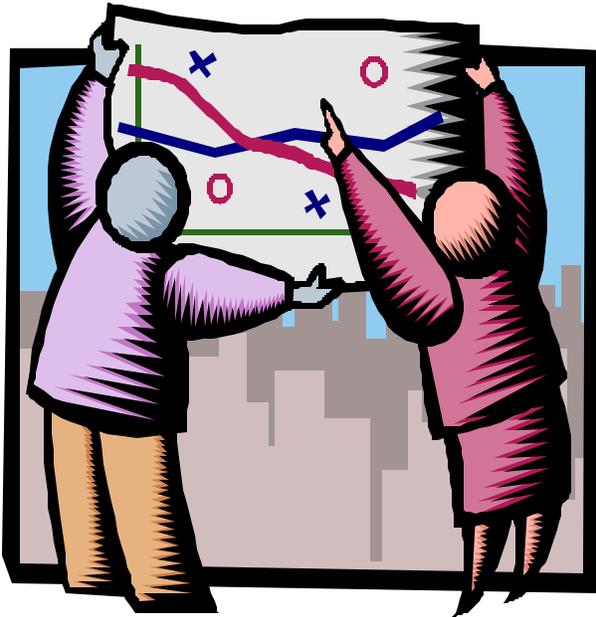


APPLICATION ACTIVITY: HARMONY SPRINGS

7-X



Job Performance
Situation 7:
Improving
Program Quality
Through Program
Monitoring and
Self-Assessment

HEAD START
MOVING AHEAD
COMPETENCY-BASED TRAINING PROGRAM



Developed under delivery order number 105-97-2043, the Head Start Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Revised in 2000 by the American Institutes for Research under contract number 105-94-2020

Clip art contained in this document is used under license from Microsoft and is copyright © 1998 Microsoft and/or its suppliers, One Microsoft Way, Redmond, Washington 98052-6399 U.S.A. All rights reserved. The Head Start Blocks are a registered trademark of Head Start. The “Listening Test: Riddles” in 3–F is used with permission of the McGraw Hill companies. The Conflict Resolution Style Sheet in 5–C is used with permission of the National Association for Community Mediation. All other material appearing in this document is in the public domain. Citation of the source is appreciated.

This material was produced in 1998, by Education Development Center, Inc., and Circle Solutions, Inc.

REFERENCE

This activity addresses the application of skill competencies in *program monitoring and self-assessment* and *planning*. Participants will increase their skill competencies in these areas and apply them to a Head Start job performance situation. They will consider how the lessons learned can be applied to other Head Start work situations.

Related skill activities include 3–D, Decision-Making: Building Consensus; 5–C, Conflict Resolution: Understanding the Elements; 7–C, Program Monitoring and Self-Assessment: Leading a Program Monitoring or Self-Assessment; 7–D, Program Monitoring and Self-Assessment: Collecting Data Using Multiple Sources of Data; and 7–E, Planning: Using Assessment Data.

Application Activity: Harmony Springs

Outcomes. Participants who complete this activity will practice some of the following skills.

- articulate a compelling vision for the self-assessment or program review for both review team members and grantee staff
- develop a plan to achieve their vision
- identify the characteristics of strong team members
- create a climate of respect during the assessment
- identify strategies that team leaders can use during different stages of team development
- use a formula to respond to staff complaints during a review
- describe the strengths and limitations of different data sources in conducting a program review or self-assessment
- conduct a group interview
- build rapport with the person being interviewed
- keep accurate recordings of interviews
- conduct an observation
- keep accurate records on observations
- analyze and interpret data from multiple sources
- identify the three basic elements that make up all types of plans
- use a common planning acronym, SWOT, to analyze assessment data
- distinguish between strategic and operational planning
- develop goals and SMART objectives

Recommended group size. Three to 15 participants, with at least one representative from each of these skill groups: 7–C, Program Monitoring and Self-Assessment: Leading a Program Monitoring or Self-Assessment; 7–D, Program Monitoring and Self-Assessment: Collecting Data Using Multiple Sources of Data; and 7–E, Planning: Using Assessment Data.

Materials. Newsprint and markers

Components

This activity can be done by one person, an informal group, or a formal workshop. We have provided suggested times, but participants and facilitators may wish to adjust these times to their own timetables.

