Human Resources System Audit:
A Tool for Head Start Programs

Early Childhood
National Centers

Contents

Human Resources System Audit

Programs can use this self-evaluation tool to help recognize their HR strengths, identify areas for improvement, and ensure compliance with federal and state laws. Embedded links to the Head Start Act, the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS), and the Uniform Guidance help programs monitor compliance with key HR regulations. This resource is divided into the following seven focus areas. They can be completed as a stand-alone exercise.

- HR Strategic Planning
- Talent Acquisition
- Employee Engagement and Retention
- Learning and Development
- Organizational Effectiveness and Development
- Employee and Labor Relations
- Culture, Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity

Begin by answering the introductory questions. Then, move on to the focus areas. Read each statement and answer by selecting "yes," "no," or "don't know," or entering a number between one and four consistent with the scoring scale below. Write notes or ideas under each question and next steps on the summary page at the end of each section.

Scoring scale:

1 = Do not do or have
2 = Needs improvement
3 = Meets expectations
4 = Exceeds expectations

Note: This HR System Audit is not a comprehensive list of requirements or expectations for Head Start and Early Head Start programs. It does not replace or supersede the requirements outlined in the HSPPS or Head Start Act.

Introductory Questions

1. Do you have an HR department? ○ Yes ○ No

2. Do you have at least one employee designated as an HR specialist? ○ Yes ○ No

3. Who will be engaged in completing this audit? _____

4. Will your program be adding or decreasing positions in the coming year? ○ Yes ○ No
○ Don't know

HR Strategic Planning

HR Strategic Planning

Involves developing, implementing, and managing strategic directions required for organizational success.

Relevant regulations:
- Management system, 45 CFR §1302.101
- Achieving program goals, 45 CFR §1302.102

Score	Questions
	1. To what extent does your program's HR staff employ systems thinking to plan workforce-related strategies for the organization?
	2. How effective are your strategies for understanding your program's competitive advantage in the local early childhood education sector?
	3. Does your HR system:
	a. Use program data to monitor and assess ongoing workforce effectiveness?
	b. Use HR-specific tools to analyze and evaluate program operations?
	c. Provide timely and accurate information to the strategic planning process?

HR Strategic Planning

Score	Questions
	4. To what degree does employee performance influence or drive compensation?
	5. How effective are your staff-retention strategies at ensuring continuity of care for children and families?
	6. How effective is your organizational succession planning at ensuring continuity of care for children and families?

HR Strategic Planning: Next Steps

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Talent Acquisition

Talent Acquisition

Involves building and maintaining a workforce that meets the needs of the program.

Relevant regulations:
- Staff qualifications and competency requirements, 45 CFR §1302.91
- Sec. 648A and 648(g)A
- Personnel policies, 45 CFR §1302.90(b)(1) and (c)
- Training and professional development, 45 CFR §1302.92(a)
- Insurance and bonding, 45 CFR §1303.12
- Uniform Guidance 45 CFR §75 Appendix II

Score	Questions
	1. How thoroughly does your HR system comply with regulations concerning minimum credentials and competencies?
	2. Has your program developed written minimum knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) for each position that exceed minimum regulatory requirements?
	3. How effective is your overall talent recruitment process at attracting qualified candidates with the appropriate KSAs?
	4. How effectively does your HR system:
	a. Define job requirements?

Talent Acquisition

Score	Questions
	b. Evaluate candidates?
	c. Conduct pre-employment assessments and screenings?
	d. Verify credentials?
	5. To what extent does your HR system:
	a. Create job advertisements that meet nondiscrimination, equal employment opportunity, and disability regulations?
	b. Comply with interview, reference verification, and background check processes?
	6. How effective is your process for:
	a. Onboarding new staff?

Score	Questions
	b. Providing comprehensive orientations for consultants, contractors, and volunteers?
	c. Ensuring compliance with written standards of conduct?
	d. Coordinating volunteers, especially those working with children?
	7. To what degree does your process for working with independent contractors and consultants comply with local, state, and federal wage and safety standards?
	8. Do you verify liability insurance for independent contractors and consultants? ○ Yes ○ No ○ Don't know
	9. To what degree does your recordkeeping system ensure your program's employee classifications are accurately defined (e.g., full-time, part-time, hourly, contract, temporary, short-term, exempt, non-exempt, regular employee, independent contractor)?

