelessness in collaboration with, to the extent possible, McKinney-Vento Local Education Agency Liaisons (42 U.S.C. 11432 (6)(A)); (C) Children in foster care; and (D) Children with disabilities, including types of disabilities and relevant services and resources provided to these children by community agencies; (iii) The education, health, nutrition and social service needs of eligible children and their families, including prevalent social or economic factors that impact their well-being; (iv) Typical work, school, and training schedules of parents with eligible children; (v) Other child development, child care centers, and family child care programs that serve eligible children, including home visiting, publicly funded state and local preschools, and the approximate number of eligible children served; (vi) Resources that are available in the community to address the needs of eligible children and their families; and, (vii) Strengths of the community. (2) A program must annually review and update the community assessment to reflect any significant changes including increased availability of publicly-funded pre-kindergarten- (including an assessment of how the pre-kindergarten available in the community meets the needs of the parents and children served by the program, and whether it is offered for a full school day), rates of family and child homelessness, and significant shifts in community demographics and resources.

	(3) A program must consider whether the characteristics of the community allow it to include children from diverse economic backgrounds that would be supported by other funding sources, including private pay, in addition to the program's eligible funded enrollment. A program must not enroll children from diverse economic backgrounds if it would result in a program serving less than its eligible funded enrollment.
Determining, verifying, and documenting eligibility, 45 CFR §1302.12	(a)(3) If a program has an alternate method to reasonably determine eligibility based on its community assessment, geographic and administrative data, or from other reliable data sources, it may petition the responsible HHS official to waive requirements in paragraphs (a)(1)(i) and (ii) of this section
Selection process, 45 CFR §1302.14	(a) *Selection criteria*. (1) A program must annually establish selection criteria that weigh the prioritization of selection of participants, based on community needs identified in the community needs assessment as described in §1302.11(b), and including family income, whether the child is homeless, whether the child is in foster care, the child's age, whether the child is eligible for special education and related services, or early intervention services, as appropriate, as determined under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (20 U.S.C. 1400 *et seq.*) and, other relevant family or child risk factors.
Enrollment, 45 CFR §1302.15	(c) *Reserved slots*. If a program determines from the community assessment there are families experiencing homelessness in the area, or children in foster care that could benefit from services, the program may reserve one or more enrollment slots for pregnant women and children experiencing homelessness and children in foster care, when a vacancy occurs. No more than three percent of a program's funded enrollment slots may be reserved. If the reserved enrollment slot is not filled within 30 days, the enrollment slot becomes vacant and then must be filled in accordance with paragraph (a) of this section.
Determining program structure, 45 CFR §1302.20	(a) *Choose a program option*. (1) A program must choose to operate one or more of the following program options: center-based, home-based, family child care, or an approved locally-designed variation as described in §1302.24. The program option(s) chosen must meet the needs of children and families based on the community assessment described in §1302.11(b). A Head Start program serving preschool-aged children may not provide only the option described in §1302.22(a) and (c)(2). (2) To choose a program option and develop a program calendar, a program must consider in conjunction with the annual review of the community assessment described in

	§1302.11(b)(2), whether it would better meet child and family needs through conversion of existing slots to full school day or full working day slots, extending the program year, conversion of existing Head Start slots to Early Head Start slots as described in paragraph (c) of this section, and ways to promote continuity of care and services. A program must work to identify alternate sources to support full working day services. If no additional funding is available, program resources may be used.
Child health status and care, 45 CFR §1302.42	(b)(4) A program must identify each child's nutritional health needs, taking into account available health information, including the child's health records, and family and staff concerns, including special dietary requirements, food allergies, and community nutrition issues as identified through the community assessment or by the Health Services Advisory Committee.
Community partnerships and coordination with other early childhood education programs, 45 CFR §1302.53	(a) *Community partnerships*. (1) A program must establish ongoing collaborative relationships and partnerships with community organizations such as establishing joint agreements, procedures, or contracts and arranging for onsite delivery of services as appropriate, to facilitate access to community services that are responsive to children's and families' needs and family partnership goals, and community needs and resources, as determined by the community assessment.
Management system, 45 CFR §1302.101	(i) Utilizing information from the program's community assessment about the languages spoken throughout the program service area to anticipate child and family needs; (ii) Identifying community resources and establishing ongoing collaborative relationships and partnerships with community organizations consistent with the requirements in §1302.53(a); and
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: 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; (d)(2) Annually, a program must publish and disseminate a report that complies with section 644(a)(2) of the Act and includes a summary of a program's most recent community assessment, as described in §1302.11(b), consistent with privacy protections in subpart C of part 1303 of this chapter.