Step 1. Handout: Harmony Springs: Scene 1	5 min.
Step 2. Worksheet: Case Analysis	15 min.
Step 3. Handout: Harmony Springs: Scene 2	10 min.
Step 4. Worksheet: Assembling an Assessment Team	20 min.
Step 5. Worksheet: an Interview	20 min.
Step 6. Handout: Harmony Springs: Scene3	10 min.
Step 7. Worksheet: Using Assessment Data	20 min.
Step 8. Post-Assessment	15 min.
Suggested total time	2 hrs.

This activity contains 17 pages.



STEP 1. HANDOUT: HARMONY SPRINGS (SCENE 1)

This performance situation provides leaders with the opportunity to enhance their competency in *leading a Head Start self-assessment or program monitoring review* and in using the results in *planning*. As with the other Performance Situations, participants will begin to address these skills areas by examining a hypothetical situation. Although the situation presented in Performance Situation 7 depicts a program at a crossroad, the skills addressed can be generalized to *any* situation in which a leader is involved in self-assessment or program monitoring.

Consider the following:

Harmony Springs

Dolores, the grantee director of a small Head Start program in the Midwest, is on the phone with the program specialist. “We’re coming up to our three-year review next year, Russ, and I wanted to talk with you. We had a piece of real unpleasantness the last time, you’ll recall!”

“I certainly do. I can assure you that you won’t be interacting with that consultant when your review comes up next.”

“Well, that is a relief. Now, maybe you have some suggestions that might help us with our annual self-assessment. We’re getting ready to do that in March.”

“So how are your plans going for that?”

“To be honest, we are feeling pretty overwhelmed by the whole process. We have been trying to design our self-assessment to more closely match the revised Federal monitoring system and it hasn’t been easy! Approaching this task from a systems-based perspective has been a real challenge for my staff, not to mention the parents and community partners!”

“What kinds of challenges have you faced in making the change?”

“Well, for one thing, it has been very difficult to shift the focus of the process from the small details to the “big picture.” We used the OSPRI for many years and most of my staff still view the checklist as their tool of choice. When we changed the process to include more open-ended interview questions, the staff had to make a huge leap of faith. They still doubt their ability to be proficient with the new process and they continually express a fear that they will “miss something.” I have to admit that I am also skeptical. Although I truly believe that the systems perspective is best, I’m just not sure that we are ready for this.”

STEP 2. WORKSHEET: CASE ANALYSIS



Suggested time: 15 min.

Purpose: To begin to address the issues raised in the Harmony Springs case.

Part I (10 min.) Answer these questions on your own. You may wish to refer to 7-C, Program Monitoring and Self-Assessment: Leading a Program Monitoring or Self-Assessment to inform your decisions.

1. Think of incidents of consultant “unpleasantness” that you’ve heard about. List several examples.

2. What advice would you give to Russ, the Federal program specialist, to help him prevent similar experiences from occurring in the Harmony Springs review?

3. Given your experiences with the Federal monitoring instrument, what information would you say that Russ can provide to Dolores to help her understand the systems-based approach to reviews?

4. What advice can Russ give Dolores about preparing herself, the team, and her program for the self-assessment?

Part II (10 min.) Reconvene as a group (or pair up with another participant) to discuss your answers and your reasons for choosing them.



STEP 3. HANDOUT: HARMONY SPRINGS (SCENE 2)

Suggested time: 10 min.

Read Scene 2, then go on to the Step 4 Worksheet.

Dolores and her team are getting ready to plan their annual self-assessment. After Dolores explains her conversations with Russ, the team agrees with her that they will model their review on the PRISM instrument. “So if we use that approach,” says Dolores, “we’d be looking at three main areas of the revised performance standards: Child Development and Health Services, Family and Community Partnerships, and Program Design and Management, as well as the systems we have in place. And I like the idea of conducting group interviews with staff and parents, in addition to having individual interviews and doing record checks. I also like the idea of seeing how our systems and services play out in reality by concentrating on a group of focus children and families.”

Roseanne, the family service manager, says, “Well, in the area of family and community partnerships, over the last year we’ve really worked hard on ways to transition children and families.”

“That’s good. I hope our assessment will help us find out if our transition system is working,” says Dolores. “And any changes we need to make to be more effective.”

“And don’t forget about the steps we’ve been taking to work with other community agencies,” adds Michelle, the manager in charge of health services.

