





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

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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.

“ 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? ”

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?

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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](#).

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.

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.

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.

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.

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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?

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.

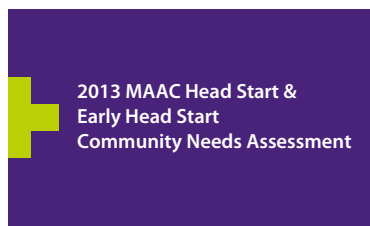
NEW DIRECTOR TIP

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.

- 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.

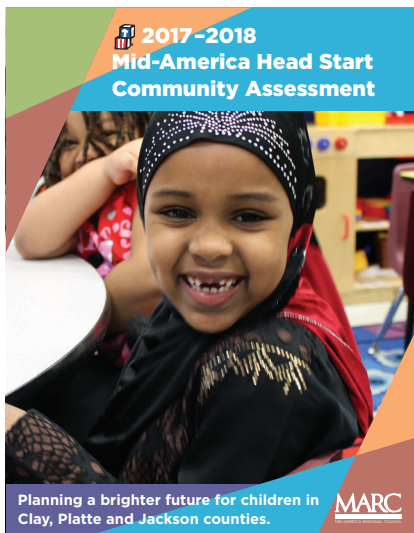
▼ While your community assessment will provide a unique portrait of your program and the community it serves, you can find inspiration in completed reports posted on the Internet. A Google search for “Head Start Community Assessment” provides a long list of reports to review.



MAAC
Northern San Diego County, California
September 2013



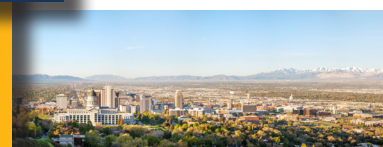
2018 Indiana
Early Head Start and Head Start
Needs Assessment Report



2017-2018
Mid-America Head Start
Community Assessment
Planning a brighter future for children in
Clay, Platte and Jackson counties. MARC



DENVER GREAT KIDS
HEAD START
COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT | 2018



2017
Community Needs 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.

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 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.