Implementation of program performance standards, 45 CFR §1302.103	(b) A program's approach to implement the changes included in parts 1301 through 1304 of this chapter must ensure adequate preparation for effective and timely service delivery to children and their families including, at a minimum, review of community assessment data to determine the most appropriate strategy for implementing required program changes, including assessing any changes in the number of children who can be served, as necessary, the purchase of and training on any curriculum, assessment, or other materials, as needed, assessment of program-wide professional development needs, assessment of staffing patterns, the development of coordinated approaches described in §1302.101(b), and the development of appropriate protections for data sharing;

Community Assessment Requirements in the Head Start Act

Sec. 640 (g)(1) For the purpose of expanding Head Start programs, the Secretary shall take into consideration—	C) the extent to which the applicant has undertaken a community- wide strategic planning and needs assessment involving other entities, including community organizations, and Federal, State, and local public agencies (including the local educational agency liaison designated under section 722(g)(1)(J)(ii) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11432(g)(1)(J)(ii))), that provide services to children and families, such as— (i) family support services; (ii) child abuse prevention services; (iii) protective services; (iv) foster care; (v) services for families in whose homes English is not the language customarily spoken; (vi) services for children with disabilities; and (vii) services for homeless children (D) the extent to which the family needs assessment and community wide strategic planning and needs assessment of the applicant reflect a need to provide full-working-day or full-calendar-year services and the extent to which, and manner in which, the applicant demonstrates the ability to collaborate and participate with the State and local community providers of child care or preschool services to provide full-working-day full calendar year services.
Sec. 641A (c)(2) The Secretary shall ensure that reviews described in subparagraphs (A) through (C) of paragraph (1)—	D) include as part of the reviews, an assessment of the extent to which the programs address the communitywide strategic planning and needs assessment described in section 640(g)(1)(C)

Sec. 641A (h)(3) The Secretary shall—	(B) for each such Head Start agency operating a program with an actual enrollment that is less than its funded enrollment, as determined under subparagraph (A), develop, in collaborationwith such agency, a plan and timetable for reducing or eliminating under-enrollment taking into consideration— (i) the quality and extent of the outreach, recruitment, and communitywide strategic planning and needs assessment conducted by such agency
Sec. 642 (d)(2) Each Head Start agency shall ensure the sharing of accurate and regular information for use by the governing body and the policy council, about program planning, policies, and Head Start agency operations, including—	(G) the communitywide strategic planning and needs assessment of the Head Start agency, including any applicable updates
Sec. 642 (h)	Technical Assistance and Training Plan— In order to receive funds under this subchapter, a Head Start agency shall—develop an annual technical assistance and training plan. Such plan shall be based on the agency's self-assessment, the communitywide strategic planning and needs assessment, the needs of parents and children to be served by such agency, and the results of the reviews conducted under section 641A(c).
Sec. 645 (a)(4)	After demonstrating a need through a communitywide strategic planning and needs assessment, a Head Start agency may apply to the Secretary to convert part-day sessions, particularly consecutive part-day sessions, into full-working-day sessions
Sec. 645 (a)(5)	(A) Upon written request and pursuant to the requirements of this paragraph, a Head Start agency may use funds that were awarded under this subchapter to serve children age 3 to compulsory school age, in order to serve infants and toddlers if the agency submits an application to the Secretary containing, as specified in rules issued by the Secretary, all of the following information: (ii) A communitywide strategic planning and needs assessment demonstrating how the use of such funds would best meet the needs of the community

Sec. 648 (a)(3) In providing training and technical assistance and for allocating resources for such assistance under this section, the Secretary shall—	(B) to the maximum extent practicable— (iii) assist Head Start agencies and programs in conducting and participating in communitywide strategic planning and needs assessments, including the needs of homeless children and their families, and in conducting self-assessments.