“For children’s services, there’s the way we’ve improved our approach to individualizing,” says Latrece, the child development services manager. “And if objectivity is one of our goals in carrying out the assessments, I’ll volunteer to look at the family and community partnerships, if that’s okay with you, Roseanne.”

“Sure,” says Roseanne. “And since we’re looking for objectivity, want me to look into transition?”

“Michelle, would you work with me on program governance?” asks Dolores. “You’d bring some helpful objectivity to the process. I’d be particularly interested in knowing how the Policy Council members think things have worked out this year. I can already think of questions I’d like to ask, but I don’t think I’m the best one to ask them.”

“I’m glad you’ve all shown so much interest in doing the self-assessment in this new way,” Dolores says to her team. “The next step is for each of you to come up with the teams you’ll need and invite them to a short orientation meeting about the process. I’ll be happy to do an introduction and talk about the purpose of the review and what I expect from the teams. You can spend the rest of the meeting time planning your interviews.”



STEP 4. WORKSHEET: ASSEMBLING AN ASSESSMENT TEAM

Suggested time: 20 min.

Purpose: To provide participants with an opportunity to practice the skills needed to form effective assessment teams.

Choose one of three assessment areas described in the Step 3 Handout: (1) Child Development and Health Services, (2) Family and Community Partnerships, or (3) Program Design and Management.

You are _____ (Roseanne, Michelle, or Latrece)

You have to put together a team to assess _____. Think about your own program and identify real staff members, parents, and perhaps some outside community people who might be good candidates. In the “Why” column, think about the role of the individual, but also his or her personal characteristics (e.g., good at giving feedback, good interviewer, has a broad understanding of Head Start and the community).

For Federal staff: select review team members for an overall onsite review of Harmony Springs.

Potential Team Members

Team Member	Why?
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

What will Dolores say to the teams during their first meeting?



STEP 5. WORKSHEET: STRUCTURING AN INTERVIEW

Suggested time: 20 min.

Purpose: To provide participants with an opportunity to practice the skills needed to structure an interview.

Your task is to develop an interview structure for the Harmony Springs self-assessment. Read the following interview subjects and sample questions. Choose the one that most closely matches your area of expertise. Use the template below to structure an interview around your topic.

1. For a follow-up interview with a focus family: Is your child going to transition from Early Head Start to Head Start or from Head Start to elementary school soon? Has a staff member talked with you about transition? What kinds of things have the staff told you about the local elementary school? Has the program helped you communicate with teachers or anyone else at the elementary school?
2. For an interview with a teacher whose classroom you've observed: How do you use information from medical and developmental screenings, ongoing observations, and parental insights to determine how the program responds to children's individual characteristics, strengths, and needs?
3. For an interview with a Policy Council that you just observed: What kinds of things does the Policy Council do? Can someone describe a recent activity or project?

The Opener

This block of questions aims at putting the interviewee at ease; explaining the purpose of the interview and how the questions will be used; and establishing the subject matter.

1. We're collecting some information about. . . .
2. I have some questions I'd like to ask. First, I want to assure you that what you tell me will be treated as confidential.

The Main Body

This block of questions focuses on getting the facts, probing for additional details, and exploring challenges, rewards, and implications.

Getting the facts. Use simple, easy-to-answer questions that seek straightforward, factual answers to lay down the basic foundation: who, what, when, where, how.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Probing for additional details. Ask for clarification on points that weren't clear to you; inquire about additional information; or make links to other program areas in Head Start.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Exploring challenges, rewards, and implications. Ask more open-ended, thought-provoking questions. Allow respondents to go further afield in their thinking or talk about topics that may be more sensitive.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

5.

6.

The Close

1. Thank you for your time and your willingness to answer these questions. It will help us understand better. . . .
2. Do you have any questions you want to ask me before we wrap up?

STEP 6. HANDOUT: HARMONY SPRINGS (SCENE 3)



Suggested time: 10 min.

Read Scene 3, then go on to the Step 7 Worksheet.

As planned, Dolores and her management team engaged a group of parents, line staff, and community members to conduct their annual self-assessment. From the information they gathered, they concluded that Harmony Springs, like most Head Start programs, offers many high-quality services to children and families, but that there are some improvements they can make to their systems and services. One of the areas that most interested the team was transition services.