Talent Acquisition

Talent Aquisition: Next Steps

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Employee Engagement and Retention

Employee Engagement and Retention

Involves communicating job expectations, creating a positive relationship between staff and leadership, promoting a thriving workforce, and retaining high-performing employees.

Relevant regulations:

- Training and professional development, 45 CFR §1302.92
- Management system,1302.101(a)(2)

Score	Questions
	1. How effectively does your HR system:
	a. Communicate organizational values to employees?
	b. Engage staff in creating a positive organizational culture?
	c. Measure employee retention and turnover rates?
	d. Measure how employees feel about their work?
	e. Recognize and reward high-quality performance?

Score	Questions
	f. Ensure job expectations are consistently met? Consider factors influencing job performance (e.g., the adequacy of resources and tools provided to employees; level of supervision and support provided; effectiveness of training, mentoring, or professional development; processes for measuring performance; providing feedback; and establishing appropriate performance goals).
	g. Ensure staff feel valued, respected, and heard?
2. Are the resolutions of complaints and grievances fully documented? ○ Yes ○ No ○ Don't know	

Employee Engagement and Retention: Next Steps

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Learning and Development

Learning and Development

Involves enhancing the knowledge, skills, and competencies of the workforce consistent with federal, state, and local regulations and the program's needs.

Relevant regulations:

- Training and professional development, 45 CFR §1302.92

Score	Questions
	1. To what extent does your program:
	a. Have an effective research-based training and professional development system for staff?
	b. Ensure staff have necessary knowledge to deliver high-quality services?
	c. Understand staff strengths and areas requiring support?
	d. Understand the best techniques for enhancing staff performance?
	e. Support staff in applying newly acquired skills and knowledge after completion of training?
	f. Have an adequate budget for training?

Score	Questions
	g. Have a research-based, coordinated coaching strategy for education staff?
	h. Extend opportunities for coaching beyond education staff, to all employees who need it?
	i. Establish community partnerships and coordinate with local and state early childhood systems to support training and professional development for staff and parents?
	j. Effectively train managers and supervisors for their job responsibilities (e.g., policies and procedures, effective leadership and management, communication, reflective supervision, carrying out disciplinary actions and termination, time management, discrimination, harassment, and health and safety)?

Learning and Development: Next Steps

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Organizational Effectiveness and Development

Organizational Effectiveness and Development

Involves measuring the effectiveness of processes and staff, and implementing improvements where necessary. Activities in this category are designed to improve the overall structure and functionality of the program.

Relevant regulations:

- Management system, 45 CFR §1302.101(a)(3)
- Volunteers, 45 CFR §1302.94(a)
- Staff health and wellness, 45 CFR §1302.93

Score	Questions
	1. To what extent does your program's mission and vision statement align with your:
	a. Organizational culture?
	b. Policies and procedures?
	2. How effectively does your current staffing pattern:
	a. Promote staffing continuity at all levels?
	b. Allow time for professional development?
	c. Align with the program's functions?

Score	Questions
	3. To what extent does HR contribute relevant data to the annual self-assessment?
	4. How effectively does HR support the six systems of organizational effectiveness?
	a. Leadership
	b. Communication
	c. Accountability
	d. Delivery of services
	e. Performance

[1]Day, Douglas. *The Six Systems of Organizational Effectiveness.* Nov. 5, 2015.
https://leadershipcircle.com/en/the-six-systems-of-organizational-effectiveness/

Organizational Effectiveness and Development

Score	Questions
	f. Measurement

Employee Engagement and Retention: Next Steps

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Employee and Labor Relations

Employee and Labor Relations

Involves the terms and conditions of employment and related negotiations with employees or unions.

