



NATIONAL CENTER ON  
Program Management and Fiscal Operations

## Implementing EHS-CC Ongoing Monitoring Systems





## Guiding Principles for EHS-CC Partners

1. Partnerships are in the infant stage – nurture the relationship first and foremost

2. Ensure partners are fully informed of the purpose of ongoing monitoring

3. Prioritize – what's the most important information you need to know over the first 12 months... 18 months

4. Not everything has equal weight or importance – the system can grow and mature overtime

5. If partners are expected to assume additional responsibilities, provide the resources from the partnership grants to fulfill those responsibilities

6. Individualize expectations – meet partners where they are





# Norms of Collaboration

## Annotated

### 1. Pausing

Pausing before responding or asking a question allows time for thinking and enhances dialogue, discussion, and decision-making.

### 2. Paraphrasing

Using a paraphrase starter that is comfortable for you – “So...” or “As you are...” or “You’re thinking...” – and following the starter with an efficient paraphrase assists members of the group in hearing and understanding one another as they converse and make decisions.

### 3. Posing Questions

Two intentions of posing questions are to explore and to specify thinking. Questions may be posed to explore perceptions, assumptions, and interpretations, and to invite others to inquire into their thinking. For example, “What might be some conjectures you are exploring?” Use focusing questions such as, “Which students, specifically?” or “What might be an example of that?” to increase the clarity and precision of group members’ thinking. Inquire into others’ ideas before advocating one’s own.

### 4. Putting Ideas on the Table

Ideas are the heart of meaningful dialogue and discussion. Label the intention of your comments. For example: “Here is one idea...” or “One thought I have is...” or “Here is a possible approach...” or “Another consideration might be...”.

### 5. Providing Data

Providing data, both qualitative and quantitative, in a variety of forms supports group members in constructing shared understanding from their work. Data have no meaning beyond that which we make of them; shared meaning develops from collaboratively exploring, analyzing, and interpreting data.

### 6. Paying Attention to Self and Others

Meaningful dialogue and discussion are facilitated when each group member is conscious of self and of others, and is aware of what (s)he is saying and how it is said as well as how others are responding. This includes paying attention to learning styles when planning, facilitating, and participating in group meetings and conversations.

### 7. Presuming Positive Intentions

Assuming that others’ intentions are positive promotes and facilitates meaningful dialogue and discussion, and prevents unintentional put-downs. Using positive intentions in speech is one manifestation of this norm.



## Tip Sheet: Asking the Right Questions

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### Introduction

The annual Self-Assessment (SA) process provides program leaders and external advisors with an opportunity to review, analyze, and dialogue about the program's Ongoing Monitoring (OGM) results and other data. A dialogue differs from a discussion: a dialogue builds upon each person's contribution, while a discussion is framed to convince others of a particular point of view.

The ongoing monitoring (OGM) process includes opportunities for monitoring teams to collect, aggregate, and analyze data and engage in dialogue to determine course corrections when needed.

Successful SA processes result in thoughtful recommendations for program improvement and direction. A successful OGM process results in monitoring data and measuring outcomes relative to compliance with regulations and progress toward goals and objectives. Dialogues during OGM and SA, like other effective dialogues, achieve positive results when participants are open to new ideas, eliminate blame during their discussions, and encourage others to share their opinions freely.

This tip sheet features dialogue practices that SA teams can use as they explore the stories that the data tell and craft recommendations for new directions. OGM teams can also use this tip sheet to help ensure they identify the best possible corrective actions. After recounting insights from inquiry experts, this document provides sample questions that program leaders can use to explore the implications of data during OGM and SA.

### *Dialogue Tips from the Experts*

For several decades, leaders in organizational development have studied the impact of thoughtful questions on planning and decision-making. We share insights from three current experts.

- **Study “what’s good.”**

Professor Ron Fry from Case Western Reserve University encourages planning groups to “study what’s good if they want to get more good”. In other words, by examining what is going well, planning groups develop insights into ways to apply good practices in new situations. Conversely, focusing on what is wrong usually produces only incremental change. An expert in Appreciative Inquiry, Professor Fry advises that posing positive questions and encouraging storytelling about successes helps people see the bigger possibilities and go beyond the incremental “tweaks” to truly innovative solutions.