Data collected from interviews with parents, staff, community members, observations, and record reviews revealed the following:

- Twenty-five percent of former Head Start parents participate in parent-teacher conferences in the public school; 75 percent of parents in the general population participate.
- Teachers incorporate a number of transition-related activities in the curriculum during May, including field trips to the local kindergartens.
- Family workers prepare “Getting Ready for School” packets for parents which contain copies of their child’s Head Start health records.
- Several parents asked that their children’s health records not say “Head Start,” because they didn’t want the kindergarten teachers to know about their income level.
- Family workers scheduled transition-related home visits with all parents. Sixty percent of the visits were completed. Some parents were unable to reschedule appointments because of their jobs.
- Current and former Policy Council members who had served three years on the council expressed a sense of loss that their involvement with Head Start was coming to an end.
- Parents report that some of their friends whose children received early intervention services prefer to send their children to the preschool program operated by the local public school because it is a “real school.”
- The LEA recently hired a new early childhood specialist.



STEP 7. WORKSHEET: USING ASSESSMENT DATA

Suggested time: 20 min.

Purpose: To provide participants with an opportunity to practice the skills needed to conduct a SWOT analysis and to develop related goals and objectives.

Part I (10 min.) Reflect on the transition data in Step 6. On your own, determine which items could be classified as **Strengths**, **Weaknesses**, **Opportunities**, or **Threats**. Compare your answers with those of others in your group.

STRENGTH	WEAKNESS	OPPORTUNITY	THREAT

Part II (10 min.) In your group, identify a goal that Harmony Springs might develop to improve its transition services.

Develop at least three objectives related to the goal you just identified. Remember to compare each one to the SMART criteria (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, related to **R**esources, **T**ime-bound).

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



STEP 8. POST-ASSESSMENT

Suggested time: 15 min.

The skill-development exercises and the Application Activity in Job Performance Situation 7 were designed to keep you building skills in the areas of *program monitoring and self-assessment* and *planning*. This Post-Assessment will help you reevaluate your competencies.

Part I

I completed the following exercises in Job Performance Situation 7 package:

- _____ 7-B, The Case Activity: Improving Program Quality Through Program Monitoring and Self-Assessment
- _____ 7-C, Program Monitoring and Self-Assessment: Leading a Program Monitoring or Self-Assessment
- _____ 7-D, Program Monitoring and Self-Assessment: Collecting Data Using Multiple Sources
- _____ 7-E, Planning: Using Assessment Data

Part II

Reassess your skills in the following areas:

SKILL: *LEADING A PROGRAM MONITORING OR SELF-ASSESSMENT*

Rate your current skills in situations in which you need to

		New skill for me	Some skill	Highly skilled	
1. <i>Prepare for a Federal review or local self-assessment:</i>	1	2	3	4	5
2. <i>Build an effective assessment team:</i>	1	2	3	4	5
3. <i>Demonstrate support for program staff being assessed:</i>	1	2	3	4	5
4. <i>Support team members during different stages of team development:</i>	1	2	3	4	5

SKILL: COLLECTING DATA USING MULTIPLE SOURCES OF DATA

Rate your current skills in situations in which you need to

	New skill for me		Some skill		Highly skilled
1. <i>Plan an individual or group interview:</i>	1	2	3	4	5
2. <i>Follow an interview protocol:</i>	1	2	3	4	5
3. <i>Conduct a group interview:</i>	1	2	3	4	5
4. <i>Observe a group setting or group meeting</i>	1	2	3	4	5

SKILL: USING ASSESSMENT DATA

Rate your current skills in situations in which you need to

	New skill for me		Some skill		Highly skilled
1. <i>Use program assessment data to determine planning options:</i>	1	2	3	4	5
2. <i>Select options that promote the organization's mission and vision:</i>	1	2	3	4	5
3. <i>Develop and revise goals and objectives:</i>	1	2	3	4	5
4. <i>Set priorities to meet short-term and long-term objectives:</i>	1	2	3	4	5
5. <i>Use planning charts to manage workflow:</i>	1	2	3	4	5

Part III Use your answers to the following questions to finish filling in your Learning Plan for Job Performance Situation 7 (at the end of 7–A).

A. In which competencies would you like to continue your skill building?

B. What steps will you take to continue your skill building in these areas?

C. How can managers, your supervisor, team members, and other colleagues support you in your continued skill development?