Relevant regulations:
- Training, 45 CFR §1301.5
- Sec. 642(c)(1)(E)(V)(cc)

Score	Questions
	1. Does your employee handbook include:
	a. An ethics policy that outlines the process for reporting illegal or unethical activity? ○ Yes ○ No ○ Don't know
	b. Policies on harassment, discrimination, or other forms of unacceptable conduct? ○ Yes ○ No ○ Don't know
	c. An Equal Employment Opportunity policy statement? ○ Yes ○ No ○ Don't know
	d. A process for conducting investigations for disciplinary concerns? ○ Yes ○ No ○ Don't know

Employee and Labor Relations

Score	Questions
	e. Standards of conduct and provisions for handling violations? ○ Yes ○ No ○ Don't know
	f. Provisions for personal leave? ○ Yes ○ No ○ Don't know
	g. A whistleblower policy? ○ Yes ○ No ○ Don't know
	h. A policy and procedures for addressing violence or potential violence in the workplace? ○ Yes ○ No ○ Don't know
	2. How effective is your employee wellness program? Consider applicable health care and privacy regulations and how they are designed to improve health outcomes.
	3. How familiar are you with local, state, and federal employment laws and regulations, including Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations involving notification and recordkeeping requirements related to workplace injuries?

Employee and Labor Relations

Score	Questions
	4. Does your worker safety plan include:
	a. Strategies for communicating and responding to hazardous substance incidents and other safety-related emergencies? ○ Yes ○ No ○ Don't know
	b. An identified safety officer or primary contact? ○ Yes ○ No ○ Don't know
	c. Protocols for safety inspections and corrections that address ergonomics, office equipment, and potential repetitive motion injuries? ○ Yes ○ No ○ Don't know
	d. Protocols for reporting occupational injuries to HR? ○ Yes ○ No ○ Don't know
	5. How effective and constructive is your communication with unions representing your staff?

Score	Questions
	6. How effectively does your program train governing body or Tribal Council members to carry out their designated responsibilities?
	7. If you have had more than one employment practice claim, mediation, administrative hearing, or grievance in the last three years, have you reviewed your systems to identify contributing factors or patterns? ○ Yes ○ No ○ Don't know
	8. How effective are your employee disciplinary and termination processes (e.g., employee due process, final paycheck regulations, notification of termination, unemployment and benefits continuation rights, company equipment disposition, and exit interview process)?
	9. How effective are your processes for:
	a. Addressing systemic issues that create turnover?
	b. Identifying and mitigating risk for accidental injury to staff?
	c. Managing and tracking time worked, time off, leave, and absences (e.g., vacation, sick time, pregnancy or military leave, Family Medical Leave Act, and workers' compensation, meal breaks, and rest breaks) in accordance with federal, state, and local laws?

Employee and Labor Relations

Score	Questions
	10. How effective are your processes or procedures for:
	a. Maintaining confidentiality of personnel records?
	b. Ensuring required employment postings are displayed and filed appropriately?
	c. Screening volunteers for communicable diseases?
	d. Promoting employee health and wellness?

Employee and Labor Relations: Next Steps

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Culture, Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity

Culture, Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity (CDIE)

Involves creating opportunities to leverage the unique backgrounds and characteristics of all employees.

Relevant regulations:

- Teaching and learning environment, 45 CFR §1302.31
- Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs Serving Children Ages Birth to Five: Learning Extensions

Score	Questions
	1. To what extent does your HR program:
	a. Maintain knowledge of current trends and HR best practices relating to CDIE?
	b. Incorporate CDIE principles into performance management, individual goal-setting, and employee professional development?
	c. Support an organizational culture that values and promotes a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workforce?
	d. Consider CDIE in developing strategies for talent acquisition and employee engagement and retention?
	e. Incorporate disability-related, older worker, and military inclusion strategies into recruitment, engagement, and retention plans?

Score	Questions
	f. Monitor CDIE data to support optimum talent acquisition and workplace accommodations?
	2. To what extent does your program provide mentoring, training, guidance, and coaching on cultural and linguistic responsiveness to staff working directly with children and families?

Culture, Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity: Next Steps

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