- **Consider the benefits of “great questions.”**

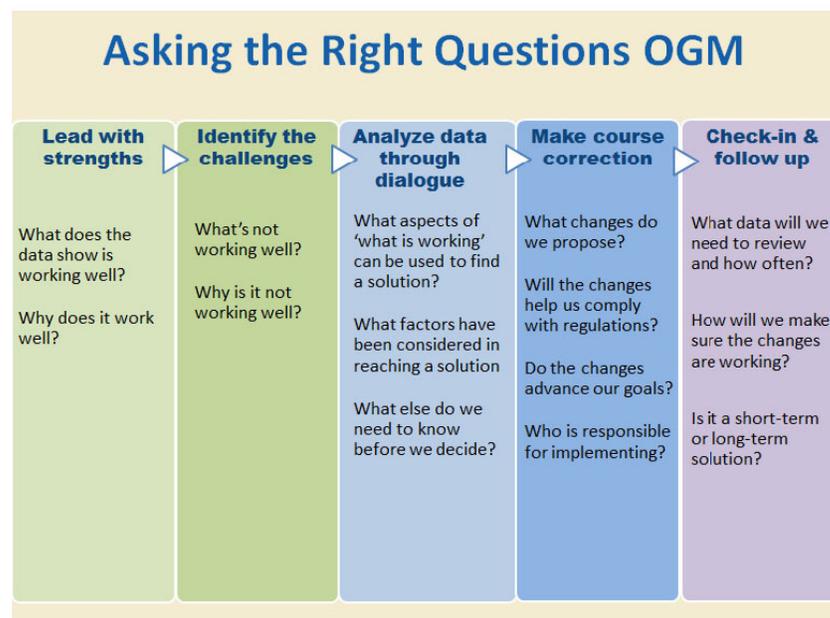
Michael Marquardt, author of *Leading with Questions*, writes about “great questions.” He suggests that great questions are selfless and support the work of the group by:

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

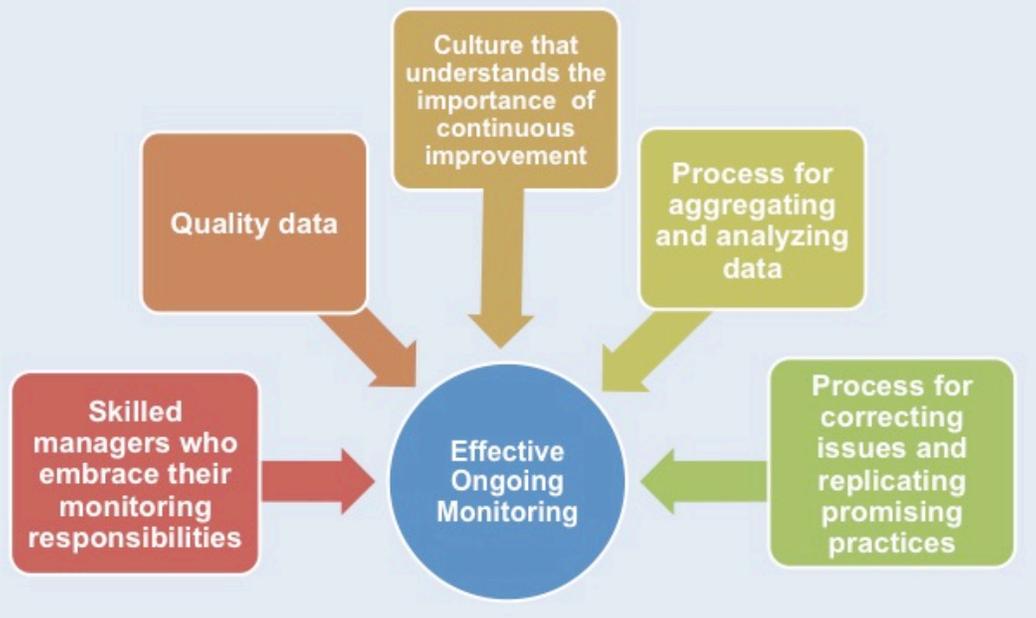
- **Come to the table with a “learner mindset.”**