References in the Head Start Act Requiring the Use of Community Assessment Data

Some requirements in the Head Start Act can only be met by taking into consideration the data collected and analyzed during the community assessment process. The following paraphrased references identify how community assessment data must be used to meet the requirements of the Head Start Act:

- When making funding determinations, there must be consideration for: the lack of resources available in the community that may prevent the Head Start agency from providing all or a portion of the non-federal contribution; whether the Head Start agency is located in a community adversely affected by a major disaster; and the impact on the community that would result if the Head Start agency ceased to carry out such program (Sec. 640(b)(1), (4), and (5)).

- In selecting an applicant to be designated as a Head Start agency, there must be consideration for the plan of the applicant to coordinate and collaborate with other public or private entities providing early childhood education and development programs and services for young children in the community involved (Sec. 641(d)(2)(H)).

- For each grantee operating with an enrollment under its funded enrollment, a plan must be developed taking into consideration: changing demographics, the ability to provide full working day programs where needed, the availability and use of other early childhood education, and development options (Sec. 641A(h)(3)(B)(ii), (iv), and (v)).

- The Policy Council shall approve and submit to the governing body decisions about activities to ensure that the Head Start agency is responsive to community and parent needs (Sec. 642(c)(2)(D)(i)).

- A Head Start agency must collaborate and coordinate with public and private entities to the maximum extent practicable (Sec. 642(e)).

- Training and technical assistance shall be available to assist programs in developing and implementing full-working-day and full calendar year programs where community need is clearly identified (Sec. (648(a)(3)(B)(iv)).

National Resources for Community Assessment Data

This chart highlights a number of government agencies, national organizations, and research groups that may provide sources of data that can be used for your community assessment. Keep in mind that this list is not exhaustive; other national resources, as well as local ones, may provide you with valuable information for your community assessment.

Agency / Organization	Area of Focus	Website
Administration for Children and Families (ACF)	Promotes the economic and social well-being of families, children, individuals, and communities with funding, strategic partnerships, guidance, and training and technical assistance. They maintain data and reports on a variety of topics, and you can link to information about a number of programs and initiatives from their website.	www.acf.hhs.gov
American Fact Finder	Provides access to official and current demographic, economic, and geographic data from the U.S. Census Bureau. Topics include: population estimates, housing, and economics, and information can be searched by multiple criteria.	www.factfinder.census.gov
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)	A national nonprofit organization that works to improve the lives of low-income people.	www.clasp.org
Child Trends	Monitors and examines more than 120 indicators of children's well-being.	www.childtrends.org
Child Welfare Information Gateway	Promotes the safety, permanency, and well-being of children, youth, and families. They maintain information, resources, and data covering topics on child welfare, child abuse and neglect, out-of-home care, adoption, and more.	www.childwelfare.gov

Agency / Organization	Area of Focus	Website
Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health	Examines the physical and emotional health of children. Special emphasis is placed on factors that may relate to the well-being of children. Databases can be searched by topic or by state or geographic region.	www.nschdata.org
Homelessness Research Institute	Working to prevent and end homelessness by improving policy, building capacity, and educating opinion leaders. They have developed interactive maps, calculators, and charts with data about issues related to homelessness.	www.endhomelessness.org
Kids Count	A national and state effort to track the status of children in the U.S. Their data center has state-by-state data on multiple indicators of child and family well-being.	www.aecf.org
Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)	Programs promote and improve the health of mothers, infants, children, and adolescents. They have rich data on children's health and healthcare-related issues.	www.mchb.hrsa.gov
National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP)	Dedicated to promoting the economic security, health, and well-being of America's low-income families and children. They maintain information on state demographics and early childhood profiles.	www.nccp.org
National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)	Maintains information about subject matter achievement, instructional experiences, and school environments for populations of students, and information about factors that may be related to children's learning.	www.nces.ed.gov
National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS)	The nation's principal health statistics agency.	www.cdc.gov

Agency / Organization	Area of Focus	Website
National Institute of Early Education Research (NIEER)	Supports early childhood education initiatives by providing objective, nonpartisan information based on research. They profile state-funded pre-kindergarten programs and national trends for enrollment in, quality of, and state spending on preschool. Tables include information on state-funded pre-K, Head Start, child care, and U.S. Census data.	www.nieer.org
Office of Child Care	Administers the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). Works to promote family economic self-sufficiency and help children succeed in school and life through affordable, high-quality early care and afterschool programs. They maintain reports on CCDF data by state.	www.acf.hhs.gov
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)	Leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation. Has extensive behavioral health data.	www.samhsa.gov

Notes

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Early Childhood National Centers