According to Marilee Adams, president and founder of the Inquiry Institute, when team members participate with a “learner mindset,” they ask great questions that lead to thinking objectively, creating solutions, and relating in a win-win way. She also says that approaching a situation as a learner allows members to become more open to new possibilities and ask questions more effectively. Team members who are in the learner mindset will pose such questions as:

- What possibilities does this open up?
- What can we do about this?
- What can we learn from this?



## Elements of an Effective Ongoing Monitoring System



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### **Skilled managers who embrace their monitoring responsibilities are managers who:**

- implement a system of supervision where staff receive feedback;
- hold team debriefing sessions during monitoring activities;
- recognize they may not have direct monitoring responsibilities but manage staff who do; and
- possess the ability to manage conflict.

Skilled managers who embrace their monitoring responsibilities

### **Quality data is:**

- relevant – information that is connected to why it is being collected;
- timely – adds credibility to the process of data analysis and decision-making and is captured as quickly as possible;
- accurate – it represents real situations; and
- complete – missing information and incomplete records can adversely impact a program's effectiveness as well as discovering the most important issues to address in improving services

Quality data

### **A culture that understands the importance of continuous improvement:**

- embraces accountability;
- asks “how and “why” questions about children and families;
- grows, learns, and contributes to the overall goal;
- empowers staff;
- instills commitment; and
- supports problem solving to get things done.

Culture that understands the importance of continuous improvement

### **A process for aggregating and analyzing data:**

- assigns responsibility for gathering significant data;
- looks at data that helps see the big picture; and
- uses the data that leads to answers.

Process for aggregating and analyzing data

### **A process for correcting issues and replicating promising practices:**

- Includes follow-up,
- makes changes to the plan of action,
- determines what new data needs to be collected,
- looks at the ‘bright spots’, and
- identifies promising practices that can be replicated.

Process for correcting issues and replicating promising practices



## Parts of an Ongoing Monitoring Plan *(sample)* \_\_\_\_\_

<b>What are you monitoring?</b> <i>(Draw from regulations, goals, and objectives.)</i>	<i>What is the purpose and use?</i>
<b>Who is responsible?</b>	
<b>Who collects (enters) the data?</b>	
<b>How often will you collect the data?</b>	
<b>How do you know you are collecting the data that you need?</b>	
<b>How is the OGM data aggregated and analyzed?</b>	
<b>What is the plan for responding to issues and making course corrections?</b>	<i>How will you follow up?</i>
<b>How are the results shared?</b>	



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## Resources

- Data in Head Start and Early Head Start Series  
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/operations/data>
- A Resource Guide for Head Start Programs: Moving Beyond a Culture of Compliance to a Culture of Continuous Improvement  
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/resource/a-resource-guide-for-head-start-programs-moving-beyond-a-culture-of-compliance-to-a-culture-of-continuous-improvement>
- Friedman, Mark. (2005). *Trying Hard is Not Good Enough: How to Produce Measurable Improvements of Customers and Communities*
- National Center on Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships  
<https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/early-head-start>
- *Learning for New Leaders: Head Start A to Z - Ongoing Monitoring*. National Center on Program Management and Fiscal Operations.  
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/operations/learning/ongoing-monitoring.html>
- *Tip Sheet- Asking the Right Questions*. National Center on Program Management and Fiscal Operations  
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/operations/learning/docs/tip-sheet-asking-the-right-questions.pdf>
- *The Communication Plan*. Administration for Children and Families Office of Child Care.  
[https://ecesystemsbuilding.icfwebservices.com/sites/default/files/media/Communication plan.pdf](https://ecesystemsbuilding.icfwebservices.com/sites/default/files/media/Communication%20plan.pdf)